

# **JOB INSECURITY AND WELLNESS OF EMPLOYEES IN A CO-OPERATION**

**By**

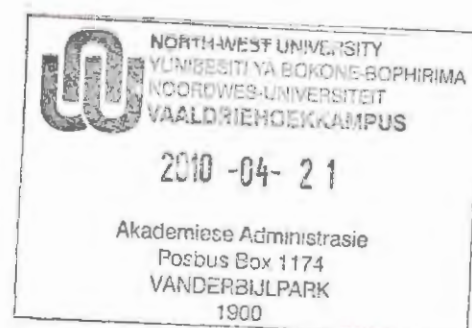
**Elrie Botha, MA**

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**Promoter:** Dr J. Bosman

Vanderbijlpark

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## REMARKS

The reader is reminded of the following:

The references, as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the Publication Manual (*5<sup>th</sup> edition*) of the American Psychological Association (APA), were followed in this thesis. This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
List of tables	v
List of figures	vii
Summary	viii
Opsomming	x
 <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT	1
1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	
1.2.1 General objective	10
1.2.2 Specific objective	10
1.3 RESEARCH METHODS	
1.3.1 Research design	11
1.3.2 Participants	11
1.3.3 Measuring battery	11
1.3.4 Statistical analysis	13
1.4 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS	14
1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY	14
REFERENCES	15
 <b>CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE 1</b>	22
 <b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH ARTICLE 2</b>	48
 <b>CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH ARTICLE 3</b>	71
 <b>CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH ARTICLE 4</b>	96

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS (CONTINUE)**

### **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1	CONCLUSIONS	121
6.1.1	Conclusions regarding the specific theoretical objectives	121
6.1.2	Conclusions regarding the specific empirical objectives	123
6.2	LIMITATIONS	125
6.3	RECOMMENDATIONS	125
6.3.1	Recommendations for the organisation	126
6.3.2	Recommendations for future research	126
6.4	CHAPTER SUMMARY	129
	REFERENCES	130

## LIST OF TABLES

### Research Article 1

Table 1	Characteristics of the Participants	30
Table 2	Rotated Component Matrix of the JIