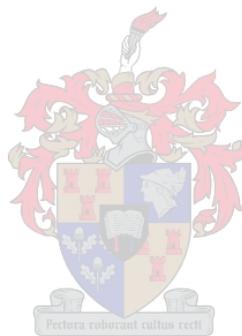


**Emotional Labour and the Experience of Emotional Exhaustion Amongst
Customer Service Representatives in a Call Centre.**

Marelise Spies

**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts at Stellenbosch University**

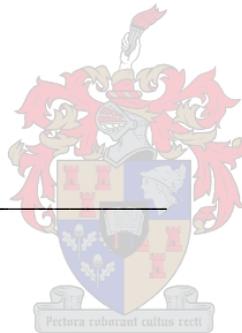


**Mr P Nel
Dr H D Vos
April 2006**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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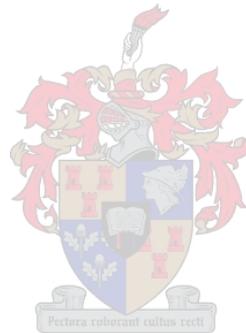


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ABSTRACT

In the new service economy organisations have to distinguish themselves from their competitors in terms of the quality of their service delivery. In order to attain this new goal organisations realise the important role that customers play in their success. Organisations also recognize that modern day customers have different wants and higher expectations regarding service delivery compared to only a decade ago. To live up to these new challenges a novel form of conducting business was introduced to the global labour market: *Telephone call centres* provide quality and efficient service in the most cost-effective way possible by, inter alia, utilising *customer service representatives (CSRs)* to attend to clients' each and every need – this job demand is termed *emotional labour*. Due to the way in which the CSRs' work is structured and the wide-ranging demands placed on them, these individuals experience countless and varied stressors on the job. The result, in a nutshell, is that CSRs become emotionally exhausted and eventually leave the call centre. The purpose of the present research study is, therefore, to identify to what extent emotional labour influences CSRs' feelings of emotional exhaustion, and whether the latter results in detrimental outcomes that undermine organisations' success and competitive advantage in the marketplace. A large organisation's call centre operators participated in the study ($n = 84$). Seven focus groups were conducted for the purpose of qualitative data collection: Six groups consisted of CSRs ($N = 30$) and one group consisted of team leaders ($N = 4$). Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the focus group interviews. The participants ($n = 84$) also completed questionnaires measuring emotional labour, emotional exhaustion, supervisor support, organisational commitment, and intentions to leave. Analysis of the interview data supported the existence of the five theoretical constructs and additional sources of job stress, over and above emotional labour, were identified. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was used to analyse the questionnaire data, followed by multiple regression analysis with organisational commitment and intentions to leave as dependent variables, and the remaining constructs as the predictors. After determining the fit of the measurement model, consisting of the five constructs, a structural model was tested. Both the measurement and structural models produced acceptable goodness-of-fit statistics. The results of the structural model did not indicate a significant correlation between the total construct emotional labour and emotional exhaustion. Significant correlations were found

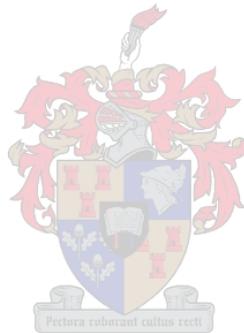
between emotional labour and supervisor support, emotional exhaustion and organisational commitment and intentions to leave respectively, and organisational commitment and intentions to leave. Multiple regression analysis indicated emotional exhaustion is a significant predictor of both lowered organisational commitment and increased intentions to leave. Structural equation modelling indicated emotional exhaustion is causally related to intentions to leave through organisational commitment. The findings are congruent with previous research on the detrimental effect of emotional exhaustion on organisational outcomes and illuminate the complex relationship between emotional labour and emotional exhaustion. Interventions minimising the impact of both emotional labour and emotional exhaustion, within a call centre environment, are explored.



OPSOMMING

Organisasies in vandag se dienstesektor is genoodsaak om hulself van hul mededingers te onderskei deur middel van gehalte dienslewering. Organisasies besef dat, ten einde hierdie doelwit te bereik, hulle nóg kan bekostig om die kliënt agterweë te laat, nóg om die moderne kliënt se behoeftes en hoë verwagtinge met betrekking tot dienslewering te ignoreer. In 'n poging om aan bogenoemde uitdagings te voldoen is 'n oorspronklike manier van besigheid doen aan die wêreld bekendgestel: *Oproepsentrums* verskaf doeltreffende en kwaliteitdiens op 'n koste-effektiewe manier deur, onder andere, gebruik te maak van *oproepsentrum-agente* wat reg staan om aan kliënte se behoeftes te voorsien – die tipe eise wat aan agente gestel word, word omskryf deur die term *emosionele arbeid*. As gevolg van die wyse waarop oproepsentrum-agente se werk gestruktureer word, asook die werkseise wat aan hulle gestel word, is agente blootgestel aan 'n groot verskeidenheid stressors. Die gevolg is dat die agente emosioneel uitgeput raak en uiteindelik besluit om die oproepsentrum te verlaat. Die doelwit van die huidige navorsingstudie is om te bepaal in welke mate emosionele arbeid aanleiding gee tot agente se emosionele uitputting, en of laasgenoemde lei tot nadelige uitkomstes wat die organisasie se sukses en mededingende voordeel in die mark ondermyn. 'n Groot organisasie se oproepsentrum-agente ($n = 84$) het deelgeneem aan die studie. Sewe fokusgroepe is ter wille van kwalitatiewe data-insameling gehou: Ses groepe het bestaan uit agente ($N = 30$) en een groep uit spanleiers ($N = 4$). Kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise is gebruik ter ontleding van die fokusgroeponderhoude. Die deelnemers ($n = 84$) het ook vraelyste vir emosionele arbeid, emosionele uitputting, toesighouer ondersteuning, organisasie toewyding en voornemens om die organisasie te verlaat, voltooi. Ontleding van die onderhouddata het die teenwoordigheid van die teoretiese konstrakte, asook addisionele bronne van werkstres bo en behalwe emosionele arbeid, in die oproepsentrum bevestig. Pearson korrelasie analise is gebruik om die vraelysdata te analiseer, gevolg deur meervoudige regressieanalise met organisasie toewyding en voornemens om die organisasie te verlaat as afhanklike veranderlikes en die oorblywende veranderlikes as voorspellers. Na aanleiding van die metingsmodel, bestaande uit genoemde vyf konstrakte, se passingsresultate is 'n strukturele model getoets. Beide die metingsmodel en strukturele model se passingstatistieke was aanvaarbaar. Die resultate van die strukturele model het nie 'n

beduidende verwantskap tussen emosionele arbeid as eendimensionele konstruk en emosionele uitputting aangedui nie. Beduidende korrelasies is gevind tussen emosionele arbeid en spanleier ondersteuning, emosionele uitputting en organisasie toewyding en voornemens om die organisasie te verlaat onderskeidelik, en organisasie toewyding en voornemens om die organisasie te verlaat. Meervoudige regressie analise het aangedui emosionele uitputting is 'n beduidende voorspeller van beide verminderde organisasie toewyding en verhoogde voornemens om die organisasie te verlaat. Strukturele vergelykingsmodellering het aangedui emosionele uitputting het *deur* organisasie toewyding 'n kousale verwantskap met voornemens om die organisasie te verlaat. Die bevindinge is in ooreenstemming met vorige navorsing oor die negatiewe uitwerking van emosionele uitputting op organisatoriese uitkomstes en verhelder die komplekse verhouding tussen emosionele arbeid en emosionele uitputting. Intervensies om die impak van beide emosionele arbeid en emosionele uitputting binne die oproepsentrum-omgewing teë te werk, word ondersoek.



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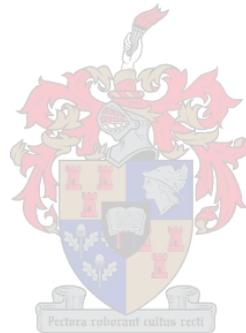


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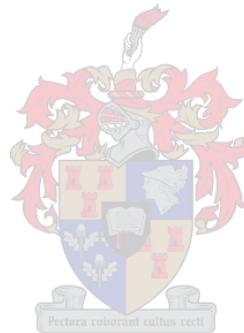
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary business has undergone a change in focus with regard to how it positions itself in the marketplace. Under the former industrial production model the aim was to produce and sell volumes of goods, as this would ensure a premier position, that is, a competitive advantage, in the market. On the contrary, in the new service economy organisations have to distinguish themselves from their competitors in terms of the quality of their *service delivery* (Deery, Iverson & Walsh, 2004).

In order to attain this new strategy organisations realise the important role that customers play in their success. Organisations also recognize that modern day customers have different wants and higher expectations regarding service delivery compared to only a decade ago. To live up to these new challenges a novel form of conducting business was introduced to the global labour market: *telephone call centres*.

Call centres are believed to provide the mentioned competitive advantage to organisations by means of a relatively simple business principle, namely providing quality and efficient service in the most cost-effective way possible (Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004). For this purpose call centres follow a very specific design model characterised by a high degree of structure and very limited flexibility, both in terms of how the call centre is managed, as well as how the *customer service representatives (CSRs)* – that is, the call centre agents - perform their job. It is noteworthy that this formula has indeed provided enormous financial benefits to organisations (Deery & Kinnie, 2004).

Unfortunately, this positive picture of call centres does not tell the whole story. Call centres have also been labelled “electronic sweatshops”, “dark satanic mills of the twenty-first century” (Holman, 2003, p.123) and “the *bête noire* of organisational types” (Holman, 2004, p.223). These descriptions refer to the fact that CSRs experience countless and varied stressors on the job due to the way in which their work is structured and the wide-ranging demands placed on them.

The result, in a nutshell, is that CSRs become emotionally exhausted and eventually leave the call centre. In fact, costs associated with labour turnover are the *one* factor that consumes the biggest part of call centre budgets all over the world (as per Dimension Data's *Merchants Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report, January 2005*).

Thus, the call centre phenomenon seems to be a double-edged sword in that it has the potential to augment organisations' prosperity due to its lean and efficient design features - the irony is also, however, that these same design features might undermine its original purpose, namely to provide organisations with a competitive advantage.

1.2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

CSRs are an integral element in the service delivery equation as they are the proverbial *boundary-spanners* (Singh, Goolsby & Rhoads, 1994) between the organisation and its customers: it is their task to present the organisation in a positive light to customers by providing quality service through telephonic interaction (Deery & Kinnie, 2004; Singh et al., 1994).

Research has found that service performance deteriorates in response to emotional exhaustion (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998, cited in Grandey, 2003). The implications for call centres are significant: If CSRs feel emotionally exhausted they are unlikely to provide a quality service to customers, let alone provide a competitive advantage.

From the literature it is clear that a wide array of work-related variables contribute to the onset of *emotional exhaustion* amongst service professionals (such as CSRs). These include, amongst others: a) *daily hassles*, that is, work demands that, as the name implies, irritate CSRs on an incessant basis (Lazarus, 1977, cited in Carayon, 1995); b) work demands that exist in combination with a lack of resources (for example, support) (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001), and c) emotional work demands that are inherent in the nature of service work (Côté, 2005; Hochschild, 1979). This latter variable has been extensively researched under the construct *emotional labour*. It is also included in the present study.

In light of the fact that the nature of CSRs' work, encapsulated by the notion of emotional labour, has been linked to emotional exhaustion and that the latter is associated with such outcomes as employee *turnover*, companies that make use of call centres could gain substantially, for example in terms of cost savings, by investigating the relationships amongst these variables.

Therefore, the problem and / or challenge for call centre management is to identify those factors in the work environment that impact negatively on CSRs' well-being and to either eliminate them or assist CSRs in better coping with them for the purpose of obtaining the competitive advantage that call centres promise.

1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present study are therefore as follows:

1. To investigate the nature of CSRs' jobs (encapsulated by the term emotional labour).
2. To investigate CSRs' levels of emotional exhaustion (as a dimension of the construct *burnout*) in response to the nature of their work (i.e. emotional labour).
3. To investigate the direct effect of *social support* (more specifically, supervisor support) on emotional exhaustion.
4. To establish the resulting consequences of emotional exhaustion for the organisation in terms of *organisational commitment (OC)* and *intentions to leave*.

In light of the above objectives and the proposed model (see Chapter 2) the following propositions will be tested statistically:

H_{a1}: Emotional labour will be statistically significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

H_{a2}: Supervisor support will be statistically significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

H_{a3}: Supervisor support will be statistically significantly related to organisational commitment.

H_{a4}: Emotional exhaustion will be statistically significantly related to organisational commitment.

H_{a5}: Emotional exhaustion will be statistically significantly related to intentions to leave.

H_{a6}: Organisational commitment will be statistically significantly related to intentions to leave.

1.4. STUDY OUTLINE

Chapter 2 focuses on the nature of the call centre environment. It aims to provide a general overview of the business rationale for establishing call centres, two types of call centre models and their design characteristics, as well as how these qualities impact on CSRs' well-being. Chapter 2 also explicates the linkages amongst all the constructs contained in the present study and how they relate to the call centre environment specifically.

Chapter 3 focuses on the causes of emotional exhaustion. The chapter begins with a detailed discussion of emotional labour, indicating how the various sub-dimensions of emotional labour are associated with emotional exhaustion. The second part of the chapter focuses on social support – specifically supervisor support – and cites research on the association between a lack of support and emotional exhaustion. Also included in this section are the different types and sources of social support, as well as the two mechanisms through which support impacts on strain (i.e. exhaustion).

In Chapter 4 the consequence of performing emotional labour for the individual (i.e. CSR) is discussed. This entails an in-depth coverage of the construct burnout, with a clear emphasis on its core dimension, emotional exhaustion. Also included are the conceptualisation and definition of burnout, an explanation of the difference and relationship between stress and burnout, an overview of various developmental models of burnout, two theoretical frameworks against which to interpret emotional exhaustion, and the common causes of burnout (i.e. emotional exhaustion).

Following this discussion, the consequences of burnout (i.e. emotional exhaustion) for the organisation in terms of OC and intentions to leave are discussed. Also included are the relevance of OC as a role-player in present day organisations, a focus on affective commitment (a specific sub-dimension of the total OC construct), and the association between OC and intentions to leave.

Chapter 5 covers the methodology employed, Chapter 6 presents the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analyses respectively, and Chapter 7 presents the interpretation and discussion of the research findings, as well as the recommendations and conclusion.

1.5. SUMMARY

Call centres, as a relatively novel business domain, has become an integral source of employment in contemporary society. Despite many of its benefits to organisations, such as being cost-effective, it also poses a danger to the people that are employed to perform the work - the CSRs. As such, it is imperative that call centre management acknowledges and identifies those factors in the work environment that are detrimental to CSRs' well-being. In failing to do so the end-result could hold implications for individuals and organisations alike.

For individuals, increasing stress levels will result in burnout and an eventual inability to function optimally at work. For organisations, already high levels of turnover will continue to rise even higher, undermining any hopes of establishing a competitive advantage in the marketplace. For these reasons it would be in the best interests of all organisations that make use of call centres to investigate the idiosyncrasies that exist in their specific contexts. It is only through an understanding of the nature and complexity of the issue that organisations and call centre management would be able to intervene effectively.

CHAPTER 2: THE NATURE OF THE CALL CENTRE ENVIRONMENT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the nature of the call centre environment. It aims to provide a general overview of, inter alia, the business rationale for establishing call centres, two types of call centre models and their design characteristics, as well as how these qualities impact on CSRs' well-being. In addition, the linkages amongst all the constructs contained in the present study, and how they relate to the call centre environment specifically, are explicated.

2.2. THE CALL CENTRE ENVIRONMENT

In recent years the world of work has experienced a general economic paradigm shift that has affected the nature of global economic activity in terms of a movement away from producing goods towards providing services, with a concomitant change regarding the role of the customer in the economic process. In contrast to the former industrial production model where customers were external to the labour process - in other words, passive end-consumers of produced goods - customers in the service economy are now active role players in terms of their wants and expectations regarding service delivery. This development has been coined the new *triangular relationship* between organisations (management), employees and customers (Deery, Iverson & Walsh, 2004, p.201), resulting in unique organisational and service-related challenges, especially pertaining to service quality.

For example, two apparent challenges facing organisations today are a) the dual focus of providing high quality service to customers in a cost-effective way (Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004), and b) continuous endeavours to distinguish one's business in terms of (quality) customer support and service, instead of product performance, as it is the former that differentiates successful organisations from the unsuccessful ones in the eyes of present-day customers (Nel, De Villiers & Engelbrecht, 2003).

In reaction to the above changes and challenges, global labour markets have witnessed a substantial growth in telephone call centres, as businesses have transferred the responsibility for direct interaction with customers to the call centres,

charging them with the task to deliver quality service cost-effectively. In contemporary Europe call centres are believed to be *the* fastest growing form of employment (Deery & Kinnie, 2004) such as that UK call centres are projected to recruit 200 000 workers between 2004 and 2007 (UK Call Centre Growth Predicted, 2004, <http://www.humanresources-centre.net>). In a similar vein projected annual call centre growth in Australia is said to average 20% to 25% (Lewig & Dollard, 2003).

South Africa has not missed the *call centre boom* either. In December 2004 it was reported that foreign businesses had invested R 380 million in the Western Cape's call centre industry (Sakeredaksie, 2004, p. S17). In addition, the Western Cape government identified call centres as strategic growth points for the local economy: The call centre industry is estimated to be one of this province's top ten employers with approximately 11 000 employees and is projected to grow by 40% annually over the next three years (Van Dyk, 2004, p. S15).

2.2.1. Definitions of Call Centres

Call centre definitions range from being very simple to relatively technical and complex. Taylor and Bain (1999) emphasize that the presence of a telephone and a computer does not automatically render an employee a CSR; instead, it is the *integrative* use of these technologies that results in the formation of call centres.

Gutek (1995, cited in Deery & Kinnie, 2004) characterises call centres as providing service speedily and efficiently through the standardisation of service encounters, the use of interchangeable service providers and information and communication technologies. Frenkel, Tam, Korczynski and Shire (1998) view call centres as communication vehicles delivering service and sales either via advanced technological systems such as automatic voice response systems with minimum or no human involvement, or via frontline employees utilising computer software to interact with customers over the telephone. Zapf, Isic, Bechtoldt and Blau (2003) describe call centres as a tool used to compete for customers and as stations employed for voice-to-voice contact with customers. This latter conceptualisation implies one of *the* main reasons for the establishment of call centres, namely a striving for competitive advantage (Taylor & Bain, 1999).

2.2.2. The Customer Service Representative (CSR)

The manner in which customer service organisations, and by implication call centres, is designed and managed (discussed further on) often results in high stress levels amongst its employees, which in turn result in such problems as absenteeism and high turnover (Hillmer et al., 2004). Seeing that researchers have noted service performance deteriorates in response to emotional exhaustion (the burnout dimension researched in this study) (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998, cited in Grandey, 2003) organisations will need to cope with the challenge of rising stress levels amongst their employees in order to obtain the competitive advantage that call centres promise.

In other words, although it is stated that call centres (that is, the physical space from where organisations interact with their customers) provide organisations with a competitive advantage, it is in actual fact the frontline people employed in call centres (that is, the CSRs – colloquially referred to as call centre agents - responsible for handling client interactions) who differentiate organisations in terms of service delivery and who ultimately provide the competitive advantage.

Zapf et al. (2003) describes the CSR as an employee who sits behind a table, in front of a computer, with a telephone headset on and hands that are free to navigate the computer while interacting with customers. In this role, the CSR is an integral element in the service delivery equation as he / she is the proverbial boundary-spanner (Singh, Goolsby & Rhoads, 1994) between the organisation and its customers: It is his / her task to present the organisation in a positive light to customers by providing quality service through telephonic interaction (Deery & Kinnie, 2004; Singh et al., 1994). However, if CSRs feel emotionally exhausted they are unlikely to provide a quality service to customers, let alone provide a competitive advantage. In light of the above it becomes clear why the emotional well-being of CSRs should be of concern to all businesses making use of call centres.

2.2.3. Types of Call Centres

Call centres could either be inbound, outbound, or a combination of the two service models. The particular organisation's business determines whether frontline employees fulfil a more passive (inbound) or active (outbound) role (Zapf et al., 2003). Outbound call centres typically focus on telemarketing and sales where CSRs

phone clients with the aim of selling the organisation's products. Inbound call centres, on the other hand, function on the basis of customers phoning in to the organisation with CSRs answering calls so as to respond to client questions and to assist with client queries. According to Taylor and Bain (1999) these two call centre design models impose different demands on CSRs.

For example, in the inbound call centre model a sophisticated answering system (the ACD system) receives incoming calls and distributes them to available CSRs who are required to take call after call without choice regarding call timing or call breaks. These incoming calls can vary in terms of technical content and/or complexity, as well as client emotions, and in this sense CSRs are not 'prepared' in advance for what they may encounter: They are required to sort out client problems and/or deal with client queries as they happen.

In the outbound call centre model, so-called "predictive dialling systems" (Taylor & Bain, 1999, p.108) automatically dial customer numbers contained in the business' database and connect them to CSRs. In this model the CSRs do not receive calls, nor are they required to handle client problems and/or queries on an ad hoc basis as in the inbound call centre; instead, they are required to create interest in, and preferably sell, the organisation's products. These CSRs, however, know beforehand what they need to say and do while interacting with customers. Thus, one of the apparent demand differences imposed on CSRs, as deduced from the literature, seems to be the *degrees of uncertainty* under which CSRs operate in each call centre model. It is reasonable to assume that many more differences exist that warrant further investigation. This is, however, not the purpose of the present research study.

From the above it is evident that call centres provide a variety of services ranging from customer service to advertising and sales support via the integrative use of telephone and computer technology - it is this *chameleon-like property* that renders them ideal for the rapidly changing global business domain (Prabhaker, Sheehan & Coppett, 1997, p.222; Taylor, Mulvey, Hyman & Bain, 2002).

2.2.4. Advantages and Disadvantages of Call Centres

Bennington, Cummane and Conn (2000) report on the advantages and disadvantages of call centres. From the customer's point of view call centres represent convenience: Instead of travelling to a physical location, fast and efficient service is obtained via the telephone from a centralised contact point. For the organisation increased effectiveness and efficiency result from the ability to service more clients with fewer staff (Prabhaker et al., 1997, cited in Bennington et al., 2000). Thus, cost savings are achieved for both customer and service organisation.

Some of the disadvantages include a reliance on technology that is fallible at times, the inability to consistently deliver timeous and responsive service, and the difficulty of building customer relationships due to the absence of face-to-face interaction. All of these result in client frustration and dissatisfaction with service quality (Crome, 1998, cited in Bennington et al., 2000). In fact, it is probable that these disadvantages are the exact same difficulties - or *daily hassles* (Lazarus, 1977, cited in Carayon, 1995) - that CSRs face on the job and that cause their stress levels to escalate, eventually culminating in emotional exhaustion.

2.2.5. The Design Characteristics of Call Centres

As reiterated at various times already, call centres have delivered enormous financial benefits to organisations due to their cost-effectiveness (Deery & Kinnie, 2004). This is in part due to the idiosyncratic design of call centres as is evident from earlier definitions. At the same time, however, they have also been labelled "electronic sweatshops", "dark satanic mills of the twenty-first century" (Holman, 2003, p.123) and "the *bête noire* of organisational types" (Holman, 2004, p.223). Thus, it is clear that two contrasting images of call centres have emerged from the literature.

Proponents of call centres emphasize the possibility of transforming CSRs into empowered information technology professionals who interact with customers in a naturally friendly and relaxed manner. The opposite of this positive description, however, is that of a CSR who works under strenuous conditions and who is continuously measured by a superior on criteria such as speed, information accuracy, script adherence and conversation pleasantness (Taylor & Bain, 1999).

These conflicting views have been enforced and commented on by various researchers. Taylor et al. (2002) recognises that call centres are not homogeneous entities and that they differ in terms of various *work organisation* (p.134) variables, such as size, complexity of operations and technological integration, as well as human resource aspects such as management style.

With regard to management style, the particular choice and presence of supervisor (or team leader) support for CSRs should also differ between call centres. In some call centres high levels of various types of support could be present, such as emotional and instrumental support (Cohen & Wills, 1985) that are provided to CSRs on a daily basis, whereas in other call centres support could be nonexistent. In the present study the association between team leader support and CSRs' levels of emotional exhaustion is investigated.

Taylor and Bain (1999) write that although call centres have some design characteristics in common, variations across a so-called *continuum of complexity* (p.108) do exist that need to be kept in mind. In response to this, call centres are also described as *transactional* and *relational* entities. The former is characterised by, inter alia, brief agent-customer interactions, monotonous and repetitive work requiring low-level skill and close monitoring; in other words, a focus on volume / quantity. The latter is described as empathetic, quality-oriented environments where agent-customer interactions are of longer duration and agents are semi-skilled (Frenkel et al., 1998; Taylor et al., 2002).

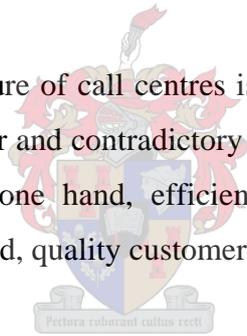
Taylor et al. (2002) proposes a way to conceptualise the nature of call centres in terms of a dichotomisation of call centre characteristics into quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The more quantitative dimensions are present, the more it approximates the traditional view of call centre work as routinised and repetitive; the more qualitative dimensions exist in a call centre, the more it is believed to approximate the more recently proposed view of call centres as allowing for creativity, customisation and increasing agent discretion (Frenkel et al., 1999, cited in Taylor et al., 2002).

Examples of proposed quantitative criteria include “simple customer interaction”, “routinization”, “targets hard”, and “strict script adherence” (Frenkel et al., 1999,

cited in Taylor et al., 2002, p.136). This latter requirement (i.e. keeping to the call centre script) is indicative of call centre management's attempts at regulating CSRs expressions on the job, whether it is with regard to what they say to clients (i.e. the technical content of the message) or as to how they deliver the message (i.e. their manner and behaviour) to clients. In fact, this *regulated emotional expression* vis-à-vis clients, achieved through conforming to the organisation's *display rules*, contribute to the monotonous and repetitive nature of call centre work and 'robs' CSRs of any control and / or discretion over performing their work.

Quality criteria are at the opposite poles, in other words, "complex customer interaction", "individualization / customisation", "targets soft", and "flexible or no scripts" (Frenkel et al., 1999, cited in Taylor et al., 2002, p.136). Call centres can hence be positioned on a quantity-quality continuum, depending on the combination of work dimensions present in its particular environment.

This dual perspective of the nature of call centres is reflected in the inherent tension that exists between two particular and contradictory objectives that call centres aim to achieve and maintain: on the one hand, efficiency and productivity (a quantity perspective) and on the other hand, quality customer service (a quality perspective).



Evidence for this contradiction is found in a recent summary of the *Merchants Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report* (published in January 2005 by Dimension Data), in which various global call centre industry trends are explicated. With regard to call centre strategy and development, the three most important business drivers are indicated as reducing costs (increasing efficiency), increasing revenue, and improving service levels – the contradictory goals of efficiency and quality service being crystal clear.

2.3. CONTEXTUALISATION OF CONSTRUCTS WITHIN THE CALL CENTRE ENVIRONMENT

2.3.1. Emotional Labour

In recent years the role of emotion in the workplace has been a constant, albeit implicit, theme in the Industrial / Organisational Psychology literature. With specific reference to service transactions researchers have found that the manner in which

employees display feelings has a definite influence on perceived service transaction quality (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). It is for this reason that organisations have begun to emphasise the development of a pertinent customer orientation in terms of the nature and the quality of services rendered to all its customers and / or clients.

A second factor that has contributed to this trend is the growth in the service sector and the accompanying and increased competition amongst service providers (Scheider & Bowen, 1995, Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990, cited in Morris & Feldman, 1996, p.986).

With regard to call centres, CSRs have been assigned the role of managing customer relationships and of presenting the firm's *personality* telephonically to the customer (Belt, Richardson & Webster, 1999, cited in Deery & Kinnie, 2004, p.8). As implied earlier, the manner in which CSRs act towards and speak to customers has become a salient concern of organisations. Therefore, the nature of CSRs' jobs could be termed *emotional labour*, in contrast to physical labour as performed in the production of goods (see Figure 1 at the end of Chapter 2 for a visual and simplified representation of the discussion that follows).

2.3.2. Burnout (Emotional Exhaustion)

Although emotional labour has functional consequences (positive outcomes) for the organisation, such as when it enables CSRs to deal effectively with customer complaints, which in turn may influence customers' decisions to use the services offered by an organisation on a future occasion, the possibility of negative consequences for the psychological well-being of individuals also exist (Morris & Feldman, 1996). One potentially negative consequence of emotional labour has been identified as *burnout* (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

Burnout is defined as a syndrome consisting of three distinct dimensions, namely *emotional exhaustion* (characterised by individuals feeling depleted of emotional resources), *depersonalisation / cynicism* (referring to individuals' negative, cynical or detached responses to other people and / or work), and *reduced personal accomplishment / inefficacy* (entailing individuals' feelings of incompetence and declined productivity).

Emotional exhaustion has consistently been perceived as the core component of burnout as it has been the most internally consistent and stable measure of the three components, as well as the most responsive to work-related stressors (Shirom, 2003). For the purposes of the present study emotional exhaustion will be the construct under consideration.

Despite extensive research on the causes of burnout - such as the quantity or frequency of interactions with clients, role and work overload, role conflict and role ambiguity - the quality of experiences has received scant attention. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) emphasize that although *emotional* exhaustion has been viewed as the core of burnout, rarely has *emotional* work demands been considered as predictors of burnout.

Rafaeli and Sutton (1989, cited in Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002) support the above viewpoint by proposing that, in addition to the inherent stress involved in continuously interacting with people (due to the frequency, and hence the workload, characterising such interactions), employees might also be required to adapt and regulate their emotional expressivity according to pre-determined and organisationally sanctioned ways – hence referring to emotional labour. The emotional nature of interpersonal encounters as predictors of burnout therefore warrants further attention.

2.3.3. Burnout and Supervisor Support in terms of Two Theoretical Frameworks

The conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Ito & Brotheridge, 2003) has been utilised as a framework for integrating research on stress and burnout. According to COR theory “...people strive to obtain, retain, protect, and foster valued resources and minimize any threats of resource loss” (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002, p.58). Furthermore, in order to gain or regain valued resources individuals usually make use of other resources (Shirom, 2003), and if this is impossible individuals experience stress. Hobfoll (1989, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2002) argues that one of the most critical ways to obtain and regain resources that have been lost is by developing beneficial, that is rewarding, social relationships with others.

The specific resource applicable to the call centre environment is supervisor support – in call centre terminology, *team leader* support. Shirom (2003) explains, individuals that either lack a supportive structure or that experience poor social support, are more prone to experience burnout and / or periods of intermittent resource losses and gains. This proposition is supported by consistent research findings of negative correlations between burnout and social support. In other words, team leader support could serve as a buffer (moderator) between the stressor (emotional labour) and the outcome (emotional exhaustion). In addition, some researchers have also found a moderating effect of supervisor support on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave (an organisational outcome included in the present study) (Van Dierendonck, Buunk & Schaufeli, 1998).

The Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001) is a relatively new theory that has been employed by various researchers in research specifically on burnout. The JD-R model posits, working conditions can be divided into two broad categories, namely *job demands* and *job resources*, and each process has distinct individual and organisational outcomes.

Job demands constitutes a broad and comprehensive concept that describes physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that require prolonged physical and / or cognitive effort and, as such, are psychologically taxing. Job resources describes those physical, social, psychological or organisational aspects of the job that assist in achieving work goals, reducing job demands, or facilitating growth and development.

Individuals that experience high job demands and low levels of social support (a resource) should, according to this model, experience higher levels of stress, and hence, burnout (emotional exhaustion). In fact, different studies have found a positive relationship between job demands (such as emotional demands) and emotional exhaustion, as well as a positive relationship between a lack of job resources and emotional exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001; Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2005; Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In addition, the existence of a positive relationship between a lack of resources and psychological withdrawal (*disengagement* or *mental distancing*) has also been indicated (Demerouti et al., 2001,

p.508; Jackson et al., 2005, p.18). As such, a shortage of resources also holds potential implications for intentions to leave and / or actual turnover.

As is evident from the above, both the COR theory and the JD-R model serve as an important theoretical grounding for a discussion on burnout (emotional exhaustion). The role of social resources in alleviating or preventing work-related strain has been extensively investigated and, in fact, has been found to impact both directly and indirectly on the specific burnout criterion in the present study, emotional exhaustion (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003).

2.3.4. Organisational Commitment (OC) and Intentions to Leave

Burnout has important consequences for organisations, including the call centre environment. One such consequence is employee *turnover*, a type of withdrawal behaviour believed to be one of the biggest problems in terms of both cost and productivity faced by call centres (O'Herron, 2003); another problem is lowered *organisational commitment (OC)* (Burke and Greenglass, 2001, cited in Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

Deery and Kinnie (2004) describe employee withdrawal behaviours, whether it manifests temporarily or permanently, as undeniably entrenched characteristics of call centre work. They cite a nation-wide survey conducted in Britain in 2002 that found annual average turnover rates of over 30 per cent. A local South African newspaper recently pitched the Cape Town call centre industry's annual labour turnover at 10,7 per cent (Van Dyk, 2004, p. S15).

The business implications of such figures are astronomical. According to the *Merchants Global Contact Centre Benchmarking Report (January 2005)* labour cost consumes the biggest part of call centre budgets, averaging up to 68% of total operating budgets. In addition, annual labour turnover amongst the participating call centre sample is shown to cost organisations between USD 100 million to 500 million. Thus, turnover is a factor within the call centre industry that cannot be taken light-heartedly.

Various researchers have studied turnover intention (*intentions to leave*) and actual turnover in an attempt to establish its relationship with other variables. One of the most consistent, negative relationships found in previous research is that between intentions to leave (as a measure of turnover) and OC (Stallworth, 2003). Meyer (2001) posits, the correlation between commitment and intentions to leave could be seen as a reflection of an association between a psychological state and a behavioural intention; stated differently, if turnover is the criterion, OC could act as the predictor.

2.4. SUMMARY

In light of the fact that the nature of CSRs' work, encapsulated by the notion of emotional labour, has been linked to emotional exhaustion and that the latter is associated with such outcomes as employee turnover and low OC, companies that make use of call centres could gain substantially - for example in terms of cost savings - by investigating the relationships amongst these variables.

The reality, however, is that organisations and managers alike have up to date been reluctant to address – or even acknowledge – burnout (and by implication emotional exhaustion) as a significant role-player. This has been evident in their tendency to place the blame for burnout on the shoulders of the individual and in the description of burnout as the proverbial “can of worms that is best left unopened” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, p.62). In a similar fashion business has mistakenly depicted emotion as irrational, as something that interferes with rational work performance; in other words, as an inconsequential factor to the organisational context (Mann, 2002).

The ability of Industrial Psychologists and Human Resource Managers to prevent and treat burnout (emotional exhaustion) – and thereby address organisational problems – is dependent on the extent to which they understand the latent variables that affect it and the manner in which these variables shape this complex phenomenon. Therefore, it is in the best interests of all organisations that make use of call centres to investigate the idiosyncrasies that exist in their specific contexts.

In the following chapter (Chapter 3) the causes of burnout (i.e. of emotional exhaustion) are explicated in depth. The discussion commences with emotional labour

and is followed by social support – in both instances these constructs’ association with and contribution to emotional exhaustion is the primary focus.

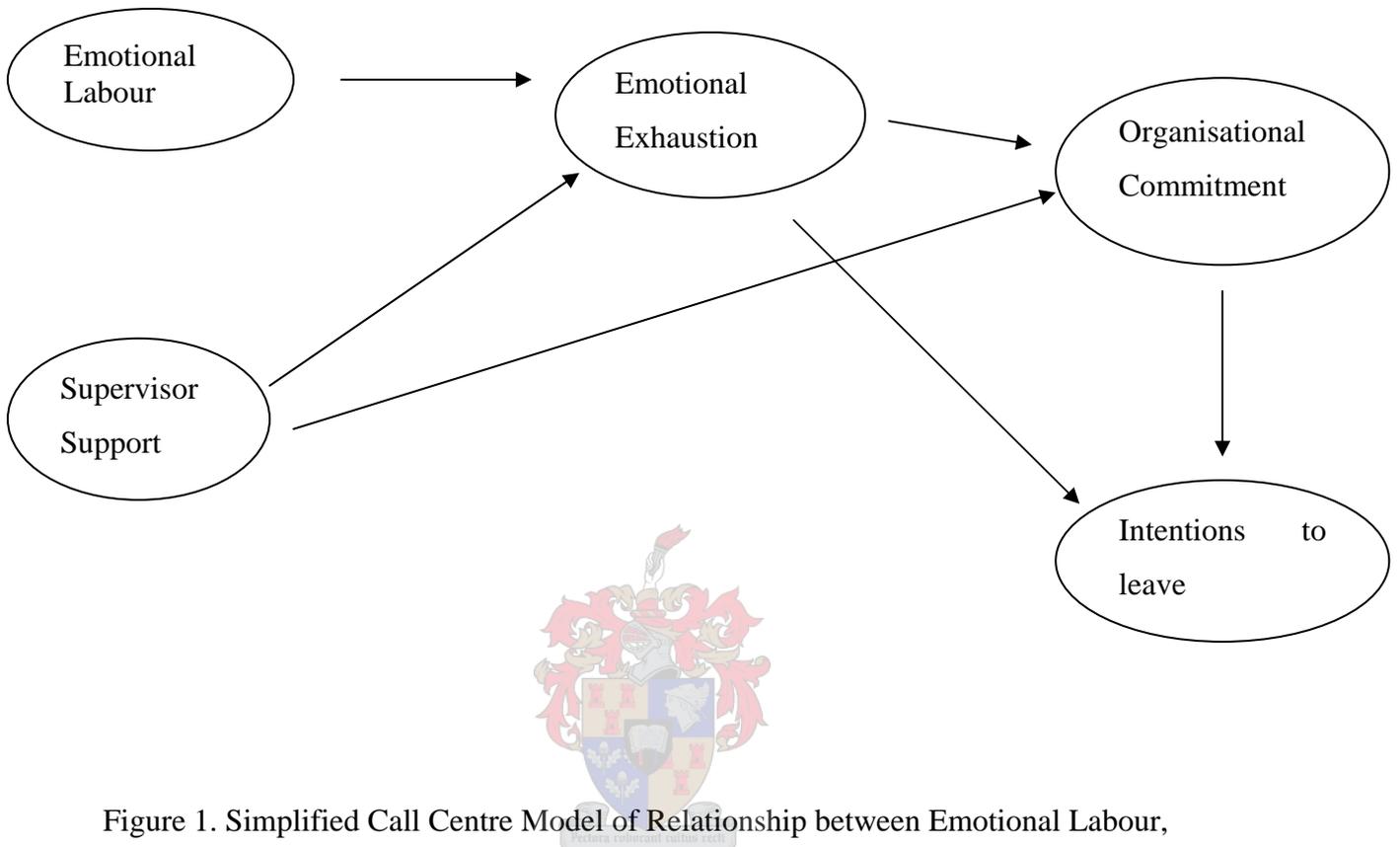


Figure 1. Simplified Call Centre Model of Relationship between Emotional Labour, Emotional Exhaustion, and Organisational Outcomes.

CHAPTER 3: EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the causes of emotional exhaustion. It begins with a detailed discussion of, inter alia, the conceptualisation and dimensions of emotional labour, the association of the various sub-dimensions of emotional labour with emotional exhaustion, and the social interaction model of emotion regulation, a useful framework for interpreting research findings.

The second part of the chapter focuses on social support – specifically supervisor support – and cites research on the association between a lack of support and emotional exhaustion. Also included in this section are the different types and sources of social support, as well as the two mechanisms through which support impacts on strain (i.e. exhaustion).

3.2. EMOTIONAL LABOUR

3.2.1. Emotional Labour in the Service Environment

Contemporary service organisations have to distinguish themselves from other organisations, especially those selling similar products, in order to survive in the globally competitive marketplace. For this reason, these organisations advertise and sell *service with a smile* – a condition said to positively influence customer perceptions of service quality so as to increase the probability of repeat business (Grandey & Brauburger, 2002, p.260; Humphrey, 2000). Call centres constitute one such service environment where the management of customer relationships is a daily business prerogative.

In the service industry, and by implication call centres, the customer service employee – or *customer service representative (CSR)* in call centres - is charged with the responsibility to create a pleasant service experience for the consumers of organisations' services and / or products. As such, service employees are expected to regulate and display certain pre-established and contextually appropriate emotions while interacting with customers – conditions that remind of the quantitative dimension of call centre work where CSRs are expected to engage in emotion regulation and adhere to the call centre script. The reward for engaging in this specific

type of labour is a wage. Thus, in addition to being paid for performing cognitive and physical work tasks, many employees are now also being paid for engaging in emotional work demands - more specifically, for performing *emotional labour* (Grandey & Brauburger, 2002; Zapf, 2002).

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) provide several reasons for emotional labour's relevance to service encounters like those occurring in call centre environments. Firstly, front-line service employees operate at the organisation-customer boundary representing the organisation to the public; secondly, as customers participate in the service encounter uncertainty ensues that provides the encounter with a dynamic and evolving quality, and lastly, the quality of services rendered is difficult to evaluate due to its intangible nature.

Berry (1980, cited in Bailey & McCollough, 2000) emphasize that in addition to its intangible character service interactions are heterogeneous encounters, also with regard to *emotional content* (p.54). These authors explain that no two service encounters can ever be a hundred percent alike, as both the course or process and the outcome of the interactions differ. In terms of emotions, it is highly unlikely that the emotions experienced by service provider and recipient respectively will converge perfectly and create a uniform emotional experience. Rather, both parties experience varying emotions and hence the aggregate emotional content of one service interaction to the next will vary. In this context, the behaviours of service employees – especially in terms of emotion regulation and / or flexibility – become an important influencing factor on clients' perceptions of service and product quality respectively (Bowen et al., 1989, cited in Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993).

3.2.2. Potential Costs Associated with Performing Emotional Labour

Schaubroeck and Jones (2000) acknowledge that nowadays, the work roles of many people encompass the requirement to dictate and regulate their personal emotions. This additional job requirement acts as a demand, placed on individuals, with important consequences for psychological and physiological well-being. This thinking seems plausible as, noted in the introduction and in line with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, emotional labour could be conceptualised as a job demand, the performance of which results in emotional exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Various researchers (Gross, 1998; Pugh, 2002; Richards & Gross, 1999) have conducted research on the mentioned consequences of emotion regulation for the individual. All of these researchers conclude that two particular types of emotion regulation costs are evident, namely a) physiological costs and b) cognitive costs, and that these vary in accordance with the particular emotion regulation technique employed.

According to the *process model of emotion regulation* (Gross, 1998; Pugh, 2002) emotion regulation occurs at two points in time. Furthermore, the timing of the regulation determines the particular technique employed, which in turn determines the particular cost for the individual. *Antecedent-focused emotion regulation* (Gross, 1998, p.225) occurs before the actual activation of an emotion; in other words, the individual acts on stimuli internally before it even generates an emotional response (i.e. it entails acting on the input to the system or individual). *Response-focused emotion regulation* (Gross, 1998, p.225) entails a reactive response in that the individual manipulates the expression of emotion (i.e. it entails acting on the output to the system or individual). *Cognitive reappraisal*, that is, "...interpreting potentially emotion-relevant stimuli in unemotional terms..." is a form of antecedent-focused emotion regulation, whereas *suppression*, that is, "...inhibiting emotion-expressive behavior while emotionally aroused..." is a form of response-focused emotion regulation (Gross, 1998, p.226) (For more examples see Gross, 1998).

An integration of research findings from the studies cited above seems to suggest, although the overt effect of both antecedent- and response-focused emotion regulation seems similar, the actual, imperceptible effect on the individual is quite different. In other words, whereas both reappraisal and suppression are effective in generating an acceptable, explicit emotional display, and reappraisal succeeds in decreasing subjective emotional experience, suppression fails to impact on subjective emotional experience, resulting in, inter alia, increased sympathetic nervous system activation (such as increased heart rate). Thus, this immediate physiological effect of suppression could with sufficient repetition pose a health risk (cost) for the individual. Richards and Gross (1999) also found cognitive costs in the form of impaired memory performance for individuals simultaneously presented with information *and* the requirement to suppress emotion. In addition, the effects of suppression on memory

were independent of the strength (high versus low) of the negative emotions to be suppressed – thus, the suppression of negative emotions per se is significant.

In addition to a decrease in cognitive performance in the face of emotion regulation, Pugh (2002) also acknowledges the possibility for cognitive demands (cognitive load) decreasing one's effectiveness at emotion regulation. In support of this hypothesis Rafaeli and Sutton (1990, cited in Pugh, 2002) found that customer service employees' emotion expressions became systematically less positive as store busyness increased – they attributed this phenomenon to cognitive load experienced by the service employees.

These findings have important implications for CSRs - and their organisations - who are required to perform task demands (i.e. who are faced with a relatively high work and cognitive load respectively) and who, at the same time, need to regulate (suppress) their negative emotions (stated differently, display positive emotions) in their interactions with customers.

Richard and Gross (1999) poignantly summarise the effects of emotion suppression on the individual as follows: on the exterior it enables one to "... appear calm, cool, and collected ...", but on the inside one experiences "... just as much emotion and even more physiological activation ..." than if one were to freely express one's true emotions (p.1033). Such findings are important for management decisions with regard to training CSRs in emotion regulation techniques for optimal physiological and psychological well-being.

3.2.3. Characteristics of Emotional Labour

Emotional labour is described by three main characteristics. Firstly, it constitutes *person-related work* (Zapf, 2002, p.240) entailing either face-to-face or voice-to-voice client contact. Secondly, portrayed emotions serve to influence the emotions, attitudes and behaviours of other individuals. Strauss, Farahaugh, Suczek and Wiener (1980, cited in Zapf, 2002) term this aspect of emotional labour *sentimental work* (p.240), as emotion is perceived as a secondary work task, supportive of the primary work task and occurring in parallel with it. Applying this concept to the call centre environment it could be argued that a CSR's primary task is to handle customer queries and

complaints, whereas dealing with client emotions effectively and / or ensuring satisfaction with services rendered constitute secondary tasks. Lastly, emotional expression is required to follow certain rules, that is, *display rules* of the organisation (Grandey & Brauburger, 2002; Humphrey, 2000; Zapf, 2002).

The second characteristic of emotional labour (mentioned above) is also encapsulated by the popular concept of the *service-profit chain* (Heskett, Sasser & Schlesinger, 1997, cited in Pugh, 2001, p.1018) that posits that a relationship exists between employees' attitudes, the satisfaction of customers and organisations' bottom-lines.

The hypothesis that service employees' emotional displays impact customer affect has also been explained by the construct *emotional contagion* (Pugh, 2001, p.1020): Research has indicated that observers of negative and / or positive emotions experience a matching change in their own emotional states; hence, the potential impact of service providers' behaviours becomes apparent.

Emotional contagion not only affects observers' experienced emotions; it also affects the service employee's efficiency at emotion regulation. Pugh (2002) explains, emotional contagion has an automatic, uncontrollable and unconscious nature and as such penetrates the service encounter invisibly, catching the service provider unprepared in activating his / her emotion regulation process. This, once again, insinuate the potential worth of applying antecedent-focused emotion regulation techniques (discussed above) in customer interactions.

The exact mechanisms that are at play during interactions between service employees and service recipients have, however, not been studied explicitly - until the appearance of the *social interaction model of emotion regulation* (Côté, 2005). This model, discussed in more detail further on, extends the emotional contagion hypothesis in that it adds a feedback loop between service recipients' responses to emotional displays and service employees' strain levels. This additional link is critical to the current study's investigation into emotional exhaustion.

Attempts to align the characteristics of emotional labour with the call centre environment lead to the conclusion that emotional labour *is* a definite factor to include

in empirical studies conducted in any and every call centre environment. More specifically, call centres interact via voice-to-voice contact with their customers, the emotions expressed by CSRs are aimed at creating perceptions of quality service and feelings of satisfaction (i.e. positive emotions) amongst their customers, and CSRs are required to follow scripts as a function of the organisation's display rules (that include specific phrases and tone of voice as a manner of speaking) while interacting with customers.

3.2.4. Conceptualisation and Definition of Emotional Labour

Different researchers conceptualise emotional labour (also referred to as *emotion work*) in different ways. Originally the focus was on the management of inner feelings for the purpose of creating an externally visible and physical composure (Hochschild, 1983, cited in Zapf, 2002), whereas later authors became more interested in the manner in which behaviours are portrayed and the extent to which these behaviours conform to organisational prerequisites (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Morris & Feldman, 1996, cited in Zapf, 2002).

These organisational prerequisites have alternatively been termed *feeling rules* by Hochschild (1979) and *display rules* by Ekman (1973, cited in Humphrey, 2000). Hochschild (1979) described feeling rules as "social guidelines" that instruct individuals in how they "want to try to feel" (p.563) – her research focus was on the actual experienced feelings of service workers. In contrast, display rules imply that organisations cannot force individuals to feel certain emotions; they can only influence the manner in which such emotions are expressed – in other words, the individual's personal feelings are beyond the organisation's influence (Humphrey, 2000).

Zapf, Isic, Bechtoldt and Blau (2003) provide some examples of rules (including display rules) that operate in call centres. These include explicit time limits for employee-customer interactions (for example four minutes talk-time), requirements to address customers on their names and to speak in a friendly and polite manner, as well as the requirement to create positive emotions, and hence ensure positive experiences, for customers.

Definitions of emotional labour followed a similar development pattern as its conceptualisation. Hochschild (1979, 1983, cited in Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) originally defined emotional labour as “the act of expressing socially desired emotions during service transactions” (pp.88-89), perceiving it as a way in which people are exploited and as a cause of individuals’ alienation from self and psychological illness. In the long run, however, this one-dimensional conceptualisation of emotional labour proved insufficient as researchers failed to find the suggested negative relationship with psychological strain (Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini & Holz, 2001).

In response to the above researchers started working at the differentiation of emotional labour as a multi-dimensional construct. In this regard, two researchers are specifically mentioned for having done pioneering work, namely J. Andrew Morris and Daniel C. Feldman (1996).

Morris and Feldman (1996) define emotional labour as “...the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions” (p.987). Evidently the focus has shifted from the management of feeling to the expressed emotional behaviours of service workers, as the latter is what is desired by organisations (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Accordingly, Brotheridge and Lee (2003) define emotional labour as “...the behavioural response to variations in the frequency, variety, intensity and duration of service interactions” (p.367).

Morris and Feldman (1996) elaborate on their definition of emotional labour by explicating four assumptions underlying the construct against the backdrop of an *interactionist model of emotion* (p.987). Firstly, individuals interpret emotions through the environment that surrounds the emotional experience. This implies that social factors influence the manner in which emotions are experienced and expressed and the extent to which they are valued and nurtured or, in fact, subdued.

Secondly, despite congruence of felt and expressed emotions, these emotions still have to be translated into displays that are emotionally appropriate, which equates to emotional labour. Thirdly, the expression of emotion and resulting behaviours has

become a *market-place commodity* (p.988) that is now part and parcel of the service itself.

Lastly, these researchers reiterate the fact that service workers are exposed to certain expectations (i.e. display rules) regarding their occupationally appropriate emotional behaviours, indicating what kinds of emotions are allowed expression, in what manner they are to be expressed and the time limit within which they should be expressed (Mann, 2002). For example, CSRs are expected to greet customers in a friendly, albeit clichéd, manner and to remain polite for the duration of the service encounter, that should be kept as short as possible, even if a customer behaves obnoxiously.

For this purpose, CSRs are provided with scripts, that is, detailed instructions for interacting with customers in terms of how to respond to clients irrespective of truly felt emotions. When CSRs are forced to express emotions that they do not feel and / or suppress emotions that they do feel (i.e. when expression differs from feeling) due to having to follow the 'call centre script', a state known as *emotional dissonance* ensues (Mann, 2002). Hochschild (1983, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2003) found that employees dealt with this dissonance via *surface acting*, in other words changing the displayed feelings, or *deep acting*, that is, actually creating the appropriate feelings internally. If this state of affairs continues over the long term, however, the end-result could be emotional exhaustion (Deery & Kinnie, 2004).

It is important to note, however, that emotional labour does not always result in emotional dissonance – stated differently, surface and / or deep acting is not always required for compliance with expected emotions. In fact, a service agent (CSR) may genuinely feel what he or she is expected to express without having to fake, induce or conjure up the emotion – this congruent state is another means of performing emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Zerbe, 2000, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). Therefore, Brotheridge and Lee (2003) do not regard emotional dissonance as a component of emotional labour despite its potential association with either surface or deep acting.

3.2.5. Dimensions of Emotional Labour

As a result of their theorising Morris and Feldman (1996) developed four dimensions along which to describe emotional labour: the *frequency* of appropriate emotional display, attentiveness to required display rules (encompassing the *duration* and *intensity* of emotional display), *variety* of emotions to be displayed and *emotional dissonance*.

Firstly, the frequency or quantity of interactions with customers has been considered a key element of the degree of emotional labour performed as well as a main contributing factor to burnout (emotional exhaustion), in that multiple service interactions should be more taxing, both emotionally and psychologically, than merely a few interactions. In the service industry interactions between service providers and customers could be characterised as *service relationships*, *service encounters* or *pseudorelationships*.

A service relationship is a situation in which the customer expects a future interaction with a particular, individual service provider, whereas a service encounter entails a once-off interaction with no expectations regarding future interaction. In the former interaction type a shared history gradually develops between two people over time; in the latter interaction type no common denominator exists, except for the temporary interaction itself. The pseudorelationship is a hybrid interaction form in which the customer returns to a specific provider organisation for service, each time interacting with a different individual service provider (Gutek, Bhappu, Liao-Troth & Cherry, 1999; Gutek, Cherry, Bhappu, Schneider & Woolf, 2000).

It is evident that the call centre environment fits this latter interaction model best: Customers phone the same call centre for a particular service on various occasions, each time interacting with a different CSR. It might prove meaningful to keep the nature of call centre interactions in mind and to examine the characteristics of emotional labour, as well as the research findings, against its specific background.

Secondly, the shorter the duration of emotional display, the lower the level of effort expended (i.e. the less emotional labour required) and vice versa (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Morris & Feldman, 1996). With regard to

the call centre environment the more tightly scripted interactions between CSRs and customers are, the shorter such interactions are likely to be, and hence, the less emotional labour is performed – stated differently, the duration of interactions is negatively related to the scriptedness of interactions (Zapf, 2002). An integration of burnout research by Cordes and Dougherty (1993) supports the above, that is, client interactions of longer duration are associated with higher levels of burnout.

The greater the intensity of emotion displayed, the more emotional labour is performed. Accordingly, Maslach (1978, cited in Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002) reports a positive relationship between the degree of emotional intensity of client interactions and levels of emotional exhaustion experienced. In addition Zapf (2002) notes, shorter interactions should be lower in intensity as the strength of displayed emotions increases as interactions are prolonged.

The greater the variety of emotions to be displayed, the more psychological energy is required and hence the greater the degree of emotional labour. Frequent adaptations in the variety of emotions to be expressed require effort and planning and are potentially emotionally exhausting (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Furthermore emotional displays may be positive, neutral or negative and a specific type of expression may vary and / or be dominant depending on the particular job context (Zapf, 2002). With regard to the call centre environment it is probable that the most frequently required and elicited (expressed) emotions are positive in nature (e.g. friendliness) and to some extent neutrality (e.g. calmness when dealing with difficult customers). The requirement to suppress negative emotions (e.g. frustration) should also be considered integral to the nature of the CSR job.

Emotional dissonance refers to a state in which there exists a discrepancy between a person's true, subjective feeling and the emotion that he / she is required to express to the external world (Zapf et al., 2001). Such *mismatches* (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p.992) require great effort and control in order to produce the appropriate emotional display and are hence believed to result in greater strain for the individual (Côté, 2005).

Morris and Feldman (1996) also proposed the existence of definite relationships amongst the four dimensions of emotional labour as conceptualised by them. Keeping the definitions of each dimension in mind, they hypothesized the following: a) frequency of emotional display should correlate negatively with attentiveness to display rules (i.e. duration and intensity), as the opportunity for multiple interactions decreases as emotional displays become longer and more intense; b) instead of frequency of emotional display impacting directly on the variety of expressed emotions, the latter should be more influenced by job and situational characteristics (e.g. in call centres the specific emotions required of CSRs, as well as the amplification of positive and / or neutral emotions, and the suppression of negative emotions, are a function of the nature of the job); c) frequency of emotional display should correlate positively with emotional dissonance, as the more interactions are engaged in, the higher the probability for conflict between true and required feelings becomes; d) duration and intensity of emotional expression should correlate positively with emotional dissonance, for the same reason as in (c); e) variety of expressed emotion should correlate positively with the duration and intensity of expressed emotion respectively, as increases in duration and intensity of interactions should require a wider array of emotions to be displayed, and f) variety of emotional expression should correlate negatively with emotional dissonance, as the fewer emotions one has at one's disposal, the higher the probability should become of having to express 'fake' emotions.

The conceptualisation by Morris and Feldman (1996) has served as the groundwork for various other researchers, such as Brotheridge and Lee (2003) who drew extensively on the work of Morris and Feldman (1996) in their development of the *Emotional Labour scale* (a relatively recent measuring instrument of emotional labour), although they opted to replace emotional dissonance with surface and deep acting respectively.

Brotheridge and Lee (2003) identified six dimensions of emotional labour, divided between *emotion-related role requirements* and a *perceived need for effort*. Emotion-related role requirements include the duration of interactions and the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display respectively. Surface acting and deep acting constitute the perceived need for effort.

In an earlier article Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) defined emotional labour according to *job-focused* emotional labour and *employee-focused* emotional labour. The former entails the frequency and duration of interactions, the intensity and variety of emotional displays, as well as display rules. The latter entails surface acting and deep acting. Thus, from the above it is evident that a great degree of overlap exists in the conceptualisation of the dimensions of emotional labour.

Zapf (2002) attempts to clarify the conceptual overlap existing in the conceptualisation of emotional labour. He writes, whereas some researchers focus on the frequency, duration, variety and intensity of emotional display, either viewing them as dimensions of emotional labour or as job characteristic antecedents or role demands, others focus on emotion management strategies, in other words, how emotional labour is performed. These emotion management strategies are alternatively labelled *forms of emotion regulation* (Côté, 2005) and will be discussed in greater depth under the social interaction model of emotion regulation, as they hold important implications for service employees' levels of experienced strain (i.e. emotional exhaustion).

3.2.6. The Relationship between Emotion Management (Regulation) Techniques and Burnout

Hochschild (1983, cited in Kruml & Geddes, 2000) originally developed the concept *emotion management* (p.178) in order to describe the manner in which emotional labour is performed. She differentiated between three emotion management strategies and proposed that each would produce different individual outcomes. In fact, each is said to designate a completely different process occurring within individuals (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2003).

Passive deep acting (Hochschild, 1983, cited in Kruml & Geddes, 2000, p.178) is a form of emotional labour that is effortless: service employees truly feel the emotions that they are required to display – such individuals are characterised by a state of congruence as opposed to (emotional) dissonance. Zapf (2002) terms this emotion management strategy *automatic emotion regulation* (p.243) – the word 'automatic' emphasizes its effortless nature.

Surface acting exists when individuals change their external emotional displays in an attempt to align it with the organisational display rules, whereas *active deep acting* entails the adaptation of internal thoughts and feelings to fit externally imposed display rules (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Zapf, 2002).

In other words, when *surface acting* individuals attempt to change only their outward behaviours with no consideration for their true, internal feelings and thoughts. As such, surface acting is the *process* that perpetuates the *state* of emotional dissonance as experienced by service employees (Zapf, 2002). Grandey and Brauburger (2002) call this *response-focused emotion regulation* (p.277) – more specifically, *expression modulation* (p.278) – to describe how individuals either hide (suppress) true feelings or fake (express) feelings not experienced (Mann, 2002).

In contrast, when individuals engage in *active deep acting* they attempt to truly align their internal, emotional states with external, behavioural (expressive) requirements. Grandey and Brauburger (2002) refer to this as *internally focused emotion regulation* (p.275) and note that, contradictory to coping research that views problem-focused coping as generally more adaptive and effective than emotion-focused coping, in the service setting the latter (i.e. active deep acting or emotion-focused coping) could prove more beneficial due to the idiosyncratic nature of these work environments and their corresponding job requirements. This point is extremely important and should be kept in mind for the subsequent discussion on the relationship between forms of emotion management and resultant strain levels, as under the social interaction model of emotion regulation.

Originally, Hochschild (1983, cited in Kruml & Geddes, 2000) believed that surface actors would experience less burnout (hence emotional exhaustion) due to being better able to separate themselves from their work role via faking and / or hiding feelings, and conversely, that deep actors would be more vulnerable to burnout due to attempts to actually personify, fulfil and ‘feel’ their role requirements.

However, in accordance with Brotheridge and Grandey (2002), as well as Richards and Gross (1999), Kruml and Geddes (2000) found that the more employees (of which their sample included CSRs) engaged in surface acting, the more likely it was

that they would be emotionally exhausted, and that deep acting was associated less with emotional exhaustion. Zapf (2002) cited unequivocal research findings for the significant positive relationship between emotional dissonance (by implication surface acting) and emotional exhaustion. In a study by Grandey (2003) surface acting, but not deep acting, was significantly and positively related to emotional exhaustion.

Richards and Gross (2000, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2002) utilise the conservation of resources (COR) theory to explain the differential impact of surface acting and deep acting on the psychological well-being of the individual. They state that although both surface and deep acting entail resource loss, surface acting represents a bigger investment of resources, as it requires *emotion suppression* and hence greater physiological and psychological effort. This reasoning is corroborated by other research studies in which the perception to suppress, and the actual suppression of, negative (unpleasant) emotions were linked to higher strain levels (see Côté, 2005).

Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) believe that the inauthenticity of surface acting results in stress outcomes, and hence in emotional exhaustion. Deep acting, however, is more authentic in its treatment of the customer and as such possibly does not result in emotional exhaustion – this is in line with Hochschild's (1983, cited in Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002, p.33) contention that "...surface acting may create guilt and dissatisfaction with work efforts and that deep acting may create a sense of satisfaction in the quality of the provided services". In fact, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) found that surface acting was indeed significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

In support of the above, Côté (2005) recently developed the social interaction model of emotion regulation that proposes, senders' emotion displays created via surface acting are perceived as inauthentic by the recipients thereof, hence resulting in unfavourable responses from the recipients which in turn cause higher strain levels for the senders of such displays. The relationship of deep acting to strain levels is somewhat more complex, but will be comprehensively covered later on in the chapter.

In addition to findings that corroborate the suggested relationships between emotional labour and burnout (emotional exhaustion), some researchers have also been unable to

find such supportive evidence. For example, Wharton (1993) found no significant differences in levels of emotional exhaustion (as a measure of psychological strain) between employees performing emotional labour and those not performing emotional labour. Wharton (1993) concludes that the conditions under which emotional labour is performed determine whether negative or positive outcomes occur, especially when variables such as levels of job autonomy, job involvement and degree of self-monitoring are taken into account.

Hence, from the above it is clear that research up to date has produced mixed findings with regard to the relationship between emotional exhaustion (a form of psychological strain) and emotional labour and emotion regulation respectively. In this regard, a very recent model of emotion, namely the social interaction model of emotion regulation (Côté, 2005), attempts to elucidate the many contradictory findings with regard to the emotion regulation – strain relationship as found in the literature. It is noteworthy that Hochschild (1979) already contented early on that the outcomes of emotional labour depend on the manner in which it is performed - an idea that is now extended by this novel model of emotion.

3.2.7. The Social Interaction Model of Emotion Regulation

Most emotion models published up to date concentrate on intra-personal processes in attempting to explain the emotion regulation – strain relationship (e.g. emotional dissonance as discussed above), and a common assumption in the emotional labour literature is that emotion regulation (e.g. in the form of display rules) is beneficial to organisations while being harmful to individuals.

The social interaction model of emotion regulation refutes both these propositions. Instead it proposes the following: a) An investigation into inter-personal processes would enhance our understanding of the complexities surrounding the emotion regulation – strain relationship, and b) emotion regulation is not by nature good or bad for strain – its effect depends on a multitude of other factors corresponding to the social dynamics of emotion.

Gross (1999, cited in Côté, 2005) defines emotion regulation as “... all the efforts to increase, maintain, or decrease one or more components of an emotion” (p.510). It is

divided into two forms of emotion regulation (surface and deep acting respectively, as discussed previously) and two directions of emotion regulation, namely *emotion amplification* (starting or intensifying emotional expressions) and *emotion suppression* (weakening or nullifying emotional expression) (p.510). If conceptualised in terms of a two-by-two quadrant, it becomes clear that individuals can regulate their emotions in one of four ways (e.g. one way would be to amplify emotion via surface acting).

The power of the social interaction model of emotion regulation rests on three basic tenets: a) The sender's emotion regulation impacts his own external emotion display (the emotion display is a function of whether surface or deep acting is employed and the distinct emotion being regulated); b) the sender's emotion display conveys a message to and causes a response from the receiver, and c) the receiver's response in turn influences the sender's strain.

As already referred to above by Brotheridge and Grandey (2002), and now reiterated by Côté (2005), the form of emotion regulation employed is important for the development of strain in that it influences receivers' perceptions of the emotion display's authenticity. In brief, deep acting produces authentic emotion displays (due to the match between the sender's internal feeling and external emotion display), whereas surface acting produces inauthentic emotion displays (due to the sender's mismatch between the internal feeling and external emotion display).

Côté (2005) notes laboratory and field studies in which the receivers of inauthentic emotion displays (i.e. due to senders' amplification or suppression of emotion via surface acting) react unfavourably towards the senders, which in turn increases the latter's strain levels. Emotion displays perceived as inauthentic also have implications for ratings of service quality as they fail to convey portrayals of sincerity, effort, interest and individual attention towards customers – experiences that customers desire as part of service interactions (Grandey et al., 2002, Grandey, 2003, Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985, cited in Côté, 2005; Parasuraman et al., 1985, cited in Grandey, 2003).

A consideration of distinct emotions is critical for an understanding of how deep acting influences strain levels; in other words, the consequences of deep acting for individuals depend on the specific emotion regulated. Côté (2005) mentions two emotions that are also applicable to the call centre environment, namely happiness (e.g. CSRs try to create feelings of happiness in clients by delivering quality service) and anger (e.g. CSRs feel anger towards, and experience anger from, clients).

The social interaction model proposes the following with regard to deep acting: Firstly, senders' amplification of positive emotions (e.g. happiness) via deep acting will elicit favourable responses from receivers, which in turn will lower senders' strain levels (vs. the suppression of happiness via deep acting will elicit unfavourable responses and hence increase strain levels).

Grandey (2003) hypothesizes that one of the payoffs of deep acting could be that employees' emotional resources are restored in the face of customers' favourable responses towards deep acting's authentic appearance – a possible explanation for the often-found lack of association between deep acting and emotional exhaustion.

Secondly, senders' amplification of negative emotions (e.g. anger) via deep acting will elicit unfavourable responses from receivers, which in turn will increase senders' strain levels (vs. the suppression of anger via deep acting will elicit more favourable responses and hence decrease strain levels).

In this regard Grandey (2003) comments, although customers expect service employees to be *real people* (p.90) they don't seem to appreciate the portrayal of authentic negative feelings – hence their unfavourable responses to such emotion displays.

From the above it becomes clear that it is the interaction between the *manner* in which CSRs' regulate emotion and the *discrete* emotion being regulated that impacts on strain levels (i.e. emotional exhaustion). To be exact, the use of surface acting should be avoided by CSRs in that it holds detrimental consequences for their strain levels. In addition, CSRs would have to be able to discriminate between situations on the grounds of their emotional content (e.g. whether a client is happy / satisfied or

unhappy / dissatisfied), as well as know which direction to use for deep acting (i.e. amplification or suppression) in order to control their own strain levels. It is therefore evident that straightforward comparisons between levels of strain (such as emotional exhaustion) and forms of emotion regulation may obscure the true complexity inherent in the relationships amongst these constructs.

A very important factor to consider in relation to the call centre environment is receivers' accuracy at decoding senders' emotion displays: According to the model the accuracy with which receivers decode senders' emotion displays has an impact on the strength of receivers' responses and senders' strain levels respectively. Stated differently, in light of the fact that receivers' responses have an impact on senders' strain levels, the model posits that as receivers' accuracy at decoding senders' emotion displays increases, so the relationship between the form of emotion regulation and strain also becomes stronger (and vice versa) (Côté, 2005).

Carnevale, Pruitt and Seilheimer (1981, cited in Côté, 2005) provide the analogy of negotiations where parties, separated by a "barrier" (p.519), do not escalate conflict in response to opponents' anger displays to the same degree as in face-to-face negotiations, presumably because the barrier hampers the accuracy of the decoding process and in this way reduces levels of conflict.

If applied to the call centre environment, this analogy illuminates a potentially beneficial situation for CSRs in dealing with negative client encounters (e.g. angry clients). The so-called barrier in the call centre environment is situated between the CSR and the client phoning in, namely the telephone.

For example, if a CSR (sender), faced by an angry client (receiver), amplifies an emotion display of understanding the client's anger via surface acting, two types of strain outcomes are possible. If the client accurately decodes the CSR's message, he would experience the understanding as inauthentic (due to surface acting being utilised to create the emotion display) and react unfavourably towards the CSR, which in turn would increase the CSR's strain levels. If, however, the client inaccurately decodes the CSR's message, he would experience the understanding as authentic (i.e. the client 'misses' the CSR's use of surface acting) and react favourably towards the

CSR, thereby decreasing the CSR's strain levels. In the second scenario the telephone barrier serves as prevention for increased strain levels.

The value of the social interaction model of emotion regulation lies in its assertion that emotion regulation can increase or decrease strain, or not influence strain at all, depending on the receiver's response to the sender's emotion display, the form of emotion regulation employed and the distinct emotion being regulated (Côté, 2005). As such, it could serve as *a* framework for interpreting research findings that often seem contradictory and hence aid in creating clarity amongst the confusion.

3.3. SUMMARY

From past research it is evident that emotional labour is a complex, multi-dimensional variable that encompasses various sub-dimensions, and that it holds important implications for the psychological well-being of many employees, also for CSRs employed in call centres.

Researchers have also, however, recently argued that, in addition to the unique contribution of emotional labour to the development of burnout, it is, in fact, the co-occurrence of emotional work demands *and* organisational job stressors and psychosocial demands that result in exaggerated levels of emotional exhaustion (Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Zapf et al., 2001). In relation to the call centre environment, it could therefore prove worthwhile to investigate additional work stressors' impact on strain levels (i.e. emotional exhaustion) beyond the scope of emotional labour per se.

3.4. SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

3.4.1. Supervisor Support in the Service Environment

In most, if not all, organisations, employees are not left to do as they please: They are required to report to and interact with their respective supervisors on a regular basis. Thus, also within the call centre environment, the CSR - team leader relationship (interaction) constitutes *a* very important facet that has an impact on the daily functioning of CSRs – particularly in terms of the type and level of support provided by team leaders to CSRs. In other words, seen from the perspective of emotional

exhaustion, the nature of this relationship could be an important determinant of the psychological well-being of CSRs.

3.4.2. Definitions of Social Support in terms of Types and Sources of Support

Social support has been defined in various ways over the years, most often in terms of the *type* of support provided. Cobb (1976, cited in Winnubst, 1993) described social support as a source of information that informs individuals that they are loved and cared for (*emotional support*), respected and valued (*affirmative support*) and that they form part of a wider communication network (*network support*) (p.155).

Hobfoll and Vaux (1993) posit that social support should be viewed as a meta-construct due to the plethora of definitions associated with it. Hence, they identified three sub-constructs that constitute social support: a) *support network resources* (objectively available social relationships that provide stable support, such as a social group); b) *supportive behavior* (the existence of a supportive dyadic relationship between a provider and recipient, intended to contribute to the latter's well-being), and c) *subjective appraisals of support* (an individual's personal evaluation of available support) (pp.686-687).

A frequently employed definition of social support in the organisational research domain is that originally set forth by House (1981, cited in Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001, p.141; Etzion, 1984, p.616; Sarros & Sarros, 1992, p.56). House defined social support in terms of an interpersonal interaction consisting of four types of support: a) *instrumental support* (providing tangible help in the form of goods or services); b) *emotional support* (portraying emotional concern/understanding/caring; showing love/empathy/sympathy); c) *informational support* (providing information to aid with problems, making decisions etc.), and d) *appraisal support* (providing information for self-evaluation/self-esteem purposes).

In accordance with the above, and specifically with regard to supervisory support, Kaufmann and Beehr (1986, cited in Posig & Kickul, 2003) define emotional support as actively listening to and caring about employees' needs, and instrumental support as providing concrete assistance and knowledge for completing job assignments.

Thus, it is evident that a great degree of overlap and agreement exist with regard to the likely types of support that could be provided within the context of a relationship.

In addition to the different types of social support as explicated above, various *sources* of social support are also notable in the literature. Without discussing this facet in detail, two broad sources of support are often researched, namely work resources (for example, co-worker, supervisor and subordinate support) and more general life resources (for example, family, friends and spouse support) (Cooper et al., 2001). For the purposes of the present study, the focus will not so much be on the type of support provided as on one of the pivotal sources of support operating within the call centre environment, that is, *team leader support*.

3.4.3. Social Support and The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

The significance of social support is well explained by the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1988, 1989, cited in Hobfoll & Vaux, 1993). COR theory posits, individuals who experience a lack of resources are, ironically, also more vulnerable to resource loss, and as such a vicious cycle of resource loss is activated in which the individual's few available resources are employed to either prevent more resource loss, or to protect or gain resources. As such, social support (signifying the availability of resources) is posited to be one means of preventing or alleviating the impact of resource loss, that is, work-related strain (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Cooper et al., 2001; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). Furthermore, Lee and Ashforth (1996, cited in Deery, Iverson & Walsh, 2004) argue that the incidence of emotional exhaustion is affected by the availability of resources (in other words, coping aids) such as supervisory support.

Bliese and Castro (2000) corroborate the importance of specifically studying supervisor support by stating that, although all forms of support are believed to be important, in the study of occupational stress supervisor support is critical in relieving some of the harmful effects of strain. In the call centre environment specifically, team leaders fulfil a very important role in the work lives of CSRs: They are often the first line of management contact for the agents, and are simultaneously responsible for putting into effect the organisational rules and norms, as well as providing assistance to the agents. It is in this latter support function that team leaders could play a pivotal

role in ameliorating the negative effects of call centre work for the CSRs (Frenkel et al., 1998; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; cited in Deery et al., 2004).

3.4.4. Process Models of Social Support: Main and Buffering Hypotheses

Cordes and Dougherty (1993) reviewed and integrated research on burnout. These researchers categorised the processes through which social support impact on employees' well-being into two categories. Firstly, it acts as a *moderator* or *buffer* between job-related stress and its pathogenic outcomes by either enabling individuals to redefine the potential harm of a situation or by enhancing the belief that they will be able to cope due to the provision of resources by other individuals. In other words, within the call centre environment, team leader support could serve as a buffer (moderator) between the stressor (emotional labour) and the outcome (emotional exhaustion). This is, however, only *one* of the significant effects of social support on the stressor-strain relationship.

Secondly, social support can have a *direct* or *main* effect on experienced stress, whereby an increase in social support directly results in a decrease in strain levels, regardless of the quantity and intensity of stressors experienced (Cooper et al., 2001). In other words, the provision of team leader support could reduce CSRs' strain levels (i.e. emotional exhaustion) no matter how often CSRs are exposed to emotional work demands (i.e. the frequency dimension of emotional labour), and despite the intensity of emotional expressions during client interactions.

The seeming simplicity of Cordes and Dougherty's categorisation is in conflict with the exhaustive debate that has existed, and still exists, within the literature on social support. A more comprehensive discussion on the so-called *models of social support* and their impact on the stressor-strain relationship, in addition to random examples of research findings, will serve to elucidate this debate.

In their influential work on stress, social support and the buffering hypothesis, Cohen and Wills (1985) state that the often found positive relationship between support and well-being could be attributed to two very divergent processes. Firstly, support may have a beneficial effect on individuals irrespective of whether they are exposed to stressors or not – this is termed the *main* or *direct effect* of social support.

Secondly, social support may act as a buffer either by preventing a stress appraisal process (thus, intervening between the stressful event and stress reaction) or by intervening between the stress appraisal process and the pathogenic outcome (strain) – this is termed the *buffering* or *moderator* hypothesis.

In their review, Cohen and Wills (1985) found evidence for the existence of both models, emphasizing that each one is “... evidently correct in some respects” (p.348). These researchers conclude that evidence for a buffering hypothesis emerges when social support is measured in terms of perceived availability of interpersonal resources that are matched to the particular stressor exposed to. In other words, “...support will buffer stress when it matches the functional coping requirements of the stressor” (Cohen & McKay, 1984, cited in Hobfoll & Vaux, 1993, p.693) – stated simplistically, there is a match between the type of stressor and the type of support provided. This theory has alternatively been termed the *modified buffering hypothesis* (Cohen & McKay, 1984, cited in Hobfoll & Vaux, 1993, p.693) or the *alternative specificity hypothesis* (Brotheridge, 2001, p.11).

Applied to the present study this could mean that if team leader support is of an emotional type, evidence of a buffering effect between emotional labour (a stressor of an emotional kind) and emotional exhaustion could be found. Evidence for a main effect, on the other hand, is found when support is measured by establishing the extent of integration into a large social network.

The social interaction model of emotion regulation also explains the effect of social support on levels of strain. This model posits, when senders regulate emotion they impact receivers’ provision of social support which in turn influences the senders’ strain levels, whether directly or indirectly.

The support provided by receivers directly affects senders’ strain levels by fostering positive emotions in the latter and by providing understanding for the senders’ situation. Receivers’ support has an indirect effect on senders’ strain levels by acting as a buffer: work stressors affect senders with more support from receivers *less* than senders who receive little support (Côté, 2005). It is evident that this novel model of

emotion regulation resonates with decades of research conducted on the effects of social support on strain.

Peeters and Le Blanc (2001) conducted a research study in which they investigated the potential moderating effect of social support on the relationship between various job demands (quantitative, emotional and organisational demands) and burnout amongst oncology care providers, as well as whether a 'match' between the particular source of social support (colleagues, supervisor and family) and the type of job demand existed (note that this is somewhat different to the above-mentioned matching hypothesis). Their findings did not support the hypothesized interaction effects of job demands and social support on emotional exhaustion. However, significant interaction effects were found for depersonalisation. The researchers' interpretation was that social support might not prevent persons from feeling emotionally exhausted (the first stage of burnout) in the face of job demands, although it might prevent the development of the second phase of burnout.

Etzion (1984) investigated the moderating effect of social support on the relationship between burnout and life and work stresses respectively. The support measure tapped the quality of participants' relationships with their supervisors, colleagues and subordinates in the work sphere, and their spouses, families and friends in daily life. Interestingly the research findings indicated differential moderating patterns of social support on burnout for male and female participants: life support moderated the relationship between work stress and burnout for women, whereas work support moderated the stress-burnout relationship for men. Etzion (1984) concludes that, in the face of potential gender differences in the use of particular sources of support, research on social support and the buffering hypothesis should take careful note of the target population, the available sources of support, the levels of stress and burnout and other relevant contextual variables.

Brotheridge (2001) more recently conducted research on alternative models of coping by investigating the relationships amongst co-worker support, workload and emotional exhaustion. In addition to the main (*coping as a strain deterrent*) and buffering (*coping as a moderator*) models, she included three additional, hypothetical models of coping. In brief, these models were: a) *coping as a suppressor* (when

experiencing stressors, support is mobilised which in turn reduce levels of strain); b) *coping as a mediator* (in this model stressors increase strain and reduce support respectively, and support reduces strain – hence, stressors have both a direct and indirect effect on experienced levels of strain) and c) *coping as a stressor deterrent* (support actually prevents stressors from occurring in that support directly reduces exposure to stressors which in turn affects strain levels) (pp.3-6).

Research findings indicated that: a) the main effects model had the best overall fit with the data; b) the paths in the buffering effects model were all significant, although the model did not provide a good fit with the data, and c) the remaining models were rejected. Hence, Brotheridge's study supports the main effects model that posits social support directly has an impact on levels of strain independent of levels of experienced stressors.

Carayon (1995) investigated the impact of supervisor social support on worker stress. The following findings are of special importance to research on burnout (emotional exhaustion): a) The duration of exposure to stressors (not merely the strength of stressors) was regarded as an important factor that has an impact on stress levels; b) the lack of supervisor social support could have acted as a chronic job stressor; c) employees who received high social support reported the lowest stress levels, whereas those with low or medium support over a long time period or intermittently indicated higher stress levels, and d) the presence of sustained supervisor social support served as a buffer against high stress.

Brotheridge and Lee (2002) explain the relationship between emotional labour, social support (a resource) and emotional exhaustion as follows: employees are faced with emotional demands (i.e. CSRs need to display a variety of emotions on a frequent basis, for some duration of time and with some degree of intensity towards customers), which require them to employ emotional energy (whether via surface or deep acting) to effectively and successfully deal with customer needs. If an imbalance occurs between the demands and the resources available to meet the demands, emotional strain results. In the presence of supervisor support the effect of the imbalance between demands and resources could be ameliorated; if it is absent, emotional exhaustion could begin to set in.

In other words, Brotheridge and Lee (2002) posit that although emotional labour *can* result in burnout (emotional exhaustion), the relationship is impacted on by, inter alia, rewarding social relationships (hence, supervisor support). Stated differently, the effect of the performance of emotional labour on emotional exhaustion could be less stressful for CSRs when they experience a high degree of supervisor support.

Karasek, Triantis and Chaudhry (1982) investigated supervisor and co-worker support as moderators of the relationship between task characteristics and mental strain. These researchers found direct (main) effects for both emotional and instrumental support from co-workers and supervisors on the criterion (strain) variables (although the strength of the effect for supervisors was stronger than that for co-workers), as well as evidence of buffering effects for both co-worker and supervisor emotional and instrumental support on the stressor-strain relationships.

Sarros and Sarros (1992) investigated burnout amongst teachers. With regard to the sources of social support, support from the principal and faculty head indicated stronger, negative relationships with emotional exhaustion than that provided by friends in and out of school. Regarding types of social support an interesting finding emerged: Instead of reducing burnout, emotional support and time (the latter equivalent to instrumental support) actually increased burnout – this is indicative of the complicated nature of social support and the probability that sharing negative work experiences may actually have a reverse effect of increasing burnout instead of relieving strain.

Posig and Kickul (2003) found a similar reverse buffering effect of supervisor support in a more recent study in which they tested an integrative model of burnout: In this particular model supervisory support actually strengthened the relationship between role conflict (a job stressor) and emotional exhaustion; in other words, as more role conflict was experienced, emotional exhaustion increased significantly with the presence of high supervisory emotional support.

They explained this phenomenon by a possible incongruence between supervisors' actions and words of emotional support and stated, "...mixed messages may exacerbate the stressful occurrence and situation rather than alleviate it" (p.15).

Another possible reason for the reverse buffering effect is that supervisory support might not be addressing the root causes of stress, such as the characteristics of the job. In such cases emotional exhaustion may exist in parallel to high levels of supervisor support.

Van Dierendonck, Buunk and Schaufeli (1998) investigated the moderating role of social support (including supervisor support) on the occurrence of burnout and intentions to leave respectively within the context of a burnout intervention program. They hypothesized that because social support is positively related to organisational commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990, cited in Van Dierendonck et al., 1998) – also keeping in mind that commitment is negatively related to intentions to leave (see Chapter 4) – employees who receive high levels of support (especially from a supervisor) would indicate lower levels of intentions to leave (and vice versa). In addition, it was hypothesized that employees with higher supervisor support levels would indicate lower burnout levels.

Their findings did not support the latter hypothesis, thereby casting doubt upon the moderating role of supervisor support on burnout. However, moderating effects of supervisor support on intentions to leave were found – more specifically, “[p]rofessionals with low levels of support tended to look for work outside the organization, whereas among those with high levels of support, turnover intention decreased” (p.404).

These researchers comment that the moderating effect of support from the supervisor on intentions to leave is in accordance with the COR Theory (Hobfoll, 1989, cited in Van Dierendonck et al., 1998), namely people who have access to personal and/or social resources can deal with – and will be motivated to deal with - demands more constructively; therefore, they might be less likely to seek employment elsewhere.

3.4.5. Supervisor Support and Organisational Commitment (OC)

Supervisory support has also been researched in relation to organisational commitment, as in a relatively recent study by Kidd and Smewing (2001). They suggest supervisors play a critical role in the creation of a supportive organisational climate and that the supervisor-employee relationship impacts more on employee

well-being than relationships with colleagues. In addition, these researchers posit employees' relationships with their supervisors may be important determinants of organisational commitment. Their findings with regard to the relationship between supervisor support and organisational commitment indicated that overall supervisor support was in fact significantly related to organisational commitment.

Hierarchical regression analyses were consequently performed to test supervisor support as predictive of organisational commitment. The findings were as follows: the relationship between supervisor support and organisational commitment was moderated by gender (for female respondents, increases in perceived support were associated with increases in organisational commitment, i.e. a positive linear relationship; however, for male respondents a positive linear relationship existed at low and high levels of perceived support). Furthermore, two components of supervisor support (specifically feedback and goal-setting, and trust and respect) were significantly related to organisational commitment.

3.4.6. Supervisor Support and Interpersonal Bases of Power

Inherent to the team leader – CSR relationship is a power differential that could impact the nature of their relationship and the dynamics operating between these two entities. French and Raven (cited in Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly, 2000, pp.250-252) identified five interpersonal bases of power, each of which will be briefly discussed in turn.

Legitimate power entails a person's ability to influence others due to his / her position in the organisation. If individuals with less power in the organisation (such as CSRs) view the exercise of power by individuals with more power (such as team leaders) as legitimate, they comply with whatever is enforced (e.g. rules / regulations).

Reward power entails a person's ability to reward other individuals. The extent to which individuals comply with or respond to another person's request, for example, depends on whether they value the particular reward(s) in question and whether they understand how they can earn the reward.

Coercive power is the opposite of reward power and entails the ability of a person to punish others. It refers to particular practices used to punish or the fear of such practices being employed. Managers who supervise large numbers of employees tend to exercise this type of power – stated differently, as the ratio of manager to subordinates increases the probability of using coercive power also increases.

Expert power is attributed to a person with some form of special expertise that is highly valued by other individuals. Whereas the first three power bases are set by the organisation, expert power is a personal trait and is independent of a person's rank in the organisation. Thus, an individual could attribute expert power to a colleague who has the same job rank but who is more knowledgeable with regard to some job aspects.

Referent power also falls within the personal trait category and refers to an individual's power due to his / her personality and / or behavioural style; in other words, the strength of the individual's charisma is indicative of his / her referent power.

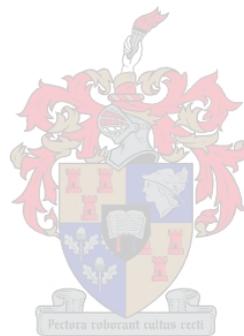
Gibson et al. (2000) cite research studies in which managers' levels and use of both expert and referent power positively correlated with their subordinates' emotional involvement and commitment towards their jobs. It is noteworthy that the research done by Gibson et al. (2000), and Kidd and Smewing (2001), has a similar underlying implication, namely, supervisors influence their subordinates' levels of OC towards the organisation, be it through the type of support provided or the interpersonal power base from which the supervisors operate. Thus, team leaders might be important role players in a) determining CSRs' levels of OC and in b) reducing CSRs' intentions to leave, albeit in an indirect manner.

3.5. SUMMARY

From the above discussion it is evident that although extensive research has been conducted on the nature of social support and its relationship to job stressors, burnout, and various other criterion variables such as OC and intentions to leave, the findings remain inconclusive and mixed - the existence of both the direct and moderator effects seems to be correct in certain situations. Peeters and Le Blanc (2001) rightly

propose that in conducting research studies, more specificity would seem warranted; in other words, by specifying job demands and outcomes that are specific to particular occupations / jobs, as well as the sources and types of support existent in such environments, researchers would be better equipped to disentangle the intricacies and complexities inherent in the relationships amongst such variables.

In the following chapter (Chapter 4) the consequence of performing emotional labour for the individual (CSR) is discussed. This entails an in-depth coverage of the construct burnout, with a clear emphasis on its core dimension, emotional exhaustion. Following this discussion, the consequences of burnout (emotional exhaustion) for the organisation in terms of OC and intentions to leave are discussed.



CHAPTER 4: EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION, ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT AND INTENTIONS TO LEAVE

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the consequence of performing *emotional labour* for the individual (i.e. CSR) is discussed. This entails an in-depth coverage of the construct *burnout*, with a clear emphasis on its core dimension *emotional exhaustion*. Also included is the conceptualisation and definition of burnout, an explanation of the difference and relationship between stress and burnout, an overview of various developmental models of burnout, two theoretical frameworks against which to interpret emotional exhaustion, and the common causes of burnout (emotional exhaustion).

Following this discussion, the consequences of burnout (emotional exhaustion) for the organisation in terms of *organisational commitment (OC)* and *intentions to leave* are discussed. Also included are the relevance of OC as a role-player in present day organisations, a focus on affective commitment (a specific sub-dimension of the total OC construct), and the association between OC and intentions to leave.

4.2. BURNOUT

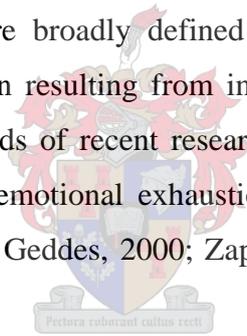
4.2.1. Definition and Dimensions of Burnout

The burnout phenomenon has been of research interest for more than 30 years. The first individuals to have formally researched burnout were Bradley (in 1969) and Freudenberger (in 1974) (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001), followed by Maslach (in 1976) who, at the time, initiated her research on burnout amongst people specifically working in the human services professions (Burke & Richardsen, 2001). It is noteworthy that since then this phenomenon has not lost its 'researching appeal' and has become a well-known topic in the field of stress-related research.

Various researchers have attempted to provide definitions of burnout over the years. Most, if not all, of these definitions refer to states such as "fatigue", "depression", "frustration", "anxiety" and "tension" (this list is by no means exhaustive) (Cooper et al., 2001, pp.81-82). Burke and Richardsen (2001, p.329) and Cooper et al. (2001, pp.81-83) provide a comprehensive summary of some of the most well known burnout researchers' definitions:

Freudenberger (1980) originally conceptualised burnout as a state of relentless and continuous weariness, depression and frustration as a result of an individual's strong attachment to, for example, a vocation or a relationship that failed to bring the expected rewards. Cherniss (1980) depicted burnout as consisting of three successive phases in which an imbalance between work demands and the individual's resources results in feelings of anxiety, tension, fatigue and exhaustion. Cherniss' conceptualisation of burnout corresponds to the underlying rationale of the Job Demands-Resources model that posits, burnout develops when high work demands and limited resources co-exist in any given occupation. In response to feelings of exhaustion, negative behavioural and attitudinal changes begin to take place within the individual. It is noteworthy that this definition shares some conceptual overlap with two of the burnout dimensions as identified by Maslach, namely emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation / cynicism.

Pines and Aronson (1988) more broadly defined burnout as a state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion resulting from involvement in emotionally taxing situations. This definition reminds of recent research conducted on the relationship between emotional labour and emotional exhaustion (see Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Grandey, 2003; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Zapf, 2002; Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini & Holz, 2001).



The definition of burnout that has gained the most acceptance and that has been utilised most often by researchers over the years, however, is that developed by Maslach and Jackson in the late 1970s - early 1980s. According to their conceptualisation, burnout is an umbrella term, encompassing three distinct – but also related – components that describe peoples' reactions to their jobs (Jackson, Schwab & Schuler, 1986). More specifically, these researchers defined burnout as a syndrome consisting of *emotional exhaustion*, *depersonalisation* and *reduced personal accomplishment* that surfaces amongst individuals who interact with other people in some capacity (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993).

The first component, emotional exhaustion, entails feelings of emotional overextension and energy depletion due to one's contact with other people. The second component, depersonalisation, describes the presence of unfeeling, callous

responses towards the recipients of one's services – it is characterised by the tendency to objectify and deindividuate clients. The third component, reduced personal accomplishment, refers to a general feeling of inefficacy, that is, it is characterised by a perception of incompetence and inability to achieve in one's work with people (Cooper et.al, 2001; Jackson et al., 1986; Maslach & Leiter, 1988).

The original labels for the three dimensions of burnout (exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment) were developed to reflect the focus on occupations where individuals interacted extensively with other people, namely the human services and educational sectors. Due to the increasing interest in burnout within occupations that were less people-oriented different labels (provided below) were developed to describe *two* of the three burnout components in slightly broader terms. These labels reflect a stronger focus on the job itself, in addition to a somewhat weaker focus on the relationships that form part and parcel of the job in question (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

Thus, although much of the early research on burnout was limited to the human services professions – such as police officers, nurses, teachers and counsellors – during the 1990s the burnout concept was increasingly extended to and researched in non-human services professions, such as managers, clerical workers and the military (Maslach et al., 2001).

The three more recently developed labels referred to above are *exhaustion*, *cynicism* and *inefficacy*. The exhaustion component has remained unchanged in that it refers to the individual stress experience of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) during which workers feel irrecoverably drained (Maslach & Leiter, 1997) – in this case, however, the source of exhaustion shifts beyond interactions with people to the circumstances of the job (Burke & Richardsen, 2001; Cooper et al., 2001). Cynicism represents the interpersonal context component of burnout and entails cognitive distancing (Maslach et al., 2001): The individual develops a cold, distant attitude and an uninvolved, indifferent manner towards work and people. Maslach and Leiter (1997) emphasise that cynicism is often an attempt at self-protection against exhaustion, but that this effort results in diminished well being and effectiveness. The third component, inefficacy, refers to the self-evaluation dimension of burnout and entails individuals

experiencing feelings of lowered competence, a failure to be productive and a lack of achievement on the job (Maslach et al., 2001).

From the above it is evident that burnout is conceptualised as a multi-faceted construct. In fact, Maslach et al. (2001) and Maslach (2003) emphasize that although emotional exhaustion is an important criterion for establishing burnout, it is not sufficient. Nevertheless, and in contrast to the multi-dimensional view of burnout, a different school of thought has deemed emotional exhaustion the core component of burnout – hence proposing a uni-dimensional conceptualisation of burnout - as it has repeatedly been found to be the most internally consistent, stable and responsive dimension vis-à-vis work stressors in research studies (Cooper, 2001; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998, cited in Shirom, 2003).

4.2.2. Conceptual Difference between Stress and Burnout

At this stage it is important to distinguish between the two concepts of burnout and stress in order to eradicate any potential ambiguity or confusion with regard to the conceptualisation of burnout. Indeed, the question of whether the burnout concept is merely a revitalised version of an age-old phenomenon (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993) has been reiterated many times. Part of this confusion is due to the diversity of causes, symptoms, definitions and consequences associated with burnout.

Lazarus (1977, cited in Carayon, 1995) developed the notion of minor, chronic job stressors or *daily hassles*, defined as “the irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that to some degree characterize everyday transactions with the environment”(p.358). The pertinence of this conceptualisation is that a person exposed to such job stressors for a short time period might not experience stress; however, if exposed to them day after day, a person would probably begin to experience stress, and over the long term, burnout. Herein lies the implicit distinction between the concepts of stress and burnout: regarding the latter, it is the *chronic* nature of the stressors – stated differently, the time period over which stressors are experienced – that is the defining characteristic of burnout.

4.2.3. Burnout within the Service Environment

The notion of daily hassles is crucial to an understanding of burnout in call centre environments. Customer service representatives (CSRs) are required to interact with clients over the telephone on a daily basis – stated differently, they are continuously exposed to emotional demands and / or it is consistently required of them to perform emotional labour. More often than not clients tend to be rude and obnoxious towards the CSRs who have to provide assistance to them. Nel (2001) mentions complaints from clients as one type of feedback that needs to be dealt with on a regular basis. Referring back to Lazarus's notion of daily hassles, it is not far-fetched to presume that these types of interactions could be emotionally taxing and, over the long-term, lead to burnout (emotional exhaustion).

In accordance with Lazarus (1977), Maslach and Schaufeli (1993) characterise burnout as job stress that relentlessly continues over time and state that the distinguishing factor of burnout vis-à-vis stress is not so much the symptoms as it is the *process*. Furthermore, although emotional exhaustion is the main component of burnout, the focus of burnout research has traditionally not been on the individualistic stress response but on the individual's relation to and interaction with the work environment. In other words, with regard to burnout the focus is more on the relationship between service provider (CSR) and recipient (client) and on the situational context of service occupations (call centre environment) (Maslach et al., 2001).

Maslach and Goldberg (1998) poignantly summarise and drive the above arguments home when they write, "...burnout is very much a product of the situational context, even if it is expressed on an individual level" (p.64). Therefore, although in the past there has been a tendency by organisations to blame the individual worker for burnout (Beating burn-out, 2002), it is now clear that this has been a serious misperception. Maslach and Leiter (1997) further emphasize the importance of looking and searching for the problem of burnout in the social environments where people work, rather than in the people that suffer from burnout.

4.2.4. Developmental Models of Burnout

In addition to the variety of burnout definitions provided, as well as the academic debate surrounding the multi-faceted versus uni-dimensional character of burnout, various researchers have also proposed different *developmental models of burnout* to explain the dynamic evolution of the burnout process. Some of the most well-known theories are briefly explicated below.

Cherniss (1980, cited in Cooper et al., 2001; Burke & Richardsen, 2001) posits that work environment and individual characteristics interact, resulting in idiosyncratic stress experiences. Burnout, then, represents the process and the manner in which individuals cope with the stress experiences, that is, either in an adaptive or a maladaptive way.

Golembiewski and Munzenrider (1988, cited in Leiter, 1993; Maslach et al., 2001) developed the *phase model* in which each dimension of burnout is divided into low and high scores, resulting in eight possible phases of burnout. These researchers proposed that depersonalisation occurs first, followed by reduced personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion characterising the final stage of burnout. This development pattern is significant in that the gradually increasing development of emotional exhaustion signifies heightened levels of burnout – hence lending implicit support to the core position of emotional exhaustion.

Leiter (1993) acknowledges a shift in thought with regard to the development of burnout. At first, Leiter and Maslach (1988, cited in Leiter, 1993) presented a sequential development pattern of burnout: Emotional exhaustion develops first, followed by depersonalisation and ending with reduced personal accomplishment. Since then this theory has undergone some revision: Emotional exhaustion is still perceived to be the primary and critical burnout dimension that contributes to increased depersonalisation; however, the relationship of personal accomplishment to the former dimensions has changed. Instead of following a linear relationship, personal accomplishment may develop and be influenced independently of the other two components – in other words, it may develop in parallel with emotional exhaustion (Cooper et al., 2001; Leiter, 1993).

The three burnout components are thus related in a special manner. Recent research (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Goldberg, 1998) supports this revised developmental theory as proposed by Leiter: Cynicism is consistently shown to have a strong relationship with and to follow directly on exhaustion, but the relationship of inefficacy to exhaustion and cynicism is more complex. In fact, two hypotheses are generally postulated in this regard: a) a work situation characterised by chronic and overwhelming demands that results in exhaustion and cynicism erodes an individual's sense of efficacy and / or interferes with effectiveness, or b) inefficacy develops parallel to exhaustion and cynicism (as Leiter proposed).

Leiter (1993) substantiates his view by proposing that the emotional exhaustion – depersonalisation, and accomplishment, development processes respectively are ‘caused’ by different variables – the former by the presence of work demands (for example, demanding clients), the latter by the presence of work resources (for example, supervisor support). Maslach et al. (2001) reiterate this belief, stating that emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (cynicism) seem to arise from the presence of work stressors, such as work overload, and social conflict, such as difficult interpersonal relations, whereas inefficacy (reduced personal accomplishment) results from a lack of relevant resources, such as social support. Various theoretical frameworks (discussed next) support these researchers’ informed opinions.

4.2.5. Burnout, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, and Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

Various theories have been proposed as frameworks for studying the burnout phenomenon, inter alia, the Demand-Control-Support model, the Effort-Reward Imbalance and Person-Environment Fit models, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and the Job-Demands-Resources model (JD-R) (Cooper et al., 2001; Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001; Ito & Brotheridge, 2003; Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Shirom, 2003). The present research study utilises the COR theory and the JD-R model to explicate the burnout phenomenon.

The COR theory provides an overarching framework for studying stress and burnout irrespective of context; in other words, it is applicable in a variety of settings ranging from home to work. Hobfoll and Freedy (1993) state that COR theory revolves around “resource utilization” and convincingly write that if “...resource depletion is a central facet of burnout, then COR theory may have particular relevance for the study of how stress leads to burnout” (p.116).

According to COR theory people are motivated to obtain, maintain and protect those ‘things’ that they value. These ‘things’ are termed *resources* and are placed into four categories: a) objects (e.g. physical assets), b) personal characteristics (e.g. self-esteem), c) conditions (e.g. social support), and d) energies (e.g. emotional energy) – it will become evident that the latter two resources are especially important for the burnout construct. Stress develops when individuals a) face the possibility of resource loss, b) actually lose resources or c) do not replenish resources after having lost them. Furthermore, in order to gain or regain valued resources individuals usually make use of other resources – if this is impossible, individuals also experience stress (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993; Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001; Shirom, 2003)

COR theory posits that individuals view work demands as resource losses, as they have to invest a vast amount of resources in an attempt to live up to such demands (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). With regard to burnout the specific resource that is lost is (emotional) energy: It is possible that performing emotional labour (a work demand) depletes an individual’s energy resources which then contributes to emotional exhaustion.

A second type of resource that is important to a discussion of burnout is *conditions*, in other words, *social (supervisor) support*. Social support has been studied extensively in relation to burnout – more specifically as having both a direct and moderating effect on the experience of burnout (emotional exhaustion) (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Curtona & Russell, 1990, cited in Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001; Ito & Brotheridge, 2003).

According to COR theory individuals who experience a lack of resources are, ironically, also more vulnerable to resource loss: A vicious cycle of resource loss is activated in which the individual's few available resources are employed to either prevent more resource loss, or to protect or gain resources. As such, social support (signifying the availability of resources) is posited to be one means of preventing or alleviating the impact of resource loss, that is, work-related strain (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Cooper et al., 2001; Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). As discussed in Chapter 3, supervisor support could serve as a buffer (moderator) between the stressor (emotional labour) and the outcome (emotional exhaustion).

The JD-R model is another theoretical framework that is valuable for use in attempts to understand the burnout phenomenon. The JD-R model posits that working conditions can be divided into two broad categories, namely *job demands* and *job resources*, and that each process has distinct individual and organisational outcomes. According to this model burnout develops when high work demands and limited resources co-exist in any given occupation.

Job demands constitutes a broad and comprehensive concept that describes physical, social or organisational aspects of the job that require prolonged physical and / or cognitive effort and, as such, are psychologically taxing. Job resources describes those physical, social, psychological or organisational aspects of the job that assist in achieving work goals, reducing job demands or facilitating growth and development. Individuals that experience high job demands and low levels of resources should, therefore, experience higher levels of stress, and hence, burnout (emotional exhaustion) (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Several studies have found a positive relationship between job demands (such as emotional job demands) and emotional exhaustion, as well as a positive relationship between a lack of job resources (such as lack of social support) and emotional exhaustion (Demerouti et al., 2001; Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2005; Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In addition, the existence of a positive relationship between a lack of resources and psychological withdrawal (*disengagement / mental distancing*) has also been indicated. As such, a lack of

resources also holds potential implications for intentions to leave and / or actual turnover (Demerouti et al., 2001, p.508; Jackson et al., 2005, p.18).

The potential for applying the principles of the JD-R model in call centre environments becomes clear: if CSRs are exposed to high emotional work demands (emotional labour) on a prolonged basis, and if they experience a lack of support from their team leaders, the probability that burnout (emotional exhaustion) will develop increases.

4.2.6. Causes of Burnout

The COR theory and JD-R model as explicated above already alluded to some of the causes of burnout, a topic that is extensively covered in the burnout literature. In an integrative article on job burnout Cordes and Dougherty (1993, pp.628-637) summarised and grouped the antecedents of burnout into three broad categories: a) *job and role characteristics*, including interpersonal relations between employee and client, role problems and overload; b) *organisational characteristics*, such as contingent rewards / punishment and job context, and c) *personal characteristics*, including demographics, social support, personal expectations and career progress. More recently, Schaufeli (2003, p.7) summarised the most recurring stressors found related to burnout as qualitative and quantitative work overload, role problems (such as role conflict and role ambiguity), (perceived) lack of control, autonomy, feedback and participative decision-making respectively, as well as a lack of social support from co-workers and supervisors.

After some decades of research, Maslach and Leiter (1997) refined their research and attributed the cause of burnout to a chronic mismatch between the individual and six areas of work life, namely work overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown of community, absence of fairness and conflicting values. They propose, the bigger the mismatch between the individual and the job, the stronger the probability becomes of burnout developing (Maslach et al., 2001).

From the above, two inferences can be drawn: Firstly, research on the causes / antecedents of burnout is extensive and has possibly reached an acceptable level of agreement with regard to what these are; secondly, despite the vast number of

research studies conducted on the causes of burnout, the *quality of experiences* has received scant attention. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) emphasize that although emotional exhaustion has been viewed as the core of burnout, rarely has emotional work demands been considered as predictors of burnout.

Rafaeli and Sutton (1989, cited in Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002) support the above viewpoint by stating, in addition to the inherent stress involved in continuously interacting with people (due to the frequency, and hence the workload, characterising such interactions) employees might also be required to adapt and regulate their emotional expressivity according to pre-determined and organisationally sanctioned ways. Therefore, the emotional nature of interpersonal encounters as predictors of burnout warrants further attention in future. This is, as one of the objectives of the present research study, discussed in Chapter 3 under the construct emotional labour.

4.3. SUMMARY

From the above it is evident that burnout is not merely a random event that occurs on an ad hoc basis; rather, a complex nomological network of environmental and person-centered latent variables shapes it. Nevertheless, burnout has been the proverbial *black sheep* of organisational problems for decades: Organisations and managers alike have been reluctant to acknowledge or address burnout as a significant role-player (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Instead of honouring this view, organisations could gain a lot by acknowledging the impact of the work environment's structure and functioning on the development of burnout. In this way many organisational problems that occur as a result of burnout (discussed in the following section) could also be avoided.

4.4. ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT (OC) AND INTENTIONS TO LEAVE

4.4.1. Introduction

Organisations all over the globe suffer from such problems as poor employee job performance and low productivity, low worker morale, high absenteeism and turnover rates, low organisational commitment and inefficiency. Many and varied research studies have been undertaken to investigate the possible causes of these mentioned

problems. Burke and Greenglass (2001, cited in Maslach et al., 2001) present burnout as a significant factor to consider in this regard. They write that burnout results in job withdrawal behaviours, such as absenteeism, intention to leave the job and turnover. For those employees who decide to stay on the job, burnout results in lower productivity and effectiveness along with decreased job satisfaction and lowered commitment to the job and / or organisation.

It follows that in studying organisational problems and searching for possible solutions to such problems burnout should not be left out of the equation. Even though burnout may not traditionally be a concern of management, it will inevitably become a focal point for organisational intervention if it were established that burnout is a mediator of important organisational outcomes (Maslach, 2001).

4.4.2. Relevance of Organisational Commitment to Contemporary Business

The relevance of organisational commitment for contemporary business has been a much debated, in fact controversial, topic in recent years. Therefore, it seems warranted to explain the rationale for including the construct into a study of the call centre environment that is itself a relatively novel business domain.

Management scholars might argue that in the current world of work, characterised by such factors as downsizing, mergers and a lack of career paths as known in the past, OC has no foot holding anymore. Richard Mowday (1998), an acknowledged scholar that has been researching the topic of OC for more than 25 years, begs to differ.

Mowday (1998) writes that those organisations that engage in efforts to build employee commitment will gain a competitive advantage over those that have followed the route of downsizing and cost-cutting, strategies that he describes as *short-sighted* and as hurting organisations where it hurts the most, i.e. the bottom-line.

Furthermore, unlike technology and products that can be copied, employee and / or organisational commitment are impossible to imitate. This argument supports the earlier discussion on the importance of looking after CSRs' well-being (i.e. to limit increasing levels of emotional exhaustion) due to their position as *the* source of competitive advantage for call centres. Reichheld (1996, cited in Mowday, 1998)

argues in support of the above that, in comparison to uncommitted employees, faithful employees develop customer relationships of higher quality – if applied in the context of call centres the potential value of OC for the service industry becomes evident.

Mowday concludes, “[a] s businesses face increasing competitive challenges, a strategy of developing committed and loyal employees holds the promise of superior financial returns” (1998, p.396). Therefore, it is critical that organisations (for the purpose of this research study call centres) determine the impact that the nature of CSRs’ jobs has on their well-being, which in turn could impact their organisational commitment.

4.4.3. Definitions of Organisational Commitment

OC has been defined and measured in many different ways over the years. One of the earliest definitions by Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979) describe OC as “...the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization...” (p.226), and characterise it in terms of a) a belief in and acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values, b) a willingness to exert effort and energy on behalf of the organisation, and c) a desire to remain a member of the organisation.

It is noteworthy that the latter characteristic (i.e. a desire to remain with the organisation) could conceptually be conceived of as the opposite of *intentions to leave* the organisation. Hence, it seems that the consistently found negative correlation between OC and intentions to leave (discussed further on) is well grounded in their construct definitions.

Mowday et al. (1979) align their conceptualisation of commitment with the *attitudinal approach* that views commitment in terms of an “emotional attachment” (Mathieu, Bruvold & Ritchey, 2000, p.130) to the organisation. A more recently developed multidimensional model of commitment, namely that of Allen and Meyer (1990), conforms to Mowday and colleagues’ attitudinal approach and proposes three distinct components of organisational commitment: a) *affective commitment*, an emotional attachment and / or affective orientation towards the organisation; b) *continuance commitment*, a recognition of costs associated with leaving the organisation, and c) *normative commitment*, a moral obligation to remain with the organisation. These

authors confirm that commitment is a psychological state characterising the employee's relationship to the organisation as well as influencing decisions to remain a member of the organisation (Meyer, 2001).

4.4.4. The Development and Antecedents of Organisational Commitment

The three components of OC are believed to develop somewhat independently and differentially as a function of different experiences (or antecedents) of commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The antecedents of affective commitment have been grouped into four categories: a) *personal characteristics*, b) *job characteristics*, c) *work experiences*, and d) *structural characteristics* (Mowday et al., 1982, cited in Allen & Meyer, 1990, p.4) - the strongest evidence, however, has been found for work experience antecedents that provide the employee with psychological need fulfilment which in turn creates feelings of comfort within the organisation and competence in the work-role. This factor has alternatively been labelled *quality of the work environment* (Stallworth, 2003, p.409).

The above theorising on the quality of work experiences as an important antecedent to the development of affective commitment is very significant in terms of a theoretical explanation for the hypothesized negative association between emotional exhaustion and organisational (affective) commitment.

Emotional exhaustion is defined as a state of energy depletion due to *negative* and emotionally demanding work experiences, that is, one could state emotional exhaustion evolve from poor quality work experiences. The JD-R model provides an alternative explanation for emotional exhaustion's onset, namely it is triggered by an imbalance between work demands placed on the individual and resources provided to the individual. In this scenario, it is doubtful that an individual would experience psychological need fulfilment or feelings of competence on the job (as a result of not receiving adequate support so as to perform the work proficiently) - consequently, work experiences of a high quality would seem to be absent.

If one considers that both emotional exhaustion and lowered affective commitment is the result of poor quality work experiences, the theoretical link between emotional exhaustion and affective commitment becomes feasible.

Antecedents of continuance commitment encompass employees' perceptions and evaluations of skill and education transferability, community investments and the possibility of being relocated to a different geographical area in the case of leaving the organisation – the focus here is on the *costs associated with resigning from a job and/or organisation*. *Normative commitment* antecedents fall under an employee's general sense of moral obligation towards the organisation due to the receipt of such benefits as tuition and training (Becker, 1960, cited in Meyer, 2001; Stallworth, 2003).

Meyer (2001) is of the opinion that in attempting to understand the development of employee commitment and how it relates to behaviour, research questions should be phrased more precisely with regard to the form that the commitment takes and the entity at which it is directed. Therefore, for the purposes of this research study on emotional labour and emotional exhaustion, affective commitment (as an attitudinal and emotion-laden construct) seems to be the most relevant component of OC and hence will be used as the measure of commitment towards the organisation.

4.4.5. Definitions of Turnover

Maertz and Campion (2001) proposed an objective definition of *voluntary turnover* as those instances where management agrees that, at the time of termination, employees still had the opportunity to continue employment at the particular company if they so desired. Weisberg (1994) provides a somewhat different, more cost-focused perspective of labour turnover as a natural part of organisational life, involving both financial and non-financial costs resulting from experienced employees leaving voluntarily.

4.4.6. Turnover within the Call Centre Environment

Within the call centre environment specifically, *turnover* has been identified as one of *the* most pressing problems in terms of scope (levels or percentages of turnover), cost and productivity respectively (O'Herron, 2003): Call centres all over the world need to reckon with employees leaving their jobs after relatively short periods of time, resulting in substantial losses (in terms of knowledge, experience and financial cost) to organisations.

This fact is driven home when one considers turnover trends all over the world. For example, in recent years the American call centre industry has experienced turnover rates of between 60 and 80 percent annually. This is believed to be the result of a combination of factors, such as the increasingly sophisticated skill sets required of CSRs, the vast spectrum of emotional and task demands placed on the agents, as well as the structured and monitored nature of the call centre environment in general (Anderson, 1997, cited in Hillmer, Hillmer & McRoberts, 2004).

These factors are subsumed under the earlier discussion on the nature of the call centre environment - recall such themes as inbound versus outbound call centres, emotion regulation and the call centre script, as well as the quantitative dimension characteristics of call centres – that indicated, these factors result in emotional exhaustion which in turn might lead to intentions to leave as a means of withdrawing from adverse call centre working conditions.

Deery and Kinnie (2004) cite a nation-wide survey conducted in Britain in 2002 that found annual average turnover rates of over 30 percent. Hence, considering the nature of call centre work as being similar across countries, industries and companies, it is quite possible that South African companies are suffering from the same predicament.



Turnover rates of such magnitude inevitably hold implications for organisations' bottom lines – in fact, the costs associated with turnover are astronomical, especially if one considers that the replacement costs of an experienced CSR with a new, inexperienced recruit include both tangible costs (recruiting and training new agents) and intangible costs (in terms of attempts to keep up service levels while new agents become adept at performing the job) (Hillmer et al., 2004).

4.4.7. Organisational Commitment as a Predictor of Intentions to Leave

In response to the mentioned loss of valuable employees to organisations, researchers have for decades attempted to identify predictors and correlates of voluntary turnover. The variable that has shown the highest and most consistent, positive relationship with actual turnover behaviour, and which is believed to be the “immediate psychological precursor” of turnover (Steel & Ovalle, 1984, cited in Maertz & Campion, 2001, p.349), is *intentions to leave*. In turn, one of the most consistent,

negative relationships found with intentions to leave (as a predictor of turnover) is OC (Stallworth, 2003). Meyer (2001) posits, the correlation between commitment and intentions to leave could be seen as a reflection of an association between a psychological state and a behavioural intention and therefore, OC could be used to predict turnover.

Burke and Richardson (2001) substantiate this argument by stating OC might be associated with the process whereby turnover intentions are translated into actual quitting behaviour. Furthermore, seeing that burnout is negatively related to OC, and OC is negatively associated with intentions to leave, burnout's relationship to organisational commitment is often researched in attempts to 'preempt' turnover. In this sense OC potentially fulfils a mediating role.

Elangovan (2001) conducted a structural equations analysis to determine the causal ordering of stress, job satisfaction, commitment and intentions to quit. The findings of significance to this research study are: a) Commitment had a very strong negative and direct effect on turnover intention (- 0.756); b) stress did not directly affect turnover intentions, but only through commitment, and c) there was a reciprocal relationship between commitment and turnover intention (i.e. the results indicated a strong negative effect of commitment on turnover intention, as well as a strong negative effect of turnover intention on commitment). Of particular interest here is the finding that stress affected turnover intentions *via* commitment, once more suggesting the presence of a mediating effect for organisational commitment.

4.4.8. The Relationship between Burnout, Organisational Commitment, and Intentions to Leave

Stallworth (2003) explored the relationships between each of the organisational commitment components (affective, continuance and normative) and turnover intentions by means of regression analysis and found that affective commitment demonstrated the strongest predictive relationship with intentions to leave. This is in accordance with Meyer's (2001) summary of OC research in which it is noted, affective commitment has consistently been associated with turnover intention and / or actual turnover in a negative direction.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) argue that, intuitively, employees' stress and organisational attachment should be related. Therefore, in their meta-analytic study stress was grouped under the category of 'correlates' with OC and, like the latter, was conceptualised as reflecting an employee's psychological reactions to work. The meta-analytic review findings indicated, however, that although stress indicated some of the highest correlations with OC, this relationship was not significant. In this regard Meyer (2001) comments, the causal connection between OC and correlate variables (such as stress) is as of yet either unidentified or a debateable topic and consequently warrants further exploration. Therefore, and considering that burnout is conceptualised as *prolonged job stress* (Maslach and Schaufeli, 1993), burnout (i.e. emotional exhaustion) as a correlate of OC should also be considered.

With specific reference to emotional exhaustion it could be possible that as workers' emotional exhaustion levels increase (i.e. as they feel increasingly overextended and 'used up' emotionally) OC (i.e. the willingness to exert effort and be involved in the organisation) decreases. This was, in fact, demonstrated by an early study on burnout and OC in which emotional exhaustion both correlated negatively with OC and independently contributed to the prediction of OC as per regression analyses (Maslach & Leiter, 1988). In a more recent study burnout was found to have a negative, albeit small, influence on OC (Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2005).

Lee and Ashforth (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of the correlates of burnout. They found a positive association between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave and a negative association between emotional exhaustion and OC. Saxton, Phillips and Blakeney (1991) investigated emotional exhaustion in the airline reservations service sector: They established a significant, positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave that was stronger than that found between emotional exhaustion and actual job change. This finding on the association between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave has been replicated elsewhere (see Deery, Iverson & Walsh, 2004; Jackson et al., 2005; Maslach & Goldberg; 1998; Schaufeli, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker; 2004).

Weisberg (1994) conducted a study in which he applied three different burnout measures as predictions of teachers' intentions to leave their place of work. He cited

various research studies that had established relationships between burnout levels and intention to leave (such as Jackson, Schwab & Schuler, 1986). In the Jackson et al. (1986) study it was hypothesized that burnout would indeed be associated with intentions to leave the job. The findings indicated that emotional exhaustion significantly predicted participants' *thoughts* about leaving the job, but not their intentions to leave. The researchers, however, pointed out that the latter finding could have been affected by problems of range restriction.

In a study by Posig and Kickul (2003) no support was found for the predicted relationships between intentions to leave and the three burnout components respectively. These researchers comment that it should be kept in mind that intentions to leave an organisation might also be influenced by labour market conditions and / or a country's economic situation, particularly the availability of alternative employment – factors also relevant to the South African job market. On the contrary, however, other researchers have established the existence of positive relationships between emotional exhaustion and ensuing voluntary turnover (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998) and between burnout and intentions to leave (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Thus far, all of the mentioned studies have treated lowered OC as a consequence of increased stress / burnout (emotional exhaustion), the stance also taken in the present study. The reverse, however, also seems to be possible; that is, increased OC as an antecedent of reduced stress. Wittig-Berman and Lang (1990) conducted a study in which they hypothesized value commitment (which is similar to affective commitment in that it designates an emotional attachment to the organisation) would be negatively related to, inter alia, psychological and physical stress symptoms. Their findings corroborated value commitment as an antecedent of psychological stress in a significant, negative direction. In other words, it seems plausible to suspect a so-called “mutual-influence” (p.176) process in which a) emotional exhaustion diminishes affective commitment, and b) affective commitment serves as a stress prevention or reduction technique.

Elangovan (2001) implies a similar point of view in writing, instead of trying to convince high-performing employees at risk of quitting to remain with an organisation by outlining and emphasising job characteristics, such organisations

should rather attempt heightening levels of OC. In other words, by altering employees' psychological states (increasing OC), the possibility exists for organisations to address turnover more effectively than by superficially changing aspects of the job and / or work environment.

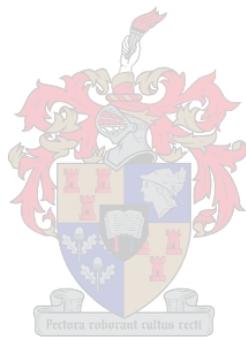
4.5. SUMMARY

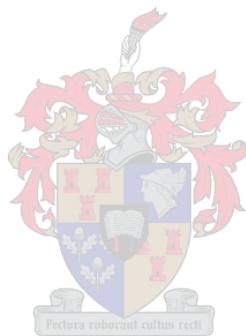
From the above it seems evident that burnout (emotional exhaustion) does indeed have detrimental consequences for organisations, specifically with regard to intentions to leave and ultimate turnover. Also important, however, is the realisation that even if employees do not quit but decide to stay on the job, burnout might still result in decreased job satisfaction and lowered commitment to the job and / or organisation, which in turn could lead to reduced productivity and effectiveness on the job.

Considering the proposed relationships amongst the constructs in the present study – that is, that the nature of CSRs' work, encapsulated by the notion of emotional labour, has been linked to emotional exhaustion and that the latter is associated with such outcomes as lowered OC and employee turnover - companies that make use of call centres could gain substantially, for example in terms of cost savings, by investigating the relationships amongst these variables.



In Chapter 5 the Research Methodology, pertaining to both the quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, is presented in depth.





CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the present study two methodological paradigms are utilised. The chapter commences with a discussion of the qualitative paradigm, followed by the quantitative paradigm.

Included in each section are: the conceptualisation and / or definition of the particular paradigm in terms of a particular philosophical orientation, the characteristics and inherent advantages and disadvantages of each paradigm, as well as a discussion of the particular data collection method, and sampling and data analysis techniques, employed in the present study.

5.2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

5.2.1. Conceptualisation of Qualitative Research

Within the qualitative research paradigm there exists no single definition of qualitative research, nor does a single approach to conducting qualitative research exist (Long & Godfrey, 2004). In fact, the term *qualitative* refers to a broad methodological approach to conducting research (Babbie & Mouton, 2002): In some cases it refers to particular data gathering techniques that collect non-numerical data, such as observation, individual depth interviews and group interviews; at other times it is strongly associated with an epistemological orientation to research or a specific research design type, for example ethnographic studies and case studies (Babbie & Mouton, 2002; Long & Godfrey, 2004).

The overarching role or purpose of qualitative research is encapsulated by the Germanic term *Verstehen* (to understand). Qualitative research aims to describe and understand how and why certain things happen in and around individuals in their social contexts; stated differently, it investigates and aims to understand human experiences and / or perceptions from the individual's point of view –the so-called “insiders’ perspective” (Babbie & Mouton, 2002, p.53) - against the backdrop of a holistic framework (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Vishnewsky & Beanlands, 2004).

Qualitative research is non-experimental by nature: It is conducted in natural (field) settings, it does not specify independent and dependent variables to be controlled and tested for statistical relationships, and its focus is on subjective data (individuals' thoughts, feelings and perceptions). In analysing qualitative data the researcher searches for patterns, as well as the reasons for such patterns, in the data in order to arrive at a "thick description" (Henning et al., 2004, p.6) - that is, a description of the research phenomenon that is lucid and that provides an in-depth interpretation of empirical facts as understood by the individuals under study.

Newman (1997) presents qualitative research as a) constructing social reality and meaning in an authentic fashion, b) focusing on interactions between individuals, with participants embedded in a particular social context in which the researcher also becomes involved, c) using relatively small sample sizes, and d) conducting thematic data analyses.

Proponents of qualitative research perceive the subjective nature of qualitative research as an advantage and / or strength in that it allows the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding for individuals in their subjective world. In this manner, qualitative research provides insight into the complexities inherent in social phenomena and enlightens the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences (Long & Godfrey, 2004).

Another feature of qualitative research is its inductive nature: Instead of approaching research studies with hypotheses that have been formulated a priori, qualitative researchers - from being emerged in the natural research setting - derive novel theories that explain their observations (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Thus, qualitative research has an added advantage of generating new hypotheses and building fresh theories.

On the contrary, however, opponents of qualitative research criticise its idiosyncratic nature and its lack of generalisability to other contexts and / or individuals external to the particular research study in question (Vishnewsy & Beanlands, 2004). This stance risks nullifying the value of qualitative research that is also linked to its

purpose – that is, it is a “... quest for understanding and for in-depth inquiry” (Henning et al., 2004, p.3).

5.2.2. Qualitative Data-Gathering Technique: Focus Groups

The particular qualitative data-gathering technique used in this study is the *focus group interview*. Focus groups fall under the broad category of group interviews that typically entail the methodical questioning of a group of research participants in a formal or informal setting. Group interviews, in general, have various purposes, for example it could be used a) to explore research questions or techniques, b) to pre-test the wording of a survey instrument, c) to gather descriptions of shared experiences amongst individuals, or d) in combination with other research techniques (i.e. triangulation) (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Babbie and Mouton (2002) mention two ways in which focus groups are used in qualitative research. In the first approach the researcher includes eight to twelve participants in the focus group and asks each individual participant for his / her opinion. The second approach to using focus groups is based on the rationale of group synergy, and entails creating a ‘space’ for research participants in which to generate a shared meaning. These two methods evidently differ with regard to their end product: Whereas the former approach results in ‘individual meanings’, the latter approach results in ‘a shared meaning’.

Hydén and Bülow (2003) distinguish amongst three different means of participant interaction in focus groups: They either represent professional and / or social groups external to the focus group, themselves as individuals, or act as members of the focus group itself. According to these researchers the particular interaction ‘model’ holds implications for analysing, interpreting and understanding the data. Thus, Hydén and Bülow (2003) and Babbie and Mouton (2002) recognise that not all focus groups function in a similar manner. For the purpose of this research study, the focus is on the interpretation of message content, rather than on group dynamics or linguistic structure (i.e. ‘who’ says ‘what’ in ‘what way’) (Hydén & Bülow, 2003).

Group interviews differ in terms of the specific type of interview, the formality of the setting, the role played by the interviewer, the question format and the interview’s

purpose. Fontana and Frey (2000) categorise focus groups as being a relatively formal interviewing technique in which the interviewer fulfils a rather directive role and asks questions in a structured manner for the purposes of exploration or pre-testing.

Additional reasons for conducting focus groups, and analysing focus group data, are: a) to extract peoples' opinions about, perceptions and attitudes towards, as well as understanding and experiences of certain life situations or topics, and b) to analyse discussions and interactions linguistically in terms of 'who' says 'what', as mentioned above (Kritzinger & Barbour, 1999, Morgan, 1988, Wilkonson, 1998, cited in Hydén & Bülow, 2003).

In this particular study focus group sessions with two target groups were held. A selected group of customer service representatives (CSRs) constituted one target group due to their centrality in the study's design. The second target group was the team leaders of the CSRs, as one of the constructs included in the research model is *supervisor support*. The overarching purpose of the focus groups was to develop a feeling for the nature of CSRs' experiences in the call centre, as well as to identify the reality of call centre work and how it influences CSRs' experiences. The questions posed to both target groups were developed in light of the existing literature on *emotional labour* and call centre work, and also allowed for individual opinions and additional topics to emerge from the discussions. See Appendix A for a Schedule of the Focus Group Questions posed to CSRs and Team Leaders respectively.

5.2.3. Data-Analysis Technique: Qualitative Content Analysis

All focus group discussions were tape (audio) recorded after having obtained informed consent from the research participants. Thereafter, the researcher transcribed the tape recordings verbatim. Henning et al. (2004) advises first-time researchers on the value of taking complete responsibility for the transcription process: By completing the process single-handedly one stays close to the data.

Fontana and Frey (2000) comment on the utility and advantage of working from tapes and transcripts: Firstly, tapes and transcripts serve as a so-called "public record" (p.829) for the scientific community; secondly, tapes can be replayed and transcripts can be improved on in accordance with the research requirements.

The specific qualitative research technique utilised for analysing the focus group data is *qualitative content analysis*. Babbie and Mouton (2002) define content analysis as a “coding operation” (p.388) employed to code and categorise any and all forms of communication. Henning et al. (2004) state, seeing that content analysis operates on a single level of meaning (i.e. the content of the data), it is relatively uncomplicated and is therefore the preferred analytical tool for beginner researchers. This method has a potential drawback in that it may result in “... superficial and *naively realistic* findings ...” (p.102) if the researcher believes that good findings are merely predicated on the rigorous application of the content analysis technique. Suffice to say that content analysis – as with all data analysis techniques - requires a great degree of intellectual effort in order to obtain meaningful results from it.

Qualitative content analysis follows a relatively simple process of firstly deconstructing and then reconstructing the data text. The main steps are as follows: To begin with, the researcher reads through all the verbatim transcripts in order to form a global impression of the data. This requirement (i.e. to form an overview of the data) is important for the mere reason that the coding process is inductive: The researcher will select codes on the basis of what the data means for him / her; therefore, an initial, thorough overview is essential. After the first reading, units of meaning (in one or more sentences or phrases) for each transcript are identified and labelled (coded), where after all related codes are grouped together (categorised) and labelled, once again in an inductive manner. These categories serve as an early preview of themes that will emerge from the data and to be used in the discussion chapter. As a final step the researcher has to, in a reconstructive manner, work at “seeing the whole” (Henning et al., 2004, p.106), determining whether the allocated codes are logical and related to the research question in a reasoned manner.

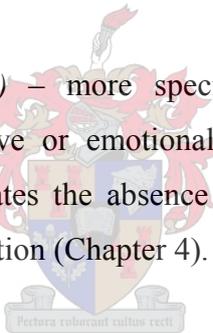
The content analysis process followed in the present study closely adheres to the steps explicated above. With regard to the process’ inductive nature, codes, subsequent categories and eventual themes were extracted from the data text against the backdrop of the researcher’s contextual knowledge of the relevant literature. In order to optimise understanding and insight of how the identified themes link up with the literature, the main construct definitions - as they are used in the present study - are reiterated:

Emotional labour describes service workers' efforts at emotion regulation - in accordance with organisational display rules - for the purpose of creating 'happy' customers, a condition that designates quality service delivery and is believed to result in a competitive advantage for organisations (Chapter 3).

Emotional exhaustion is the core component of burnout and entails feelings of emotional overextension and energy depletion (fatigue) due to the individual's contact with other people, that is, due to performing emotional labour (Chapter 4).

Social (supervisor) support serves as an information source for individuals, informing them that they are loved and cared for, respected and valued and part and parcel of a communication network. Several types of support are believed to be important in alleviating individuals' strain (i.e. emotional exhaustion), namely emotional, instrumental, appraisal and informational support respectively (Chapter 3).

Organisational commitment (OC) – more specifically *affective* commitment – designates an individual's affective or emotional attachment to the organisation, whereas *intentions to leave* indicates the absence of such attachment and hence a resulting desire to quit the organisation (Chapter 4).



5.2.4. Sample Used for Qualitative Data Collection

Both the qualitative and quantitative data was collected in an insurance company's medical aid call centre in the Western Cape. The qualitative data collection phase is discussed next. The quantitative data collection phase is discussed under the section on the quantitative research paradigm.

Seven focus groups were conducted for the purpose of qualitative data collection: Six groups consisted of CSRs and one group consisted of team leaders. CSRs were identified as being those individuals who sit in front of a computer with a telephone headset on while interacting with customers (Zapf, 2003). Team leaders were identified as those individuals who are present on the floor to assist CSRs in any required manner, as well as manage the call centre and its processes.

The size of the focus groups differed due to the availability of people and the viability of taking people off the phones for one-hour sessions at a time. Hydén and Bülow (2003) mention the recommended focus group size varies, with some researchers opting for smaller groups and others for bigger groups. Morgan (1988, cited in Hydén & Bülow, 2003) identifies “ ‘moderate sized’ groups” (p.309) as consisting of six to ten participants and comments, bigger groups should be preferred to smaller groups as participants in the latter are sensitive to inter-individual dynamics and experience demand overload with regard to required contribution. On the contrary, however, such sensitivity could yield richer data. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999, cited in Hydén & Bülow, 2003) propose including a maximum of eight participants per focus group.

With regard to the CSRs two groups consisted of 9 participants each and four groups consisted of 3 participants each, resulting in a total sample (N) of thirty CSRs. With regard to the team leaders the total population (N) of four team leaders participated in a one-hour session. Thus, this study more or less meets the requirements of the mentioned recommendations.

Stratified random sampling was utilised to select CSRs for participation in the focus groups. Stratified random sampling is a method of firstly subdividing a total population into smaller subunits and then doing random sampling from each subunit. The stratification process is even more refined by selecting proportional stratified samples in which the number of elements (i.e. the participants) selected from a subunit is proportional to the size of the subunit in the population. Proportional stratified random sampling (with ‘department’ being the stratification variable) was the chosen method for the present research study, as the particular medical aid call centre from which CSRs are sampled consists of four ‘departments’, each one headed by a different team leader (Babbie & Mouton, 2002; Collins, Du Plooy, Grobbelaar, Puttergill, Terre Blanche, Van Eeden, Van Rensburg & Wigston, 2000; Elmes, Kantowitz & Roediger, 1999).

The steps to select CSRs for participation in the focus groups were as follows: a) A complete list of CSRs (divided according to the four team leaders’ departments) was obtained from a team leader and the population size determined as $N = 135$; b) it was decided to select a sample of $n = 60$ for the purpose of the focus group discussions; c)

the number of CSRs (x) in each of the four departments was counted and their proportional size in relation to the population size (x/N) calculated as a percentage – this enabled calculating the number of CSRs to be randomly selected from each department by multiplying the proportional percentage of each group with 60; d) finally, a random selection of CSRs was made by using two-digit numbers in a “table of random numbers” (Babbie & Mouton, 2002, p.188).

Elmes et al. (1999) views stratified sampling as a feasible alternative to random sampling. The main advantage of applying proportional stratified random sampling is that it helps to ensure greater representativeness of a particular segment or unit in a population, even for the smallest subgroup. In addition, potential sampling error is also reduced. Some of the disadvantages of this sampling technique are that its use depends on a) accurate knowledge of the population parameters (such as departmental division), and b) the availability of a complete population name list – both these conditions could be met in the particular study, hence the decision to utilise proportional stratified random sampling.

As mentioned earlier the total population of team leaders in the particular call centre consists of four individuals ($N = 4$). Thus, the only option in this instance was to include all four team leaders in the focus group discussion (Babbie & Mouton, 2002); in other words, no sampling was required for this group.

The discussion that follows focuses on the quantitative research paradigm, believed to overcome some of the ‘shortcomings’ of the qualitative research paradigm, such as a lack of generalisability. In a similar vein, however, findings from qualitative research can provide context and a deeper understanding for findings obtained by quantitative research studies that may, at times, seem conceptually superficial.

Thus, rather than positioning the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms as incompatible methodologies, Newman (1997) proposes utilising them in a complementary manner: In fact, it has been stated that the best research includes and merges characteristics of both methodologies (Keohane & Verba, 1994, cited in Newman, 1997).

5.3. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

5.3.1. Conceptualisation of Quantitative Research

The quantitative research paradigm forms part of the experimental research tradition, rooted in the school of thought known as positivism. Positivism proposes that the social sciences should imitate the underlying principle of the natural sciences to *explain* observable behaviour in terms of direct, observable relationships amongst phenomena. The emphasis, in this paradigm, is encapsulated by the Germanic term *Erklären* (to explain) (Babbie & Mouton, 2002; Henning et al., 2004), which is done in the following manner:

Firstly, the quantitative paradigm measures social phenomena by allocating numerical values to them. This paradigm acknowledges the existence of theoretical constructs (as in the qualitative paradigm) but aims to develop empirical and “observable measurements” (Babbie & Mouton, 2002, p.52) of constructs in order to elicit responses from individuals.

Secondly, independent and dependent variables are identified and the statistical relationship(s) amongst them tested with the aid of various statistical analyses. Lastly, a strong emphasis is placed on controlling for sources of error in the research process, either via experimental control or statistical control (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Thus, it is evident that this paradigm stands in stark contrast with the qualitative paradigm whose focus is, inter alia, on subjective experience, in-depth inquiry and the generation of non-numerical data.

Newman (1997) presents quantitative research as: a) measuring objective facts in a reliable fashion, b) focusing on variables, independent of context, with the researcher also remaining detached from the research situation, c) using relatively big sample sizes, and d) conducting statistical data analyses.

Examples of quantitative research designs include classical experiments, quasi-experiments and survey research (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Each of these design types has strengths and weaknesses. In this particular study the chosen design type is survey research; therefore, this technique will be explicated in more detail.

5.3.2. Quantitative Data-Gathering Technique: Survey Research

Survey research entails the administration of questionnaires to a sample of respondents that form part of a larger population. Surveys take various forms, including mail, self-administered, face-to-face and telephone surveys and can be utilised for descriptive, exploratory and explanatory research.

The self-administered survey form (in which respondents independently complete questionnaires) is the method employed in the present study. This method holds certain advantages: a) It is relatively cheap and concise, enabling quick completion, b) it minimises interviewer bias, and c) it allows for anonymous and honest responses from respondents. Some disadvantages of survey research include: a) the potential for obtaining shallow data that do not provide a 'feel' for the phenomenon under study, b) the researcher's lack of control over the conditions accompanying questionnaire completion, c) the researcher's lack of opportunity for clarifying questions and probing for more information, d) receiving incomplete questionnaires, e) the researcher's lack of observation with regard to how respondents react towards questions and the research setting, and f) illiterate individuals' inability to complete questionnaires (Babbie & Mouton, 2002; Newman, 1997).

5.3.3. Sample Used for Quantitative Data Collection

For the purposes of the quantitative data collection phase only CSRs were required to complete the questionnaires, as it is their experience of the call centre environment that is the focal point of the present study.

The sampling technique employed at this stage was non-probability sampling, more specifically availability sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2002) in which the researcher makes use of the available subjects. This sampling technique was chosen due to the relatively small population size ($N = 135$) of the call centre.

Babbie and Mouton (2002) comment, this sampling method may be used if other less risky sampling methods are not practical. However, great caution should be exercised in terms of generalising from the data. The latter is, however, not a purpose of this particular research study and as such does not represent a constraint.

The team leaders distributed the questionnaires to the CSRs. The CSRs completed the questionnaires over a period of approximately two to three weeks and returned them by placing them in a marked carton box. The questionnaires were completed anonymously.

Eighty-four useable questionnaires were returned, that is, a response rate of 62 per cent. Babbie and Mouton (2002) propose a rule of thumb concerning response rates: According to them, a 60 per cent response rate is considered good for the purpose of data analysis and reporting.

5.3.4. Data-Gathering: Operationalisation and Measuring Instruments

A number of existing questionnaires are utilised in the present research study to measure the constructs as contained in the proposed call centre model (refer Chapter 2). A general discussion of each questionnaire's properties in terms of content, structure and psychometric features, as presented in the literature, follows. Thereafter, the techniques utilised to analyse the questionnaires and to test the proposed call centre model are discussed in turn.

5.3.4.1. Emotional labour (EL)

The Emotional Labour scale (ELS), as developed and validated by Brotheridge and Lee (2003), is utilised to measure **emotional labour**. The ELS is a self-report questionnaire consisting of 15 items that measure six facets of emotional labour, namely the frequency, intensity and variety of emotional display, the duration of interaction, as well as surface and deep acting (as discussed in Chapter 3).

The ELS employs a 5-point Likert scale with anchors *never* (1), *rarely* (2), *sometimes* (3), *often* (4) and *always* (5) and a response stem, “*On an average day at work, how frequently do you...*” (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003, p.368). For example, for the frequency sub-scale some items included are, “Display specific emotions required by your job”, and “Express particular emotions needed for your job”; for surface acting items included are, “Resist expressing my true feelings”, and “Hide my true feelings about a situation” (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003, p.370).

In these researchers' paper describing the development and validation of the ELS, internal consistency (Cronbach's α) of the sub-scales proved satisfactory, ranging from .74 for intensity to .83 for deep acting. Confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated the existence of six one-dimensional sub-scales, and evidence of convergent and discriminant validity was also cited.

5.3.4.2. Emotional exhaustion

In order to assess the burnout construct and its core component, **emotional exhaustion**, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the measuring instrument that has been used most often. However, a recent trend in burnout research has been to use an adapted version of the MBI for occupations other than the human services and / or education sectors. This instrument is called the MBI-General Survey (MBI-GS) – indicative of the fact that the measurement of burnout is now possible for all types of employees and not only for those engaged in “people work” (Maslach & Leiter, 1997, cited in Storm & Rothmann, 2003).

The MBI-GS contains three sub-scales: Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy. For the purposes of this research study only the emotional exhaustion sub-scale items are included in accordance with the research focus on emotion and emotional labour. In contrast to the original MBI, the exhaustion items of the MBI-GS are generic and refer to fatigue without direct reference to people as the source of this fatigue (Storm & Rothmann, 2003).

All items (16 items in total) are scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale. Individuals are required to indicate if they ever feel a certain way about their job ranging from *never* (0) to *daily* (6). The number of emotional exhaustion items equates to five, for example “I feel emotionally drained from my work” and “I feel used up at the end of the workday”. High scores on exhaustion (as well as high scores for cynicism and low scores on professional efficacy) are indicative of burnout (Storm & Rothmann, 2003).

The internal consistencies of the MBI-GS sub-scales have proven satisfactory, ranging from .73 (cynicism) to .91 (exhaustion) as found by Leiter and Schaufeli (1996, cited in Storm & Rothmann, 2003). Storm and Rothmann (2003) also found

support for the construct (structural) equivalence of the MBI-GS for White, Black, Coloured and Indian individuals as investigated for members of the SAPS.

5.3.4.3. Organisational Commitment (OC)

With regard to **organisational commitment** Meyer and Allen (1990, 1991) developed a scale that consists of three sub-scales, namely the Affective (ACS), Continuance (CCS) and Normative (NCS) Commitment Scales. These sub-scales have been found by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to measure distinguishable constructs. For the purposes of this study only the ACS is included as it is in line with the focus on emotion – recall affective commitment revolves around an emotional attachment to the organisation.

The ACS is measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). The ACS consists of eight items, examples being: “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life with this organization” and “I do not feel emotionally attached to this organization” (reverse scored) (Stallworth, 2003, p.417). In previous research it was also found that this specific sub-scale is the single best predictor of intentions to leave (Stallworth, 2003).

In a study by Stallworth (2003) the reliability of the total Allen and Meyer Organisational Commitment measuring instrument, as well as that of the three sub-scales, was assessed by calculating the reliability coefficient, Cronbach’s alpha. The alpha coefficient for the total scale was .81, and the reliability of the three sub-scales was high, ranging from .75 to .84. Accordingly, the reliability coefficient for the ACS was reported as .86 in a study by Hackett et al. (1994).

5.3.4.4. Intentions to leave

Stallworth (2003) utilised a 3-item **intentions to leave** scale in a recent study (together with the ACS) and found the reliability coefficient to be quite high at .87. The items are: “I frequently think about leaving my current employer”; “It is likely that I will search for a job in another organization”, and “It is likely that I will actually leave the organization within the next year” (p.418). The response format employed is a 7-point Likert scale, although no reference is made of the anchor points. To

simplify the response pattern for CSRs the same 7-point scale as that of the ACS was used.

5.3.4.5. Supervisor support

With regard to **supervisor support** the Contact Rating scale (originally developed by Leiter and Maslach in 1986) is used. The complete Contact Rating scale consists of two parts, the first part concerning supervisor support and the second co-worker support. For the purposes of this research study, only the supervisor support scale is utilised as a measure of team leader support. This particular scale was obtained via electronic communication with C. Brotheridge (personal communication, December 14, 2004).

A 7-point Likert scale together with a response stem (“*My immediate supervisor...*”) is used, but no indication of its anchors given. Inspection of the item wording suggests that the same response scale as that used by the ACS and intentions to leave scale would be feasible. Examples of supervisor support items include: “Is easy to talk with”; “Is helpful in resolving conflicts among staff” and “Gives me support when I need it”.

Very little information regarding this scale’s psychometric properties is available. In a study by Brotheridge and Lee (2002) it was remarked that the items for the two sub-scales were highly intercorrelated and were therefore combined into one scale labelled ‘support’: Cronbach’s alpha for the total scale was reported as .75. In another article by Ito and Brotheridge (2003) Cronbach alpha for the supervisor support sub-scale was reported as being .94.

5.3.5. Statistical Analyses

Different statistical techniques are utilised to analyse the questionnaire data and to test the call centre model as proposed in Chapter 2: a) Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis; b) Multiple Regression Analysis, c) Item Analysis, c) Factor Analysis, and d) Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

5.3.5.1. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis

The questionnaire data was initially typed into an Excel file and copied into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for the purpose of running a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. This is the first step in the data analysis process and forms the basis of all subsequent data analyses. The Pearson product-moment correlation results are presented in Chapter 6.

The Pearson product-moment correlation formula is developed in such a manner that the value of r falls within the range -1 to $+1$. The interpretation of -1 (a perfect negative correlation), $+1$ (a perfect positive correlation) and zero (no correlation) is simple; the interpretation of values falling between 0 to -1 , and 0 to $+1$, however, poses some difficulty. Guilford (cited in Sprinthall, 1987) relieves some of the obscurity by providing informal interpretations of statistically significant Pearson correlation coefficients (Tredoux & Durrheim, 2002). These guidelines are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Interpretation Guidelines for Pearson's r

Value of r (+ or -)	Informal interpretation
< 0.2	Slight; almost no relationship
$0.2 - 0.4$	Low correlation; definite but small relationship
$0.4 - 0.7$	Moderate correlation; substantial relationship
$0.7 - 0.9$	High correlation; strong relationship
$0.9 - 1.0$	Very high correlation; very dependable relationship

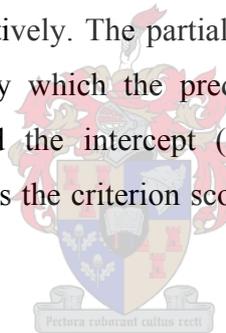
5.3.5.2. Multiple Regression / Correlation Analysis (MRC)

Multiple Regression / Correlation (MRC) is a multivariate analytic procedure that determines the linear relationship between a set of (i.e. multiple) predictors and a single criterion that best combines the set of predictors for predicting the criterion (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2001; Licht, 1995). Studies that make use of this procedure can, rather superficially, be divided into two types: a) prediction studies (i.e. studies that aim to predict behaviour or events for the purpose of decision-making in applied settings), and b) explanatory studies (i.e. studies that aim to understand and / or

explain the nature of a phenomenon for testing or theory-building purposes) (Licht, 1995).

The result of MRC studies is a *multiple regression equation*, that is, a weighted linear combination of predictors that specifies how the predictor scores should be combined so as to best predict the criterion. The steps for developing a multiple regression equation are as follows: firstly, a data set that contains values for both predictor(s) and criterion per research participant is obtained, and secondly, MRC establishes the values of the constants (i.e. the *partial regression coefficients* and *intercept*) "... that, across subjects, produce predicted scores on the criterion that are as close as possible to the observed scores on the criterion (i.e. that have the smallest amount of error in prediction)" (Licht, 1995, p.28).

The multiple regression equation can take two forms, namely the *raw score* and *standard (z) score* forms respectively. The partial regression coefficient is the name for the number (i.e. weight) by which the predictor(s) is / are multiplied when predicting criterion scores, and the intercept (as an element of the raw score regression equation only) denotes the criterion score when all of the predictors equal zero.



Furthermore, MRC provides a) a *multiple correlation coefficient (R)* and b) a *coefficient of multiple determination (R²)*. Whereas *R* indicates "... the degree of relationship between the criterion ... and the weighted combination of predictors as specified by the regression equation ..." and ranges between 0 (no relationship between predicted and actual criterion scores) and 1 (perfect prediction), *R²* indicates "... the proportion of variance in the criterion that is shared by the weighted combination of predictors" (Licht, 1995, p.29).

The use of MRC for applied prediction purposes is often critiqued as reflecting a "pure empirical process", especially when researchers do not ground their predictions in a sound theoretical framework – in such cases, the predictors may "... represent chance or idiosyncratic aspects of the samples on which they were derived" (Licht, 1995, p.32). Therefore, in order to realise the true value of MRC in originating

prediction formulas, the results should also be theoretically, and not just empirically, meaningful.

As mentioned above, MRC is also utilised for the purpose of understanding and / or explaining the nature of a phenomenon (i.e. theoretical explanation); stated differently, researchers sometimes want to determine the independent contributions of predictors on a criterion. Seeing that R and R^2 provide information on the total contribution of the combined predictors, different indexes are required to reflect the independent contributions of predictors.

Two types of indexes are utilised in MRC to indicate independent contribution. The first index - partial regression coefficients - was explained under the prediction section; however, some further comments are warranted.

Kinney and Gray (2000) define a partial regression coefficient as "... the increase in the dependent variable that would be produced by a positive increase in one unit in the independent variable ..." (p.288) when statistical control is achieved for all other variables – thus, regression coefficients indicate amount of change. Statistically significant partial regression coefficients (indicated by Beta or β) indicate that the predictors "... make statistically significant independent contributions to the prediction and understanding of the criterion" (Licht, 1995, p.39).

When interpreting the size(s) of partial regression coefficients it is important to transform raw scores into standardised (z) scores: this ensures all variables have means of 0 and standard deviations of 1, and as such direct comparisons of the relative contribution of each predictor on the overall effect become possible.

The second type of index that MRC uses to indicate independent contribution can be subdivided into two indexes of correlation: a) the *semi-partial correlation coefficient* and b) the *partial correlation coefficient*. A brief explanation of each is provided next.

The semi-partial correlation coefficient represents the correlation (ranging from -1 to 1) between a specific predictor and the criterion when all other predictors are statistically removed from the specific predictor in question, but not the criterion. In

contrast, the partial correlation coefficient represents the correlation (ranging from -1 to 1) between a specific predictor and the criterion when all other predictors are statistically removed from both the predictor in question and the criterion.

When the semi-partial correlation coefficient and partial correlation coefficients are squared, the result indicates the proportion of variance in the criterion that is shared by the specific predictor after: a) variance shared with the remaining predictors has been removed from the predictor only (for semi-partial correlation coefficients) or b) variance shared with the remaining predictors has been removed from both the predictor and criterion (for partial correlation coefficients).

It is important to realise that the partial regression coefficients, as well as the semi-partial and partial correlation coefficients respectively, are all indexes of independent contribution. Thus, calculating the significance test for one of these indexes is sufficient – the index most often utilised in this regard is the partial regression weight (Licht, 1995).

There are various types of MRC analyses, such as hierarchical regression, stepwise regression and simultaneous regression. The method of analysis employed in the present research study is *simultaneous regression*. It is the simplest form of MRC analysis, as all the independent variables (i.e. predictors) are entered into the regression equation directly to examine their contribution simultaneously, rather than adding or subtracting them individually (Kinnear & Gray, 2000; Licht, 1995).

MRC is not without its limitations and/or constraints. The following section presents some of the most significant issues to keep in mind when conducting MRC analyses.

Firstly, the multiple regression linear equation is sample specific. This means that, when the equation is used with a different sample than the original, its predictive accuracy and degree of relationship could shrink (procedures to determine the extent of shrinkage do exist; for examples see Licht, 1995).

Secondly, when trying to compare the independent contribution of predictors on the criterion, various issues need to be considered for interpretation purposes. For

instance, a predictor's independent contribution is, in fact, only independent of the other predictors in the study – the meaningfulness of its contribution rests on whether all relevant predictors (variables) were included in the study and / or equation in the first place.

Furthermore, the values of the semi-partial and partial correlation coefficients, as well as that of the partial regression coefficients, change with the addition of even a single new variable (predictor). In a similar vein, it is possible to obtain a significant correlation between a combination of predictors and the criterion (in other words, R) even when no single predictor makes a significant, independent contribution – excluding a predictor with a non-significant partial regression coefficient in this case would affect the other coefficient values and R . Thus, decisions to include and / or exclude predictors require careful theoretical reasoning.

As mentioned before, it is important to exercise caution when interpreting and comparing the size(s) of raw regression coefficients, as different variables' (predictors') units of measurement may differ. In order to ensure meaningful comparisons it is necessary to transform such raw scores into z (standardised) scores. The comparison of standardised coefficients is, however, limited to a particular sample due to their magnitude being influenced by sample variances; in other words, these coefficient sizes are unstable, and thus have limited generalisability, across samples.

Multicollinearity is an especially important issue to consider in the interpretation of MRC results. The general rule of thumb dictates, the higher the intercorrelation amongst the predictors, the more problems is encountered with regard to technical aspects, practical prediction and theoretical interpretation. More specifically, intercorrelations of $r > .80$ are regarded as too high and might be indicative of two predictors more or less measuring a single construct. Consequently, in MRC smaller rather than larger correlations amongst predictors are preferred.

In addition, the meaningfulness of predictors increases to the extent that each predictor is basically uncorrelated with every other predictor, but highly correlated with the criterion – this situation renders each predictor important in the prediction of

the criterion. Also, the higher the intercorrelations amongst predictors, the bigger the probability that they share the same variance in the criterion. MRC is unable to identify which predictor contributes the redundant variance – this decision falls unto the researcher and ultimately depends on sound theoretical reasoning.

From the above discussion it is evident that multicollinearity is the proverbial “catch-22” (Licht, 1995, p.48) of MRC: it controls for the effect of third variables via statistical control – for third variables to be credible role players, however, they need to be highly correlated with both the relevant predictor and the criterion; thus, if one attempts to ease interpretation by including mostly uncorrelated predictors, the power of statistical control is cancelled out. At the same time, highly correlated predictors obfuscate the interpretation of partial regression coefficients and leave great amounts of variance in the criterion unsolved by partial coefficients of correlation.

Therefore, the choice of which predictors to include and / or exclude in a research study depends on the existence of a sound and valid theoretical framework from which to argue.



5.3.5.3. Item Analysis

An item analysis was conducted on the scales that were used for data gathering. The purpose of item analysis is to ascertain which of the items in a scale, if any, have a negative effect on the overall reliability of the scale due to their inclusion in the particular scale. If a significant improvement in overall scale reliability occurs as a result of excluding a particular item(s), such item(s) is / are also excluded from the subsequent factor analysis. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha) for each questionnaire, followed by the results of each questionnaire’s item analysis, is presented next.

Cronbach’s alpha for the five **emotional exhaustion** items of the MBI-GS is **.888**, and the item analysis failed to indicate an improvement in overall scale reliability with the exclusion of any item.

For the eight **organisational (affective) commitment** items Cronbach’s alpha is **.745**. The item analysis indicated an incremental improvement in overall scale reliability to

.767 if item 4 is eliminated from the scale (“I think I could become as easily attached to another organization as I am to this one” – reverse scored). However, due to its insignificant improvement the item is retained for factor analysis.

Regarding the three **intentions to leave** items Cronbach’s alpha is **.885**. The item analysis indicated no improvement in overall scale reliability with the exclusion of any one item.

Cronbach’s alpha for the 12 **supervisor support** items is **.829**. The overall scale reliability showed an improvement with the elimination of three items: item three (**.833** – “My immediate supervisor ... appears to experience stress in his/her job”); item seven (**.871** – “My immediate supervisor ... seems tense and frustrated when we talk”) and item 11 (**.884** – “My immediate supervisor ... is too busy to talk with me”). It was later established (through electronic communication with C. Brotheridge) that these items actually measure supervisor stress and are treated as a separate scale from the support scale. These items were excluded from the subsequent factor analysis.

Lastly, for the 14 **emotional labour** items Cronbach’s alpha is **.852**. Incremental improvements in overall scale reliability occurred with the exclusion of two items: item 11 (**.854** – “Hide my true feelings about a situation”) and item 12 (**.855** – “Make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to others”). However, due to their limited effect they were retained in the factor analysis.

5.3.5.4. Factor Analysis

In response to the item analysis process discussed above *factor analysis* was conducted with regard to each construct for the purpose of establishing the existence (or absence) of an underlying uni-dimensional factor structure. The factor analysis method employed to extract factors in the present research study is *Principal Axis Factoring* with *Oblique Rotation*.

The purpose of factor analysis is to analyse “... the structure of the interrelationships (correlations) among a large number of variables ... by defining a set of common underlying dimensions, known as **factors**” (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998, p.90). Factor analysis considers all variables simultaneously – that is, each variable is

related to all other variables - and forms factors not with the aim of predicting a dependent variable, but to maximise their explanation of the total variable set.

Factor analysis entails three steps: Firstly, an unrotated factor matrix is computed as a means of receiving a first indication of the number of factors to extract for each construct under study. This factor matrix may fail, however, to provide a significant pattern of variable loadings; therefore, a second step is required, namely using a rotational method to arrive at a simpler and theoretically more meaningful factor solution(s) through simplifying the factor matrix's rows and columns. The third and last step entails deciding whether to respecify the factor model.

The rotation method employed in the present study is oblique rotation: this method does not preserve independence between the rotated factors, but allows for correlated factors. This method is deemed suitable "... if the ultimate goal of the factor analysis is to obtain several theoretically meaningful factors or constructs ..." (Hair et al., 1998, p.110).

Only one factor was extracted for **emotional exhaustion, intentions to leave** and **supervisor support** respectively. The percentage of variance explained by each factor is as follows: emotional exhaustion (**69%**); intentions to leave (**81%**), and supervisor support (**68%**).

Organisational (affective) commitment presented an underlying two-factor structure that corresponds to the positively worded items (first factor) and reverse scored items (second factor) as per the questionnaire instructions. As such, the two-factor structure is not viewed as problematic but as indicative of an inherent two-factor structure underlying affective commitment. The two-factor structure explains **55%** of the variance.

Emotional labour presented an underlying four-factor structure: Frequency of interactions, surface acting, and deep acting grouped into three different factors; intensity of emotional display and variety of emotional display, however, grouped together as a single factor. The four-factor structure explains **73%** of the variance.

In light of the factor analysis results it was decided to use *item parcelling* for the purposes of testing the subsequent measurement and structural models respectively.

5.3.5.5. Item Parcels and Structural Equation Modeling

In its simplest form an *item parcel* is defined as the “... sum of several items assessing the same construct” (Kishton & Widaman, 1994, cited in Hagtvet & Nasser, 2004, p.169). Bandalos (2002) describes the parcelling process as “... summing or averaging item scores from two or more items and using these parcel scores in place of the item scores in a SEM analysis” (p.78).

Despite the fact that the use of item parcelling in structural equation modelling (SEM) has become a relatively common practice in recent years (Bandalos, 2002), it has not received unanimous support from researchers. Most researchers agree that, in order to use item parcelling, items should be a priori known to have an underlying uni-dimensional structure. In such cases, item parcelling (in comparison to individual items) could result in, inter alia, improved model fit.

Two additional advantages of item parcelling are, a) the reliability of item parcel scores is usually higher than for individual item scores, and b) as the estimators in SEM require normally distributed continuous variables, and item parcels more closely approximate to normally distributed continuous variables than single items, item parcels are often the preferred method (Hagtvet & Nasser, 2004). If the uni-dimensional condition is not met, however, item parcelling could result in biased and misleading results, such as regarding actual model fit (Bandalos, 2002; Hagtvet & Nasser, 2004). It is noteworthy that item analysis was indeed utilised in the present study to investigate the assumption of uni-dimensionality.

Proponents of item parcelling argue, seeing that fewer parameters are required to define constructs when utilising item parcels, the latter is preferred, especially so in the case of small sample sizes (recall the relatively small $N = 84$ in the present study) (Little, Cunningham, Shahar & Widaman, 2002). Furthermore, structural models based on item parcel data a) are more parsimonious (i.e. have fewer estimated parameters both for defining a construct and an entire model), b) present a reduced possibility for dual loadings or correlated residuals to occur, and c) limit the

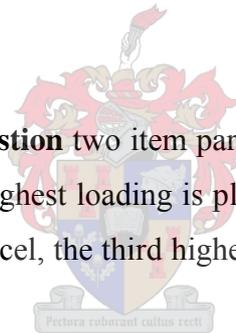
emergence of various sources of sampling error (MacCallum et al., 1999, cited in Little et al., 2002).

The item parcels in the present study were constructed in various ways in response to the item analysis results presented above. The **affective commitment** item parcels were built in accordance with its two-factor structure resulting in two item parcels: one parcel containing the positively worded items and the other parcel the reverse scored items.

The **emotional labour** item parcels were divided according to its indicated dimensions (as measured by the Emotional Labour scale) resulting in five parcels: frequency, intensity, variety, surface acting and deep acting.

The three **intentions to leave items** were kept as separate items as presented in the intentions to leave scale.

With regard to **emotional exhaustion** two item parcels were constructed by using the factor loadings as a guide: the highest loading is placed in the first parcel, the second highest loading in the second parcel, the third highest loading again in the first parcel, and so forth.

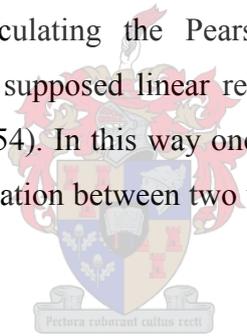


Two item parcels for **supervisor support** were constructed by using the same procedure as with emotional exhaustion.

After the item parcels for each latent variable (i.e. construct) are constructed, a measurement and structural model are tested respectively. The aim of structural equation modelling (SEM) is to determine the predictive ordering of factors (i.e. latent / unmeasured variables) that relate to measured variables (Klem, 2000). The measurement model links each observed indicator (i.e. item parcel) to the unobserved variables (constructs), thereby depicting the relationship of the indicators to their respective constructs (Knoke & Bohrnstedt, 1994) – stated differently, a measurement model is that “... part of a full model that relates *unmeasured variables* to *measured variables*” (Klem, 2000, p.256).

Thompson (2000) provides a somewhat more technical definition of the purpose of measurement models, namely they specify how "... a given construct ... expresses itself through the measured-observed variables ..." (p.279). A structural model, in comparison, is that "... part of a full model that summarizes the causal relationships between *unmeasured variables*". The final, full structural equation model is a model that combines the measurement model and structural model: It depicts both "... causal relationships among *unmeasured variables* and the relations of the unmeasured variables to *measured variables*" (Klem, 2000, p.255).

The evaluation of structural equation modelling (SEM) results entails an investigation into theoretical criteria, statistical criteria and assessment of fit – Klem (2000) remarks, model fit is of little significance if research results do not meet the first two criteria. Firstly, one should determine if the results are "theoretically sensible" (p.239), in other words, if the results converge with previous research. This is established by statistically calculating the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, a measure of "... a supposed linear relationship between two variables ..." (Kinnear & Gray, 2000, p.254). In this way one can determine the direction (i.e. positive or negative) of an association between two variables and whether it is similar to previous research findings.

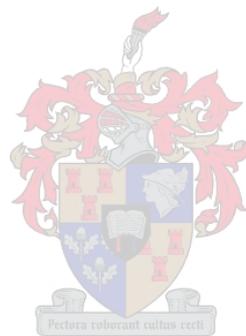


The second, statistical criteria is divided into two question parts that require answering: a) Is the model identified (i.e. does each parameter in the model have a unique solution; in other words, the possibility of an infinite number of equally plausible model parameters is eliminated), and b) are the model parameters reasonable (i.e. statistically acceptable). This is established by fitting the measurement model and evaluating its results. If the first two questions have been sufficiently dealt with, the final question that remains unanswered is, "Does the data fit the model?" (Klem, 2000, p.242). The criteria employed for establishing model fit is elaborated on in Chapter 6 under the heading "Results of Measurement and Structural Models".

5.4. SUMMARY

In the present chapter the research study's Methodology was explicated. In the following chapter (Chapter 6) the Results are presented for the quantitative (survey) research and qualitative (focus group) research. This is followed by an Interpretation

of the Results, as well as Conclusions drawn from the study and Recommendations for future research, in Chapter 7.



CHAPTER 6: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of both the quantitative and qualitative research respectively. The chapter commences with the quantitative research results and is followed by the qualitative research results.

6.2. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

6.2.1. Biographical data

Biographical data for the customer service representative (CSR) sample ($N = 84$) was gathered in the following categories: Race, Age, Education, Gender, and Home Language. The frequency tables for Race, Education, Gender and Home Language are presented in Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively, followed by a brief discussion of some of the most noteworthy frequencies.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	15	17.9	18.8	18.8
	Black	14	16.7	17.5	36.3
	Coloured	51	60.7	63.8	100.0
	Total	80	95.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	4.8		
Total		84	100.0		

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Grade 10	10	11.9	12.0	12.0
	Grade 11	2	2.4	2.4	14.5
	Grade 12	44	52.4	53.0	67.5
	Technikon Diploma	3	3.6	3.6	71.1
	Technical College Diploma	11	13.1	13.3	84.3
	University Degree	5	6.0	6.0	90.4

	Postgraduate Degree	2	2.4	2.4	92.8
	Other	6	7.1	7.2	100.0
	Total	83	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		84	100.0		

Table 4. Frequency Table for Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	14	16.7	16.9	16.9
	Female	69	82.1	83.1	100.0
	Total	83	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		84	100.0		

Table 5. Frequency Table for Home Language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Afrikaans	22	26.2	26.8	26.8
	English	46	54.8	56.1	82.9
	isiXhosa	12	14.3	14.6	97.6
	Other	2	2.4	2.4	100.0
	Total	82	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	2.4		
Total		84	100.0		

With regard to **race**, the biggest proportion of respondents is coloured (60,7%), followed by white (17,9%) and black (16,7%) respondents respectively.

The **gender** distribution of the respondents indicates an overwhelming majority of female respondents (82,1%) in comparison with males (16,7%).

The **education** breakdown shows that most respondents have a Grade 12 (52,4%), followed by 13,1% with a Technical College Diploma and 11,9% with a Grade 10 education.

Most of the respondents indicate their **home language** to be English (54,8%), followed by Afrikaans (26,2%) and isiXhosa (14,3%).

The descriptive statistics reflect a mean **age** of 33 years, with the boundaries at 21 years (minimum age) and 50 years (maximum age).

The Emotional Labour scale asks the respondents to estimate the *number of minutes* that a typical interaction with a customer takes them (i.e. the *duration of client interaction* dimension of emotional labour). The mode for estimated duration is 4-5 minutes; the shortest interaction lasts 2 minutes, and the longest interaction lasts 45 minutes.

6.2.2. Results of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Analysis

The first step in analysing the quantitative data entailed conducting a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis in SPSS.

For ease of reference the results are first presented in writing and then in tabular form. Table 6 summarises the correlations between the constructs using their total scores. This is followed by Table 7 that presents a breakdown of the correlations between the dimensions of emotional labour and the remaining constructs.

Total emotional labour (i.e. the sum of all the dimensions of emotional labour) is significantly related to supervisor support ($r = -.316$; $p < .01$). With regard to the *dimensions* of emotional labour the following correlations are significant:

Frequency of interactions (hereafter referred to as *frequency*) is significantly related to intensity of emotional display (hereafter referred to as *intensity*) ($r = .277$; $p < .05$), variety of emotional display (hereafter referred to as *variety*) ($r = .352$; $p < .01$), and deep acting ($r = .449$; $p < .01$) respectively.

Intensity of emotional display is significantly related to emotional exhaustion ($r = .278; p < .05$), affective commitment ($r = -.220; p < .05$), frequency ($r = .277; p < .05$), variety ($r = .633; p < .01$) and deep acting ($r = .262; p < .05$) respectively.

Variety of emotional display is significantly related to supervisor support ($r = -.315; p < .01$), frequency ($r = .352; p < .01$), intensity ($r = .633; p < .01$), surface acting ($r = .234; p < .05$) and deep acting ($r = .365; p < .01$) respectively.

Surface acting is significantly related to supervisor support ($r = -.218; p < .05$), variety ($r = .234; p < .05$) and deep acting ($r = .231; p < .05$).

Deep acting is significantly related to supervisor support ($r = -.237; p < .05$), frequency ($r = .449; p < .01$), intensity ($r = .262; p < .05$), variety ($r = .365; p < .01$) and surface acting ($r = .231; p < .05$).

Emotional exhaustion is significantly related to affective commitment ($r = -.518; p < .01$), intentions to leave ($r = .517; p < .01$) and intensity of emotional display ($r = .278; p < .05$) respectively.

Affective commitment is significantly related to emotional exhaustion ($r = -.518; p < .01$), intentions to leave ($r = -.664; p < .01$), supervisor support ($r = .264; p < .05$) and intensity of emotional display ($r = -.220; p < .05$).

Intentions to leave is significantly related to emotional exhaustion ($r = .517; p < .01$) and affective commitment ($r = -.664; p < .01$).

Supervisor support is significantly related to affective commitment ($r = .264; p < .05$), variety ($r = -.315; p < .01$), surface acting ($r = -.218; p < .05$) and deep acting ($r = -.237; p < .05$).

		TOTEML	TOTMBI	TOTOC	TOTITL	TOTSUP
TOTEML	Pearson Correlation	1	.186	-.169	.208	-.316(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.090	.131	.057	.003
	N	84	84	81	84	84
TOTMBI	Pearson Correlation	.186	1	-.518(**)	.517(**)	-.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.090		.000	.000	.293
	N	84	84	81	84	84
TOTOC	Pearson Correlation	-.169	-.518(**)	1	-.664(**)	.264(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.131	.000		.000	.017
	N	81	81	81	81	81
TOTITL	Pearson Correlation	.208	.517(**)	-.664(**)	1	-.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.057	.000	.000		.118
	N	84	84	81	84	84
TOTSUP	Pearson Correlation	-.316(**)	-.116	.264(*)	-.172	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.293	.017	.118	
	N	84	84	81	84	84
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).						
* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).						

		TOTMBI	TOTOC	TOTITL	TOTSUP	TOTFREQ	TOTINT	TOTVAR	TOTSA	TOTDA
TOTMBI	Pearson Correlation	1	-.518(**)	.517(**)	-.116	.106	.278(*)	.141	.091	.057
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.293	.337	.010	.200	.411	.607
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
TOTOC	Pearson Correlation	-.518(**)	1	-.664(**)	.264(*)	-.165	-.220(*)	-.172	-.040	.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.017	.142	.048	.125	.721	.977
	N	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81	81
TOTITL	Pearson Correlation	.517(**)	-.664(**)	1	-.172	.114	.147	.173	.168	.104

	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.118	.303	.183	.115	.127	.348
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
TOTSUP	Pearson Correlation	-.116	.264(*)	-.172	1	-.129	-.154	-.315(**)	-.218(*)	-.237(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.293	.017	.118		.243	.162	.004	.046	.030
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
TOTFREQ	Pearson Correlation	.106	-.165	.114	-.129	1	.277(*)	.352(**)	.184	.449(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.337	.142	.303	.243		.011	.001	.095	.000
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
TOTINT	Pearson Correlation	.278(*)	-.220(*)	.147	-.154	.277(*)	1	.633(**)	.208	.262(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.048	.183	.162	.011		.000	.057	.016
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
TOTVAR	Pearson Correlation	.141	-.172	.173	-.315(**)	.352(**)	.633(**)	1	.234(*)	.365(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.200	.125	.115	.004	.001	.000		.032	.001
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
TOTSA	Pearson Correlation	.091	-.040	.168	-.218(*)	.184	.208	.234(*)	1	.231(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.411	.721	.127	.046	.095	.057	.032		.035
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
TOTDA	Pearson Correlation	.057	.003	.104	-.237(*)	.449(**)	.262(*)	.365(**)	.231(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.607	.977	.348	.030	.000	.016	.001	.035	
	N	84	81	84	84	84	84	84	84	84

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

6.2.3. Results of Multiple Regression / Correlation (MRC)

The following section presents the results of the simultaneous multiple regression analysis. For ease of reference, the results are first presented in writing and then in tabular form (see Tables 8, 9, 10 and 11).

The first regression model includes *emotional labour*, *emotional exhaustion* and *supervisor support* as the predictors (independent variables), and *organisational commitment* as the criterion (dependent variable).

The results for $N = 84$ are as follows (the decimals are rounded up to the nearest 10):

Multiple correlation coefficient (R) = .56

Multiple coefficient of determination (R^2) = .31

Adjusted multiple coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) = .28

The regression model is statistically significant at $p < .05$

The Beta (β) values (i.e. standardised coefficients) for the individual (independent) predictors are as follows:

Emotional exhaustion = -.489 ($p < .05$)

Supervisor support = .194 ($p > .05$)

Emotional labour = -.023 ($p > .05$)

Table 8. R^2 Values and Model Significance Test

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.555(a)	.308	.281	8.98630		
a Predictors: (Constant), TOTEML, TOTMBI, TOTSUP						
ANOVA(b)						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2770.697	3	923.566	11.437	.000(a)
	Residual	6218.033	77	80.754		
	Total	8988.730	80			
a Predictors: (Constant), TOTEML, TOTMBI, TOTSUP						
b Dependent Variable: TOTOC						

Table 9. Values of Standardised Beta Coefficients

Coefficients(a)						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	36.960	7.629		4.845	.000
	TOTMBI	-.628	.124	-.489	-5.073	.000
	TOTSUP	.138	.072	.194	1.923	.058
	TOTEML	-.027	.119	-.023	-.228	.821

a Dependent Variable: TOTOC

The second regression model includes *organisational commitment*, *emotional labour*, *emotional exhaustion* and *supervisor support* as the predictors (independent variables), and *intentions to leave* as the criterion (dependent variable).

The results for $N = 84$ are as follows (the decimals are rounded up to the nearest 10):

Multiple correlation coefficient (R) = .70

Multiple coefficient of determination (R^2) = .49

Adjusted multiple coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) = .46

The regression model is statistically significant at $p < .05$

The Beta (β) values (i.e. standardised coefficients) for the individual (independent) predictors are as follows:

Organisational commitment = $-.535$ ($p < .05$)

Emotional exhaustion = $.238$ ($p < .05$)

Supervisor support = $.016$ ($p > .05$)

Emotional labour = $.059$ ($p > .05$)

Table 10. R^2 Values and Model Significance Test

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.698(a)	.487	.460	4.81934

a Predictors: (Constant), TOTOC, TOTEML, TOTSUP, TOTMBI

ANOVA(b)						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1678.062	4	419.515	18.062	.000(a)
	Residual	1765.183	76	23.226		
	Total	3443.244	80			
a Predictors: (Constant), TOTOC, TOTEML, TOTSUP, TOTMBI						
b Dependent Variable: TOTITL						

Table 11. Values of Standardised Beta Coefficients

Coefficients(a)						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	17.206	4.673		3.682	.000
	TOTMBI	.189	.077	.238	2.463	.016
	TOTSUP	.007	.039	.016	.181	.857
	TOTEML	.043	.064	.059	.672	.504
	TOTOC	-.331	.061	-.535	-5.419	.000
a Dependent Variable: TOTITL						

Due to collinearity between organisational commitment and intentions to leave, commitment was excluded from a third regression model that includes *emotional exhaustion*, *supervisor support* and *emotional labour* as predictors of intentions to leave, the criterion (dependent variable).

The results for $N = 84$ are as follows (the decimals are rounded up to the nearest 10):

Multiple correlation coefficient (R) = .54

Multiple coefficient of determination (R^2) = .29

Adjusted multiple coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) = .26

The regression model is statistically significant at $p < .05$

The Beta (β) values (i.e. standardised coefficients) for the individual (independent) predictors are as follows:

Emotional exhaustion = .490 ($p < .05$)

Supervisor support = -.087 ($p > .05$)

Emotional labour = .090 ($p > .05$)

Table 12. R^2 Values and Model Significance Test

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.536(a)	.287	.260	5.63193

a Predictors: (Constant), TOTEML, TOTMBI, TOTSUP

ANOVA(b)						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1021.417	3	340.472	10.734	.000(a)
	Residual	2537.492	80	31.719		
	Total	3558.909	83			

a Predictors: (Constant), TOTEML, TOTMBI, TOTSUP
b Dependent Variable: TOTITL

Table 13. Values of Standardised Beta Coefficients

Coefficients(a)						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.338	4.514		.961	.339
	TOTMBI	.393	.077	.490	5.092	.000
	TOTSUP	-.038	.044	-.087	-.869	.388
	TOTEML	.064	.071	.090	.890	.376

a Dependent Variable: TOTITL

6.2.4. Results of Measurement and Structural Models

With regard to latent variable models best practice dictates that “...a sequence of model tests...” (Kelloway, 1998, p.107) should be performed in which the measurement model is fitted first, followed by an investigation into the relevant structural parameters. This methodology is recommended in light of the complexity inherent in evaluating model fit: *If the model under consideration does not fit the data, this could be due to a) a measurement model with poor fit, b) a structural model that is ill-fitting, or c) both (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988, cited in Kelloway, 1998).*

Furthermore, the so-called “...full model, incorporating both structural and measurement relationships, cannot provide a better fit to the data than does the measurement model” (Kelloway, 1998, p.107). Thus, the above implies that a comprehension of the structure and fit of the measurement model should improve the evaluation and interpretation of the full latent variable model. This is also the methodology followed in the present research study.

The measurement model and structural model both used *maximum likelihood estimation* as its estimation method. This method searches for model parameters that can optimally reproduce the estimated population variance-covariance matrix (Thompson, 2000) and is also used most often in structural equation modelling (SEM) due to its robustness with regard to violations of normality (i.e. when the variables do not have a multivariate normal distribution) (Klem, 2000).

For the purpose of presenting the research results, the measurement model and structural model are first portrayed visually and then followed by their respective Goodness of Fit statistics.



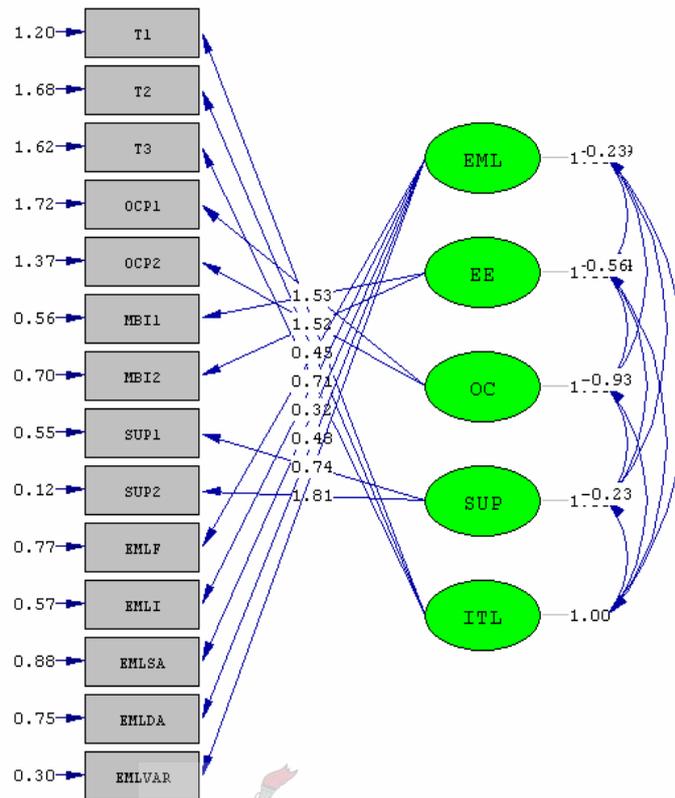


Figure 2. Measurement Model

The Goodness of Fit Statistics for the Measurement Model are as follows:

Degrees of freedom = 67

Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square = 84.86 ($P = 0.069$)

Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square = 67.05 ($P = 0.48$)

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.0029

P -value for test of Close Fit (RMSEA < .05) = 0.84

90 Percent Confidence Interval for RMSEA = (0.0 ; 0.065)

Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.89

Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = 0.97

Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.97

Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.98

Summary Statistics for Standardised Residuals:

Smallest Standardised Residual = -2.44

Median Standardised Residual = 0.00

Largest Standardised Residual = 2.71

Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = 0.057

Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.88

Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.82

Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index (PGFI) = 0.56

Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) for X-Variables:

Intentions to leave:

T1 = 0.80

T2 = 0.72

T3 = 0.71

Organisational Commitment:

OCP1 = 0.35

OCP2 = 0.43

Emotional Exhaustion:

MBI1 = 0.81

MBI2 = 0.77

Supervisor Support:

SUP1 = 0.82

SUP2 = 0.96

Emotional Labour:

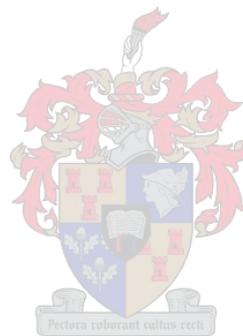
EMLF = 0.21

EMLI = 0.47

EMLSA = 0.10

EMLDA = 0.24

EMLVAR = 0.65



Completely Standardised Solution (Lambda-X parameter estimates), standard errors, and **t-values (in bold)** in order:

Intentions to Leave:

T1 = 0.89 (0.14) **15.96**

T2 = 0.85 (0.18) **11.59**

T3 = 0.84 (0.17) **11.75**

Organisational (Affective) Commitment:

OCP1 = 0.59 (0.20) **4.86**

$$\text{OCP2} = 0.65 (0.18) \mathbf{5.68}$$

Emotional Exhaustion:

$$\text{MBI1} = 0.90 (0.16) \mathbf{9.62}$$

$$\text{MBI2} = 0.88 (0.17) \mathbf{8.85}$$

Supervisor Support:

$$\text{SUP1} = 0.90 (0.16) \mathbf{10.09}$$

$$\text{SUP2} = 0.98 (0.15) \mathbf{11.96}$$

Emotional Labour:

$$\text{EMLF} = 0.46 (0.11) \mathbf{3.98}$$

$$\text{EMLI} = 0.69 (0.11) \mathbf{6.42}$$

$$\text{EMLSA} = 0.32 (0.15) \mathbf{2.10}$$

$$\text{EMLDA} = 0.49 (0.13) \mathbf{3.74}$$

$$\text{EMLVAR} = 0.81 (0.09) \mathbf{7.98}$$

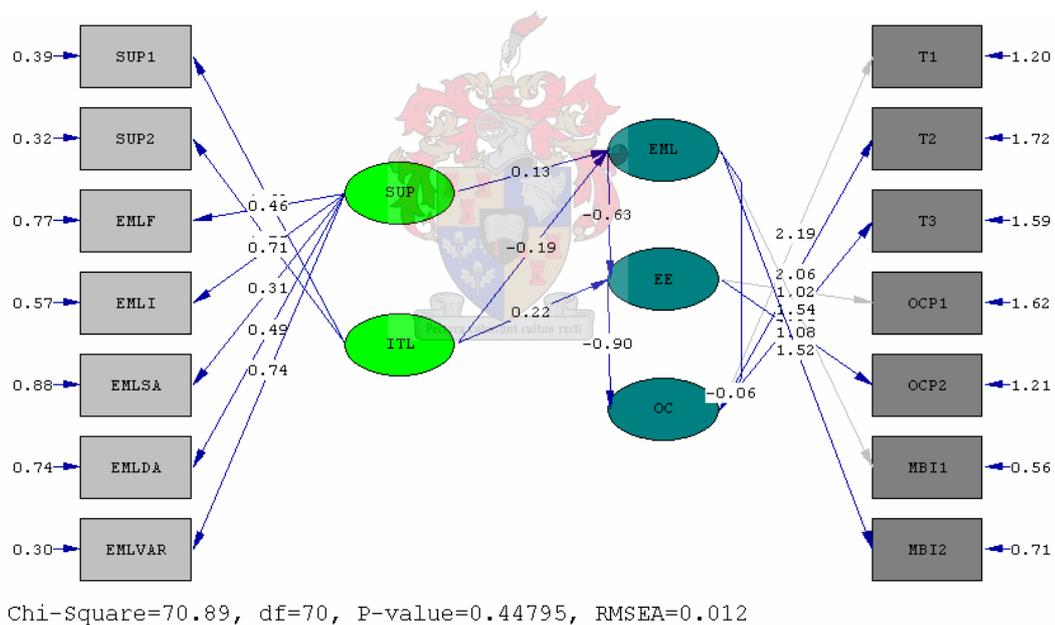


Figure 3. Structural Model

The Goodness of Fit statistics for the structural model are as follows:

Degrees of freedom = 70

Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square = 89.83 ($P = 0.055$)

Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square = 70.89 ($P = 0.45$)

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.012

P-value for test of Close Fit (RMSEA < .05) = 0.83

90 Percent Confidence Interval for RMSEA = (0.0 ; 0.065)

Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.89

Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) = 0.96

Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.97

Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.97

Summary Statistics for Standardised Residuals:

Smallest Standardised Residual = -2.77

Median Standardised Residual = 0.00

Largest Standardised Residual = 2.69

Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) = 0.061

Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) = 0.88

Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) = 0.82

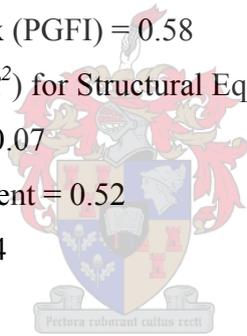
Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index (PGFI) = 0.58

Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) for Structural Equations:

Emotional Exhaustion = 0.07

Organisational Commitment = 0.52

Intentions to Leave = 0.74



Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) for Y-Variables:

Intentions to leave:

T1 = 0.80

T2 = 0.71

T3 = 0.72

Organisational Commitment:

OCP1 = 0.39

OCP2 = 0.49

Emotional Exhaustion:

MBI1 = 0.81

MBI2 = 0.76

Squared Multiple Correlations (R^2) for X-Variables:

Supervisor Support:

$$\text{SUP1} = 0.87$$

$$\text{SUP2} = 0.91$$

Emotional Labour:

$$\text{EMLF} = 0.21$$

$$\text{EMLI} = 0.47$$

$$\text{EMLSA} = 0.10$$

$$\text{EMLDA} = 0.24$$

$$\text{EMLVAR} = 0.65$$

Completely Standardised Solution (Lambda-Y parameter estimates), standard errors, and *t*-values (**in bold**) in order:

Intentions to Leave:

$$\text{T1} = 0.89 \text{ (standard error and } t\text{-value not indicated in output)}$$

$$\text{T2} = 0.84 (0.19) \mathbf{10.98}$$

$$\text{T3} = 0.85 (0.16) \mathbf{12.44}$$

Organisational (Affective) Commitment:

$$\text{OCP1} = 0.62 \text{ (standard error and } t\text{-value not indicated in output)}$$

$$\text{OCP2} = 0.70 (0.22) \mathbf{4.83}$$

Emotional Exhaustion:

$$\text{MBI1} = 0.90 \text{ (standard error and } t\text{-value not indicated in output)}$$

$$\text{MBI2} = 0.87 (0.23) \mathbf{6.72}$$

Completely Standardised Solution (Lambda-X parameter estimates), standard errors, and *t*-values (**in bold**) in order:

Supervisor Support:

$$\text{SUP1} = 0.93 (0.16) \mathbf{10.11}$$

$$\text{SUP2} = 0.95 (0.17) \mathbf{10.61}$$

Emotional Labour:

$$\text{EMLF} = 0.46 (0.11) \mathbf{3.99}$$

$$\text{EMLI} = 0.69 (0.11) \mathbf{6.43}$$

$$\text{EMLSA} = 0.32 (0.15) \mathbf{2.06}$$

$$\text{EMLDA} = 0.49 (0.13) \mathbf{3.78}$$

$$\text{EMLVAR} = 0.80 (0.09) \mathbf{7.89}$$

Statistical Findings with regard to the Proposed Propositions (presented in Chapter 1) are presented next for the Beta and Gamma matrices respectively.

Beta (β) Matrix:

H₀₄: Emotional exhaustion will not be statistically and significantly related to organisational commitment.

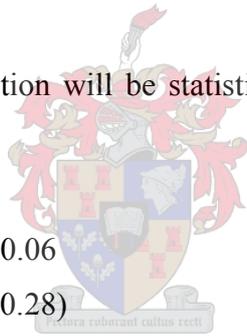
H_{a4}: Emotional exhaustion will be statistically and significantly related to organisational commitment.

Finding: Standardised $\beta = -0.63$
Standard Error = (0.17)
 t -value = **-3.62**

H₀₅: Emotional exhaustion will not be statistically and significantly related to intentions to leave.

H_{a5}: Emotional exhaustion will be statistically and significantly related to intentions to leave.

Finding: Standardised $\beta = -0.06$
Standard Error = (0.28)
 t -value = **-0.21**



H₀₆: Organisational commitment will not be statistically and significantly related to intentions to leave.

H_{a6}: Organisational commitment will be statistically and significantly related to intentions to leave.

Finding: Standardised $\beta = -0.90$
Standard Error = (0.36)
 t -value = **-2.52**

Gamma (γ) Matrix:

H₀₁: Emotional labour will not be statistically and significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

H_{a1}: Emotional labour will be statistically and significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

Finding: Standardised $\gamma = 0.13$
Standard Error = (0.15)
 t -value = **0.88**

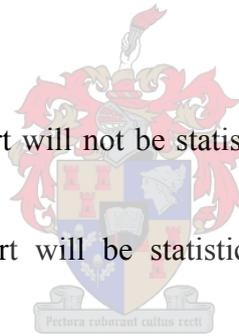
H₀₂: Supervisor support will not be statistically and significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

H_{a2}: Supervisor support will be statistically and significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

Finding: Standardised $\gamma = -0.19$
Standard Error = (0.15)
 t -value = **-1.32**

H₀₃: Supervisor support will not be statistically and significantly related to organisational commitment.

H_{a3}: Supervisor support will be statistically and significantly related to organisational commitment.



Finding: Standardised $\gamma = 0.22$
Standard Error = (0.13)
 t -value = **1.73**

Findings (standardised values, standard errors and t -values, **in bold**, listed in order) with regard to the total and indirect effects for the model follow (column affects row):

Total effects of Ksi (ξ) on Eta (η):

	EML	SUP
EE	0.13 (0.15) 0.88	-0.19 (0.15) -1.32
OC	-0.08	0.34

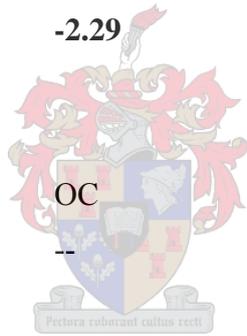
	(0.10)	(0.16)
	-0.82	2.18
ITL	0.07	-0.29
	(0.08)	(0.13)
	0.82	-2.29

Indirect effects of ξ on η :

	EML	SUP
EE	--	--
OC	-0.08	0.12
	(0.10)	(0.10)
	-0.82	1.16
ITL	0.07	-0.29
	(0.08)	(0.13)
	0.82	-2.29

Total effects of η on η :

	EE	OC	ITL
EE	--	--	--
OC	-0.63		
	(0.17)		
	-3.62	--	--
ITL	0.51	-0.90	--
	(0.13)	(0.36)	
	4.04	-2.52	



Indirect effects of η on η :

	EE	OC	ITL
EE	--	--	--
OC	--	--	--
ITL	0.57	--	--
	(0.25)		
	2.26		

Thompson (2000) advises, it is important to evaluate the fit of measurement and structural models with multiple fit statistics in order to avoid reaching judgements and / or conclusions that are biased towards the particular analytical method used. In order to facilitate the interpretation of model fit in Chapter 7, the guidelines pertaining to each reported Goodness of Fit statistic are briefly discussed.

Kelloway (1998) provides a relatively uncomplicated manner of conceptualising the various fit statistics by categorising them according to *Absolute Fit Statistics*, *Comparative Fit Statistics* and *Parsimonious Fit Statistics*. A similar conceptualisation is followed here to simplify the presentation of the Goodness of Fit Statistics.

6.2.4.1. Absolute Fit Statistics

Absolute Fit Statistics are concerned with the ability of the model in question to reproduce the actual covariance matrix (Kelloway, 1998).

The *Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square* is the traditional measure for evaluating overall model fit by testing the null hypothesis $\Sigma = \Sigma(\Theta)$ (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). Σ designates the population covariance matrix, $\Sigma(\Theta)$ is the implied covariance matrix according to the model and, contradictory to customary hypothesis testing, the aim is *not* to reject the null hypothesis as "... a nonsignificant χ^2 indicates that the model 'fits' the data in that the model can reproduce the population covariance matrix" (Kelloway, 1998, p. 25). An additional χ^2 measure that is important for consideration in evaluating exact model fit is the *Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square*.

The *Root Mean Squared Residual (RMR)* is the "... square root of the mean of the squared discrepancies between the implied and observed covariance matrices" (Kelloway, 1998, p.27). Due to the RMR being sensitive to the variables' scale of measurement, Lisrel also provides the *Standardised RMR*: This is a summary measure of the *standardised residuals*, with a lower value 0 (zero) and an upper value 1 (one), and values less than 0.05 indicative of a good (acceptable) model fit.

The *Standardised Residuals* are calculated by dividing the fitted residuals by their estimated standard errors (fitted residuals indicate the difference between the sample

variance and the fitted model's variance – if the residuals are small, model fit is good). A standardised residual is considered large if it exceeds the absolute value 2.58.

The *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)* is based on the analysis of residuals and is becoming one of the most useful criteria in SEM (Byrne, 1998, cited in Thompson, 2000; Kelloway, 1998). According to Steiger (1990, cited in Kelloway, 1998) values closer to 0 are desired, with values between 0.08 and 0.05 indicating a reasonable error of approximation (i.e. mediocre fit), values below 0.05 indicating a very good fit, and values below 0.01 suggestive of outstanding fit to the data.

Lisrel also executes a test of the closeness of fit (i.e. testing the hypothesis $H_0: RMSEA < 0.05$) and supplies a 90% confidence interval for the RMSEA (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). If the confidence interval includes the value 0.05, the H_0 of close fit is *not* rejected.

The *Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)* and *Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)* compare the ability of a model versus no model to reproduce the variance-covariance matrix (the AGFI adjusts the GFI for degrees of freedom). Values exceeding .90 or .95 are believed to indicate correctly specified models and a value of 1 indicates perfect model fit. According to Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000) the GFI should be used, as it is the most reliable index of absolute fit in most studies.

In order to establish the reliability of indicators in the measurement model, Lisrel reports R^2 values for each indicator (i.e. X-value): These squared multiple correlation values portray the amount of variance in each manifest indicator (i.e. observed variable) that is accounted for by its underlying latent variable.

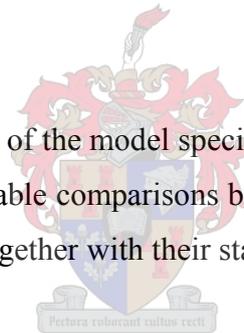
In the structural model, R^2 values for a) the structural equations, as well as b) the X- and Y-variables respectively are provided. In the former case (a), R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the endogeneous (dependent) latent variables as explained by the model. In the latter case (b), R^2 indicates the proportion of variance in the unstandardised endogeneous (dependent) or exogeneous (independent) indicator

variables respectively, as explained by the Eta (η) or Ksi (ξ) (i.e. latent variables) to which they are linked.

Kelloway (1998) explains, “It is quite possible to have a well-fitting model that explains only a modest amount of variance in the endogeneous variables” (p.28). Therefore, in order to assess the accuracy of the model, it is necessary to scrutinise individual model parameters.

For this purpose, Lisrel output reports the unstandardised parameter estimates for all the equations contained in the model, together with their standard errors and t -values. It is recommended that researchers consult the *Completely Standardised Solution* section of the output in order to enable comparisons of the validity of different indicators measuring a single construct. Indicator loadings are significant (at $p < .05$) as indicated by absolute t -values of 1.96 or higher (Diamantopoulos & Siguaaw, 2000; Kelloway, 1998).

With regard to the structural part of the model specifically, Lisrel provides completely standardised parameters (that enable comparisons between the latter) for the Beta and Gamma matrices respectively, together with their standard errors and t -values.



The Beta matrix assesses the significance of the estimated path coefficients (β) and expresses the strength of the influence of eta (η) on eta (η). In a similar fashion, the Gamma matrix assesses the significance of the estimated path coefficients (γ) and expresses the strength of the influence of ksi (ξ) on eta (η). Thus, the path coefficients provide the results of the proposed and tested causal relationships amongst the latent variables and enable decisions on whether to reject the respective null hypotheses.

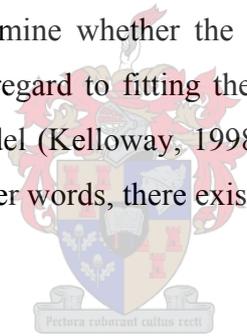
In addition to the above hypothesis testing Lisrel also lists the total and indirect effects respectively of a) ksi on eta, and b) eta on eta. The total effect of an exogeneous variable on an endogeneous variable is computed by adding the indirect effect of a variable to its direct effect – stated differently, it “...is the sum of the direct (simple paths) and indirect (compound paths) linking the two variables” (Kelloway, 1998, p.96) - and the indirect effect represents the influence of an exogeneous variable on an endogeneous variable, as mediated by one or more intervening

variables. In this regard, Kelloway (1998) emphasises, researchers should consider the implications of indirect relationships implicit in their models - he mentions the example of the indirect relationship X - Y- Z in which X influences Z *through* Y.

Kelloway (1998) explains, "...for each mediated relationship in a model, there are two plausible rival specifications: a partially mediated model and a nonmediated model" (p.85). Firstly, a *mediated* model means, X causes Y, which in turn causes Z. In contrast, the *partially mediated* model proposes, X causes both Y and Z directly, and that Y is also a cause of Z in its own right. The nonmediated model suggests, X causes both Y and Z, but there is no relationship between Y and Z. The Lisrel output will be scrutinised so as to investigate the possible existence of significant indirect effects amongst the latent variables.

6.2.4.2. Comparative Fit Statistics

Comparative Fit Statistics determine whether the model in question is better than another competing model with regard to fitting the data. The latter model - the so-called *null* or *independence* model (Kelloway, 1998, p.30) - presumes independence of the measured variables; in other words, there exist no connecting paths between the constructs (variables).



The *Normed Fit Index (NFI)* indicates the percentage improvement in fit over the baseline model; for example, an NFI of .90 would indicate that the fitted model fits 90% better than the null model. NFI values range between 0 and 1, with values exceeding .90 or .95 indicative of adequate fit. The NFI, however, has the drawback of underestimation in the case of small sample sizes (cf. $N = 84$ in the present research study).

The *Nonnormed Fit Index (NNFI)* is an extension of the NFI and adjusts the latter for degrees of freedom. NNFI values may exceed the upper bound of 1; nevertheless, the interpretation of .90 as indicating good fit is still considered the rule of thumb.

In a similar vein, the values of the *Incremental Fit Index (IFI)* and *Comparative Fit Index (CFI)* respectively range between 0 and 1, with higher values (i.e. $> .90$) indicating a good fit to the data.

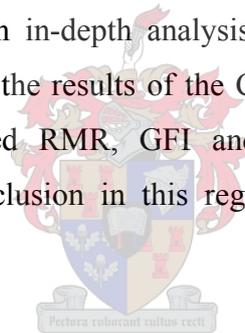
Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000) propose the NNFI and CFI should be used for determining comparative model fit.

6.2.4.3. Parsimonious Fit Statistics

Parsimonious Fit Statistics are based on the premise that the addition of parameters to a model could result in a better fit to the data.

The *Parsimony Goodness of Fit Index (PGFI)* adjusts the GFI for the model's degrees of freedom. Its values range from 0 to 1 – there is, however, no indication of 'how high' values should be to indicate parsimonious fit. As such, this index is more often used to compare theoretical models and hence choose the model with the better parsimonious fit (Kelloway, 1998).

From the above presentation of the research results it is evident that the evaluation of SEM results comprises an assessment of overall model fit, a detailed assessment of the measurement model, and an in-depth analysis into the structural model. With specific reference to overall fit, the results of the Chi-Square test(s), in combination with the RMSEA, Standardised RMR, GFI and CFI, should be adequate for evaluating and reaching a conclusion in this regard (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000).



The rationale for such comprehensive analysis is grounded in the possibility that a model may fit the data but simultaneously a) contain nonsignificant parameters, or b) contain significant parameters, albeit in the opposite direction as predicted (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000; Kelloway, 1998).

In Chapter 7 the research results are scrutinised in light of this rationale and the various Goodness of Fit Statistics presented above.

6.3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the qualitative content analysis, as discussed in Chapter 5, are presented next. In line with the inductive nature of content analysis, codes, subsequent categories and eventual themes were extracted from the data (interview text) against the backdrop of the researcher's contextual knowledge of the relevant literature. In addition, the themes were consciously extracted to correspond to the constructs in the

measurement and structural models, as the purpose of the qualitative results is to elaborate on and support the statistical results.

The construct labels are: *Emotional Labour* and its sub-dimensions (*frequency* of interaction; *intensity* of emotional display; *variety* of emotional display; *surface acting*, and *deep acting*); *Emotional Exhaustion*; *Supervisor (team leader) support*; *Organisational (Affective) Commitment* and *Intentions to leave*.

Firstly, examples of interview content from customer service representatives (CSRs) are provided. The reported speech (i.e. interview content) aims to describe the constructs and the CSRs' experience of, or reaction towards, each construct in the call centre. In some cases interview content could illuminate tentative 'explanations' for the correlations found amongst the constructs.

Secondly, examples of interview content from team leaders are presented in order to highlight differences *and* similarities existent between their perceptions and those of the CSRs in relation to the constructs and / or general experiences or issues in the call centre.

6.3.1. Construct-specific Interview content of Customer Service Representatives (CSRs)

In order to elucidate the association between the constructs and interview comments, each construct is briefly defined before being followed by its relevant interview comment(s).

6.3.1.1. Emotional labour

Emotional labour is defined as "...the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions" (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p.987), and "...the behavioural response to variations in the frequency, variety, intensity and duration of service interactions" (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003, p.367).

The second definition by Brotheridge and Lee (2003) delineates the dimensions of emotional labour as featured in the structural model, namely the frequency of client

interactions, the intensity and variety of emotional display, as well as surface and deep acting, respectively. Each of these will be presented first, followed by some more general themes relevant to emotional labour.

Firstly, the *frequency* of client interactions is referred to in terms of the quantity of incoming customer calls: a) “*Wat vir my stresvol is is nie die emosies nie, dis nie die computer nie, dit stres my nie uit nie, dis die time management, dit is my oproepe wat so kom ... vir my is dit oproepe wat in jou oor bly ... so so so*”; b) “*Hier is die gehoorstuk op jou oor ... 8 ure ‘n dag wat jy hier is, dit voel partykeer vir my ek wil daai ding afhaal en hom gooi dat hy daar anderkant trek ... ek dink partykeer dis net as ‘n mens ‘n bietjie te veel stres het dan voel jy daai ding op jou kop druk jou nog vas ook*”.

The *variety* of emotional displays can be divided into two *related* sections. Firstly, the variety of client emotions with which CSRs deal: a) “*When you answer a call that person on the other side has got lots of frustration. He’s got lots of complaints, he’s crying ... thousand types of emotions on the other side that you are sitting here with, that you are dealing with*”.

Secondly, the variety of emotions that CSRs experience themselves: a) “*You go from one call where a person shouts and shouts at you, I mean you get those abusive clients, then you go to the next client ... that lost a husband ... lost a baby and it’s one emotion go straight to a next emotion ... jumping from one extreme emotion to another extreme emotion*”; b) “*You’re on an emotional roller coaster, then you’re up, then you’re down ... then you’re feeling sad, then you’re feeling angry, then you’re happy*”.

The *intensity* of emotional displays is reflected in the extent to which CSRs feel emotionally involved with customers: “*Ek het lus om saam met haar te huil maar ek weet ek kan nie saam met haar huil nie want ek dink aan my eie kinders en ... ek kry trane in my oë en ek moet daai oproep hanteer asof ek nie koud is nie maar ek kan ook nie sit en huil aan die ander kant nie want hoe gaan dit nou klink, ek is veronderstel om haar te help en hier sit en huil ek ook ... maar daai emosies is nog beter as die negatiewe hierdie moeilike kliënte*”.

Surface acting can be inferred from statements like the following: a) *“I reached the point where I am tired of trying to butter things up ...”*; b) *“They will swear at you and they will tell you that you don’t know your job ... you have to in that situation when the member is like that you have to be very polite”*; c) *“While he’s shouting and telling you about your mother there you’re going through the screens and having a look and seeing what has upset him so that ... when he does calm down you’ve got an answer for him, ‘Sir I understand why you are upset ... this is what I am gonna do about it’”*.

CSRs also related the following statements that could be interpreted in the light of surface acting: a) *“We are now all becoming liars ... all you can actually do is lie to the member because I mean there is nothing else you can do, say ... you call the manager to ask ‘what can I say here’, but the manager is not actually willing to help you at all, so you must just lie”*; b) *“Swearing, shout, so you’re fighting, lying, and they are obviously upset as well, they are very upset, you keep on apologising”*.

The words “lying” and “lie” imply that CSRs might be experiencing emotional dissonance - that is, they recognise an *incongruence* between what they truly feel about something and what they portray / express to clients. Recall that surface acting is the *process* that perpetuates the *state* of emotional dissonance (see Chapter 3).

Deep acting could be inferred from such statements as: a) *“At the end of the day you try to handle that query so like tenderly so that the woman actually feels you support her ... like it is not just ... like a robot thingy where you have to punch in numbers but there is someone else on the other side that is actually there to support you ... emotionally”*; b) *“You are putting in a lot of energy to assist, to attend to the emotions ... taking a lot from yourself just to attend to their emotions and to put yourself in everybody’s shoes ... trying to relate to the call”*; c) *“You need to understand the condition immediately ... you’ve got to straight away take onus for the call...”*; d) *“If you are a call centre consultant you should be able to take the burden”*.

A brief presentation of some supplementary emotional labour themes - as discussed in the literature review and extracted from the focus group interviews - are presented next. Table 14 contains auxiliary interview comments on some additional themes for

the purpose of providing a holistic view of the multi-faceted nature of emotional labour (emotion work).

Emotional Contagion is reflected in the following statement: *“You’re on the phone you can be now in a jolly mood that person is going to bring you down completely you know”*.

Emotion Regulation is metaphorically presented in a manner that reminds one of operating a light switch: *“On a call centre you have to have those skills when a call is gone you must go to the next one ... you must put it behind you all the time ... switch on and off on and off all the time”*.

The following sentence could reflect a *consequence* of constantly regulating one’s emotions: *“She goes mad, I’m serious, she’s like ‘I don’t know how I’m feeling’ ... ‘I just wanna get away here’”*.



Table 14.

Supplementary Emotional Labour Themes and Interview Comments of CSRs

THEME(S)	ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW COMMENTS
Emotional Contagion	<p>“You do have your days where that very first call will take you into the gutter and then your whole day will just follow trend after that”;</p> <p>“If you are sitting at your desk and you get 10 bad calls straight after another are you still gonna be in a chirpy mood? I don’t think so ... and then it also affects the next call coz the next call might not necessarily be that type of call but because of the previous call you’ve kind of got your back up already now and ... defending yourself”;</p> <p>“We do have your lots of times in the course of the day you do have the call where the person can’t stop saying thank you for the kind service things like that which often brings you back, that puts you back again, that lifts</p>

	you up, but ... at the end of the day it's somewhere far and few between".
Emotion Regulation	"You feel you have the emotions – angry – but there is no way of letting it out ... your stomach is in a knot and there's nothing you can do about it, it will just stay that way until you maybe have a good call".
Emotional Overload – Anxiety Attack	"Bewerasies en hartkloppings ... mens huil nie sommer vir 'n moeilike ou nie jy kry bewerasies en jy kry hartkloppings ... en dan wil jy hê iemand moet dit kom oorvat want ek het nou genoeg gehartklop, gee my net 'n paar minute".

6.3.1.2. Burnout: Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion refers to the individual stress experience of burnout that entails feelings of emotional overextension and energy depletion due to a) one's contact with other people and b) the circumstances of the job (Burke & Richardson, 2001; Cooper et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Statements like the following encapsulate CSRs' feelings of being emotionally exhausted: a) *"I'm exhausted at the end of the day ... it's actually got a negative effect on your family life, it has a negative effect on you"*; b) *"You are so tired, you are so tired, the brain is tired, the body is tired, the brain is exhausted at the end of the workday, headaches, you know how panados go around in that call centre, it's frustration, it's really just emotionally ... I'm talking about breaking point stress"*.

6.3.1.3. Burnout: Cynicism and Inefficacy

Two components of burnout (*cynicism/depersonalisation* and *inefficacy/lack of personal accomplishment* respectively) are not included in the structural model. They do, however, become evident from the interview comments. In order to provide a comprehensive picture of the construct burnout as experienced by CSRs, these components and their respective interview comments are presented briefly.

The following statements indicate that CSRs begin to withdraw from clients and / or treat them as ‘objects’. **Cynicism / Depersonalisation** is engaged in as a coping mechanism in response to exhaustion: a) *“At the end of the day or at the end of a Friday do you feel like still sitting and listening to that bull the client is gonna give you, you just say ‘yes mam’ and ‘no mam’, they can hear it in your voice, they can hear what you’re saying”*; b) *“Ek herstel baie maklik na een oproep ... of die ou nou vir my gesê het whatever whatever dan dink ek net ‘ek ken nie vir jou nie so f*k jou gaan jy nou maar aan met jou dag ek het ‘n dag om aan te gaan mee’”*.

Inefficacy / Lack of personal accomplishment develops in parallel to exhaustion and cynicism, and is reflected in the following statement: a) *“I feel ... like I haven’t accomplished anything for the day ... because there is no mental stimulation to the job ... there is no stimulation at all, you feel more tired coz you haven’t been exercising your mind”*.

6.3.1.4. Supervisor Support

Supervisor support can be defined in terms of four types of support: a) *instrumental support* (providing tangible help in the form of goods or services); b) *emotional support* (portraying emotional concern/understanding/caring; showing love/empathy/sympathy); c) *informational support* (providing information to aid with problems, making decisions etc.), and d) *appraisal support* (providing information for self-evaluation/self-esteem purposes) (Cohen & Wills, 1985, p.313; Etzion, 1984, p.616; House, 1981, cited in Cooper et al., 2001, p.141; Sarros & Sarros, 1992, p.56).

For the purpose of the quantitative research (i.e. structural model) the focus was not so much on the type of support provided as on whether the source of support (i.e. supervisor / team leader support) is in fact related to the other constructs in the model. From the qualitative data (i.e. focus group interviews), however, the four types of support became quite apparent. Therefore, the interview comments are presented against the backdrop of the particular type of support. It will become evident that for the most part the comments indicate a lack of support.

For *instrumental support* the following statements are noteworthy: a) *“10 calls wanting to speak to a manager I mean but they are never willing to go and take a call*

... they never want to come to the phone”; b) “If I’ve got an irate member ... that wants to speak to a manager, she needs to be able to take over that call, she needs to ... know how to operate the computer ... to take that call ... because she doesn’t”; c) “You get your basic support but if you can go to her with a systems problem or something she will try her best to sort it out for you ... it’s technical support”.

For *informational support* the following statement is significant: a) “You call the manager to ask ‘what can I say here’ but the manager is not actually willing to help you at all”.

Statements like the following reflect *emotional support*: a) “Why don’t ... rather the people I’ve got here nurture them, make them want to be here, take unnecessary stresses away, let’s have a look and listen for once to what they are talking about, give them incentives, proper incentives to make them want to stay here”; b) “The member says to me ... ‘I need to speak to your manager’, then in a situation like that I need to have my manager on hand, to understand what I am talking about, to understand what I am dealing with”; c) “I would feel that your team leader is supposed to back you up, help you ...”; d) “We do get support but it’s ... I would say it’s due man ... you get your basic support ... but humane support, she’s a thing with a capital B ... ‘please sort out your problems and leave them at home when you come to work’”.

The following statement reflects *appraisal support*: a) “It also boils down to ... constant negativity ... from a managerial perspective, it’s always you’re doing this wrong or that wrong, but there is never any form of positive feedback ... you never get positive feedback, it’s like also you are going for your quality assessment, then you’ll be told you’re doing this this this ... and that wrong, but I scored 95% ... so I am doing something right ... surely I am doing something right, there’s this list of things you’re not doing right ... always on the negative”.

In addition to the types of support discussed above, CSRs also mention a more general and informal support structure – these comments also reflect a lack of support.

Firstly, **work colleagues** represent a potential source of support for CSRs. The following comments, however, indicate their inaccessibility due to, amongst other things, the way in which the call centre is structured: a) *“Ons kry nuwe mense, ons ken nie die mense nie ... ons is ‘n span, ons is veronderstel om as ‘n span saam te werk maar ons werk nie as ‘n span saam nie ... en ons ken niemand nie”*; b) *“Ons het nie regtig ‘n keuse nie, jou teetyd en jou lunchtye is vir jou uitgesit aan die begin van die week ... as jy nie vriende het in daai groep met wie jy lunch vat nie is jy ... alleen ... partykeer soek ek vir iemand net om bietjie te gesels mee”*.

Secondly, **other departments** in the call centre (that are supposed to support CSRs in the execution of their tasks) lack understanding for the nature of the CSRs’ work and hence do not support them adequately: a) *“There isn’t an understanding, I think the people in the call centre we take the calls but we are not getting the support ... I am alone here on an island and nobody understands what I’m saying ... I need the support of everybody else, of the whole team, of everybody else, I’m talking about all the back office ... that upsets me”*.

Thirdly, CSRs ironically cut themselves off from a potential source of support external to the work environment – **family** - in their attempts to mentally distance themselves from work: a) *“Once you’re out of here you don’t think ... nothing about work, I don’t even talk to my husband about work, even if there was a bad call a bad client I switch off my mind from anything that is work-related, you have to”*.

6.3.1.5. Organisational (Affective) Commitment

Organisational (Affective) Commitment is defined as “...the relative strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in a particular organization...” (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979, p.226) and is characterised in terms of a) a belief in and acceptance of the organisation’s goals and values; b) a willingness to exert effort and energy on behalf of the organisation and c) a desire to remain a member of the organisation.

The following statements could be indicative of *affective commitment*: a) *“The morale is also so low you don’t care anymore ... so OK I’m gonna do this in my lunchtime and I quickly fix it up and there’s one happy client but one out of ten million, what’s*

the use? To hell with it I'd rather go for a walk"; b) "It's a hundred minutes unavailable time ... well now lately I don't give a damn so I will just phone whenever I want to"; c) "I have neglected my family ... I would leave half past six and be here seven coz I want to listen to the voice mails, I don't do it anymore, why should I?"

6.3.1.6. Intentions to Leave

Intentions to leave is believed to be the "immediate psychological precursor" of turnover (Steel & Ovalle, 1984, cited in Maertz & Campion, 2001, p.349). Although turnover is considered a natural part of organisational life it involves both financial and non-financial costs for organisations (Weisberg, 1994).

The following statements reflect *thoughts and/or intentions to quit*: a) *"I wish I could abdicate this job"*; b) *"Everybody's looking for other jobs, everybody, on Monday morning you see the Jobfinder on everybody's desk"*; c) *"I am busy looking out for another job"*; d) *"I've been here for 6 years and ... it's terrible working in the call centre ... it is coming to the stage where people are actually thinking nothing of me so I am ready to leave ... I am about to leave, I need to work ... but I am really not happy"*; e) *"It is not always negativity just on the company that you're working for, the environment, it's also to me it's all about tolerance levels, you've been here now for 3 years in a call centre taking calls, that's enough! An average call centre agent's life span is a minimum of 2 years before you start getting gatvol and now you have been doing it for 6 years ... it's you as a person that has had enough"*.

It might be interesting to examine the above sentences in terms of a succession of events leading up to ultimate turnover.

The literature review provided a discussion of the nature of the call centre environment (Chapter 2). The CSRs' interview comments also illuminated some of these more salient characteristics, issues and / or concerns present in their particular work environment. Although the themes are not necessarily directly relevant to the structural model, some of the more prominent themes (with their respective interview comments) are briefly presented. Table 15 further elaborates on some of these themes for the purposes of providing a holistic view of the call centre environment and CSRs' experiences.

6.3.2. General Themes of CSRs

CSRs interact with customers on a continuous basis. It happens that these customers are sometimes frustrated about and angered due to inefficient work processes. The *person* who receives the blame, however, is the CSR answering the telephone. CSRs describe **client interactions** of this nature in the following manner: a) *“They swear ... they will swear at you and they will tell you that ‘you don’t know your job’; b) You get sworn at, you get abused, everyday”*.

CSRs realise they fulfil a **boundary-spanning role** in the call centre and that this position holds certain implications for them: a) *“We have to face the flack ... we are the ones who speak to the clients, we ... are the middle man who take to take the problem there; b) You got to sort out all their crap ... we seem to be like the factory workers, push up production ... we are, push up production”*.

In addition to the emotional labour work demands placed on CSRs by having to deal with (often times difficult) clients on a regular basis, CSRs are also expected to have a solid technical knowledge in order to deal with client queries accurately and capably: *“We do ... 12 different medical aids. So you have to know the rules of each medical aid and what we can allow and what you can’t so you need to know the rules off-hand if a client phones in ... so you must always be on hand what is allowed and what is not allowed ... and the rules, the rules is the big thing”*. In other words, CSRs’ **workload** is made up of *both* emotional demands and task demands.

As explained in Chapter 2, traditional call centres operate according to strict **script rules** that stipulate to CSRs what they *should*, or are allowed to, *do* on the job, *what* they are allowed to *say* to clients, as well as *how* they are allowed to *speak* to clients. In other words, such scripts dictate the *behaviour (performance)* of CSRs as well as their *speech content* in their interactions with clients.

An example of a **behaviour (performance) script** is: a) *“When we try, actually decide to do those follow-ups, like you decide to actually do more for the member, at the end of the day you must go and account to your supervisor for your quantity ... coz you didn’t reach your target, not even a thank you for having gone the extra mile, you serve your customer, ‘why are you unavailable so long?’”*.

The **speech script** is encapsulated in the following comment: a) *“They evaluate you on whether you say a name at the end, whether you say 021 or 011, you know, nonsense, stupid things, stupid things ... they don’t understand we’re not robots ... it’s people on the other side of the line, they are people, you can’t just stick to script ... even if you speak to a guy 3 times a day it has to be a regular greeting ... the name and every time you put someone on hold, ‘would you please mind holding’”*.

The behaviour (performance) script links up with an omnipresent tension in the call centre (and for CSRs), namely the requirement to adhere to both **quantity and quality targets** simultaneously: a) *“You are graded according to stats, everything is about figures at the end of the day ... and also you’re assessed on the quality of those calls at the same time, so it is quantity, quality and unavailable time”*.

The CSRs mention a **lack of promotion opportunities** for them in the call centre: *“It’s very hard for you to get a senior position once you work in the call centre coz ... when you’ve excelled in your position as a call centre agent they tend to want to retain you in that position ... they don’t give us the option of saying here’s a position, apply for it you people who are working with it”*. The CSRs also mention **feeling stuck** in the call centre: *“They just can’t get out ... there’s not a way out ... when you come in here you don’t have other experience but they won’t send you ... on training to get experience in other departments or other parts of the business so you are stuck here”*. It seems feasible to suggest that the lack of promotion opportunities for CSRs could be one factor that leads to CSRs’ feelings of being trapped.

CSRs describe the management style in the call centre as **crisis management**: *“What tends to happen in ... the call centre it’s not really management it’s more of crisis management, let’s deal with things as it happens”*. The CSRs also indicate a **lack of trust in their management** (i.e. team leaders): *“You know what we don’t trust our management they don’t deliver, we can’t trust them because so many things have been promised and it’s just not delivered”*. If one considers the CSRs’ comments with regard to their experienced *lack* of supervisor (team leader) support, it seems reasonable to suggest that this lack of support could be a contributing factor to their lack of trust in management.

The CSRs express high levels of frustration with regard to two related processes that impact on their daily work lives. Firstly, they experience the constant **monitoring** of their performance as belittling: *“You’re monitored on every little thing ... here it is like being in pre-primary ... not even Sub A, I don’t think they have progressed to that level yet, it’s you get treated like a child”*. Secondly, they regard the **quality assessors** (who conduct the quality assessments) as unqualified to accurately evaluate their performance: *“The QAs here that are QA-ing us on pre-cert calls but they have never done pre-cert, how can they assess you and your skills your soft skills and stuff if they’ve never done a call like that?”*.

In response to the above it seems that some CSRs develop feelings of **learned helplessness**: *“I feel very frustrated ... and what makes it worse is that there is nothing I can do about it, I mean nobody is gonna help me”*. Others create various sorts of **coping mechanisms**, such as: a) having a drink after work (alcohol use) (*“Go to the bar ... ek gaan drink elke aand ‘n glasie wyn ... om te relax ... daai is vir my totally relaxing, die dag se stres ... to unwind, it really does”*); b) taking planned sick leave (*“The sick leave it went through the roof coz people are tired, people are tired”*), and c) taking prescribed medication (*“More than 2 people have been put off for anxiety in the call centre ... for emotional stress and I don’t know how long the rest of us are gonna be able to take it and there are people that are on anti-depressants”*).

Table 15.

Additional Themes and Interview Comments pertaining to the Call Centre

THEME(S)	ADDITIONAL INTERVIEW COMMENTS
Boundary-spanning role of CSRs	<p>“At the end of the day they [<i>contributions department</i>] don’t have the stress that you have and you are trying to sort someone out ... not directly involved with the client”;</p> <p>“We are the ones who are the up-front people for the company ... we need to give the 100% service”.</p>
Service / Performance Script for CSRs	<p>“Die call centre is baie streng op ... as dit kom by professioneel optree, baie streng wat dit aanbetref”;</p>

<i>(behaviour script)</i>	<p>“I can’t deliver, I can’t fix it, I can, but I’m not allowed to, I’ve got to rely on other departments to do the things and they don’t do it ... I can’t deliver, I can see where the problem lies but you can’t fix it coz I’m not allowed to”;</p> <p>“There is a QA [<i>Quality Assessment</i>] document they e-mail it to you ‘this is what you got to do, read it and do it’”;</p> <p>“The very next call you ... move on with it don’t give it chance to gather yourself again ... here you’re not allowed, you can’t go anywhere here, you must just sit”.</p>
<p>Script Rules for CSRs with regard to Client Interactions (<i>speech script</i>)</p>	<p>“Die heel dag ... na ander mense se klagtes luister en soos ‘n parakiet net dieselfde ding oor en oor sê”;</p> <p>“Ons is te bang om te sê ons is so bang ons sê iets verkeerd ... kan nie vir jouself besluit nie”;</p> <p>“You got to be careful of how you say and what you speak, you cannot say certain things”;</p> <p>“From a client service point you have many times where you might be speaking to a member or a service provider that might not be happy with what you are telling them, you are very strictly guided, you are very restricted by what you can tell your caller”;</p> <p>“There is a set formula of how they assess your call, there’s a set formula of saying that you said the good morning at the right point, and the name was like you said the person’s name was not ahead of your good morning, you get marked up on that you know”.</p>
<p>Feelings of being trapped in the call centre</p>	<p>“We just want to be out of here ... you should come to the lifts here in the afternoons when we leave ... they try to they just want to they run, they just want to be out ... just to get out leave they run they like literally run from ... they want to get away”.</p>
<p>Monitoring of CSRs</p>	<p>“Being policed, we are all adults here, you know ... why</p>

	<p>the hell should my team leader be walking up and down to see if I am signed in or not?”</p> <p>“I don’t need somebody to manage me, I need someone to manage the processes”.</p>
Learned Helplessness	“I was just listening ... what else is there you can do?”
CSRs’ coping behaviours	<p>“This place is driving me to drink”;</p> <p>“This is ... the only job that I have ever worked at in my entire life where people know when their sick leave starts and ends ... I also never ever knew ... until I started here, but I started taking note of these things, and I laughed about it initially but now when you’ve been into it for 3 years you can understand it, you know exactly why and where and when it starts, because ... you get this tolerance level and you just get, for lack of a better word, gatvol and ... ‘I’m not going in today, bugger that, one day I don’t need a sick certificate’, or go to your doctor and tell him you are sick”;</p> <p>“There’s sometimes up to 7 people off then on a Monday 12 of us have to do that same job ... and then that is when you’re stressed out, then you need a drink when you get home”.</p>

6.3.3. Construct-specific Interview content of Team Leaders

In order to enable an optimal comparison between CSRs’ perspectives and those of the team leaders who supervise them, the team leader interview comments are, as far as possible, provided in a similar sequence to that of the CSRs’ comments (presented above).

The team leaders describe the purpose of the call centre, and by implication the purpose of CSRs, as follows: *“To answer queries they’ve got about it or handle any problem they might have ... getting clarity about something, or wanting to moan about something, it’s a forum for anything the client wants”*. This sentence reinforces that **emotional labour** is, in fact, an inherent job demand for CSRs.

The team leaders corroborate the fact that CSRs are bound to **performance scripts** and do apply **surface acting** during client interactions: *“You get frustrated as well, you get all these phone calls and ... within the first ten seconds you know what that person wants but you have to go through all the niceties and listen to him ... and you just get frustrated”*.

The physical ‘symptoms’ of **emotional exhaustion** as experienced by CSRs are substantiated by the team leaders: *“I’ve worked in the call centre ... I’ve never ever in my life been as tired as when I worked in a call centre, your brain, your body, everything is just kaput, finished, nothing left, you go home, sit, don’t want the TV on, don’t want the radio on, sit there, quiet ... your brain is numb”*.

The team leaders also comment on their own psychological well being that is similar to the CSRs’ comments on feeling emotionally **exhausted**: a) *“We feel like the staff, the same, whatever the issue, I mean we feel demoralised, we don’t feel motivated ... I don’t feel very motivated and not job satisfaction”*; b) *“Demoralised, exhausted ... not happy, not content, no job satisfaction”*.

Like the CSRs, the team leaders seem to lack feelings of **personal accomplishment** (i.e. they feel inefficacious): *“It’s very seldom that I can walk out of here and feel that I have been able to change or do something positive on that specific day”*.

The team leaders describe their *role* in the call centre in terms of six broad categories – the most relevant categories with their respective interview comments are provided in brief.

a) Giving feedback: *“There’s no set pattern at the moment, we are supposed to once a month ... what happens is the agents get evaluated on a six-weekly basis, they get feedback from the quality assessors on weaknesses and strengths ... and we also come and give our feedback”*.

b) Human Resources Activities: *“I think it is very broad, HR issues ... performance management, leave, planning of leave, addressing excessive leave, sick leave, development issues”*.

c) Providing technical expertise to their subordinates: *“Our technical specialist ... we have to stand in for them, so we have to have technical knowledge as well”*.

d) Showing understanding and support for the CSRs: *“The understanding, just that understanding ... of the type of business we’re in, I just think if you’ve never been in a call centre you cannot imagine what it’s like, and especially Medical Aid”*.

The latter interview comment indicates that team leaders are aware of the importance of showing an understanding (i.e. providing emotional support) to the CSRs. The team leaders also recognise that they are, however, prevented from truly providing **support** to the CSRs, as witnessed in the following comments: a) *“There’s just one positive thing for me and that is dealing with my staff, I love that so if the circumstances were better that would have been even better for me as well ... you can’t take them off the phones to speak to them ... you can’t have a meeting with them ... especially when you’re understaffed because you cannot take them off the phone, ever, for anything, you can’t train them, you can’t have a meeting with them, you can’t talk to them (about anything) ... you can’t just sit and have a nice discussion with them ... you can’t just ask how they are because it’s time to go on the phone, the next calls ...”*; b) *“We just don’t motivate them ... they’re not performance managed, that they aren’t getting the training and the support that they need”*.

The team leaders’ interview comments also highlighted some general issues and concerns with regard to the call centre. For purposes of comparison those themes that are mentioned by the team leaders – that were also mentioned by the CSRs - are presented.

6.3.4. General Themes of Team Leaders

The team leaders acknowledge the fact that other departments – supposedly there to support the CSRs – do not understand the nature of the CSR’s job, nor do they realise that clients do act abusively towards CSRs in some instances: *“They don’t have to speak to the client, they don’t hear ... they don’t feel pressured ... if they had to speak to the client it would be different ... they don’t realise ... how client can belittle you ... and what he can do to you ... make a total idiot of you and totally abuses you”*. The team leaders also realise the thorny position in which the CSRs find themselves (i.e.

in the **boundary-spanning role**): *“We take the brunt ... the people here feel it, we are held accountable for every other mistake the business makes”*.

In accordance with the Job Demands-Resources Model of stress, the team leaders declare that the CSRs are simultaneously faced with a heavy **workload** and a **lack of resources**: *“Between the 70 calls we expect them to take a day they must find time to read their e-mails otherwise they’re in trouble coz we didn’t inform them”*, and *“Multi-skilling is not necessarily a good thing ... puts more pressure on the staff coz now they got to do thirteen different schemes”* (**workload**) versus *“It’s frustrating coz you can’t do what you’re supposed to do coz they don’t give you resources to do it 90% of the time and you’re still expected to deliver it”* (**lack of resources**). It is possible that this imbalance (i.e. demands > resources) creates stress for CSRs that negatively affect both task execution and their performance of emotional labour.

The team leaders – like the CSRs - explain the call centre environment is characterised by a contradiction in service goals: CSRs are expected to live up to **quantity targets** and **quality targets** without sacrificing either one. The following comments illustrate this underlying tension: *“The objective is our service level agreement, is to have to low abandon rate ... it means answer most, many calls as we can ... abandon rate under 7% I think it is, so we answer 93% or more of our calls”*, and *“Quick response times as well, to answer 80% of calls within 20 seconds is the objective”* [**quantity**] versus *“Quality target is 85% for agents on the floor, currently we are upping it to 95 ... it’s a benchmark, overall service level”* [**quality**].

The team leaders agree with the CSRs regarding the nature of their **management style**: *“It feels like you’re putting out fires the whole day long, you’re waiting for one crisis to the next”*. They also acknowledge that they are unable to improve **conditions in the call centre** for the CSRs: *“Things have changed a lot since the previous year ... I wouldn’t say the way that things are done, I would say the state of mind in which our consultants are ... because I haven’t been able to change anything for them they still sit with the same problems, they’re still the people who have to deal with the client”*. It seems plausible that the latter factor could be a contributing factor to the CSRs’ expressed lack of trust in management.

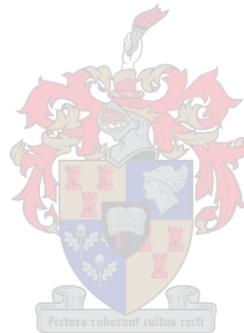
The team leaders express a desire to create more time off for CSRs during the course of a day: “*You need ... to be staffed so that the agents have maybe an hour or two free a day, in that hour or two you can either spend training them or having a meeting with them or getting to know them or giving them feedback or doing something, there’s a lot of stuff that we can’t do at the moment because there is not a spare moment in the day ... to operate properly as a call centre you need to have a bit more capacity to allow for training, to allow for one-on-one meetings with your staff ... so we need to create the capacity to take those people off the phones and send them back to training*”. The reason for requesting more time off is, however, not to provide CSRs with *leisure time* in which they can rest, debrief or receive support from colleagues and/or team leaders. Rather, the team leaders want more free time for the CSRs in order to ‘do something’ with them (such as providing training or giving feedback). A discrepancy between the needs of team leaders and CSRs becomes evident.

The team leaders view the **quality assessors** and **quality assessment process** as functioning well enough to identify training needs: “*After quality assessments ... they identify training ... needs and ... if somebody is not doing OK they recommend training*”. This contrasts with the view that the CSRs have of the QA process and assessors respectively, namely that the quality assessors are ill qualified to evaluate the CSRs’ job performance, and hence the quality assessment process is, according to them, unsuited to provide an accurate reflection of their performance.

Lastly, the team leaders commented on what characteristics, according to them, represent a so-called *good CSR*. Brackets including the suggested theme (in **bold**) to which each interview comment corresponds, follow the comments: a) “*They want to see the client happy at the end of the day*” (**performing emotional labour / emotion regulation**); b) “*Adherence to the schedule*” (**performance script rules**); c) “*That person knows their job, they are ... knowledgeable and ... confident that they will be able to answer the question that will be asked*” (**technical knowledge**); d) “*High level of energy*” (**not emotionally exhausted**); e) “*Emotionally resilient ... you have to be emotionally strong, you don’t take things personally ... take ... feedback in a positive manner*” (**emotional strength / resilience**).

6.4. SUMMARY

In the following chapter (Chapter 7) the results that were presented here are interpreted and discussed in greater depth. This is followed by the Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research.



CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research results, as presented in Chapter 6, are discussed and interpreted. The chapter commences with a discussion of the correlation results in light of the existing literature, followed by a discussion of the multiple regression analysis and an interpretation of the measurement and structural models respectively. The qualitative data is utilised to elaborate on and / or clarify the research findings, especially in the case of unexpected or contradictory findings.

7.2. DISCUSSION OF CORRELATION RESULTS

In this section the results of the *Pearson product-moment correlation* analysis is interpreted for each construct, against the backdrop of the existing literature pertaining to the particular construct. The guidelines for interpreting statistically significant Pearson correlation coefficients, as presented by Guilford (cited in Sprinthall, 1987) and explicated in Chapter 5, are also employed to enlighten some of the correlations.

Total emotional labour is significantly and negatively related to **supervisor support** ($r = -.316$; $p < .01$): the r -value indicates a low correlation between the two constructs, in other words a definite but small relationship.

The relationship between emotional labour and supervisor support has not been extensively studied up to date – an exception is Brotheridge and Lee (2002) who tested a conservation of resources (COR) model of the dynamics of emotional labour. They posit, although emotional labour might result in burnout (emotional exhaustion), it is mediated by, inter alia, rewarding social relationships, such as supervisor support.

In terms of COR theory, employees are faced with various emotional demands on the job, such as frequent client interactions, the requirement to express a variety of emotions of varying intensity, and constant emotion regulation. In order to meet these expectations service workers use up a lot of resources (i.e. emotional / physical resources by engaging in surface or deep acting) in attempts to generate rewarding

social relationships (for example, positive client responses that create feelings of personal accomplishment). In this sense, supervisor support could be an important resource for employees performing emotional labour, in that it aids employees in regaining some of their lost (emotional) resources (Hobfoll, 1989, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

In light of the above, the negative correlation between emotional labour and supervisor support conveys a troublesome story: It seems that the more CSRs perform emotional labour, the less supervisor support they perceive to be forthcoming and / or receiving. Stated differently, the CSRs seem to experience a lack of support in relation to their emotional work demands.

Both the COR theory and Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory recognise that this imbalance between work demands and available resources has significant implications for the individual: higher levels of stress, and eventually burnout (emotional exhaustion) (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2001).

Various explanations for this finding could be proffered – the team leaders' qualitative interview comments suggest one possible interpretation of the negative correlation between emotional labour and supervisor support: a) *“If someone comes up to me and says ‘I need to talk to you now’ you can’t send them back, so then you have a talk with them ... try and sort it out but you know you got one eye on the queue”*; b) *“... you can’t take them off the phones to speak to them ... you can’t talk to them ... you can’t just sit and have a nice discussion with them ... you can’t just ask how you are because it’s time to go on the phone, the next calls ...”*.

These comments explicate management's constant focus on incoming calls (a work demand that entails performing emotional labour), almost at the expense of providing the necessary support to CSRs in performing this work demand. The phrase *“you got one eye on the queue”* clearly illustrates management's emotional absence with regard to their employees: The team leaders convey more concern for call volume (and implicitly reaching quantity targets) than for their CSRs' psychological well-being. It is probable that, during times of extremely busy call centre activity, team

leaders are left with no time to attend to their employees' needs for support; hence the negative correlation between emotional labour and supervisor support.

Frequency of interactions is significantly and positively related to **intensity of emotional display** ($r = .277; p < .05$). In contrast, Morris and Feldman (1996) proposed a negative relationship between frequency of emotional display and intensity of emotion displayed, positing that the more intense emotional displays become, the fewer opportunities for multiple interactions exist.

The positive correlation in this study suggests an alternative interpretation of the relationship between these two dimensions of emotional labour: It could be that the more frequent client interactions are, the more intense the service provider's emotional displays become, possibly due to an ever-increasing accumulation of emotions during the course of a day.

An extract from the CSRs' qualitative interview comments highlights the emotional build-up as experienced by CSRs: *"You have to take a break or you have to actually release that built up emotion"*. In this context 'taking a break' could translate into reducing the quantity (frequency) of client interactions, which could, in turn, decrease the intensity of displayed emotions due to the opportunity to release some built up emotions.

Frequency of interactions is significantly and positively related to **variety of emotional display** ($r = .352; p < .01$). Morris and Feldman (1996) hypothesized that, instead of frequency of emotional display directly impacting on the variety of emotions expressed, the latter should be more influenced by the situational demands in the particular job context.

From the present findings it appears that the more frequently CSRs interact with customers, the greater the variety of their displayed emotions becomes. In this sense, it seems that there does indeed exist a direct relationship between frequency of interactions and variety of emotional display – whether this is due to the nature of the call centre environment (i.e. the particular job context of CSRs) is impossible to

deduct from the correlation analysis, although it might be a factor to consider in this regard.

Frequency of interactions is significantly and positively related to **deep acting** ($r = .449$; $p < .01$): the r -value indicates a moderate correlation between the two dimensions, in other words a substantial relationship. This finding implies that the more frequently CSRs interact with clients, the more deep acting they engage in (i.e. the more authentic their emotional expressions are) - stated differently, the more the CSRs align their expressed emotions with their true, subjectively felt emotions.

Morris and Feldman (1996) proposed a positive correlation between frequency of emotional display and emotional dissonance (a *state* of incongruence between the individual's true, subjective feelings and expressed feelings). The *process* of surface acting perpetuates this incongruent state – hence, one could theoretically substitute emotional dissonance with surface acting in Morris and Feldman's (1996) proposition. These researchers do not, however, propose a relationship between frequency of emotional display (i.e. frequency of interactions) and deep acting, the relationship found in the present study.

Brotheridge and Lee (2002) utilise the COR theory and suggest, surface acting represents a greater investment of resources than deep acting as it requires emotion suppression (i.e. “*weakening or nullifying emotional expression*”; Gross, 1999, cited in Côté, 2005, p.510). Therefore, in an attempt to minimise resource loss, employees try to really conjure up the emotions they have to display to clients (i.e. they perform deep acting). It is probable that with repeated practice, deep acting could become a habitual emotion regulation technique for CSRs – hence the positive correlation between frequency of interactions and deep acting.

Hochschild (1979, 1983, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2002) contended that deep acting allows for authentic self-expression and, as such, could result in feelings of personal accomplishment. Côté (2005) developed the social interaction model of emotion regulation that posits, emotional regulation – more specifically, deep acting – can increase *or* decrease strain, depending on the discrete emotion in question, the

direction of emotion regulation (i.e. whether deep acting amplifies or suppresses the emotion), and the receiver's response to the sender's emotional display.

In general, and provided there exists a match between the direction of emotion regulation and the discrete emotion being regulated, deep acting produces authentic emotion displays (due to the match between the sender's internal feeling and external emotion display) that elicit favourable responses from receivers, which in turn lower senders' strain levels.

It is noteworthy that Côté (2005) (in comparison to, for example, Brotheridge & Lee, 2002) places the suppression of emotion within the deep acting framework and does not consider its outcome necessarily detrimental. She does, however, agree that surface acting produces inauthentic emotion displays that elicit unfavourable responses from receivers, thereby increasing senders' strain levels.

Taken together, these hypotheses could suggest the following: When CSRs engage in deep acting, they a) feel a sense of personal accomplishment, and b) experience less strain from client interactions. As such, a 'positive interaction spiral' could ensue where CSRs are, so to speak, positively reinforced to continuously engage in deep acting as the frequency of client interactions increases - hence the positive correlation between frequency of interactions and deep acting.

Intensity of emotional display is significantly and positively related to **emotional exhaustion** ($r = .278$; $p < .05$). This finding makes intuitive sense: CSRs who are engaged in continuously intense emotional encounters with clients would most probably feel fatigued and emotionally drained at the end of an eight-hour work day and / or a five-day work week. The finding is also corroborated by Maslach (1978, cited in Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002) who reported a positive relationship between the degree of emotional intensity of client interactions and levels of emotional exhaustion experienced.

Intensity of emotional display is significantly and negatively related to **affective commitment** ($r = -.220$; $p < .05$). The correlation coefficient value is low, indicating

a definite but small relationship between intensity of emotional display and affective commitment.

Research studies on emotional labour have not as of yet focused on the latter's relationship to organisational outcomes (such as commitment). As such, there exists substantial opportunity for intellectual speculation regarding this relationship. One potential explanation could be, the more CSRs display intense emotions towards clients, the less positive affect remains for projection onto the organisation, or the less emotionally attached CSRs feel towards the organisation (recall the definition of affective commitment as an emotional attachment and / or affective orientation towards the organisation; Meyer, 2001).

In addition, the lack of affective commitment towards the organisation could be a reflection of the CSRs true feelings towards their clients; in other words, if CSRs feel emotionally distanced from their clients, they might also begin to feel emotionally unattached from the organisation that, in the CSRs' eyes, imposes the performance of emotional labour on them. It should be kept in mind, however, that the above 'explanations' are limited to being hypothetical and speculative.

Intensity of emotional display is significantly and positively related to **variety of emotional display** ($r = .633$; $p < .01$). Consistent with this finding, Morris and Feldman (1996) proposed, intensity of emotional display should be associated with variety of expressed emotion, as increases in intensity of interactions should require a wider array of emotions to be displayed. The size of r indicates a moderate association, indicative of a substantial relationship between these two dimensions of emotional labour.

Intensity of emotional display is significantly and positively related to **deep acting** ($r = .262$; $p < .05$). Morris and Feldman (1996) proposed a positive association between intensity of emotional display and emotional dissonance (i.e. surface acting), arguing that the more emotionally intense client interactions become, the higher the probability for conflict between true and required feelings becomes – they did not, however, propose an association between intensity and deep acting.

The positive relationship between intensity of emotional display and deep acting is instinctively appealing in light of their conceptual definitions. The term *intensity* signifies the presence and utilisation of deep-seated feelings in emotional expressions. *Deep acting* entails evoking such deep-seated feelings internally and aligning them with emotional expression. It seems plausible, therefore, that the more intense the emotions that CSRs are required to display to clients, the more they would make use of deep acting.

It could also be that, as with the correlation between frequency of client interactions and deep acting, and in line with the COR theory, deep acting minimises resource loss for CSRs as it entails a congruent state of being between subjectively felt feeling and required emotional expression – hence the positive correlation between intensity of emotional display and deep acting.

Variety of emotional display is significantly and negatively related to **supervisor support** ($r = -.315; p < .01$). This finding indicates that the more varied the emotional displays required of CSRs, the less supervisor support they perceive as forthcoming.

The existing literature on the relationship between the dimensions of emotional labour and supervisor support is scant. As mentioned before, supervisor support is a psychological resource that could negate the detrimental effects of work demands (such as performing emotional labour) on employees.

The JD-R theory could shed some light on the implications of the negative correlation between variety and supervisor support: It seems that the CSRs' resources (i.e. team leader support) decrease in the face of increases in work demands (i.e. emotional labour, specifically variety of emotions displayed to clients). The potential significance of this imbalance is that, over the long term, CSRs could become emotionally exhausted (burned out).

But why does a negative correlation between variety of emotional display and supervisor support exist, but not between supervisor support and frequency of interactions and intensity of emotional display respectively (the two remaining emotional role characteristics)?

Firstly, it could be possible that CSRs require more support – especially in the form of emotional support – for dealing with and expressing a variety of emotions in client interactions. The following interview comment illustrates the extent to which CSRs experience varying emotions, as well as the nature of these emotions: “*You’re on an emotional roller coaster, then you’re up, then you’re down ... then you’re feeling sad, then you’re feeling angry, then you’re happy*”.

If CSRs continuously express positive and neutral emotions towards clients, suppress negative emotions and experience a variety of emotions (e.g. “*angry*”, “*happy*”), their support needs might be more pronounced than in the case of frequent client encounters (where the focus is on the quantity of interactions) and / or client encounters requiring intense emotional expressions (where the focus is on degrees of emotion intensity). In other words, the CSRs might perceive a need for emotional support from their team leaders in order for them to experience a sense of emotional stability – especially during or after days of ‘*riding the call centre roller coaster*’.

Secondly, it might also be that CSRs perceive this particular emotional demand (expressing a variety of emotions to clients) to be more receptive to supervisor support than the other two role demands. Whereas team leaders cannot directly change the frequency of client interactions (as this depends on call volume), nor influence the degree of intensity of emotions experienced and / or expressed during client interactions (as this is a function of the particular situation and various intangible factors operating between CSR and client), they may be able to indirectly assist CSRs with regard to the demand to express a variety of emotions – research by Wegner (1994, cited in Pugh, 2002) suggests how.

Wegner (1994, cited in Pugh, 2002) identified a phenomenon called *the ironic processes of mental control* (p.158): When individuals try to control their mental states (e.g. try to suppress a thought), the result is counter-intentional (i.e. the thought continually recurs).

If this phenomenon is applied to the requirement to display a variety of emotions, it could mean that the more CSRs try to display a variety of emotions to clients, the less they may succeed in doing so. Therefore, CSRs might perceive a special (specific)

role for supervisor support in this regard; that is, in helping them to perform this role demand as they intend to.

Once more, keep in mind that the above statements are purely hypothetical and require empirical testing in future.

In addition, multiple explanations for CSRs' perceptions of a general lack of support could be offered. In fact, the team leaders offer a viable explanation in their interview comments: "... you're not being able to pull the people from the phone at all so you can't really support them ...". The team leaders' inability to support the CSRs apparently stems from a lack of time to get around to everything that needs to be done in the call centre: "There's just so many things to do and there is not enough time ... to get through the things that you need to do ... you don't always get to everything and you have to now decide prioritise ...". It is possible that in the bigger scheme of things, the CSRs do not count as "priority" for the team leaders – this could also be inferred from the following statement describing the team leaders' responsibilities: "I think it is very broad, HR issues ... performance management, leave, planning of leave, addressing excessive leave, sick leave ... development issues". It is noteworthy that "development issues" features in last place.



Variety of emotional display is significantly and positively related to both **surface acting** ($r = .234$; $p < .05$) and **deep acting** respectively ($r = .365$; $p < .01$). Both correlations fall within the low correlation category, indicative of a definite but small relationship.

Morris and Feldman (1996) posited, variety of emotional expression should correlate negatively with emotional dissonance (i.e. surface acting), as the fewer emotions one has at one's disposal, the higher the probability should become of having to express 'fake' emotion (and vice versa).

In this research study, however, the association between variety of emotional display and surface acting and deep acting respectively is in a positive direction, indicating a) the greater the variety of emotions that CSRs need to express to clients, the more they

engage in surface acting, and b) the greater the variety of emotions that CSRs need to express to clients, the more they engage in deep acting.

Brotheridge and Lee (2002) employed the COR theory and found that service workers cope with the emotional demands of the job (such as the variety of emotional displays towards clients) by performing both surface and deep acting – the finding also made in this study. Although each technique preserves some of the individual's resources, surface acting is considered more taxing than deep acting and hence, the latter is deemed more beneficial for the individual's well-being.

An extract from the CSRs' interview comments illuminates the manner in which these two emotion management techniques operate: *“On a call centre you have to have those skills when a call is gone you must go to the next one ... you must put it behind you all the time ... switch on and off on and off all the time”*.

The latter part of the phrase – *“switch on and off on and off all the time”* – reminds of operating a light switch and is indicative of emotion expression (“on”) and emotion suppression (“off”). Therefore, it does seem likely that, during the course of a day, CSRs intermittently use both surface acting and deep acting in their interactions with clients - whether to suppress or hide truly felt emotions (switching off), to fake expressed emotions or express emotions authentically (switching on). Future research would be required to determine under which circumstances each emotion management technique is applied.

Surface acting ($r = -.218$; $p < .05$) and **deep acting** ($r = -.237$; $p < .05$) are both significantly and negatively related to **supervisor support**. Brotheridge and Lee (2002) posit, supervisor support is a mechanism of social influence that motivates the internalisation of one's work role. Therefore, they hypothesize social support will direct employees to employ less surface acting and more deep acting in their encounters with others.

With regard to the negative relationship between surface acting and supervisor support, the ‘internalisation argument’ seems plausible: the more CSRs receive supervisor support, the less they engage in surface acting. This could be due to the

fact that support instils a sense of association with and belonging to the work role, presumably to such an extent that employees strive to act more authentically towards clients, for example.

Brotheridge and Lee's (2002) hypothesized positive relationship between supervisor support and deep acting is, however, not corroborated by the present study's negative correlation. In fact, if interpreted in a similar manner to the above, it seems that the more CSRs receive supervisor support, the less they engage in deep acting. This interpretation does not make logical sense; therefore the question arises, should one not rephrase the negative correlation as follows: the more deep acting CSRs engage in, the less supervisor support they receive.

Interpreted in this way, one could hypothesize that the team leaders provide more support to those CSRs who engage in surface acting in attempts to bring these CSRs 'closer' to performing deep acting – this is similar to the notion of motivating employees to internalise their work role.

It could also be that, in the eyes of the team leaders, those CSRs performing deep acting do not 'need' support. Considering the time constraints faced by the team leaders (mentioned earlier), it would seem viable to suggest that the team leaders conserve their support for those who 'really need' it. Once again these statements require empirical testing before arriving at conclusions pertaining to the negative relationship(s) cited above.

Surface acting is significantly and positively related to **deep acting** ($r = .231$; $p < .05$). Brotheridge and Lee (2002) also found a significant, positive relationship between surface acting and deep acting – the value of r in their study ($r = .30$; $p < .01$) fell within the same range (i.e. low correlation) as the r -value in the present study.

Seeing that surface acting and deep acting are simply "... alternative means for expressing socially desirable emotions in service transactions ..." (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002, p.64), it does not seem strange that they are, in fact, positively correlated. It might be possible that CSRs engage in surface and deep acting on an intermittent basis, depending on how much energy (for example, emotional resources) they

possess and how much support they receive from the team leaders (see above discussion on the relationship between supervisor support and surface and deep acting respectively). If it *is* true that surface acting has a more detrimental (draining) effect on the individual's emotional resources than deep acting, it would seem beneficial for CSRs to alternate between the two techniques.

Emotional exhaustion is significantly and negatively related to **affective commitment** ($r = -.518; p < .01$). The r -value indicates a moderate correlation, i.e. a substantial relationship between the two constructs. The implication of this finding is that, the more CSRs feel emotionally exhausted, the less they feel emotionally attached to the organisation.

In an early study by Maslach and Leiter (1988) it was found that emotional exhaustion both correlated negatively with organisational commitment and independently contributed to the prediction of organisational commitment as per regression analyses. A few years later, Lee and Ashforth (1996) conducted a meta-analysis of the correlates of burnout and established a negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and organisational commitment.

A major implication of the present research study's finding is that the proposed theoretical link between emotional exhaustion and affective commitment specifically - based on the notion that both constructs develop as a result of poor quality work experiences (as proposed in Chapter 4) - now seems feasible due to the support of some concrete (correlational) evidence.

Emotional exhaustion is significantly and positively related to **intentions to leave** ($r = .517; p < .01$) – the r -value indicates a moderate correlation, i.e. a substantial relationship. This means, the more CSRs feel emotionally exhausted, the greater their intentions to leave become.

Various researchers have established the same finding as in the present study over the years: Saxton, Phillips and Blakeney (1991) established a significant, positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave in the airline reservations sector; Lee and Ashforth (1996) found a positive association between

emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave in a meta-analytic study of the correlates of burnout; Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) established the existence of a positive relationship between burnout and intentions to leave, and Wright and Cropanzano (1998) indicated a positive correlation between emotional exhaustion and ensuing voluntary turnover.

Thus, in light of the fact that research repeatedly corroborates the positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave, organisations could gain a lot (for example, in terms of long-term cost savings) by acknowledging burnout as a serious problem and threat to both the individual and organisation's well-being.

Affective commitment is significantly and negatively related to **intentions to leave** ($r = -.664$; $p < .01$) - the r -value is indicative of a substantial relationship (moderate correlation) between the two constructs. This finding means, the less affective commitment CSRs feel towards the organisation, the higher their intentions to leave becomes.

Elangovan (2001) conducted a structural equations analysis and found commitment had a very strong negative and direct effect on turnover intention. Stallworth (2003) explored the relationships between each of the organisational commitment components (affective, continuance and normative) and turnover intentions by means of regression analysis and found that affective commitment demonstrated the strongest predictive relationship with intentions to leave.

Thus, it might be possible that Meyer (2001) is accurate in his presumption that, the correlation between commitment and intentions to leave could be seen as a reflection of an association between a psychological state and a behavioural intention and therefore, organisational commitment could be used to predict turnover.

Affective commitment is significantly and positively related to **supervisor support** ($r = .264$; $p < .05$) - the value of r indicates a definite but small relationship between the two constructs. The implication of this finding is, the more supervisor support CSRs receive, the more affective commitment they feel towards the organisation.

This finding has been found elsewhere: one such study is by Kidd and Smewing (2001) who postulated that supervisors play a critical role in the creation of a supportive organisational climate, and that employees' relationships with their supervisors may be important determinants of organisational commitment. In a subsequent research study these researchers did indeed find a significant relationship between overall supervisor support and organisational commitment.

In the next section the research results pertaining to the multiple regression analysis are interpreted and discussed.

7.3. DISCUSSION OF MULTIPLE REGRESSION / CORRELATION (MRC) ANALYSIS RESULTS

In this section the results of the *simultaneous multiple regression analysis* is discussed. Three regression 'models' were tested separately in keeping with the two dependent variables, namely *organisational (affective) commitment* (the first 'model') and *intentions to leave* (the second and third 'models').

The first regression 'model' presents $R^2 = .31$, and the Adjusted $R^2 = .28$. If one interprets the Adjusted R^2 value of .28, it means that 28% of the variance in the criterion (i.e. organisational commitment) is explained by variance in the combination of predictors (i.e. emotional labour, emotional exhaustion and supervisor support); in other words, 72% of the variance in the criterion remains unexplained by the variance in the predictors. Despite the relatively small explanatory power of the combination of predictors, the regression 'model' is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

An investigation into the independent contribution of the various predictors to the prediction of the criterion indicates that only emotional exhaustion independently contributes to the prediction of organisational commitment in a statistically significant manner ($p < .05$). This signifies that in order to achieve an increase of .489 standard deviations in organisational commitment, emotional exhaustion must decrease by a full standard deviation.

With reference to the call centre environment specifically, the effort that would be required of organisations and team leaders to assist CSRs' in reducing their levels of

emotional exhaustion might be reasonable in light of the fact that CSRs' levels of affective commitment could, in return, increase by almost a .5 standard deviation. This effort also seems meaningful in light of the relatively strong negative Pearson product-moment correlation ($r = -.664$; $p < .01$) between affective commitment and intentions to leave (as well as the significant β between these two constructs, mentioned below).

The second regression 'model' presents $R^2 = .49$, and the Adjusted $R^2 = .46$. If one interprets the Adjusted R^2 value of .46 it means that 46% of the variance in the criterion (i.e. intentions to leave) is explained by variance in the combination of predictors (i.e. organisational commitment, emotional labour, emotional exhaustion and supervisor support); in other words, in this model almost half of the variance in the criterion is explained by variance in the combination of predictors (54% of the variance in the criterion remains unexplained). As with the first regression 'model', the second one is also statistically significant ($p < .05$).

An investigation into the independent contribution of the various predictors to the prediction of the criterion indicates that both emotional exhaustion and organisational commitment independently contribute to the prediction of intentions to leave in a statistically significant manner ($p < .05$).

A few remarks are essential with regard to the independent contributions of these predictors. Firstly, when scrutinising the standardised coefficients (β values) – while keeping in mind sample specificity and the limitations of statistical control - it seems reasonable to suggest that affective commitment (in a negative direction) contributes more to the prediction of intentions to leave than does emotional exhaustion (in a positive direction). This finding corroborates the suggestion by Meyer (2001), namely that the correlation between commitment and intentions to leave could be seen as a reflection of an association between a psychological state and a behavioural intention and therefore, organisational commitment could be used to predict turnover.

The ordering of the Beta coefficients is also in line with the Pearson product-moment correlation results: affective commitment with the larger β -coefficient ($\beta = -.535$) also

has the larger r -value ($r = -.664$), in comparison to emotional exhaustion with $\beta = .238$ and $r = .517$.

More specifically, these findings mean that: a) In order to achieve a decrease of .535 standard deviations in intentions to leave, affective commitment has to increase by a full standard deviation, and b) in order to achieve a decrease of .238 standard deviations in intentions to leave, emotional exhaustion has to decrease by a full standard deviation.

The effort that would be required of organisations and team leaders alike to increase CSRs' feelings of affective commitment towards the organisation might be reasonable – especially if considered in light of Meyer's (2001) proposition and the significant and independent predictive contribution of affective commitment towards intentions to leave. As a consequence, CSRs' intentions to leave could decrease by more than a .5 standard deviation.

The third regression 'model' presents $R^2 = .29$, and the Adjusted $R^2 = .26$. If one interprets the Adjusted R^2 value of .26, it means that 26% of the variance in the criterion (i.e. intentions to leave) is explained by variance in the combination of predictors (i.e. emotional labour, emotional exhaustion and supervisor support). Despite the relatively small explanatory power of the combination of predictors, the regression 'model' is statistically significant ($p < .05$).

An investigation into the independent contribution of the various predictors to the prediction of the criterion indicates that only emotional exhaustion independently contributes to the prediction of intentions to leave in a statistically significant manner ($p < .05$). Furthermore, in the third model emotional exhaustion accounts for more variance in intentions to leave than in the second model, possibly due to the exclusion of organisational commitment as a predictor in the third model. It is significant that neither emotional labour nor supervisor support contributes significantly to the prediction of intentions to leave in either model two or three.

From the above regression 'models' it is evident that the constructs emotional exhaustion, affective commitment and intentions to leave are interrelated in a

meaningful manner. To summarise: a) Emotional exhaustion correlates negatively with affective commitment ($r = -.518$; $p < .01$) and independently contributes to the prediction of affective commitment in a statistically significant manner ($\beta = -.489$; $p < .05$); b) emotional exhaustion correlates positively with intentions to leave ($r = .517$; $p < .01$) and independently contributes to the prediction of intentions to leave in a statistically significant manner ($\beta = .238$; $p < .05$ in the second model, and $\beta = .490$; $p < .05$ in the third model), and c) affective commitment correlates negatively with intentions to leave ($r = -.664$; $p < .01$) and independently contributes to the prediction of intentions to leave in a statistically significant manner ($\beta = -.535$; $p < .05$).

It seems reasonable to suggest that emotional exhaustion (i.e. burnout) *is* indeed a significant role-player in the call centre environment. Of importance to organisations, however, is not the presence of emotional exhaustion in their CSRs per se, but rather the cost implications that emotional exhaustion has for the business: an increase in intentions to leave (i.e. ultimate turnover) due to, amongst other things, lowered affective commitment towards the organisation which is due to, inter alia, feelings of emotional exhaustion, as illustrated in the present findings.

The implications of the above regression analysis's findings are that, call centres aiming to reduce annual turnover would need to include pertinent ways to address CSRs' levels of emotional exhaustion and affective commitment respectively in their intervention plans. Of equal importance is the need to understand the conditions in the call centre environment that shape emotional exhaustion (i.e. burnout) - this study presented emotional labour and a lack of supervisor support as two factors to consider in this regard.

It is required of future research studies to conduct broader investigations into the causes of burnout in the call centre environment specifically, because although the construct emotional labour (and to some extent a lack of supervisor support) sheds some light on the development of burnout (refer to correlation results), these constructs do not provide sufficient explanation. One fact, however, stands firm, and that is the detrimental outcome of emotional exhaustion (i.e. burnout) for both individuals and organisations.

7.4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS OF STATISTICAL MODELS

In this section the results of the measurement and structural models respectively are interpreted. Throughout the discussion reference to the previously presented quantitative results (i.e. Pearson correlation and MRC results) and qualitative results is made where warranted.

7.4.1. Measurement model

The first fit measures presented in the Lisrel output are the Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square = 84.86 ($P = 0.069$) and the Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square = 67.05 ($P = 0.48$). The χ^2 statistic tests the null hypothesis that $\Sigma = \Sigma(\Theta)$: It is evident that both χ^2 statistics are nonsignificant ($p > .05$); hence, the proposed null hypothesis is *not* rejected and model fit is deemed adequate.

Another important measure of model fit is the RMSEA that has a value below .01 (i.e. RMSEA = 0.0029), indicating that the proposed model fits the data exceptionally well. A test of the null hypothesis of close fit indicates that the hypothesis H_0 : RMSEA \leq 0.05 cannot be rejected ($p > 0.05$), and the 90 percent confidence interval for RMSEA includes the 0.05 value. Thus, the RMSEA lends further credence to the conclusion that the model has an excellent fit to the data.

The Standardised RMR is a summary measure of the standardised residuals, with a lower value 0 and an upper value 1. Values less than 0.05 indicate a good (acceptable) model fit – in the present study its value is reported as 0.057. Thus, it is clear that this value is a little higher than the preferred 0.05; nevertheless, it does approximate the latter. An investigation into the individual indicators' (manifest variables') standardised residuals could shed some light on the reason for a poorer than expected fit, as the residuals "...provide clues to sources of ill-fitting models" (Kelloway, 1998, p.70). Recall that a standardised residual is considered large if it exceeds the absolute value 2.58.

The only standardised residual that is larger than the absolute value of 2.58 is that between EMLF (i.e. the *frequency of interactions* dimension of emotional labour) and EMLDA (i.e. the *deep acting* dimension of emotional labour). Its value equals a positive 2.71: This means that the model underestimates the covariance between these

two indicators (i.e. the model is underfitted); hence, additional paths should be inserted in the model so as to provide a better explanation for the covariance between EMLF and EMLDA. This is achieved through modifying the model by freeing some of the model parameters (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000).

The measurement model's GFI has a value of 0.88, and its AGFI (which adjusts the GFI for degrees of freedom) equals 0.82. These two indices compare the ability of a model versus no model to reproduce the variance-covariance matrix, and values exceeding .90 or .95 are believed to indicate correctly specified models. Although the fitted model does not exceed .90, it does come close to being correctly specified at 0.88; in other words, the fitted model indicates a somewhat weak ability to reproduce the variance-covariance matrix.

The CFI ranges between 0 and 1, with higher values (i.e. > .90) indicating a good fit to the data. The measurement model reports a CFI value of 0.97, and as such comes very close to the value 1 (which would indicate a perfect model fit). In other words, it seems as if the proposed model fares better than another competing model (i.e. a null model with no connecting paths between the variables) with regard to fitting the data.

An investigation into the squared multiple correlations (R^2 values) for the X-variables indicate that four indicators have relatively low reliability. More specifically, organisational commitment explains 35% variance in OCP1 (one of the two organisational commitment item parcels), and emotional labour explains 21% variance in EMLF (frequency of interactions), 10% variance in EMLSA (surface acting) and 24% variance in EMLDA (deep acting) respectively. The remaining indicators all have acceptable to good R^2 values, that is, values that range between 0.43 (for OCP2 – organisational commitment) and 0.96 (for SUP2 – supervisor support).

The final statistics under consideration for the measurement model are those as presented in the Lambda-X matrix; that is, the completely standardised solution of Lambda-X parameter estimates - together with their standard errors and t -values - that depict the significance and magnitude of the paths between each latent variable and its indicators.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that all the indicators' *t*-values are above the absolute value 1.96; in other words, *all* the path loadings between the indicators and their respective latent variables are significant (at $p < .05$).

Secondly, with regard to the magnitude of the path coefficients between each latent variable and its indicators, the lowest path loading is for EMLSA (i.e. surface acting = 0.32; $t = 2.10$; $p < .05$) and the highest path loading is for T1 (i.e. one of the indicators for intentions to leave = 0.89; $t = 15.96$; $p < .05$). These results offer "...validity evidence in favor of the indicators used to represent the constructs of interest" (Diamantopoulos & Siguaaw, 2000, p.89).

A synopsis of the remaining path coefficients is as follows: a) For intentions to leave the remaining two indicators (T2 = 0.85 and T3 = 0.84) almost have equal size; b) for organisational commitment, OCP2 (0.65) is the more valid indicator; c) with regard to emotional exhaustion, both indicators are fairly big in magnitude, that is, valid (MBI1 = 0.90, and MBI2 = 0.88); d) for supervisor support, both indicators appear highly valid, especially SUP2 (0.98), and e) for emotional labour the indicator with the highest path coefficient value is EMLVAR (0.81).

In light of the fit statistics interpreted above – especially the χ^2 fit statistics, RMSEA, and CFI - it can be inferred that the measurement model provides adequate to good overall fit to the data. Two measures of absolute fit, however, cast some doubt on this deduction, namely the Standardised RMR and GFI. Closer inspection of the data indicated that one standard residual is underfitted and that four indicators have relatively low reliability (as per their R^2 values).

In summary, the assessment of the measurement model reveals adequate reliability and validity with regard to the operationalisation of the majority of latent variables, as well as no critical deficits that should be too troublesome or that would render the research results insignificant.

In the following section the structural model is evaluated in a similar fashion to the measurement model above.

7.4.2. Structural model

The first fit statistics presented for the structural model are the Minimum Fit Function Chi-Square = 89.83 ($P = 0.055$) and the Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi-Square = 70.89 ($P = 0.45$). Like in the measurement model, the χ^2 statistic tests the null hypothesis that $\Sigma = \Sigma (\Theta)$: It is evident that both χ^2 statistics are nonsignificant ($p > .05$); hence, the proposed null hypothesis is *not* rejected and model fit is considered adequate.

The RMSEA has a value of 0.012: this value falls below 0.05, which is indicative of a very good fit to the data. A test of the null hypothesis of close fit indicates that the hypothesis $H_0: \text{RMSEA} \leq 0.05$ cannot be rejected ($p > 0.05$), and the 90 percent confidence interval includes the value 0.05. Thus, the RMSEA lends further credence to the conclusion that the model has an excellent fit to the data.

The value of the Standardised RMR equals 0.061; thus, in light of the proposed rule of thumb of 0.05 (and below) for establishing good fit, it is evident that the standardised RMR is a bit higher than preferred – that is, this statistic suggests that the model does not fit the data satisfactorily.

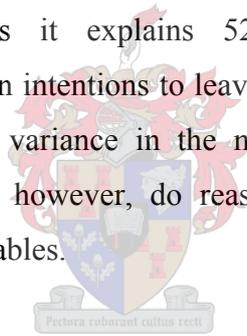
An investigation into the standardised residual parameters highlights two residuals that are bigger than the absolute value 2.58: a) a large, negative standardised residual (-2.77) is found for EMLVAR (*variety of emotional display*) and EMLDA (*deep acting*), and b) a large, positive standardised residual (2.69) is found for EMLDA and EMLF (*frequency of interactions*). This means that, in the case of (a) the model overestimates the covariance between these two dimensions of emotional labour (i.e. the model is overfitted), and for (b) the model underestimates the covariance between these two indicators of emotional labour (i.e. the model is underfitted).

In response to the above, the structural model could be modified by a) deleting paths that are associated with the covariance through the fixing of parameters (in the case of the large, negative residual), and b) adding paths so as to account better for the covariance between the two indicators via the freeing of parameters (in the case of the large, positive residual). In both instances, however, caution is required when deciding to modify the model (for an extended discussion of model modification, see Diamantopoulos & Sigauw, 2000).

The structural model's GFI and AGFI indices have values of 0.88 and 0.82 respectively – these values correspond a hundred percent to those reported by the measurement model. According to these fit statistics the model does not fit the data, even though their values come close to 0.90 (the rule of thumb for acceptable fit). Thus, the fitted model fails to reproduce the variance-covariance matrix satisfactorily.

The CFI value is reported as 0.97, once again the same as in the measurement model. Seeing that values above 0.90 indicate good fit to the data, the structural model appears to do very well, in comparison with an independence model, with regard to fitting the data.

Lisrel computes the Squared Multiple Correlations for Structural Equations, that is, the R^2 for each endogenous (dependent) variable in the model. An investigation into these R^2 values indicates that the model is only able to explain 7% of the variance in emotional exhaustion, whereas it explains 52% variance in organisational commitment and 74% variance in intentions to leave. Thus, it appears that the model does a poor job of explaining variance in the main component of burnout (i.e. emotional exhaustion); it does, however, do reasonably well with regard to the remaining two endogeneous variables.



The R^2 values pertaining to the Y-Variables (i.e. the indicators of intentions to leave, organisational commitment and emotional exhaustion respectively) reflect the proportion of variance in the endogeneous indicator variables that is accounted for by their corresponding etas (η). In light of the fact that higher values are preferred, none of the R^2 values appear too low: the lowest R^2 is found for OCP1 (0.39), that is, 39% of the variance in this indicator is accounted for by organisational commitment. The R^2 values for the X-Variables (i.e. supervisor support and emotional labour) have already been discussed under the section “Measurement Model” (see above).

The Lambda-Y and Lambda-X matrices assess the significance of the indicator variables' factor loadings on their designated endogeneous and exogeneous latent variables respectively. An inspection of both matrices indicates that all the t -values exceed the absolute value 1.96; thus, all the factor loadings are significant. Regarding the path coefficients' magnitude, surface acting (in the Lambda-X matrix) appears to

have the lowest path coefficient (i.e. EMLSA = 0.32) – it is, however, still significant. The remaining variables' path coefficients are all above the value of 0.45 and therefore seem to be of satisfactory magnitude.

Thus, the indicator variables can all be retained in the structural model and - to the extent that the standardised Lambda values appear reasonably large – they seem to provide satisfactory measures of the latent variables they are meant to represent.

As explained in Chapter 6, the Beta matrix assesses the significance of its estimated path coefficients (β) and expresses the strength (i.e. size) of the influence of eta (η) on eta (η). In a similar fashion, the Gamma matrix assesses the significance of its estimated path coefficients (γ) and expresses the magnitude of the influence of ksi (ξ) on eta (η).

Inspection into the proposed, causal relationships amongst the latent variables shows that only two of the six propositions (presented in Chapter 1) have significant t -values, namely H_{04} and H_{06} . These two null hypotheses can, therefore, be rejected.

More specifically, it is established that emotional exhaustion is causally related to organisational commitment (H_{a4} : $t = -3.62$). The size of the β -coefficient ($\beta = -0.63$) is fairly substantial, indicating that the influence of emotional exhaustion on organisational commitment is rather strong. The negative direction of the relationship between these two variables corresponds to the direction as proposed in the literature and as found by the present study's correlation and regression analyses respectively.

In addition, it is established that organisational commitment is causally related to intentions to leave (H_{a6} : $t = -2.52$). The magnitude of the β -coefficient ($\beta = -0.90$) is exceptionally large, indicating a substantial influence of organisational commitment on intentions to leave. The negative direction of this relationship also corresponds to the study's hypothesized direction, as well as the results of the correlation and regression analyses respectively.

The Beta and Gamma matrices fail to provide support for the remaining propositions. Thus, it follows that a) emotional exhaustion is not causally related to intentions to

leave (i.e. $H_{05}: \beta = -0.06; t = -0.21$ is not rejected); b) emotional labour is not causally related to emotional exhaustion (i.e. $H_{01}: \gamma = 0.13; t = 0.88$ is not rejected); c) supervisor support is not causally related to emotional exhaustion (i.e. $H_{02}: \gamma = -0.19; t = -1.32$ is not rejected), and d) supervisor support is not causally related to organisational commitment (i.e. $H_{03}: \gamma = 0.22; t = 1.73$ is not rejected).

Lisrel reports the total effects of Ksi (ξ) on Eta (η), and η on η , respectively, as well as the indirect effects of ξ on η , and η on η , respectively. Seeing that the direct effects are, in fact, the parameters as estimated in the structural model (i.e. they have already been presented and discussed elsewhere) a glance on indirect effects follows.

With regard to the indirect effect of ξ on η , supervisor support is found to have a significant, indirect effect on intentions to leave ($\beta = -0.29; t = -2.29$), and with reference to the indirect effect of η on η , emotional exhaustion has a significant, indirect effect on intentions to leave ($\beta = 0.57; t = 2.26$). The second finding is briefly discussed so as to provide an example of the significance of scrutinising an indirect effect between two latent variables.

According to the structural model, emotional exhaustion has an indirect effect on intentions to leave: this would mean that emotional exhaustion affects intentions to leave *through* organisational commitment (refer to Figure 1 in Chapter 2 for a visual representation of this indirect effect). At this point it is warranted to refer back to the results of the correlation and multiple regression analyses that found, a) emotional exhaustion significantly correlates with, and contributes to the prediction of, organisational commitment and intentions to leave respectively, and b) organisational commitment significantly correlates with intentions to leave and contributes to the prediction of the latter.

Consequently, taking into consideration the correlation results, the multiple regression results, the structural model's findings, as well as the partial mediation model (presented in Chapter 6; Kelloway, 1998), the existence of an indirect effect of emotional exhaustion on intentions to leave does appear viable.

A summary of the structural model's fit statistics is as follows: Adequate model fit was found by the Minimum Fit Function χ^2 and the Satorra-Bentler Scaled χ^2 respectively, and both the RMSEA and CFI indicated very good model fit to the data. In contrast, the Standardised RMR indicated unsatisfactory model fit (although the obtained value only exceeded the proposed rule of thumb value by 0.01), and the GFI and AGFI also established unsatisfactory model fit, albeit by a hair's breadth.

The Beta and Gamma matrices succeeded in rejecting two of the six null hypotheses; as a result, causal relationships were established between emotional exhaustion and organisational commitment, and organisational commitment and intentions to leave, respectively. These findings match up with the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis results, as well as the multiple regression analysis results.

An investigation into the structural model's parameters illuminated various aspects that could provide pointers with regard to potential sources of poor or inadequate model fit. Firstly, two standardised residuals exceeded the absolute value 2.58, indicating over- and underestimation of covariance between the variables in question. Secondly, the model does a poor job of accounting for variance in emotional exhaustion, the main component of burnout included in the structural model.

The structural model in this research study presents an interesting case, in that one half of the goodness of fit indices report adequate to excellent model fit, and the other half casts doubt on the overall fit of the model. Inspection into the model parameters and paths (especially the Beta and Gamma matrices) indicate that not all the hypothesized paths are significant either. On the whole, however, it seems safe to suggest that the overall fit of the structural model is satisfactory. In future studies more in-depth data inspection and model modification could aid in improving this particular model's fit to the data.

In the following section the quantitative research results are integrated so as to form a holistic view of the research results. Accordingly, the qualitative research results are incorporated into the quantitative results in order to substantiate and / or elucidate the latter.

7.5. CONCLUSION

In the present research study six propositions are tested by means of three statistical procedures, namely Pearson product-moment correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis, and structural equation modelling. In an attempt to enable a logical integration of the data *selected findings* are highlighted throughout the discussion.

In order to facilitate the interpretation of the statistical results, the six propositions in the present study are briefly reiterated:

H_{a1}: Emotional labour will be statistically and significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

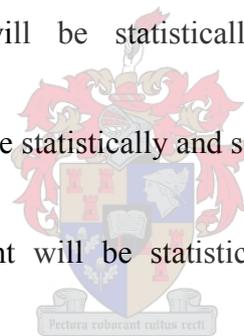
H_{a2}: Supervisor support will be statistically and significantly related to emotional exhaustion.

H_{a3}: Supervisor support will be statistically and significantly related to organisational commitment.

H_{a4}: Emotional exhaustion will be statistically and significantly related to organisational commitment.

H_{a5}: Emotional exhaustion will be statistically and significantly related to intentions to leave.

H_{a6}: Organisational commitment will be statistically and significantly related to intentions to leave.



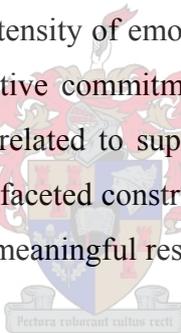
The Pearson product-moment correlation analysis confirmed statistically significant relationships for propositions H_{a3} ($r = .264$; $p < .05$), H_{a4} ($r = -.518$; $p < .01$), H_{a5} ($r = .517$; $p < .01$), and H_{a6} ($r = -.664$; $p < .01$). In addition, an unexpected, statistically significant relationship between supervisor support and emotional labour was found ($r = -.316$; $p < .01$), although no significant relationships between supervisor support and emotional exhaustion (H_{a2}: $r = -.116$; ns), and emotional labour and emotional exhaustion (H_{a1}: $r = .186$; ns) respectively, were established. Various statistically significant relationships were, however, found between the dimensions of emotional labour and the other constructs included in the study (see Table 7).

In light of the above correlation results, a few broad deductions are possible. Firstly, emotional exhaustion (i.e. the main component of burnout) is significantly related to important organisational outcomes, namely lowered organisational commitment and

increased intentions to leave. The correlation results do not, however, explain *how* these three constructs are related: What is evident though, is that – although emotional exhaustion is related to both outcomes - organisational commitment is even more strongly related to intentions to leave than emotional exhaustion (as evident from the magnitude of r). The multiple regression and structural equation modelling results will aid in elucidating the complexity inherent in these relationships.

Secondly, the emotional labour construct used as a composite score appears insufficient for establishing significant relationships with other constructs, most notably pertaining to the hypothesized relationship with emotional exhaustion. When the *dimensions* of emotional labour are correlated with the study variables, however, meaningful relationships with emotional exhaustion (as well as supervisor support and affective commitment) come to the fore.

For example, it is found that the intensity of emotional display is significantly related to emotional exhaustion and affective commitment respectively, and the variety of emotional display is significantly related to supervisor support. Thus, it seems that emotional labour is indeed a multi-faceted construct that requires researchers to make provision for its complex nature if meaningful research results are to be expected.



Lastly, it seems probable that supervisor support plays a role in contributing to employees' organisational commitment, even though the size of r in the present research study is rather small.

The qualitative research alludes to *a* mechanism through which employees (i.e. CSRs) might lose their feelings of emotional attachment towards the organisation, namely a lack of trust in management (i.e. team leaders): “*You know what we don't trust our management they don't deliver, we can't trust them because so many things have been promised and it's just not delivered*”.

In light of the fact that CSRs experience a lack of support from their team leaders (see qualitative research results, Chapter 6, and recall the significant, negative correlation between supervisor support and emotional labour), and provided CSRs view management as representing the organisation, their negative feelings towards

management might be projected onto the organisation, resulting in lowered affective commitment towards the latter.

Future research is required to establish the exact mechanisms through which this process possibly occurs.

The Multiple Regression analysis elaborates on and expands the Pearson product-moment correlation results, especially with regard to the intricate relationships extant amongst the constructs emotional exhaustion, organisational commitment and intentions to leave. The simultaneous consideration of the structural equation modelling results further allows for meaningful interpretation of the regression results, as well as the implications of emotional exhaustion for the organisation.

According to the multiple regression analysis, emotional exhaustion independently and significantly contributes to the prediction of organisational commitment ($\beta = -.489$; $p < .05$). Furthermore, both emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .238$; $p < .05$ as per model two and $\beta = .490$; $p < .05$ as per model three) and organisational commitment ($\beta = -.535$; $p < .05$) independently contribute to the prediction of intentions to leave in a statistically significant manner. From scrutinising the β -values it is evident that organisational commitment contributes *more* to the prediction of intentions to leave than emotional exhaustion.

According to the structural model, emotional exhaustion is causally related to organisational commitment ($\beta = -0.63$), and organisational commitment is causally related to intentions to leave ($\beta = -0.90$). Although emotional exhaustion is not causally related to intentions to leave in the structural model, it is nevertheless established that emotional exhaustion *indirectly* affects intentions to leave *via* organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.57$).

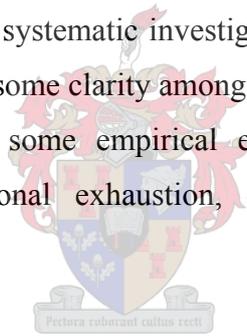
Thus, the multiple regression and structural equation modelling results converge in providing empirical evidence for the following:

- a) Emotional exhaustion contributes to the prediction of, and is causally related to, organisational commitment.

- b) Organisational commitment contributes to the prediction of, and is causally related to, intentions to leave.
- c) Emotional exhaustion contributes to the prediction of intentions to leave, although it does not seem to be causally related to it, and
- d) Emotional exhaustion affects intentions to leave *indirectly through* organisational commitment.

Meyer (2001) proposed, organisational commitment could be used to predict turnover; he also commented, the causal connection between organisational commitment and correlate variables such as stress - and by implication burnout - is as of yet either unidentified or a debateable topic warranting further investigation.

The significance of Meyer's observations lies in their speculative nature, and as is often the case with research, mixed and inconclusive evidence permeate the academic literature. By having followed a systematic investigative process, the present study's research findings aid in creating some clarity amongst the confusion; that is, the above findings succeed in providing some empirical evidence for causal associations amongst the constructs emotional exhaustion, organisational commitment and intentions to leave.



For example, the finding of the *indirect* relationship between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave (finding d) serves as *one* potential explanation for the absence of a direct causal relationship between emotional exhaustion and intentions to leave (finding c). More specifically, it seems that the 'missing link' between these two constructs is organisational commitment, in that organisational commitment acts as an important mediator between employees' feelings of emotional exhaustion and their intentions to quit the organisation.

In addition, the business argument put forward by Mowday (1998) in Chapter 4 – that is, that organisations engaging in efforts to build employee commitment will gain a competitive advantage over their competitors – proves to be astonishingly valid in light of the demonstrated *direct, causal* relationship between organisational commitment and intentions to leave, as well as commitment's *mediating* role in influencing emotionally exhausted employees' intentions to leave.

In addition to the quantitative research results that elucidate meaningful associations and causal relationships (even though somewhat tentatively) amongst the constructs, the qualitative research results provide valuable insight into the CSRs' *experiences* in and of the call centre environment - particularly pertaining to experiences that involve emotional labour.

The following section aims to provide a more phenomenological perspective of the nature of emotional labour by asking the question, "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon [emotional labour] for these people [CSRs]?" (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p.16). This question is deemed important due to the centrality of the construct in the present study's research design.

Even though the quantitative research findings did not find overwhelming support for emotional labour's relationship to other constructs in the study, its presence and significance within the call centre environment should not be overlooked. In fact, the qualitative interview comments paint a rather complex picture of the nature of emotional labour, and in order to highlight some of this complexity, *selected interview comments* are presented next (for an extended presentation of CSRs' interview comments, see Chapter 6).



One CSR views the continuous flow of incoming calls as one of *the* biggest sources of stress in her working life: "*Wat vir my stresvol is is nie die emosies nie, dis nie die computer nie, dit stres my nie uit nie, dis die time management, dit is my oproepe wat so kom ... vir my is dit oproepe wat in jou oor bly ... so so so*".

A first reading of the CSR's comment seems to suggest that call volume (alternately referred to as call quantity) is a big stressor in the call centre environment – which it definitely is: "*You are graded according to stats, everything is about figures at the end of the day ... and also you're assessed on the quality of those calls at the same time, so it is quantity, quality and unavailable time*".

However, one could also infer the phrase "client interactions" from the phrase "incoming calls" (i.e. from "*dit is my oproepe wat so kom*") as the latter essentially results in the former. In other words, although the correlation analysis failed to

indicate a significant relationship between the frequency of client interactions and emotional exhaustion, the qualitative data tells a rather different story.

This example also indicates the extent to which constructs in the social sciences overlap: Within the context of the call centre environment specifically, the constructs *workload* and *frequency of client interactions* are not sufficiently clear-cut, as both constructs could envelop the notion of *incoming calls*. Nevertheless, the qualitative data enables the researcher to obtain a glimpse of the individual's subjective reality and to move beyond sheer hard data.

According to the correlation analysis, intensity of emotional display is significantly related to emotional exhaustion. The following interview comment highlights the complexity that is built into CSRs' interactions with clients: "*Ek het lus om saam met haar te huil maar ek weet ek kan nie saam met haar huil nie want ek dink aan my eie kinders en ... ek kry trane in my oë en ek moet daai oproep hanteer asof ek nie koud is nie maar ek kan ook nie sit en huil aan die ander kant nie want hoe gaan dit nou klink, ek is veronderstel om haar te help en hier sit en huil ek ook ...*".

This comment illustrates that, even though CSRs experience intense emotions in response to clients' personal problems, they have to a) regulate these emotions in accordance with the organisation's display rules ("*ek kry trane in my oë en ek moet daai oproep hanteer asof ek nie koud is nie*") and b) attend to the task at hand ("*ek is veronderstel om haar te help*"). Against the backdrop of such emotional and cognitive demands the potential outcome for the individual (i.e. emotional exhaustion) does not seem unlikely.

Although the structural model accounted for a mere 7% of the variance in emotional exhaustion, the CSRs describe their feelings of emotional and physical exhaustion in unambiguous terms: "*You are so tired, you are so tired, the brain is tired, the body is tired, the brain is exhausted at the end of the workday, headaches, you know how panados go around in that call centre, it's frustration, it's really just emotionally ... I'm talking about breaking point stress*".

It is important to consider the question of why the structural model does rather poorly in accounting for variance in emotional exhaustion. Lewig and Dollard (2003), and Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini and Holz (2001), recently contended that, in addition to the unique contribution of emotional labour to the development of burnout, it is, in fact, the co-occurrence of emotional work demands *and* organisational job stressors and psychosocial demands that result in exaggerated levels of emotional exhaustion.

The qualitative data proposed various sources of job stress over and above the requirement to perform emotional labour. Some examples include client abuse; the CSR's boundary-spanning position between the client and the organisation; adherence to script rules; the tension between quantity and quality targets in the call centre, and the quality assessment process that entails being monitored incessantly (for more examples in this regard see Chapter 6). In relation to the call centre environment, therefore, it could prove worthwhile to investigate these additional work stressors' impact on strain levels (i.e. on emotional exhaustion) beyond the scope of emotional labour per se in future research studies.

In response to feelings of emotional and physical exhaustion CSRs engage in various coping behaviours, such as having a drink after work, taking planned sick leave, and turning to medication (e.g. headache tablets like panados) (see Chapter 6 for interview comments in this regard).

Maslach and Goldberg (1998) report the appearance of comparable coping behaviours in individuals who show signs of burnout: "*I've gone through drinking to relax enough to go to sleep, tranquilizers, stretching my sick leave to its ultimate limit, and so on*" (p.63). These coping behaviours could alternatively be labelled *withdrawal behaviours* (Deery & Kinnie, 2004; Westman & Etzion, 2001) and serve as a means to 'escape' from job demands: Having a drink, or taking a few panados, enable temporary escape from a situation; taking sick leave, however, is a more permanent (or long-term) form of escapism.

An example of how CSRs think about sick leave is, "*I've been last week off and ... I have lots of sick leave and I will use it up before my new cycle*". This comment quite clearly illustrates the premeditated nature of absenteeism in the call centre due to,

inter alia, fatigue (exhaustion): *“The sick leave it went through the roof coz people are tired, people are tired”*. Although all of the above-mentioned behaviours enable CSRs to “recharge [their] batteries” (Westman & Etzion, 2001, p.597) they could also signify that the CSRs struggle in coping successfully with their work demands.

The above-mentioned behaviours seem rather counter-productive, but could be expected in light of the CSRs’ perceived lack of emotional support from their team leaders: *“We do get support but it’s ... I would say it’s due man ... you get your basic support ... but humane support, she’s a thing with a capital B ... ‘please sort out your problems and leave them at home when you come to work’”*.

In other words, the CSRs could argue, ‘if the team leaders are unavailable to alleviate our emotional load, at least other options are available’, or ‘if all else fails, at least we have panados / alcohol / sick leave to turn to’. It could also be that they make such ‘bad choices’ due to a lack of alternative options and / or due to having no other form of assistance.

The above comments highlight the concurrent need to equip CSRs with constructive coping skills *and* to teach team leaders practical support skills. Leiter (1991) implies a similar point of view in stating, “...individual coping behaviours may be quite salient to addressing occupational stressors, but only if these coping efforts are supported by colleagues on the workgroup or departmental level” (p.143). In other words, individual-level interventions that are presented in isolation from the organisation and / or management will be ineffective in addressing job stress and burnout.

The CSRs comment on the requirement to engage in both surface and deep acting. With regard to surface acting they state, *“We are now all becoming liars ... all you can actually do is lie to the member because I mean there is nothing else you can do, say ... you call the manager to ask ‘what can I say here’, but the manager is not actually willing to help you at all, so you must just lie”*.

Regarding deep acting they declare, *“At the end of the day you try to handle that query so like tenderly so that the woman actually feels you support her ... like it is not*

just ... like a robot thingy where you have to punch in numbers but there is someone else on the other side that is actually there to support you ... emotionally”.

It is interesting to note the language that the CSRs use to describe each emotion management technique, as well as the context in which the CSRs apparently apply each technique. The above comments suggest that CSRs engage in surface acting - which, according to them, requires them to “lie” to their clients - when they fail to obtain the necessary informational support from their team leaders.

On the contrary, however, CSRs engage in deep acting when they make it their personal objective to support their clients emotionally, and it might even be that the CSRs experience a sense of pride when they are able to help another person (i.e. they are not merely “robots” who “punch in numbers”). It is also ironic that the CSRs give exactly that which they desire, but do not receive, from their team leaders to their clients (i.e. support).

Although neither surface acting nor deep acting significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion in the present research study, the above comments seem to converge with the emotional labour literature in proposing that emotion regulation is indeed a reality for service employees. Furthermore, it could be that surface acting entails a bigger investment of resources due to the suppression of one’s true feelings (cf. the act of lying), and that deep acting results in feelings of personal accomplishment and / or lower levels of strain as a result of helping clients in an authentic manner (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Côté, 2005; Hochschild, 1979, 1983, cited in Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

These comments remain only hypothetical, however, and require further investigation in future.

Thus, even though the quantitative data analysis failed to shed much light on the construct emotional labour, it is evident from the selection of qualitative interview comments that emotional labour is indeed a significant role player in the lives of CSRs. Stated differently, the requirement to perform emotional labour influences the

CSRs' experiences in and of the call centre environment and, as such, should not be disregarded.

Furthermore, from the organisation's point of view it seems reasonable to suggest that the decision to look after CSRs' well-being will in this day and age become more than a sheer symbol of altruism once businesses realise the increasingly important role that their employees' mental health plays in ultimate business success. In order to intervene successfully, however, organisations would require an in-depth understanding of the complex nature of *all* variables that affect their employees' mental health. It is hoped that this study will contribute to that understanding, albeit only in a limited way, and lead to greater efforts in promoting the well-being of individuals.

Those organisations (and by implication call centres) that do succeed in simultaneously limiting CSRs' levels of emotional exhaustion *and* building organisational commitment will reap greatly sought-after business benefits, such as continuously decreasing turnover levels and building long-term, competitive advantage.

It seems evident therefore that, instead of regarding burnout as the proverbial can of worms that is best left unopened, it should henceforth be viewed as an important determinant of organisational success.

7.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The final section in this research study aims to provide guidance for future researchers interested in the study of emotional labour and burnout (emotional exhaustion) in industry. The pieces of advice follow from the study's own limitations, as well as from an article on the social interaction model of emotion regulation (Côté, 2005). Finally, several thoughts on interventions and how they could be approached are presented.

7.6.1. Limitations of the Present Research Study

Firstly, future research studies should aim to increase the sample size to the recommended $N = 200$ (or at a minimum $N = 100$), as this is the recommended sample

size for the purpose of structural equation modelling (Baldwin, 1989; Lomax, 1989; cited in Thompson, 2000).

Secondly, the dimensions of the Emotional Labour scale should be subjected to refinement for use in future research studies by, for example, fine-tuning its wording and / or better demarcating the various sub-dimensions. This seems necessary in light of the fact that the intensity and variety of emotional display dimensions grouped together as a single factor in the factor analysis, and because the path coefficients for emotional labour were some of the lowest as per the Lambda-X matrix in the structural model (i.e. EMLSA = 0.32). Despite the scale's satisfactory Cronbach alpha value (.852), fact remains it is a relatively novel scale that could still benefit from improvement efforts.

Thirdly, it might be favourable to include the remaining two components of burnout (i.e. *cynicism / depersonalisation*, as well as *reduced feelings of accomplishment / inefficacy*) in future research studies, so that their relationship(s) to predictors and organisational outcomes can also be established. This seems warranted in light of the fact that burnout is most often described as a multi-faceted phenomenon.

Furthermore, the opposite of burnout - *engagement* - should also be studied in relation to work demands and work resources in an attempt to determine how these two constructs combine to affect overall well-being. Studies of this nature would improve management's understanding of the developmental process of burnout in organisations, and ultimately assist them in choosing the best interventions for their employees.

In a similar vein, researchers should aim to include as many work stressors (i.e. predictors) as is practicably feasible in future studies on burnout. The qualitative data provides many examples of stressors that could be studied specifically in relation to the call centre environment. This will improve management's understanding of the conditions that shape the burnout phenomenon.

Fourthly, the role of supervisor support in impacting on or alleviating burnout remains as indefinite as indicated by Cohen and Wills in 1985. Contradictory to what was

hypothesized, supervisor support failed to indicate a significant, direct relationship with emotional exhaustion, but instead correlated significantly with emotional labour (as a composite score), as well as with variety of emotional display and surface and deep acting respectively. Thus, these findings suggest a need for studies that explicitly investigate the role of the supervisor in service employees' work lives: a possible avenue to follow is to investigate this association against the backdrop of the Conservation of Resources and / or Job Demands-Resources theories (for an example of the former, see Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

Fifthly, additional criteria (i.e. organisational outcomes) could be added to studies on emotional labour and burnout. One such criterion is *job satisfaction* - also believed to be one of the two most proximal causes of organisational commitment (interestingly, the second cause is mental health – note the theoretical link with burnout) (Mathieu & Hamel, 1989, cited in Meyer, 2001). Such studies could assist I / O Psychologists and researchers alike in their quest(s) to extricate the intricate relationships existent amongst many of the social science constructs.

Sixthly, future research studies should attend to the measures employed to determine (or predict) turnover. Kirschenbaum and Weisberg (1994, cited in Maertz & Campion, 2001) proposed a causal ordering of events leading up to ultimate turnover, namely an initial stage of passively searching for alternative opportunities, followed by intentions to leave, active search behaviours and the decision to quit (in this order).

The CSRs' interview comments illustrate a comparable progression in deciding whether to leave the organisation - more specifically a) "*I wish I could abdicate this job*" (i.e. thoughts or wishes of leaving are beginning to formulate); b) "*Everybody's looking for other jobs, everybody, on Monday morning you see the Jobfinder on everybody's desk*", and "*I am busy looking out for another job*" (i.e. active search behaviour is taking place), and c) "*I've been here for 6 years and ... it's terrible working in the call centre ... it is coming to the stage where people are actually thinking nothing of me so I am ready to leave ... I am about to leave, I need to work ... but I am really not happy*" (i.e. the decision to quit has already been made and is imminent). Note the phrase "*I am really not happy*" – this might also imply a theoretical link between intentions to leave and job satisfaction.

Thus, it is evident that much opportunity exists for future studies to disentangle the direct and indirect relationships amongst, inter alia, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and turnover. Also note that three sub-dimensions actually constitute the total organisational commitment construct, that is, affective, normative, and continuance commitment respectively - great scope still exists for studies to incorporate all three dimensions in their research designs.

7.6.2. Recommendations for future research in light of the social interaction model of emotion regulation

Côté (2005) recently published an article in which she explicates the way in which emotion regulation impacts strain (comprehensively discussed in Chapter 3). She mentions multiple avenues still open for future research on emotion regulation – these include, inter alia:

1. Determining, very broadly, under which circumstances emotion regulation is indeed associated with increased strain, and when it is unrelated to strain.
2. Identifying the role that *all* possible types of emotions play in affecting strain levels, and how a particular emotion regulation technique (i.e. surface or deep acting) interacts with these distinct emotions in affecting strain levels.
3. Investigating the relative strength of different forms of emotion regulation on strain, for example, whether the amplification of happiness, or the suppression of anger, via deep acting decreases strain the most.
4. Investigating those factors that impact the accuracy with which receivers decode senders' emotion displays in different work environments (e.g. the telephone barrier in the call centre).
5. Developing instruments that can gauge which form of emotion regulation senders employ and that accurately measure their ensuing strain levels.
6. Developing instruments that accurately reflect the nature and power of receivers' responses to senders' emotion displays (seeing that these responses might fulfil a mediating role between the sender's emotion display and his / her resultant strain levels).

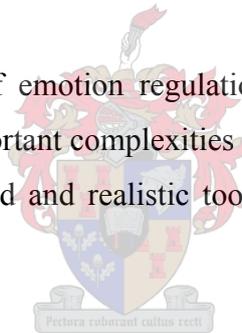
As is evident from the above pointers, organisational (i.e. applied) research on emotions and emotion regulation is still very much in an emerging phase. This

presents researchers interested in conducting research within the domain of emotions with limitless opportunities to contribute to I / O Psychology's body of knowledge.

7.6.3. Intervention: Implications for Practice

In previous decades, the notion and presence of *emotions* in organisations was completely disregarded: Emotions were conceived of as irrational factors to be excluded from the work environment. The present research study forms part and parcel of a novel movement in organisational research that attempts to create a change in how business thinks about emotions. In fact, organisations all over the globe are beginning to realise the importance of approaching the individual as a holistic being, acknowledging the role that emotions play in psychological and physical well-being, as well as in job performance. In response to this realisation, organisations need valid and workable interventions in order to assist their employees in functioning optimally in the work environment.

The social interaction model of emotion regulation (Côté, 2005) is only intricate enough so as not to obscure important complexities inherent in emotion regulation. As such, it is simultaneously a valid and realistic tool that is workable in any applied setting.



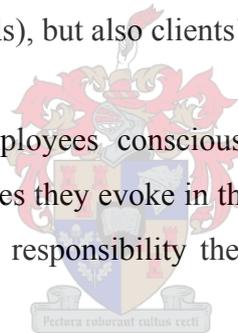
Managers who want to assist their employees in minimising and / or controlling their strain levels should, from studying the social interaction model of emotion regulation, know that: a) Surface acting is perceived as inauthentic by clients who receive such emotion displays, thereby increasing the sender's strain levels, and as such, should rather be avoided, whereas b) deep acting is a better alternative, although cognisance of the discrete emotion being regulated is also important for determining deep acting's consequences.

Information of this nature could be presented to all service employees in a workshop format, thereby equipping individuals with emotion regulation skills in an attempt to positively influence their strain levels and job performance (it is probable that such skills could also have an added benefit of spilling over into individuals' personal lives).

It is also of critical importance to equip service employees (e.g. CSRs) with constructive and adaptive coping skills. This is due to the organisational reality that supervisors sometimes don't have the time *or* the ability to fulfil a supportive role. This type of situation, however, risks nullifying the potential value that individual-level coping has (refer to the earlier quote by Leiter, 1991). Stated differently, if organisations are to reap any benefits from teaching service employees (i.e. CSRs) coping skills, management (i.e. team leaders) will have to support them in their coping efforts.

Grandey and Brauburger (2002) emphasize the importance of training service employees in emotion-focused coping skills as - in the service environment specifically - the ability to cope with the job's imposed emotional demands (and regulate one's emotions optimally) not only affects one's interactions with clients and hence one's personal well-being (recall the feedback loop between unfavourable client interactions and strain levels), but also clients' perceptions of the organisation.

Managers could also make employees conscious of the role they play in their '*personal reality*' via the responses they evoke in their clients. In this way individuals could begin to acknowledge the responsibility they carry in determining their own well-being.



In light of the importance of supervisor support (mentioned above), managers should be trained in *how* and *when* to provide various *types* of support to their employees. For example, in environments where high emotional demands are placed on individuals (like in call centres), supervisors should be *au fait* in providing their subordinates with emotional support – the same argument holds for other types of environments (e.g. more technically-oriented workplaces). This is in line with the *modified buffering hypothesis* (Cohen & McKay, 1984, cited in Hobfoll & Vaux, 1993, p.693) - also called the *alternative specificity hypothesis* (Brotheridge, 2001, p.11) - that states, support should ameliorate stress if it matches up with the nature of the stressor in question.

It is worth mentioning that, although supervisor support did not correlate significantly with emotional exhaustion, the CSRs' interview comments indicated a need for

various types of support (i.e. emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal support) from their team leaders. Stated differently, it seems that the individual's subjective reality is negatively influenced by a *lack* of support – hence the importance of intervening on this level.

The multiple regression and structural equation modelling results clearly converge in describing the significant relationship(s) amongst emotional exhaustion, organisational commitment, and intentions to leave (refer to the Conclusion). In practical terms these findings suggest that, in order to decrease service employees' intentions to leave, management needs to increase feelings of organisational commitment *and* deal with burnout (i.e. emotional exhaustion) amongst their employees in a constructive manner.

As regards organisational commitment, those organisations that want to strengthen their employees' attachment to the organisation could potentially learn a great deal from the following interview comment: *“You know what we don't trust our management they don't deliver, we can't trust them because so many things have been promised and it's just not delivered”*.

In other words, management might need to consider restoring their employees' faith in *them* first before attempting to build organisational commitment. The potentially important role that supervisors might play in determining their employees' organisational commitment seems viable in light of the significant, positive correlation between supervisor support and organisational commitment as found in the present study (see Table 7).

Maslach and Goldberg (1998) published an informative article in which they propose a two-pronged approach for dealing with burnout: The first approach entails building *engagement* with work by creating a better 'fit' between the person and the job (see the problem-solving approach by Maslach & Leiter, 1997, mentioned later on), and the second approach entails *reframing* burnout so that individuals do not fall prey to a self-fulfilling prophecy where perceptions of being at risk for burnout actually lead to choices that enhance one's chances of truly burning out.

These authors write, the focus of burnout interventions should be on the *relationship* between the individual and his / her situational context, and that interventions should be explicitly designed to a) combat emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, and b) build feelings of personal accomplishment, respectively (i.e. a program that tries to tackle burnout as a uni-dimensional construct will, in all likelihood, fail).

Originally, approaches to preventing burnout were divided into *person-centered* and *situation-centered* approaches. The person-centered approach argues that the individual is responsible for managing his / her own well-being; as such, various individual burnout prevention strategies have been proposed. The first group focuses on improving the person's relationship to the job – these include, a) a change in work patterns (e.g. working less or changing one's pace of work); b) developing preventive coping skills (e.g. applying cognitive restructuring and / or debriefing), and c) the utilisation of social resources (e.g. utilising work and family sources of support).

In line with the suggestion to work less, Westman and Etzion (2001) investigated to what extent a vacation (i.e. holiday) relieves psychological strain (conceptualised as burnout) and behavioural strain (conceptualised as absenteeism) respectively. They found a significant difference between pre-vacation levels of burnout and the *first* post-vacation measure; however, by four weeks after the return from vacation burnout levels had returned to the chronic, pre-vacation level. Similar findings were reported for absenteeism.

These findings convey two important messages: Firstly, individuals cannot 'heal' from burnout simply by going on vacation; that is, in order to prevent and / or treat burnout a more comprehensive process is required (see Maslach & Leiter, 1997, further on). Secondly, however, intermittent periods of leave could act as an on-going means of preventing strain from reaching a critical phase – more research is required to identify the ideal length and frequency of vacations for maximal respite.

The second group (still with the person-centred approach to preventing burnout) focuses on building the individual's internal resources – these include, a) fostering a more relaxed and healthy lifestyle (e.g. practicing meditation, eating nutritional food, and exercising more), as well as b) engaging in self-analysis in order to increase self-

insight (i.e. insight into one's personality and values could elucidate possible risk areas for developing burnout). Another internal strength that could be taught is *resilience*, that is, the ability to overcome life's obstacles and 'bounce back'. This latter point was also made by the team leaders who commented on the notion of a 'good CSR': "*Emotionally resilient ... you have to be emotionally strong, you don't take things personally ... take ... feedback in a positive manner*".

The situation-centered approach focuses on enhancing the quality of individuals' experiences on the job – examples of possible strategies include, a) increasing job control, b) implementing job rotation systems, and c) providing training in interpersonal skills.

Johnson (2004, pp.229-230) identifies two approaches that should aid individuals in coping with life's extreme stressors. The first approach is based on *self-control*, that is, learning to take responsibility for one's own reactions to life situations – this approach echoes the earlier notion of being aware of how one shapes one's '*personal reality*'.

The second approach entails *situation control* and includes training in critical problem-solving, assertiveness, conflict resolution, time management, and self-care – this approach dovetails with the notion of interpersonal skills training (mentioned above). These topics can be presented relatively easy in workshop formats and might aid in creating awareness about oneself vis-à-vis life's stressors, and how to cope better with life's difficulties - their validity with regard to impacting on burnout specifically (i.e. a consequence of prolonged job stress), however, remains dubious.

Maslach and Goldberg (1998) write, the focus on individual strategies (like the above) is "particularly paradoxical" (p.69) in light of the overwhelming volume of research that indicates, organisational work stressors far outweigh individual stressors in causing burnout. In response to this misconception of *how* burnout should be prevented, they propose constructing a so-called "mental model" of burnout, based on the premise that "knowing what workers think about burnout is necessary to understand their current behaviour and to predict their future choices" (p.70).

In a nutshell, a mental model of burnout identifies a) those factors that employees believe either increase or decrease their risk for burnout, as well as cognitive biases that undermine the success of prevention efforts, as well as b) how people perceive the risks and benefits associated with various options, as well as why they occasionally opt for risky behaviours (refer back to the discussion on *coping behaviours* earlier on).

An alternative approach for framing burnout was developed by Maslach and Leiter (1997) and proposes, "...the greater the gap, or misfit, between the person and the job, the greater the likelihood of burnout" (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998, p.71). The six factors that create the mismatch between the individual and work were mentioned in Chapter 4 (under the "Causes of Burnout"), and are therefore not repeated here.

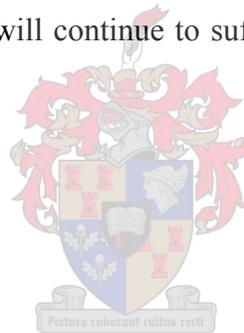
Maslach and Leiter (1997) emphasize that, although it is better to *prevent* the onset of burnout, it is often necessary to intervene in *crisis* mode. In both instances, the purpose should always be to "...connect the job setting to individual employees" (p.81).

These researchers propose a Problem-Solving Process as *a* framework for dealing with burnout. This process operates from the premise that burnout can be prevented and / or counteracted by building engagement with work. In order to achieve this goal, however, organisations need to create organisational structures and processes that *drive* this dual goal. To set this process in motion the organisation should assess itself in relation to the six work areas (refer Chapter 4), obtain information on the structures and processes that shape the six work areas, *and* assess employees to establish each individual's position on the burnout-engagement continuum.

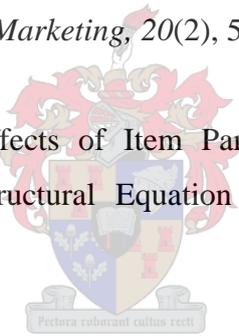
Ultimately, organisations should strive to identify those factors (i.e. conditions in the workplace) that negatively affect employees' emotions and work behaviours (i.e. that cause feelings of burnout) in order to eliminate them and begin to build engagement. Importantly, however, this process is not a once-off endeavour; rather, it is a long-term, ubiquitous process that requires commitment from both individuals and organisations.

Maslach and Leiter's (1997) approach to dealing with burnout is very applicable to the call centre environment, especially in light of the CSRs' descriptions of various call centre processes and structures that function as sources of frustration in their work lives (refer to Chapter 6 under "General Themes of CSRs"). From a business point of view, therefore, it might be more beneficial to engage in a relatively large-scale OD intervention - aimed at simultaneously improving the call centre's processes and structure, and attending to the individual's well-being - instead of spending money on small and isolated interventions that provide little return on investment.

The main message that should ensue from the above discussion is that burnout cannot be addressed in isolation: As Maslach and Goldberg (1998) write, it is imperative that organisations realise "...the necessity of understanding individual behavior in its social context" (p.72). If organisations fail to comprehend the precarious balance that exists between the individual and his / her milieu, all efforts in dealing with burnout will be futile and organisations will continue to suffer from uncommitted employees and high levels of turnover.



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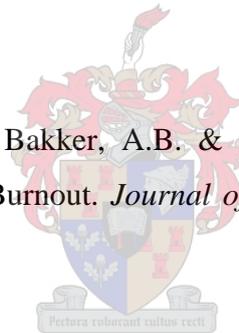
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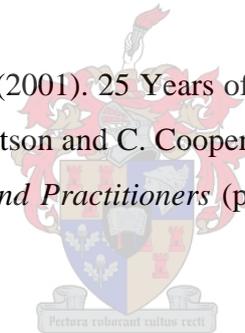
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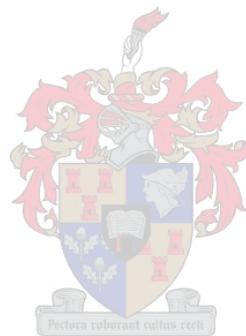


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APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

A. CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES (CSRs)

1. What is the **purpose** (mission, goals, objectives) of the call centre?
2. How are you **organised** and structured to achieve this purpose?
 - a) Do you work according to fixed processes and procedures, and are you allowed to deviate from them?
 - b) Do you have fixed response sets?
3. What is the **purpose of your job**? Tell me briefly what you do?
4. How do you **feel** about your call centre?
5. What is it like to **work in the call centre (CC)**? Be specific.
 - a) Do you enjoy working for it, or not. Why?
 - b) How do you **feel at the end of the workday**?
 - Physically
 - Emotionally
 - Spiritually
 - c) Is this feeling a regular occurrence or do you only feel like it 'once in a blue moon'?
6. Describe the **role of your team leader** in the call centre.
7. What do you **expect** from the team leaders with regard to **support**?
8. What is going well in the CC – what are the **strengths** and the positive qualities?
9. What is not going well – what are the **problems, concerns and issues**?
10. What happens to and around you in a typical day that makes you feel particularly **satisfied or** particularly **dissatisfied** about working in the CC?



(OR: What aspects of the job/work contribute most to job satisfaction, as well as to job dissatisfaction?)

a) Give a general overview of those aspects of the job that you **enjoy** and/or **don't enjoy** (probing)

b) Give a general overview of **positive and negative client experiences**. What exactly makes these experiences either positive or negative? (probe)

11. In your opinion, what are the **most stressful aspects** of call centre work?

12. If you had complete power (or you were the boss), what would you do to **change** things?

a) What, in your opinion, should be done more of, done less of and/or stay the same?

13. Any additional comments?



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

14. What would you consider to be a **negative service encounter**? (What contributes to *experiencing* a negative service encounter?)

15. What prevents *you* from delivering **quality service** to a customer? (What are the barriers/hindrances?)

16. How would you describe the **management style** at this call centre?

17. What (characteristics), in your opinion, distinguish a *supportive* from an *unsupportive team leader*?

B. TEAM LEADERS

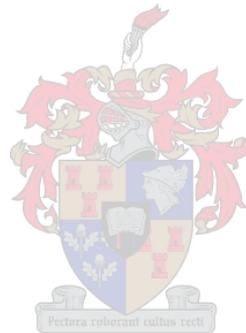
1. What is the **purpose** (mission, goals, objectives) of the call centre?

2. How are you **organised**, structured to achieve this purpose?

3. What is the **purpose of your job**? Tell me briefly what you do?
4. How do you **feel** about your call centre?
5. What is it like to **work** in the call centre (CC)? Be specific.
 - a) Do you enjoy working for it, or not. Why?
 - b) How do you feel at the end of the workday:
 - Physically
 - Emotionally
 - Spiritually
 - c) Is this feeling a regular occurrence or do you only feel like it 'once in a blue moon'?
6. How do you see your **own role** in the call centre?
7. How do you **support the CSRs** that you are responsible for?
8. What is going well in the CC – what are the **strengths** and the positive qualities?
9. What is not going well – what are the **problems, concerns and issues**?
10. What happens to and around you in a typical day that makes you feel particularly **satisfied or particularly dissatisfied** about working in the CC?
 - a) Give a general overview of those aspects of the job that you enjoy and/or don't enjoy (probing)
11. If you had complete power (or you were the boss), what would you do to **change** things?
 - a) What, in your opinion, should be done more of, done less of and/or stay the same?
12. Any additional comments?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS:

13. What, in your opinion, distinguishes a **successful from an unsuccessful** (or less successful) call centre agent?



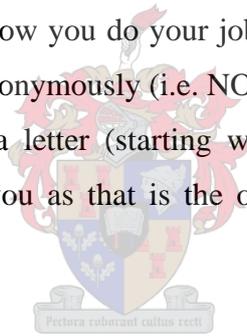
APPENDIX B: PROCEDURE FOLLOWED BEFORE EACH FOCUS GROUP SESSION

1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS:

- Thank you for attending today's session. I appreciate your willingness to participate in today's discussions.
- The session will be approximately 1 hour long.

2. PURPOSE OF DISCUSSIONS:

- The questions that I will be asking you are designed to provide me with insight into the workings of the call centre environment and to provide me with an understanding of the experiences that you have working in the call centre.
- The information that you give me will only be used by me and for my research. I am not working for (*name of insurance company*) and I am also not here to evaluate you or how you do your job. In other words, everything that you say will be treated anonymously (i.e. NO NAMES will be mentioned).
- Therefore, please write a letter (starting with A from left to right) on the sticker that I will give you as that is the only way that I will identify you during our discussion.



3. INFORMED CONSENT:

- I just want to ensure that you know that your participation in today's discussion is voluntary, in other words, you are under no obligation to attend; however, your presence is greatly appreciated!
- Would it be OK with you if I used the tape recorder to tape our discussions? There are 2 reasons for the tape recorder: one is that I can listen much better to what you are saying (without having to make notes all the time) and the other is that the tape recorder is much better at recording your answers and opinions than I am.
- Once again, complete anonymity is guaranteed: your managers/supervisors will never hear this recording; it is only for my use.

4. REQUESTS WITH REGARD TO SESSION:

- Please answer as truthfully as you can.

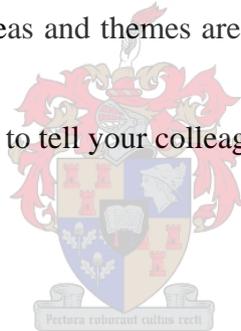
- Please do not tell your co-workers what was discussed in today's session – it might have a negative effect on our future sessions.

5. TO BEGIN WITH:

- Some introductions: I will introduce myself (name, what I do) and ask the participants to introduce themselves to the larger group

6. CLOSING REMARKS:

- Thank you, once again, for participating in today's discussion. It was truly very interesting to hear what your jobs entail. I wish you all the best for the future.
- I would also just like to emphasize that what you told me today will be treated anonymously. The only kind of feedback that I might give to management will be in a summary format. No names or quotes of what you said will be included. Overarching ideas and themes are all that I can provide to (*name of insurance company*).
- Please also remember not to tell your colleagues what was discussed today.



APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE

Research Study

(Insurance company's name)

Call Centre

Purpose of the research study

The purpose of the following questionnaire is to determine how you feel about certain aspects of your job.

It is not an evaluation of you as employee or of how well you perform your job.

The information that you provide is completely anonymous.

Instructions and requests

1. Please answer the following questions as truthfully as possible.
2. The questions are numbered chronologically.
3. Different scales are attached to the questions. *Please read the instructions with regard to each scale carefully before answering the questions that follow.*
4. **A loose answer sheet is enclosed with the questionnaire. Please circle your answers on the answer sheet WITH A PEN (thus, please ensure the answer you circle is your FINAL answer).**
5. Once you have completed the questionnaire, please place **the entire questionnaire (in other words, the questionnaire booklet and answer sheet)** in the box as provided.
6. **Complete anonymity is guaranteed.**
7. The questionnaire takes between 15 and 20 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your willingness to complete this questionnaire. Your time and effort is truly appreciated.

Please provide the following biographical information. All the information obtained is only used for statistical purposes. Complete **anonymity** is guaranteed.

Please circle your answer OR where applicable write your answer in the space provided.

1. Are you:

White Black Coloured Indian

Other (please specify):

2. Age in years:

3. Number of years at (*name of insurance company*):

4. Number of years in current position:

5. I have attained the following level of education:

Grade 10/Standard 8

Grade 11/Standard 9

Grade 12/Matric

Technikon Diploma

Technical College Diploma

University Degree

Other:

Postgraduate degree



6. Are you:

Male Female

7. Your home language:

Afrikaans English

isiXhosa isiZulu

Other (please specify):

A. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you never had this feeling, circle the zero (0). If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by circling the number (from 1-6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

Scale:

0 = never	1 = a few times a year or less	2 = once a month or less	3 = a few times a month	4 = once a week	5 = a few times a week	6 = every day
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1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. Working all day is really a strain for me.
5. I feel burned out from my work.

B. Please read each of the following statements carefully and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each one.

Circle the number (1-7) that best describes how you feel.

Scale:

1 = strongly disagree	2 = moderately disagree	3 = slightly disagree	4 = neither agree nor disagree
5 = slightly agree	6 = moderately agree	7 = strongly agree	

6. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation.
7. I enjoy discussing my organisation with people outside of it.
8. I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own.
9. I think I could become as easily attached to another organisation as I am to this one.
10. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organisation.
11. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organisation.
12. This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
13. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation.
14. I frequently think about leaving my current employer.
15. It is likely that I will search for a job in another organisation.
16. It is likely that I will actually leave the organisation within the next year.

C. Continue using the same scale (1-7) to answer the following questions by reading the phrase “My immediate team leader...” before EACH question.

For example, for question 1 you will read the question as “My immediate team leader is easy to talk with”.

My immediate team leader:

17. Is easy to talk with.
18. Is committed to providing first rate service.
19. Appears to experience stress in his/her job.
20. Is helpful in resolving conflicts among staff.
21. Listens to what I have to say.
22. Is an expert in his/her field.
23. Seems tense and frustrated when we talk.
24. Puts the needs of the work group first.
25. Gives me support when I need it.
26. Provides creative solutions to problems.
27. Is too busy to talk with me.
28. Makes fair decisions.



D. The following statements describe the nature of your job.

For statement number 29 please fill in (on the answer sheet) the AMOUNT OF TIME that a typical interaction with a customer takes FOR YOU.

29. A typical interaction I have with a customer takes about minutes.

For statements 30 to 43 please indicate the FREQUENCY with which you engage in the described behaviours on an average day at work by circling the appropriate number (1-5).

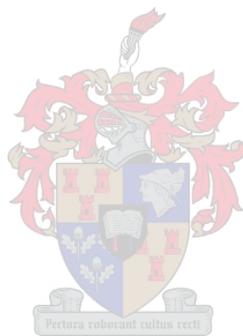
Scale:

1 = never	2 = rarely	3 = sometimes	4 = often	5 = always
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*On an **average day** at work how **frequently** do you:*

30. Display certain emotions required by your job.
31. Adopt certain emotions required as part of your job.
32. Express particular emotions needed for your job.
33. Express intense emotions.
34. Show some strong emotions.
35. Display many different kinds of emotions.
36. Express many different emotions.
37. Display many different emotions when interacting with others.
38. Resist expressing my true feelings.
39. Pretend to have emotions that I don't really have.
40. Hide my true feelings about a situation.
41. Make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display to others.
42. Try to actually experience the emotions that I must show.
43. Really try to feel the emotions that I have to show as part of my job.

THE END



APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWER SHEET

Please circle your answers to the questions on this answer sheet. The numbers on the answer sheet correspond to the numbering in the questionnaire booklet.

Please ensure that you use the correct scale for the various questions. The bold (black) and bigger sized numbers indicate the start of a new scale.

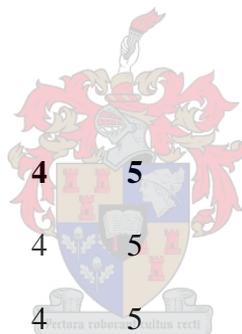
1.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
2.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
3.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
4.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
5.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
6.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

- 20. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 21. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 22. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 23. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 24. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 25. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 26. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 27. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 28. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

29.



- 30. 1 2 3 4 5
- 31. 1 2 3 4 5
- 32. 1 2 3 4 5
- 33. 1 2 3 4 5
- 34. 1 2 3 4 5
- 35. 1 2 3 4 5
- 36. 1 2 3 4 5
- 37. 1 2 3 4 5
- 38. 1 2 3 4 5
- 39. 1 2 3 4 5
- 40. 1 2 3 4 5
- 41. 1 2 3 4 5

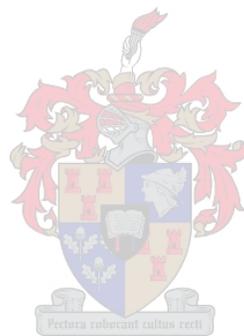


42. 1 2 3 4 5

43. 1 2 3 4 5

THE END

THANK YOU



APPENDIX E: CSRs' INTERVIEW COMMENTS (RAW DATA)

Overarching themes	Sub-themes	Words / phrases (direct speech)
Emotion work/ Emotional labour	Emotion management	<p>They will swear at you and they will tell you that you don't know your job ... you have to in that situation when the member is like that you have to be very polite You keep quiet and you let him blow his mind While he's shouting and telling you about your mother there you're going through the screens and having a look and seeing what has upset him so that ... when he does calm down you've got an answer for him, Sir I understand why you are upset ... this is what I am gonna do about it You let them talk first, let them get it off, and then you say OK Sir I do understand where you're coming from, what happened ... I'm gonna try and see if I can help you ... then they start calming down They are very upset, you keep on apologising As hy onbeskof is of as hy kort-af is dan pas jy maar aan by dit I was just listening ... what else is there you can do?</p>
	Emotional contagion	<p>Make them happy ... to make the customer happy Depending on how your mood is or the client's mood, sometimes you get a very irate person that is now very upset with everybody so you're on the phone you can be now in a jolly mood that person is going to bring you down completely you know ... if you are sitting at your desk and you get 10 bad calls straight after another are you still gonna be in a chirpy mood? I don't think so ... and then it also affects the next call coz the next call might not necessarily be that type of call but because of the previous call you've kind of got your back up already now and ... defending yourself</p>
	Positive client encounters / interactions	<p>A lot of positive clients and ... what's nice if you can service them straightaway they are very happy I love dealing with the clients ... I like the</p>

		<p>interaction, I've always been a people's person, I can't see myself working in the back office situation</p> <p>We do have your lots of times in the course of the day you do have the call where the person can't stop saying thank you for the kind service things like that which often brings you back, that puts you back again, that lifts you up, but ... at the end of the day it's somewhere far and few between Kliënte is eintlik baie nice, ek moet eerlik waar sê, veral die lede</p> <p>I love my work man, you know I love dealing with clients, I try to do things</p>
	<p>Negative client encounters / interactions</p>	<p>If you can service them straightaway they are very happy but if you first have to sort out other things for them ... then they're not happy</p> <p>You do get people that phone about 10 to 20 times which are not happy when you get those calls</p> <p>They upset you so that you can't go on with the next call ... you sitting talking to the next person who is a lovely person but this is in the back of your mind thinking about this onbeskofte mens wat nou met jou gepraat het</p> <p>At the moment negative, negative plus plus plus plus ... because of all the problems that we're having and we don't have answers</p> <p>O baie ... mense wat dinge gedoen wil hê op die mediese fonds wat die mediese fonds nie vir hulle kan toelaat nie is mislik Jy kry maar mislike lede ook</p> <p>Even that kind of person that is a very strong-willed person you do have your days where that very first call will take you into the gutter and then your whole day will just follow trend after that</p> <p>Somebody phoning in and complaining 'no my account is not paid' ... and 'this is outstanding and they're waiting on a cheque' ... really moaning</p> <p>From the members all the time I mean continuously ... 'why is my medication not approved? Who gives you the right to generically substitute my medication? If I die are you gonna be held liable?' You know that kind of crap ... every day</p>

	CSRs deal with variety of client emotions	When you answer a call that person on the other side has got lots of frustration. He's got lots of complaints, he's crying ... thousand types of emotions on the other side that you are sitting here with, that you are dealing with
	CSRs experience variety of emotions	<p>You go from one call where a person shouts and shouts at you, I mean you get those abusive clients, then you go to the next client ... that lost a husband ... lost a baby and it/s one emotion go straight to a next emotion ... jumping from one extreme emotion to another extreme emotion</p> <p>You're frustrated ... angry actually ... feel like useless, like you don't know what you are doing</p> <p>You work yourself up because of the different type of emotions that you do experience</p> <p>You're on an emotional roller coaster, then you're up, then you're down ... then you're feeling sad, then you're feeling angry, then you're happy</p> <p>On a call centre you have to have those skills when a call is gone you must go to the next one ... you must put it behind you all the time ... switch on and off on and off all the time</p>
	Emotional demands placed on CSRs	<p>We're dealing with people, we are dealing with their health issues</p> <p>You are dealing with the person's emotions on the other side</p> <p>Show empathy</p> <p>You are putting in a lot of energy to assist, to attend to the emotions ... taking a lot from yourself just to attend to their emotions and to put yourself in everybody's shoes ... trying to relate to the call</p> <p>You are trying to assist the member</p> <p>At the end of the day you try to handle that query so like tenderly so that the woman actually feels you support her ... like it is not just ... like a robot thingy where you have to punch in numbers but there is someone else on the other side that is actually there to support you ... emotionally</p> <p>Understanding exactly why he is upset ... you need to understand the condition</p>

		<p>immediately ... you've got to straight away take onus for the call and say to him this is what I'm gonna do about it, this is the solution to your problem</p> <p>If you are a call centre consultant you should be able to take the burden</p> <p>We need to understand exactly what the call is about, we need to understand exactly why that person is irate, what's caused him to be like that</p> <p>Ek praat hulle hart uit ... dit vat baie tyd, dit was 'n lang oproep gewees, maar ek kan haar nie onderbreek en vir haar sê maar mevrou jy weet ek het nou genoeg geluister na jou klagtes nie</p> <p>To understand their needs, to put yourself in their shoes, to understand their frustrations and all that</p>
	Task demands placed on CSRs	<p>Find a solution for their problems</p> <p>You are trying to assist the member</p> <p>You've got to straight away take onus for the call and say to him this is what I'm gonna do about it, this is the solution to your problem</p> <p>If you are a call centre consultant you should be able to take the burden</p> <p>Give good service to our customers</p> <p>To give our members more information on our products</p> <p>Listening, resolving their queries, trying to resolve queries ... giving information ... on all the questions they've got, about products, accurate information, give them correct information</p> <p>I will assist the member in whatever queries she's got and I only put down the phone and say goodbye once I know she's satisfied and understands what I've explained to her</p> <p>To answer clients' questions ... to help them get over their difficulties ... explaining to them what their benefits are</p> <p>When we deal with a query we do it to the best of our abilities and basically we try to sort it out there and then and also not to actually create a problem for the member further on so we basically do our best there and them to sort out the problem</p>
	Emotional involvement with	<p>We feel the full effect of the member coming through to us, hanging on so long</p>

	clients	<p>and the first thing he's gonna say, he's gonna start complaining</p> <p>You sit and you think to yourself there's a person who needs to go to the hospital</p> <p>You know you actually you are feeling for that member because it's not his error it's our error</p> <p>You feel like your heart is almost breaking for the way you feel about the client</p> <p>Ek het lus om saam met haar te huil maar ek weet ek kan nie saam met haar huil nie want ek dink aan my eie kinders en ... ek kry trane in my oë en ek moet daai oproep hanteer asof ek nie koud is nie maar ek kan ook nie sit en huil aan die ander kant nie want hoe gaan dit nou klink, ek is veronderstel om haar te help en hier sit en huil ek ook ... maar daai emosies is nog beter as die negatiewe hierdie moeilike kliënte</p> <p>You sit and you think to yourself there's a person who needs to go to the hospital or whatever</p>
Surface acting		<p>I reached the point where I am tired of trying to butter things up, if you are gonna ask me a stupid question you are gonna get a stupid answer, that's how I feel</p>
Feelings of inauthenticity		<p>You're giving excuses, at the moment we are not servicing our clients we are giving out excuses, all the time, all the time ... for errors, for other departments, and for errors that we haven't made</p> <p>At the end of the day or at the end of a Friday do you feel like still sitting and listening to that bull the client is gonna give you, you just say yes mam and no mam, they can hear it in your voice, they can hear what you're saying</p> <p>We have to say 5 to 7 days which we know is the biggest crock of crap, but we've got to say so because that is the company's rule ... I am giving information that while I am saying it I am actually laughing at myself, this is a bloody joke, I mean this is a joke</p> <p>You don't always understand their frustration</p> <p>We are now all becoming liars ... all you</p>

		<p>can actually do is lie to the member because I mean there is nothing else you can do, say ... you call the manager to ask 'what can I say here' but the manager is not actually willing to help you at all, so you must just lie</p> <p>You're just like one big liar ... the only thing that we are doing over here is becoming a better liar ... it feels like you're working for a dishonest company</p> <p>The basic things you lie about is management, that's basically the lie I tell constantly ... regarding management not being available that is basically the white lie I tell everyday, but other than that I try to be as truthful to the member as possible I'll tell you how I lie, I lie everyday ... especially when it is about the turnaround time ... I say 'they are currently busy on that, it's either today or tomorrow' ... I'm just trying to get rid of you ... what else can I do? If it is over 10 days we always say ... it's 5 days turnaround time ... what else can I say? Must I say 'no we take 40 days turnaround time'? I must lie ... sometimes you have to lie on top of that lie as well</p> <p>You call the manager to ask 'what can I say here' but the manager is not actually willing to help you at all so you must lie</p>
<p>Client abuse</p>	<p>Nature of client abuse</p>	<p>They swear ... they will swear at you and they will tell you that 'you don't know your job, why are you there ... I want to speak to somebody that knows what they are talking about ... you don't know what you are doing'</p> <p>Like if the person calls and gets transferred from pillar to post ... he will be irate</p> <p>He will swear at you ... he is frustrated ... now when he phones he is very upset ... now you have to take that and I must tell you they do swear</p> <p>They are mad, angered, you know the minute you pick you answer your phone 'Good morning this is ... speaking Healthcare' 'I've been waiting on this phone for f***ing 20 minutes what are you people doing out there?'</p> <p>You get sworn at, you get abused,</p>

		<p>everyday They are completely out of their minds ... ‘What’s wrong with this business?’ And then they go on Swearing, shout, so you’re fighting, lying, and they are obviously upset as well, they are very upset, you keep on apologising Our service is pathetic ... we get the blame for everything from A to Z so whether it’s ... it’s always the medical aid’s fault ... the members will always blame the medical aid for losing the accounts You can imagine the kind of abuses we get ... it get personal sometimes, it gets personal, we end up arguing ... you know sometimes it’s not your fault and they are obviously gonna speak to you and blame you Soos mense wat jy penalties voor moet gee ... hulle blameer, die meeste sê, hulle dink dis jy wat die penalty vir hulle gee nou Hulle sê ‘ag dis belaglik, wat se nonsens is dit, ek betaal nie daai geld nie, I didn’t know, ek weet nie daarvan nie’ en die mense vloek ... ‘that’s ridiculous’ of ‘what stupid rule is that’ ‘You are incompetent ... all the bad service from (medical aid name)!’</p>
	<p>CSR control over client abuse</p>	<p>Sometimes if a person swears at me I’m sorry I tell that person if you swear to me again I will put down the phone</p>
<p>Boundary-spanning role of CSRs</p>		<p>Sometimes when we do double deductions, these people are pensioners, they don’t have money ... we have to hear these things ... and it’s our fault You do get people that phone about 10 to 20 times which are not happy when you get those calls and then you have to deal with that person because that person is then not happy and you the person that answers is the person that he sommer get to immediately, he takes everything out on you although you try and tell him that it is not your fault but ... he wants to he takes it out on you Reversing all claims that were assessed incorrectly ... we end up with the client, they don’t have to do anything, we’ll handle it ... and we don’t even know why</p>

		<p>Your first line of contact for information on your membership ... or product information</p> <p>We get blamed because we're the point of contact ... and it is not our fault ... we get attacked</p> <p>Everything the rest of Healthcare does has an impact on the call centre</p> <p>We have to face the flack, they are not one-on-one with the clients or they don't speak to the clients directly, we are the ones who speak to the clients, we ... are the middle man who take to take the problem there</p> <p>It all comes back to the call centre so we stand responsible for the rest of Healthcare even for our executive decision-makers in the business we need to report on that as well</p> <p>You got to sort out all their crap ... we seem to be like the factory workers, push up production ... we are, push up production</p> <p>It is so frustrating, they send out letters to the clients, we get to know about the letters after the tenth client has phoned in to ask 'what do you mean by this?' We don't even know a letter has been sent out to the client, they make changes at the top ... management ... everything the rest of Healthcare does has an impact on the call centre and they cannot see that</p> <p>We know best, we are on the calls, we deal with the calls ... we know better than I think I know more than what the broker knows</p> <p>For us here that is the front of the business we are not involved in making ... decisions</p> <p>That contributions department, that department pisses me off ... because at the end of the day they don't have the stress that you have and you are trying to sort someone out ... not directly involved with the client</p> <p>We are the ones who are the up-front people for the company ... we need to give the 100% service</p>
<p>Nature of call centre environment</p>	<p>Stressful</p>	<p>It's a stressful environment</p> <p>It's the pits at the moment, a lot of stress</p> <p>Stressful, very stressful</p>

		<p>Stresvol ... ek het by N1 stad hospital gewerk en het gedink dit was stresvol maar ek dink dit is baie meer ... ek ervaar baie meer stres as wat ek daar ervaar het</p> <p>Kyk as jy dink wat maak jou stres né ... jy moet kyk na die benefits jy is so bang jy boek die verkeerde benefit ... of jy mis 'n warning, so by ons gaan dit alles oor geld, as jy iets confirm wat jy nie moes nie dan betaal jou call centre daarvoor ... jy kry 'n comeback, dan verloor jy punte ... dan gaan jou QA af en dan kry jy nie 'n bonus nie</p>
	<p>Pressurised</p>	<p>You are under pressure that you have to make sure that that gets through to the chronic department immediately because the patient is out of medicines</p> <p>You're basically trying to see how quickly you can get them their medication approved ... but on top of that we need to also check the process, how far is the process and if the medication is authorised by us</p> <p>Die call centre is baie streng op ... as dit kom by professioneel optree, baie streng wat dit aanbetref</p> <p>I worked 2 days in the back office and I've never been so relaxed since I've started working here ... the difference is there's no pressure on you now, the call's not there, if I want to go to the toilet I'm gonna go to the toilet, not a 'where have you been'</p> <p>There is a lot of pressure on the call centre agents to do their job correctly but then when it goes to the back office ... they are the people that are making our jobs easier but ... they are supposed to ... they are not doing their job properly so ... then we get the schlep from the clients</p>
	<p>Anonymous / impersonal</p>	<p>Dis baie anoniem, dis die mees anoniemste plek wat jy kan werk, jy werk in 'n hele saal vol mense maar jy weet nie eers as ... siek is nie</p> <p>Dit voel vir my koud ... ons loop mekaar verby</p> <p>Ons kry nuwe mense, ons ken nie die mense nie ... ons is 'n span, ons is veronderstel om as 'n span saam te werk maar ons werk nie as 'n span saam nie ... en ons ken niemand nie</p>

		<p>Ons loop mekaar verby ... ons het saam oor gekom as vriende maar ek sien haar nooit nie ... as ek opstaan sien ek haar oor die tafel andersins dan sien ek haar nooit nie</p> <p>Ons het nie regtig 'n keuse nie, jou teetyd en jou lunchtye is vir jou uitgesit aan die begin van die week ... as jy nie vriende het in daai groep met wie jy lunch vat nie is jy ... alleen ... partykeer soek ek vir iemand net om bietjie te gesels mee</p>
	Structured	<p>Jy het set tye, jy het lunch, jy het tee en jy het time management want dis al hoe hulle kan werk, dis nou maar ... 'n given</p> <p>Ons het nie regtig 'n keuse nie, jou teetyd en jou lunchtye is vir jou uitgesit aan die begin van die week</p>
	Monotonous	<p>Die heel dag ... na ander mense se klagtes luister en soos 'n parakiet net dieselfde ding oor en oor sê</p> <p>You work with the same stuff day in and day out and it becomes so monotonous you repeat yourself with each call is the same thing over and over again</p>
Call centre tenure		<p>It is not always negativity just on the company that you're working for, the environment, it's also to me it's all about tolerance levels, you've been here now for 3 years in a call centre taking calls, that's enough! An average call centre agent's life span is a minimum of 2 years before you start getting gatvol and now you have been doing it for 6 years ... it's you as a person that has had enough</p> <p>These people sitting here 7 years, you know what that people must go through ... I'm 4 years here and I know what I go through</p>
Feelings of unhappiness / dissatisfaction		<p>We are very unhappy</p> <p>You know ... we feel unhappy</p> <p>I am really not happy</p> <p>People are you know this people in this call centre are so unhappy</p>
Feelings about call centre and/or Medical Aid		<p>The general feeling is the call centre? Mph ... you know, they really look down on you as the call centre</p> <p>This place is so verkramp ... this place is</p>

		<p>so verkrampt!</p> <p>I wouldn't recommend anyone to join (medical aid name)</p> <p>It feels like you're working for a dishonest company</p>
Feelings of being stressed		<p>We are ... very stressed</p> <p>For this past month I feel very stressed out and ... the major factor is that I am incompetent, I don't belong here</p> <p>For this past month I've been feeling extremely stressed</p> <p>I am absolutely stressed out at the moment</p>
Feelings of being inconsequential / useless		<p>They make you feel like a little piece of dust</p> <p>Feel so damn frustrated and in...inconsequential, I'm just there to answer the phone I'm just a bloody glorified telephonist</p> <p>You feel useless man, you feel useless</p> <p>It is coming to the stage where people are actually thinking nothing of me so I am ready to leave</p>
Feelings of lack of accomplishment		<p>I feel ... like I haven't accomplished anything for the day ... because there is no mental stimulation to the job ... there is no stimulation at all, you feel very you feel more tired coz you haven't been exercising your mind</p>
Feelings of being trapped		<p>We feel absolutely trapped in this call centre</p> <p>You know we feel trapped ... you feel trapped</p> <p>You feel so ... I am so trapped in here ... it's so frustrating</p> <p>Jobs aren't all that ... available ... outside it's not available to you, people have moved on in age too you know people moving into their 40s and sometimes even close to their 50s you're not gonna get jobs elsewhere so it's a situation where you need to ...you have to sit and take it</p> <p>They just can't get out ... there's not a way out ... when you come in here you don't have other experience but they won't send you ... on training to get experience in other departments or other parts of the</p>

		business so you are stuck here We feel absolutely trapped in this call centre
Feelings of inequity / unfairness		I am being rated incompetent, how dare they? Unfairness within the call centre Now you've had one bad month, 'we're not gonna give you nothing' how does that work? There needs to be some form of average working into that To be fair! <i>[Management]</i> It's come to the point where I don't give a damn anymore, I go for my walk lunchtime ... I will never work in that time ... I've decided there's too much that I give for this company I've given my all, I've given more than I could I have neglected my family ... I would leave half past six and be here seven coz I want to listen to the voice mails, I don't do it anymore, why should I?
Feelings of being disrespected		There is no respect for us so why should we respect them ... that's the bottom line
Hassles in call centre	Lack of recognition / acknowledgement / positive feedback	We are ... not recognised for the hard work we do The team leader has no idea of what you're doing ... not knowing our hard work that we've given You are not getting that thank you you're not getting it ... they are not acknowledging us We try our best to render the service to the client but at the end of the day the call centre people they don't get any recognition to whatever we do we can go an extra mile but no one is gonna recognise us The suggestions that we are giving all the time is falling on deaf ears ... nothing's been done with it ... we are trying to assist you all the time by saying there are problems you need to focus on, but nobody is noticing it, they're not doing anything about it We are 20 people on the call centre, 15 of that 20 do their 70 calls a day but there's

		<p>another 5 that just do as they like ... and you have to carry that people as well so you are doing extra ... you should get recognised for that extra that you do</p> <p>They never do long weekends for us, you have to be here till quarter to four ... it's Easter weekend, you would think that they give the people off a bit</p> <p>It also boils down to ... constant negativity ... from a managerial perspective, it's always you're doing this wrong or that wrong, but there is never any form of positive feedback ... you never get positive feedback, it's like also you are going for your quality assessment, then you'll be told you're doing this this this ... and that wrong, but I scored 95% ... so I am doing something right ... surely I am doing something right, there's this list of things you're not doing right ... always on the negative</p>
	<p>Brokers</p> 	<p>That to me is a very frustrating part of the job and that happens on a daily basis, 2 to 3 calls a day ... they don't know the information they sell, they know the product of the benefit structure but when it comes to the chronic and as to which medication we'll cover, which conditions we'll cover ... they don't know anything about that</p>
	<p>Lack of promotion opportunities</p>	<p>There's no opportunities, there are a lot of opportunities but they don't move you on, they don't, they don't move you</p> <p>It's very hard for you to get a senior position once you work in the call centre coz ... when you've excelled in your position as a call centre agent they tend to want to retain you in that position ... they don't give us the option of saying here's a position, apply for it you people who are working with it</p> <p>I ask for experience, assessing experience ... coz I wanna get out of here, the only experience I could gain was when they offered overtime at other departments then I had to jump take overtime there then you will learn</p>

	<p>Quantity vs Quality</p>	<p>The thing is also you are trying to go the extra mile and they tell you ‘Hey! There is so many people in the queue please’, you can’t really go that extra mile and try to solve the problem there and then</p> <p>You know you got the guy on the phone, what’s more important, the person you are dealing with there or the 20 calls that is holding? What’s more important?</p> <p>Finishing that client properly, whether it’s going to take you longer, and regardless of the 20 calls that’s holding</p> <p>You are graded according to stats, everything is about figures at the end of the day ... and also you’re assessed on the quality of those calls at the same time, so it is quantity, quality and unavailable time</p> <p>Keeping a balance between customer service, quality and then also the quantity everyday</p> <p>The manager wants ... quality, they want quality, but ... they want to balance the two, they want quality and quantity which is not possible</p> <p>When we try, actually decide to do those follow-ups, like you decide to actually do more for the member, at the end of the day you must go and account to your supervisor for your quantity ... coz you didn’t reach your target, not even a thank you for having gone the extra mile, you serve your customer, ‘why are you unavailable so long?’</p> <p>The thing is they are looking at we must take a certain amount of calls in the call centre every day and that is not what they are supposed to look at, they must look at the quality of our calls</p> <p>In a day like we might get 3,4 queries, difficult queries, after one another ... and we are on the phone half an hour with each of those people, but then you still have to account why you didn’t make your target</p> <p>There is always added duties put on top of you ... we are still expected to have the required amount of calls and still at the same time provide a 100% of quality</p>
	<p>Lack of staff (CSRs)</p>	<p>We are ... understaffed</p> <p>We are way understaffed</p>

		<p>I think ... expectations are a bit high for the amount of people who can attend to the queries and also provide quality feedback ... not enough people to provide what we really want to put in ... with the number of heads on the floor is not going to meet the expectations with the volume in the back office ... turnaround time ... we obviously want to provide quality service but we are a bit limited ... there's just too many calls and too little help</p>
	<p>Turnaround times</p>	<p>Take sometimes weeks to get sorted out where it is supposed to take 5 days The departments not being up to date with their work ... we have a turnaround time of 5 working days and the other departments are not complying with that and it comes back to the call centre where we have to explain You can't send the query to the back office, then it takes another 5 days and the client's been waiting 3 months already Especially when it comes to the urgency and ... we need to sort out the queries or the problems there and then for the member ... the urgency ... is not understood by, I would not say the back office per se, but certain people that actually deal with those cases I would do follow-ups ... we do do follow-ups, we try to do follow-ups, as soon as possible, but the minute you send it to the back office ... you don't know what is going on in the back office ... you send it to them, it hangs there ... the turnaround time is supposed to be five working days, it sits there for almost a couple of weeks I felt like an idiot because the one man laughed when I told him the turnaround time is 5 working days, coz he wanted me to e-mail ... I told him the e-mail will take 5 working days, then he laughed ... and then I told him I'll fax it to you ... I mentioned 24 hours ... it's ridiculous, if only they could give us some access to this type of thing so that we can e-mail it directly from our computer They, back office, do have a backlog Waiting 5 working days, or 24 hours</p>

		<p>turnaround time</p> <p>I send it to the back office, it's supposed to take 5 days, then back office will wait on systems to fix it ... which will take another 5 days ... I am getting so frustrated ...</p> <p>gatvol</p> <p>This is the age of technology but we are taking 5 to 7 days to change the strength of the medication, in the mean time the member is sitting and waiting ...</p>
	Unavailable times	<p>You need to be away but you can't be away coz your unavailable time</p> <p>Ek dink hoekom dit vir my stresvol is is omdat ... waar ek voorheen gewerk het was nie 'n call centre nie ons het ons eie tyd gehad ... daar is nie unavailable tyd wat teen jou tel nie</p> <p>Now that unavailable time ... it's a hundred minutes unavailable time, which includes lunches and teas as well ... that was also still stressing me out, to cope with that 25 minutes</p>
Decision-making	Lack of inclusion in decision-making	<p>Management makes decisions without coming to us, without coming to the people who do the job</p> <p>You normally get the facts after the fact after you have been struggling for a month they wanna come back and tell you oh ok it should be done like this</p> <p>It's about decision-making ... for us here that is the front of the business we are not involved in making that decisions ... but we get the flack</p> <p>The major things that frustrate me a lot is upper management makes decisions and implement things and the guys at the grass root level like us who know how it is going to affect us don't get consulted on anything and the guys will sit with the end result of the frustrated people on the phones because they made decisions that don't really make sense</p> <p>Management makes decisions without coming to us, without coming to the people who do the job</p>
	Lack of decision-making power	<p>Ons is te bang om te sê ons is so bang ons sê iets verkeerd ... kan nie vir jouself besluit nie</p>

		<p>Ons kan nie finale besluite neem nie, in moeilike situasies, ons kan byvoorbeeld nie 'n finale besluit neem as dit iets is wat buite ons jurisdiksie val nie ... ons kan besluit net op ons scheme rules hierdie pasiënt mag vir dit gaan of mag nie vir dit gaan nie</p>
	<p>CSRs decisions being overridden</p>	<p>Dan penalise ons en dan lig die ander team dit ... en dan skryf hulle 'n brief ... en dan lig die back office die penalty, so hulle is die helde en ons is die poepolle</p> <p>That is very frustrating I think coz you've been not 5 or 6 or 7 minutes on a call, you spent about 20 minutes trying to get this into their head ... so you're wasting your time and your energy and stressing yourself up by explaining and you know you've taken all your routes and all your options ... send in a motivation letter and all is cool</p>
	<p>Lack of transparency</p>	<p>There's no transparency ... take example my team leader, she would nominate somebody to go to a meeting which concerns us as a team, she doesn't inform us she doesn't ask our input before that person goes to that ... meeting so that she can get the feel on the floor as to how we feel about certain changes</p> <p>If there's no transparency then how can we really be responsible for their actions or even defend their actions if we don't know what is going on</p>
	<p>Restrictions on CSRs: Scripts</p>	<p>They evaluate you on whether you say a name at the end, whether you say 021 or 011, you know, nonsense, stupid things, stupid things ... they don't understand we're not robots ... it's people on the other side of the line, they are people, you can't just stick to script ... even if you speak to a guy 3 times a day it has to be a regular greeting, a positive greeting ... the name and every time you put someone on hold, 'would you please mind holding'</p> <p>You get rated, you get marked down because you're not finishing your greeting ... 10 times a day I will speak to Paul, but you must still say 'Paul, Paul' all the time</p>

		<p>We are also limited as to what you can say, you've got to say at the opening of the call this</p> <p>You got to be careful of how you say and what you speak, you cannot say certain things</p>
	<p>Restrictions on CSRs: limited autonomy and/or job scope</p>	<p>We are limited ... you can only go so far and that is the end of it</p> <p>From a client service point you have many times where you might be speaking to a member or a service provider that might not be happy with what you are telling them, you are very strictly guided, you are very restricted by what you can tell your caller</p> <p>I've been in the medical aid for four years now ... and now they're bringing in something new that we need to do registrations and updates and things which I don't think is applicable to my job but we haven't got a choice we must do it and you are so used to doing what you used to do and now they come and change your way of working, now you have to ask other questions</p> <p>The sad part about the call centre we have to do everything, we cannot argue, if we argue 'just go out of the kitchen if it is too hot for you'</p> <p>They are putting us into little boundaries ok and expect us to do such a lot within those boundaries ... let's say we ask all of us to be given e-mail ... if a client asks ... can you send us something by e-mail, or can I send you something by e-mail, 'I'm sorry sir you can't do it'</p> <p>You can do just that much and you must transfer, now they've been on the phone for 20 minutes waiting for you to answer, then you can't help them anymore, now you must transfer them ... we are only allowed to do so much ... it is so frustrating</p> <p>We can just tell them what we see there, we see the problem but we can't fix it for you</p> <p>I can't deliver, I can't fix it, I can, but I'm not allowed to, I've got to rely on other departments to do the things and they don't</p>

		<p>do it ... I can't deliver, I can see where the problem lies but you can't fix it coz I'm not allowed to</p> <p>We can only confirm accounts ... we have to open that account and it goes back to that assessor ... and it takes a few days, it takes 5 days, it should take 5 days, we can action stuff that have to be rectified ... we can delegate that</p>
	Administration problems	<p>A lot of our problems stem from administration ... claims, registrations, people not getting faxes, turnaround times ... admin is probably one of our biggest problems we have</p> <p>I think the administration process and the whole process from our call from the members ... to the backlog is ... ancient</p>
	Comeback calls	<p>Partykeer is jy gefrustreerd dis maar net sê maar nou jy kry daai laaste oproep en dis nou net weer 'n dental motivation wat nog nie uitgesort is nie</p> <p>If you think about it, what are queries, it's the comebacks, it's the same people phoning for the same thing every time, mistakes, it's never about even new queries</p> <p>Die call moet afgehandel wees, hy moet klaar wees ... as jy klaar is met daai oproep, jy vergeet van daai oproep ... nou paar dae later kom, daar is nêrens 'n memory waar jy kan gaan instoor om te sê daai oproep moet opgevolg word of iets nie, dis nie ons werk nie</p> <p>Daar kom 'n oproep deur, nou is die ou van pillar tot post getransfer, nou kom die oproep nou weer terug na jou toe ... nou moet jy hom weer terugsit in die queue ... nou's daar niks wat jy kan doen nie</p>
	Inefficient processes and/or process problems	<p>Ek dink wat my die meeste frustreer is goed wat drag ... motiverings raak weg en die warnings word verkeerd opgesit en jy het geen ondersteuning van die case managers anyway nie ... maar as iemand dalk daai oproep van die begin af net gevat het en gesê het ... finish en klaar</p> <p>What tends to happen in ... the call centre it's not really management it's more of crisis management, let's deal with things as</p>

		<p>it happens and ... that happens a lot here It's actually quite frustrating, I mean you need to have processes in place and make sure those processes are adhered to and ... it just doesn't happen and it's actually very frustrating</p> <p>We also can't send the e-mails directly then they tell you go via your technical specialist</p> <p>Claims getting lost, waiting periods There aren't any follow-ups but we do the follow-ups</p> <p>When we send e-mails, or proof of payments, even like proof of payments get lost</p> <p>Their systems and their processes, it's outdated</p> <p>It's small things really, small management problems</p> <p>Nou sit ek op my query notes 'please advise the member' ... nou transfer ek die pasiënt soontoe ... gits later kom dieselfde oproep deur ' why do you transfer the patient for this procedure' ... so dis sulke goed ... dis tydmors ... dit is sulke goed wat ek sal nie sê stresvol nie maar ... dit is baie irriterend</p> <p>Processes, the only thing that stops me is processes ... you can't do this, you can't ... send something urgent because it's not part of this ... it could be anybody, it could be your TS, it could be the back office, it could just be the rules of the company, scheme rules ... from delivering good client service</p> <p>Their processes is all screwed up here There is a lot of pressure on the call centre agents to do their job correctly but then when it goes to the back office ... they are the people that are making our jobs easier but ... they are supposed to ... they are not doing their job properly so ... then we get the schlep from the clients</p> <p>You feel like I'm giving service to the client and the person who does the processing for the chronic application and everything they should pull up their socks</p>
	<p>Lack of communication</p>	<p>There is no communication between the back office and us. We are point of service,</p>

	with back office	<p>we speak to our clients, we don't even know what is going on in the back office. There's no communication, nothing. Some members want us to explain as to why wasn't it ... done ... because you can't do the explanation, you don't know what is going on in the back office</p>
	Quality assessment process and/or quality assessors	<p>I'd rather have the customer rate me than somebody who doesn't understand what's going on</p> <p>We have quality assessors here that rate us on a every 3 months basis but they don't really know ... they can't rate ... they don't have the training either</p> <p>The QA is the quality assessor who assesses your call should know everything but it is very scared when they are told to take the calls</p> <p>We have quality assessors ... they draw an amount of calls at any specific time in a month ... and then they assess you according to that</p> <p>The QA's here that are QA-ing us on pre-cert calls but they have never done pre-cert, how can they assess you and your skills your soft skills and stuff if they've never done a call like that?</p> <p>If you don't know what I'm doing, how are you going to assess my call?</p> <p>You take about 2000 calls a month, now out of that 2000 calls they take 6 calls and they evaluate you on, that's 0. something, how can they evaluate you on 6 calls ... they don't evaluate you monthly because we are too many staff</p> <p>Dis waar die stres eintlik inkom, dis as jy jou QA, nou gaan jy na jou QA toe ... want hulle luister na die verskillende oproepe, kyk elke oproep is verskillend, so jy kan nie onthou wat jy vir daai ou gesê het daai tyd nie of wat het jy confirm daai tyd nie nou gaan jy vir jou QA nou dink jy Oo gosh</p> <p>There is a QA document they e-mail it to you this is what you got to do, read it and do it</p> <p>Assess it a little more open-eyed, not just so there's the line, don't move, don't move, I'll kick your butt if you move</p>

		<p>One of the most frustrating things for me ... is you got a manager who says to you 'right it is time to have your personal assessment now' ... she's discussing your job but she doesn't have the first clue about your job, what you're doing, or how it's done, but you are gonna assess me, that is a joke ... the team leader has no idea of what you're doing, no clue ... and they are gonna tell you how to do your job, that to me is a joke</p> <p>There is a set formula of how they assess your call, there's a set formula of saying that you said the good morning at the right point, and the name was like you said the person's name was not ahead of your good morning, you get marked up on that you know</p> <p>You get marked on those things, if you leave out one little line you get a naught in your QA</p>
	<p>Monitoring</p> 	<p>You are graded according to stats, everything is about figures at the end of the day, how much calls on average you take per month ... the unavailable time, you've got a 100 minutes per day ... and they come to you 'do you know there are 10 calls holding?'</p> <p>You're monitored on every little thing ... here it is like being in pre-primary ... not even Sub A, I don't think they have progressed to that level yet, it's you get treated like a child</p> <p>Being policed, we are all adults here, you know, most of us are parents ... why the hell should my team leader be walking up and down to see if I am signed in or not? I'm always signed in at 8 o'clock but she just have to make it known that 'I'm watching you', damn it I'm not kindergarten man</p> <p>I don't need somebody to manage me, I need someone to manage the processes We work on unavailable times, if I'm 2 minutes over, 'what's going on?'</p> <p>You can't just get up and go make a cup of coffee, they look ... when you come from the other side your team leader is standing there actually she look at you like 'where</p>

		<p>the heck do you come from', so you get the question look ... which of course adds to all the stress</p> <p>We need to keep a calendar ... you need to hold a calendar up for your unavailable time ... explain why we got a 100 minutes and 12 minutes added to that ... you have to have on the date, time, the exact reason why and who you helped</p> <p>I want to assist the people next to me but there's no way I can coz I'm ... supposed to take my calls. If I don't they're gonna ask me 'why'</p> <p>The requirements for the daily job ... is you have a certain percentage which you have to reach ... you have a certain amount of calls you have to reach, and you have a certain amount of unavailable time that the company gives to you, if you exceed that time ... then you get called in to explain that</p>
	Unsolved problems	Nothing gets resolved ... nothing gets resolved, just the same problems over and over
Emotional exhaustion	Emotional overextension	<p>I saw people that burst into tears and just throw that phones off their heads because they're not used to dealing with clients like that</p> <p>Sometimes you just feel like crying ... you cannot just absorb all of this</p> <p>You want to scrrream, you really feel agitated with your family ... 'don't ask me anything I am tired'</p> <p>Now I am in the kitchen, 'nobody talks to me, don't speak to me, because I'm unwinding now ... and don't ask me anything, I don't want to answer'</p> <p>She goes mad, I'm serious, she's like 'I don't know how I'm feeling' ... I just wanna get away here</p> <p>The first call you get that person is rude to you, you sommer burst out in tears</p> <p>Anything can happen ... at home and then it that person is just totally ... it will be because of the build up here at work and something will just happen at home that might also be a big thing and then that person can crash</p>

		More than 2 people have been put off for anxiety in the call centre ... for emotional stress and I don't know how long the rest of us are gonna be able to take it and there are people that are on anti-depressants
	Feeling drained	I mean that affects you definitely and it totally drains you at the end of the day Drained ... stressed
	Exhaustion / Fatigue	It really is tiring ... it is like a relief to put, to take that headset off and just walk out of here, it is a relief, it is a relief Jy is so moeg Like your child wants to sit on your lap and you say 'wait man not now I'm tired' Exhausted, exhausted, tired, very tired, I don't want to answer another phone at my own house People are tired, people are tired It's very tiring working here I'm exhausted at the end of the day ... it's actually got a negative effect on your family life, it has a negative effect on you You are so tired, you are so tired, the brain is tired, the body is tired, the brain is exhausted at the end of the workday, headaches, you know how panados go around in that call centre, it's frustration, it's really just emotionally ... I'm talking about breaking point stress Moeg ... ja asseblief ek wil net hier uit ... ja moeg ... Weet jy hoe moeg maak dit jou ... dit is jou mind As jy huis toe gaan jy het nie lus vir nog 'n telefoon nie, jy het nie lus vir nog 'n ... om te gesels nie want jy het heel dag gesels I am just very tired at the end of the day ... you work with the same stuff day in and day out and it becomes so monotonous you repeat yourself with each call is the same thing over and over again I'm tired
	Physiological tension	I have a stiff neck I had a stiff neck I have a stiff neck
	Effect on family life	It's actually got a negative effect on your family life Like your child wants to sit on your lap and you say 'wait man not now I'm tired' It is not fair on our family life

Coping behaviours		This place is driving me to drink! Go to the bar ... ek gaan drink elke aand 'n glasier wyn ... om te relax ... daai is vir my totally relaxing, die dag se stres ... to unwind, it really does
Mentally distancing self from work		Once you're out of here you don't think ... nothing about work, I don't even talk to my husband about work, even if there was a bad call a bad client I switch off my mind from anything that is work-related, you have to
Low morale		The morale is very low let me tell you The morale is also so low you don't care anymore ... so OK I'm gonna do this in my lunchtime and I quickly fix it up and there's one happy client but one out of ten million, what's the use? To hell with it I'd rather go for a walk
Lack of regard for organisational rules (lack of organisational commitment)		It's a hundred minutes unavailable time ... well now lately I don't give a damn so I will just phone whenever I want to
Escapist feelings and/or behaviours		I just wanna get away here We just want to be out of here ... you should come to the lifts here in the afternoons when we leave ... they try to they just want to they run, they just want to be out ... just to get out leave they run they like literally run from ... they want to get away Asseblief ek wil net hier uit People stay at (company) for 3 months 'well I've got (company) on my CV I'm going I really don't need this crap' ... or they go to a different department in (company) ... Healthcare is a way into (company) coz Healthcare is always looking for staff, so they come here, they stay two or three months ... they get a transfer to another department I've had actually enough of call centre work now I think I need a break now, I really do, I genuinely do ... I'm sick of it I wanna get out of here

<p>Thoughts and/or intentions of quitting</p>		<p>Everybody's looking for other jobs, everybody, on Monday morning you see the Jobfinder on everybody's desk I am busy looking out for another job I am about ready to take my bag and leave, I've been here for 6 years and ... it's terrible working in the call centre ... it is coming to the stage where people are actually thinking nothing of me so I am ready to leave ... I am about to leave, I need to work ... but I am really not happy You want to take your bag and walk, you want to take your bag ... because you are not incompetent and ... they make you feel like a little piece of dust Ek dink net hierso hulle maak 'n fout hulle hou die seniors te lank op die call centre ... hulle raak gatvol op die job waar hulle is ... en hulle is nie meer lus om die werk te doen nie ... en hulle raak negatief, en dan waai hulle ... die mense waai want jy raak gatvol van jou job I wish I could abdicate this job</p>
<p>Fear of losing job</p>		<p>Out of a job, out of a job ... I worry, my job ... that is really one of my biggest worries, I need this job. Every day I cancel at least 4 to 5 memberships</p>
<p>Absenteeism</p>		<p>The sick leave of the sick people that is sick is very high The sick leave it went through the roof coz people are tired, people are tired I've been last week off and ... I have lots of sick leave and I will use it up before my new cycle This is ... the only job that I have ever worked at in my entire life where people know when their sick leave starts and ends ... I also never ever knew ... until I started here, but I started taking note of these things, and I laughed about it initially but now when you've been into it for 3 years you can understand it, you know exactly why and where and when it starts, because ... you get this tolerance level and you just get, for lack of a better word, gatvol and ... I'm not going in today, bugger that, one day I don't need a sick certificate, or go to</p>

		<p>your doctor and tell him you are sick The time has come for me now I have already checked how many sick leave I have left for the year</p>
Negative feelings about being at work		<p>You're meant to come to work everyday thinking 'I don't want to be here today' I said to my friend one time I do not want to come to work</p>
Depersonalisation / cynicism		<p>You get used to the abuse ... I get used to it, you just back off and let the person talk and just say you know I can understand how you feel and ... on a Monday you get p****d off, on a Friday you just take it ... on a Friday it's ja whatever OK it's Friday, it's weekend I can take it At the end of the day or at the end of a Friday do you feel like still sitting and listening to that bull the client is gonna give you, you just say yes mam and no mam</p>
Emotional reactions	Emotional build-up	<p>You have to take a break or you have to actually release that built up emotion You feel you have the emotions – angry – but there is no way of letting it out ... your stomach is in a knot and there's nothing you can do about it, it will just stay that way until you maybe have a good call If you feel that you really want to help a person, you understand the whole situation, you are getting aggro as well you are really empathising with this person, but there is no way of releasing it, there is no solution to it You bottle up</p>
	Emotional disequilibrium	<p>Dit vat vir my 'n halfuur na 'n moeilike oproep Bewerasies en hartkloppings ... mens huil nie sommer vir 'n moeilike ou nie jy kry bewerasies en jy kry hartkloppings ... en dan wil jy hê iemand moet dit kom oorvat want ek het nou genoeg gehartklop, gee my net 'n paar minute Eerstens begin ek bewe so dit vat my 'n halfuur om van daai bewerasies ontslae te raak ... want hulle maak my bang ek hou nie daarvan as mense op my skel nie ... so dadelik begin ek bewe en my hart begin</p>

		<p>klop en dit vat 'n rukkie voor dit weer afgaan</p> <p>Nou kry sy 'n moeilike oproep, nou het sy nog steeds bewerasies en nou verwag hulle ... daar is 10 calls in die queue vat asseblief daai volgende oproep, nou is sy nie reg om daai oproep te vat nie</p>
	Anger	<p>I am really so angry at these people, honestly</p> <p>You know I am actually so angry I don't think you should be listening to me ... this company is just gonna be blackmouthed badmouthed by us</p>
Emotional strength		<p>So jy moet emosioneel sterk wees om te kan cope hierso ... en met die druk Ek herstel baie maklik na een oproep ... of die ou nou vir my gesê het whatever whatever dan dink ek net 'ek ken nie vir jou nie so f*k jou gaan jy nou maar aan met jou dag ek het 'n dag om aan te gaan mee' ... die volgende ou kan maar kom ... hy kan nou maar my sleg sê net soos wat hy wil ek ken hom in elk geval nie, ek ken ook nie sy gesig nie so hy moet maar sê wat hy wil</p> <p>Jy sit daai foon neer en jy vergeet van daai oproep onmiddellik ... en ek wag vir die volgende oproep en ek hanteer hom net soos hy kom</p>
Helplessness		<p>Even if we aren't wrong and they feel that they are right, there's nothing we can do</p> <p>You are trying your best to resolve their enquiry but your hands are tied</p> <p>I feel very frustrated ... and what makes it worse is that there is nothing I can do about it, I mean nobody is gonna help me</p> <p>I was just listening ... what else is there you can do?</p>
Frustration		<p>Very frustrated ... if you are customer orientated and you feel the back office staff does not understand the urgency coz you obviously can't relate the phone call to them to make them understand what it really is like or how urgent it is ... you sit and you think to yourself there's a person who needs to go to the hospital or whatever</p> <p>The worst people are the people that are on</p>

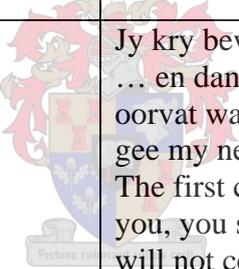
		<p>depressive medication, I wish I could just take a gun and shoot them ... I got irritated You know how panados go around in that call centre, it's frustration</p> <p>I feel very frustrated ... and what makes it worse is that there is nothing I can do about it, I mean nobody is gonna help me</p> <p>The whole day you are like that, frustrated ... it builds up, it builds up</p> <p>Feel so damn frustrated and in...inconsequential, I'm just there to answer the phone I'm just a bloody glorified telephonist</p> <p>I am getting so frustrated ... gatvol</p> <p>Have you ever phoned a call centre and said you want to speak to the manager and now you must hear ... no you can't be put through to the manager ... it's nonsense ... you feel stupid ... I just want to shake them or something</p> <p>Hier is die gehoorstuk op jou oor ... 8 ure 'n dag wat jy hier is, dit voel partykeer vir my ek wil daai ding afhaal en hom gooi dat hy daar anderkant trek, want ek kan net nie daai ... ek dink partykeer dis net as 'n mens 'n bietjie te veel stres het dan voel jy daai ding op jou kop druk jou nog vas ook ... ek voel partykeer ek wil daai ding net van my kop afhaal en loop, ek loop net 'n draai dan kom ek terug</p> <p>I am extremely gatvol and I am very glad for this coz I need to get this off my chest</p>
<p>Lack of understanding and/or support from other departments</p>		<p>We know how urgent certain things are ... they don't understand the effect that it will have on the member's life</p> <p>... you feel the back office staff does not understand the urgency coz you obviously can't relate the phone call to them to make them understand what it really is like or how urgent it is</p> <p>You're gonna have to follow the normal route and you know those protocols are still not sufficient because even though we have this one long line of bureaucracy it sucks and the people that is gonna do the carry out the instructions for you they don't see the urgency in it</p> <p>There isn't an understanding, I think the people in the call centre we take the calls</p>

		<p>but we are not getting the support ... I am alone here on an island and nobody understands what I'm saying ... I need the support of everybody else, of the whole team, of everybody else, I'm talking about all the back office ... that upsets me</p> <p>There is nothing that is gonna be done until Monday because the contributions is no longer there, they have all gone home</p>
<p>(Lack of) support from technical specialist (TS)</p>		<p>You actually can call the TS technical specialist to come and help with the call but they don't want to take the call ... they say you can handle the call yourself</p> <p>I need someone to assist me ... go via your technical specialist and then your technical specialist don't even know</p> <p>The TS is also not trained so the TS cannot assist him but now they don't do the coaching and now everybody is stressed out</p> <p>They are there to assist on the floor with technical enquiries, any type of information we need, anything ... they are supposed to be the fundi's ... taking over calls, that type of thing ... technical assistance</p> <p>When we call the TS then it is like 'no I'm not taking the call' ... they are not willing to take calls ... they think it is not possible for them to handle ... they tell you 'listen tell them this' ... I mean that is not on ... it's the last resort to call them, we don't call them because we know they don't want ...</p> <p>Another problem is also the technical specialist that is supposed to assist you with ... there's people on the phones that know more than what the technical specialist</p> <p>Support will be the technical specialists are fully trained to assist and coach ... but they don't do that</p> <p>The technical specialist is ... supposed to be on the floor to help you all the time but we've got a situation by us where our team technical specialist is not assisting us all the time, there's other seniors on the floor ... so when my technical specialist is not there or she cannot help the person she will</p>

		<p>say 'go to that person' ... and we are on the phones as well, so that actually puts a lot of stress on you because you give them an answer, what if that answer is not right? The TS to me is not the senior, the TS to me is somebody who's done the same job as me and now he's on the floor to assist the people if there are calls</p>
<p>(Lack of) support from team leader (TL)</p>		<p>At the end of the day or at the end of a Friday do you feel like still sitting and listening to that bull the client is gonna give you, you just say yes mam and no mam, they can hear it in your voice, they can hear what you're saying, 'oh let me speak to your manager' and then they complain about your attitude, and the manager doesn't even think 'damn it she's been taking 110 calls a day 5 days a week how can I support her? No man, look this client is unhappy with you'</p> <p>We came up here to this call centre with a manager ... she doesn't know us, she doesn't know what our job entails, we are a specialised field, she doesn't</p> <p>You call the manager to ask 'what can I say here' but the manager is not actually willing to help you at all</p> <p>Why don't ... rather the people I've got here nurture them, make them want to be here, take unnecessary stresses away, let's have a look and listen for once to what they are talking about, give them incentives, proper incentives to make them want to stay here</p> <p>Little things like your break after your bad call ... you have an incentive ... 'ok fine you guys have done well we notice you've had a bad week', as a team leader that is part of your job to notice the spirit of your team it's part of your job ... let's say you close a bit earlier, say to guys maybe go for a couple of drinks at the pub or that kind of thing but little things that make things lighter which is not forthcoming</p> <p>The team leaders are unqualified ... they are not qualified, they can manage but they don't know what the business is about ... I cannot speak to her coz she doesn't know what I am talking about when I talk to her</p>

		<p>... she can't even use the HighCare system</p> <p>... there's more than one team leader in this department that doesn't the hell have a clue on what this business is about ... they don't know the nitty gritty of HighCare, of the processes, of how it works</p> <p>To manage the team, make sure that everything goes smoothly in the team ... comebacks, to be honest with you, I don't know because I don't see them doing anything</p> <p>Support, not getting support ... from ... your supportive structure which is your team leader up management</p> <p>You call the manager to ask 'what can I say here' but the manager is not actually willing to help you at all so you must lie 10 calls wanting to speak to a manager I mean but they are never willing to go and take a call ... they never want to come to the phone</p> <p>He's supposed to be capable of assisting you or at least providing an option for you to be able to help this person out</p> <p>My team leader should come from the floor, she should be somebody ... who knows the ins and outs of all the things that happened in HealthCare ... she must have people skills</p> <p>I think the role of the team leader here by us is to see that the team is functioning but as well know what the team is doing coz I find that if I've got a query and there's nobody on the floor to help me, my team leader can't help me, she doesn't know my job</p> <p>If I've got a very bad call and she needs to help me she cannot help me ... they don't know the technicality of the call ... if you call your team leader and say 'I've got this irate member can you come and assist' she will tell you that 'no I can't say this and that and that and that to the member' ... they're not on hands</p> <p>Our managers don't stick up for us</p> <p>The first person out of here is our team leader ... she don't listen, first see if everybody's off the phones</p> <p>The team leaders are supposed to manage ... and see that TSs' are trained</p>
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		<p>The team leader, my understanding of a team leader, you should be able to know everything about your department whatever call come through that is difficult for a consultant you should be able to take over and go to each and every screen 'If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen' ... team leader ... because we only deal with the team leaders</p> <p>The member says to me ... 'I need to speak to your manager', then in a situation like that I need to have my manager on hand, to understand what I am talking about, to understand what I am dealing with, to be able to take that call ... when I'm saying manager I'm saying team leader ... so your team leader is the person the manager of your department, so if they want to speak to the manager the manager must be able to help them and that is what we find is not happening ... they don't know what we are doing ... they are there to manage the team and see that they do the calls, the unavailable time, to see that you're at work, you're late you're early, to talk to you about that but they are not there to help you on the floor ... and they grant you leave ... from a work point ... nada</p> <p>You can never put a call really through to her ... if you do put a call through to her ... she has to jot down all the details, she can't help him on the phone and then she has to check with the technical specialist, 'what's happening here'</p> <p>I never go to my team leader unless it's absolutely necessary ... if I need something from you I'll go and ask you which 9 times out of 10 you don't know I need my team leader to know exactly what I am doing, she needs to be able to assist me in my job, she has to know the full function of my job ... basically if I've got an irate member ... that wants to speak to a manager, she needs to be able to take over that call, she needs to ... know how to operate the computer ... to take that call ... because she doesn't ... even have access to the systems that we work on because she doesn't know how to use it ... to me a good manager should be able to do that and</p>
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		<p>know exactly what you are doing I would feel that your team leader is supposed to ... back you up, help you ... she is supposed to know, to be able to understand ... the whole query or whatever the comeback was Team leader ... doen eintlik net die uitk*k werk Sy weet ook nie wat ons doen nie want ... sy kan nie 'n call vat nie ... sy weet nie waarom dit gaan nie, sy ken nie van ... skema reëls nie Team leader ... kan nie calls vat nie want sy weet nie wat ons doen nie, sy het nie 'n kat se kans of 'n clue wat ons doen nie, jy kan nie eers vir haar roep om te sê 'ek weet nie wat dink jy, wat is jou opinie' ... sy kan jou op geen van jou vrae antwoord nie ... sy doen meer die human resources, sy doen verlot, vergaderings ... unavailable time, nou wie is dan daar om vir ons te back-up?</p>
<p>Lack of support and/or understanding in general for CSRs</p>		<p>Jy kry bewerasies en jy kry hartkloppings ... en dan wil jy hê iemand moet dit kom oorvat want ek het nou genoeg gehartklop, gee my net 'n paar minute The first call you get that person is rude to you, you sommer burst out in tears, they will not come to you and say ... go have a cup of tea for 10 minutes or 15 minutes, calm down and come back. They just leave you there, you can sit there your tears running, you have to and take the next call and that is wrong coz you do need that chill out I feel very frustrated ... and what makes it worse is that there is nothing I can do about it, I mean nobody is gonna help me No support from anywhere Die case managers ... daar is geen support van die case managers nie ... hulle sê ons moet weet wat ons doen Almal doen sy eie ding, daai maak 'n fout maar die fout word nie bespreek nie, more doen daai ou dieselfde fout want niemand sê kyk hier is 'n fout nie ... daar word ook nie vir jou gesê hoe word dit reggemaak nie ... en niemand praat oor dinge of 'n nuwe diagnose</p>

		<p>As daar 'n moeilike oproep is moet daar iemand wees wat daai oproep vat en uitsorteer ... hulle moet weet wat ons doen ... ek meen so iemand wat veronderstel is om daar te wees as ons 'n probleem het op die vloer of op die telefoon laat sy dit kan oorvat by ons, die probleem hanteer en afhandel</p> <p>Daar is geen support van die case managers nie</p> <p>Daar moet iemand anders daar moet 'n team leader of iemand daai call vat en ek moet nie twee keer daaroor moet dink of moet explain ... ek kan nie stres so goed hanteer soos die ou langs my nie ... as ek dit nie so goed kan hanteer nie dan moet iemand dit oorvat en dit moet mooi net daar en dan uitgesort word ... daai support wil ek hê, ek is nie lus om daaroor te stres nie</p> <p>We do get support but it's ... I would say it's due man ... you get your basic support but if you can go to her with a systems problem or something she will try her best to sort it out for you ... it's technical support ... but humane support, she's a thing with a capital B ... 'please sort out your problems and leave them at home when you come to work'</p> <p>Not getting support ... from ... peers ... there is no camaraderie</p> <p>We feel absolutely trapped in this call centre, no support from anywhere</p> <p>You know what is also sad, those people that just came from training, there is no backup for them there is nobody to help them, it's sink or swim</p> <p>We want the back office to be sorted out, the turnaround times they must just be cut out and when we say it is an urgent case, they must deal with it ASAP</p> <p>We do get support but not like we're supposed to, we want</p> <p>There's no teamwork ... we realise here the ... of the member and phone the member ... but once it goes to the back office ...</p> <p>There's no support</p> <p>They listen very diligently to you, do the necessary grunts and nods what have you</p>
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		<p>... that's as far as it goes</p> <p>At a lot of other companies ... they say to you 'look go and have a cigarette, have a cup of tea and calm down', you're not allowed to do this here, they don't allow it ... the very next call you ... move on with it don't give it chance to gather yourself again ... here you're not allowed, you can't go anywhere here, you must just sit ... there's another call waiting for you so why must you go and take a break and reconcile</p> <p>If you at any time complain about anything the response is generally 'you got a job working as a call centre agent that is how it is in a call centre', that is the response, 'you chose the work in the call centre and that is how the call centre works' ... 'you wanted the job ... you got the job so that is how a call centre works, don't complain'</p> <p>Ek dink wat nog stresvol is is as jy nou 'n difficult caller het en jy't nie daai back up nie ... ek haat dit ... ek haat dit</p> <p>Weet jy wat, dit plaas vir ons in 'n moeilike posisie ... want jy't nie daai back-up nie, ons weet nie vir wie moet ons wat gaan vra nie ... daar moet iemand wees wat dit moet doen en wil doen</p> <p>Jy het die back up nodig</p>
Inability to help / assist clients		<p>We don't have answers</p> <p>You can do just that much and you must transfer, now they've been on the phone for 20 minutes waiting for you to answer, then you can't help them anymore, now you must transfer them to another company, we are only allowed to do so much, oh G**, it is so frustrating</p> <p>You were supposed to be fully trained on everything ... you were supposed to deal with it</p>
Call volume		<p>The call ratio at this stage is actually very high like the customers tend to wait for more than 20 minutes ... so by the time like you answer 'thank G** I am through' and when I try to apologise 'we are really busy I apologise' and 'don't tell me that you are supposed to get more staff' ... so I mean that is really a problem</p> <p>Daar is 10 calls in die queue vat asseblief</p>

		<p>daai volgende oproep, nou is sy nie reg om daai oproep te vat nie ... 10 calls in die queue so vat die volgende een</p> <p>Wat vir my stresvol is is nie die emosies nie, dis nie die computer nie, dit stres my nie uit nie, dis die time management, dit is my oproepe wat so kom ... vir my is dit oproepe wat in jou oor bly ... so so so so</p> <p>The worst is in the morning when you see that queue</p> <p>It is stressful because at the moment I think we are very busy, we do a lot of calls</p> <p>Ek dink die oproepe, dis nie die mense om jou nie, dis nie die computer nie, dis daai aanhoudende oproepe in jou ore, dit is wat vir my die ergste voel party dae as ons so verskriklik besig is is daai oproepe wat kom en kom en kom en kom en jy voel jy kan nie eers 'n slukkie koffie vat nie want die volgende oproep vang jou met daai koffie in jou mond</p> <p>Ek dink hoekom dit vir my stresvol is is omdat ... waar ek voorheen gewerk het was nie 'n call centre nie ons het ons eie tyd gehad, as jy daai foon van jou ore wil afhaal en net vir 5 sekondes 'n blaaskans vat dan haal jy dit af ... hier is die gehoorstuk op jou oor ... 8 ure 'n dag wat jy hier is ... die oproepe is net te aanhoudend, veral as dit 'n besige dag is ... veral as dit soos Maandae-oggende is</p> <p>Running from the next call into the next call is stressful, is stressful</p> <p>I took half day post and I am much better now I feel much better I'm off the phone a bit more</p> <p>The very next call you ... move on with it don't give it chance to gather yourself again ... here you're not allowed, you can't go anywhere here, you must just sit ... there's another call waiting for you so why must you go and take a break and reconcile</p>
<p>Call demands</p>		<p>You must basically think on your feet coz you don't know what the next call is going to be ... elke oproep is uniek is nie dieselfde nie so en jy moet aanhoudend 'n antwoord hê vir alles</p> <p>Ek is nie 'n ou wat 'n antwoord het vir alles nie so hy ek sit daar met 'n bek vol</p>

		<p>tande ... en ek weet nie wat ek het nie 'n antwoord vir hom nie ... ek kan nie dink op my voete nie en dis een van daai ... jy moet kan dink op jou voete</p> <p>There are difficult times when you can handle that call to a certain point and eventually you hit a brick wall and there is no way further on that call</p>
Lack of trust in management		<p>You know what we don't trust our management they don't deliver, we can't trust them because so many things have been promised and it's just not delivered</p>
Workload		<p>You know we are 20 people that can do the job if 20 is here ... but there's sometimes up to 7 people off then on a Monday 12 of us have to do that same job ... and then that is when you're stressed out, then you need a drink when you get home</p> <p>It's just not a call centre anymore, it's more than a call centre coz a call centre to me is answering calls and helping the clients, but now we are going the extra mile</p> <p>At the end of the day you are not doing what you thought you're gonna end up doing, you go that extra mile</p> <p>There is always added duties put on top of you ... duties taken from other departments placed on top of you ... it is not discussed with you, you are told for the next three days you will be dealing with these calls ... you are told you will be dealing with this so besides you dealing with your normal ... as it is they put that onto you too ... they load you with the extra duties ... which is not relevant to what you are actually doing</p> <p>They pack more and more and more things for us to do in the call centre, they just expect you to remember more and more and more things ... and its more rules more regulations and its unrealistic</p> <p>We work from 8 o'clock to half past four non-stop, we even get asked not to take tea ... and there are ... calls waiting for us</p> <p>We are 20 people on the call centre, 15 of that 20 do their 70 calls a day but there's another 5 that just do as they like ... and you have to carry that people as well so you are doing extra</p>

<p>(Lack of) Technical knowledge and/or capability</p>		<p>We do ... 12 different medical aids. So you have to know the rules of each medical aid and what we can allow and what you can't so you need to know the rules off-hand if a client phones in ... so you must always be on hand what is allowed and what is not allowed ... and the rules, the rules is the big thing</p> <p>With the (company) Healthcare call centre ... we are totally different to the other medical aids ... like the type of calls that we take there's calls for all the schemes ... here we take 80 calls for 14 different medical aids within that 14 different medical aids there are option plans you know so you have ... to know 8 different options' rules ... then we talk about the scheme rules coz the scheme rules are totally different</p> <p>Our team we need to know all the schemes, we need to know all the rules ... so we are more stressed than anybody else</p> <p>If you don't know the processes you can't advise the clients, you don't know what to tell them ... that was what supposed to have happened, that I can take the call and I can assist the client there and then</p> <p>We are sitting in a call centre now with a hundred people and only 20 of that 100 people still have the capability to do that so we carry all that stress</p> <p>You must look up all the time, you must make sure that you get the right information from the very own search ... you're dealing with 13, 14 different medical aids, there's not one that works the same as the other one, so you persistently always have to check having to have your processes in line ... see that you give the information correctly</p>
<p>CSRs suggestions</p>	<p>Job rotation</p>	<p>What I suggest is take them off the phones ... rotate it around ... which means you are constantly going to be on top of things ... so that you can work where the actual processing happens, so that you can understand the processes</p> <p>That people that sit here seven years I think they should make opportunities for those</p>

		<p>people to move ... to different department to go see and come back then if ... you want to go back ... give them an opportunity to get off the phone a bit ... we need variation as we got people working here for 5,6,7 years</p> <p>I've made suggestions how many times to management ... let's say ... every 3 months even just for 3 weeks ... take 4 people out of this call centre, put them in the back office, take that people out there, put them in the call centre ... so you can also see what happens in the back, what they're dealing with in the front</p>
	One-stop-shop	<p>We need to have a one-stop-shop, you must have your call centre, your registrations, your contributions and the person who is gonna write the letter all in one team and that's the way you can deliver</p>
	Communication	<p>There's got to be communication</p>
	Teamwork	<p>There's got to be the one hand's got to wash the other, you must work together as a team</p>
	Training	<p>They should ... take the senior people that's on the floor to do that training coz they know what is going on, you know what they do, they go get people from other departments who haven't got a clue about our job to do this type of training</p>

APPENDIX F: TEAM LEADERS' INTERVIEW COMMENTS (RAW DATA)

Overarching themes	Sub-themes	Words / phrases (direct speech)
Purpose of call centre	Sort out client problems	To answer member queries To answer queries they've got about it or handle any problems they might have ... getting clarity about something, or wanting to moan about something, it's a forum for anything the client wants
	Relationship-building	To build a relationship with our clients (or destroy it)
Call centre objectives	Quantity targets	The objective is our service level agreement, is to have a low abandon rate ... it means answer most, many calls as we can ... abandon rate under 7% I think it is, so we answer 93% or more of our calls Quick response times as well, to answer 80% of calls within 20 seconds is the objective
	Quality targets	High quality interactions with clients Quality target is 85% for agents on the floor, currently we are upping it to 95 ... it's a benchmark, overall service level
	Quantity measures	The only way you can really achieve all of that ... is you got to measure it, we got the technology that provides it, for the statistical side of it, 80% in 20 seconds response time As far as their volumes are concerned they can basically see on a daily basis how they are doing, they're performing as far as time management and volumes are concerned
	Quality measures	For the quality side we got quality assessors
Role of team leaders	Giving feedback	There's no set pattern at the moment, we are supposed to once a month ... what happens is the agents get evaluated on a 6 weekly basis, they get feedback from the quality assessors on weaknesses and strengths ... and we also come and give our feedback You can see maybe if the person is able to move on to another role ... and then you can also arrange for ... courses ... that they can attend for their own development ... that's at performance appraisal time when you give feedback to your people ... which officially would be twice a year, and then in between we'll do all the other stuff
	Management	To manage that team of people so that they

		<p>can achieve the things that we've mentioned there ... anything and everything to do from nursing to guiding to managing</p> <p>Managing people ... we then also manage our queues ... we have to ensure there's enough people here on a day to take the calls ... and if not we have to rearrange lunch, tea schedules ... you got to plan ahead for tomorrow and the next week</p> <p>We manage the staff to save on paper, save on that</p> <p>Also you need to make sure that our processes are ... know if our processes are in check or OK ... see if something's going to happen ... maybe scheme rules changed or legislation</p>
	Human Resources activities	<p>I think it is very broad, HR issues ... performance management, leave, planning of leave, addressing excessive leave, sick leave ... development issues</p>
	Reporting	<p>Reporting as well ... at month end we have to report on ... your figures for the month ... like how many calls we receive, we lost ... absenteeism, constraints, what the problems are</p>
	Providing technical expertise	<p>Our technical specialist ... we have to stand in for them, so we have to have technical knowledge as well</p>
	Understanding for CSR job / call centre environment	<p>The understanding, just that understanding ... of the type of business we're in, I just think if you've never been in a call centre you cannot imagine what it's like, and especially Medical Aid ... with Medical Aid claims you need to maybe know the basic things, how an account is processed, basic rules, what happens</p>
Position of team leaders		<p>I think team leaders in most cases are always stuck in between, I mean you are part of management, and our top management is so detached from us ... there's no way to reach them ... there's a gap</p>
Role of quality assessment (QA) process		<p>After quality assessments ... they identify training ... needs and ... if somebody is not doing OK they recommend training and if he is doing OK then you can see maybe if the person is able to move on to another role ... and then you can also arrange for ... courses ... that they can attend for their own</p>

		development
Call centre problems and/or constraints	One-stop-shop	Being a one-stop-shop, it is not possible 100% at this particular time It's a goal, it's not possible at once
	Lack of resources	Limitations, we're not given the resources that we need to deliver a quality service
	Lack of trainers and/or training	Training issues ... we don't have trainers ... our staff are not trained well enough ... you can't have your training done for 6 months ... so the process is in place but it ain't working because there's no capacity ... there's no implementation
	QA process	Human errors, assessors, our assessors making errors Quality throughout the business is an issue ... there are no quality controls in place ... maybe .1% of what it should be You need somebody to check the work so you need quality assessors ... we have some quality assessors but they are not enough, they have 1 quality assessor and for some staff 2 for the whole roster, it should be 1 a month at least. So ... the process is there but it is not happening the way it should be There are no consequences for the people not writing the letters properly. There is no performance management on their side so they can write crappy letters ... get away with it and ... they still get paid
	(Lack of) support for CSRs	There's just one positive thing for me and that is dealing with my staff, I love that so if the circumstances were better that would have been even better for me as well ... you can't take them off the phones to speak to them ... you can't have a meeting with them ... especially when you're understaffed because you cannot take them off the phone, ever, for anything, you can't train them, you can't have a meeting with them, you can't talk to them (about anything) ... you can't just sit and have a nice discussion with them ... you can't just ask how you are because it's time to go on the phone, the next calls ... There's things that you would like to do that you just never get the time to We just don't motivate them ... they're not performance managed, that they aren't getting the training and the support that they

		<p>need</p> <p>We don't really ... the time that we have I think is in the morning, which is 15 minutes ... I think there you recap on issues that took place the previous day, issues, errors, share information, everything that is work-related, you're not being able to pull the people from the phone at all so you can't really support them ... when you can get your team together as one team ... that's the only time</p> <p>If someone comes up to me and says 'I need to talk to you now' you can't send them back, so then you have a talk with them ... try and sort it out but you know you got one eye on the queue</p>
	Lack of staff (CSRs)	<p>Membership is growing and ... our headcount, we've outgrown our service model, our headcount is exactly the same as it was before membership grew</p>
	Expectations placed on CSRs	<p>Between the 70 calls we expect them to take a day they must find time to read their e-mails otherwise they're in trouble coz we didn't inform them</p>
	Span of control: Ratio of team leader to CSRs	<p>The size of our teams ... the people whom I have to manage ... my concern is about the size of the team ... it's too big</p> <p>For me the day is like so short, coz the team has grown, the ratio is 1:45</p>
	Boundary-spanning position of call centre, and CSRs, vis-à-vis the business	<p>People that send out correspondence to members without telling the call centre about it ... so the member gets a letter, he phones in about wanting to know more information about that letter but we haven't a clue what the letter is about ... it can be scheme managers, it can be anybody in the back office ... from anywhere in Healthcare they can send out correspondence to members or to a specific group of members or all of them and then not telling the call centre about it</p> <p>Or they make changes to scheme rules, not realising the impact it will have on us like the call centre is immediate ... we don't have enough staff to deal with those calls because somebody else used to do it before but now it's changed, now we are doing it but we were not told</p> <p>Things have changed a lot since the previous year ... I wouldn't say the way that things are done, I would say the state of mind in which our consultants are ... because I haven't been</p>

		able to change anything for them they still sit with the same problems, they're still the people who have to deal with the client ... the things that we mentioned ... about the rest of the business doing things without telling us and doing things without considering us ... we take the brunt of it and they're not worried that they screwed it up because they don't have to face the repercussions for it ... they don't realise the consequence of what is happening, the people here feel it, we are held accountable for every other mistake the business makes
Nature of medical aid industry		The medical aid industry is a tough industry and there is such a lot of information and it changes with the drop of an e-mail, tomorrow you will send something, the next someone else will say 'no it's not like that anymore, it's like this now' and they expect the staff to know and to stay up to date
Nature of call centre environment		It's become more challenging now ... things are going very fast in the call centre, there's seldom something that happens slowly ... it's picked up pace but negatively, it's going worse and worse quickly
Team leaders' ...	Feelings vis-à-vis call centre	It is not living up to its true potential The worst is on a Friday afternoon ... and you just want to go home It feels like you're putting out fires the whole day long, you're waiting for one crisis to the next What's going right ... it's a very challenging question
	Personal feelings	We feel like the staff, the same, whatever the issue, I mean we feel demoralised, we don't feel motivated ... I don't feel very motivated and not job satisfaction, it's frustrating coz you can't do what you're supposed to do coz they don't give you resources to do it 90% of the time and you're still expected to deliver it Demoralised, exhausted ... not happy, not content, no job satisfaction It's very seldom that I can walk out of here and feel that I have been able to change or do something positive on that specific day
	Client interactions	You're not meeting service levels so the clients want to speak to you and crap you out

	Time management	There's just so many things to do and there is not enough time ... to get through the things that you need to do ... so the things that you want to do and that you know you have to do and that you want to do you don't always get to everything and you have to now decide prioritise and say OK I'm going to leave this and I'm going to do that, there's always things that's hanging, not finished
	Physical symptoms	Today is Friday at which time I've got a huge headache, I still have a couple of members to phone back
Team leaders' thoughts on CSRs' ...	Exhaustion / fatigue	I've worked in the call centre ... I've never ever in my life been as tired as when I worked in a call centre, your brain, your body, everything is just kaput, finished, nothing left, you go home, sit, don't want the TV on, don't want the radio on, sit there, quiet ... your brain is numb
	Work demands	You gotta be alert all the time ... you never know, you can never know what to expect
	Frustration	You get frustrated as well, you get all these phone calls and ... within the first ten seconds you know what that person wants but you have to go through all the niceties and listen to him ... and you just get frustrated
	Experienced lack of support and/or understanding from other departments	Bureaucracy, red tape, big time, and they don't understand it, this client wants to kill you ... they don't understand the urgency of now ... there's no sense of urgency at all ... they don't have an idea of real time, everything in the back office is later tomorrow or any other time but not now, when I get to it Internally with our colleagues and the back office ... you have to build relationships you know, you need a favour, send an e-mail ... and for some reason ... you so urgently need something to be processed ... then you find it takes 48 hours now They don't have to speak to the client, they don't hear ... they don't feel pressured ... if they had to speak to the client it would be different ... they don't realise ... how client can belittle you ... and what he can do to you ... make a total idiot of you and totally abuses you just due to the fact that they won't do it now, they don't feel like it, they don't have any understanding for this side

Team leaders' suggestions to improve call centre operations	Increased trainers and/or training	Training ... start by having people that can train ... and quite a lot of them ... for technical knowledge and client service skills so that we can train the new intake and renewal training thereafter
	Deskilling CSR's	Limit the amount of schemes or work you want them to be able to do well, multi-skilling is not necessarily a good thing ... puts more pressure on the staff coz now they got to do thirteen different schemes
	Call centre service model	We need a model, a call centre model that is really gonna you know improve service quality and be service orientated, functional, one that actually works We need a solid or good service model
	Increased support for CSRs	Hire a lot of call centre people ... you hire enough so that we are slightly overstaffed, overstaffed is not actually overstaffed but you need ... to be staffed so that the agents have maybe an hour or two free a day, in that hour or two you can either spend training them or having a meeting with them or getting to know them or giving them feedback or doing something, there's a lot of stuff that we can't do at the moment because there is not a spare moment in the day ... to operate properly as a call centre you need to have a bit more capacity to allow for training, to allow for one-on-one meetings with your staff ... so we need to create the capacity to take those people off the phones and send them back to training
	QA process	Do enough quality checks ... also have QA's, quality assessors ... you need quality assessors and trainers
	Reduced spans of control	The appropriate ratio of team leader to agent ... quality assessor to agent and trainer to agent
Team leaders' thoughts on what constitutes a good CSR ...	Cognitive ability	They must have the ability to think ... individually, flexibly
	Service orientation	He cares about client service They want to see the client happy at the end of the day Adherence to the schedule
	Technical expertise	That person knows their job, they are ... knowledgeable and ... confident that they

		will be able to answer the question that will be asked
	Willingness to learn	One must be able and willing to learn ... coz nothing stays the same Willing to learn
	High energy	High level of energy
	Resilience	Emotionally resilient ... you have to be emotionally strong, you don't take things personally ... take ... feedback in a positive manner

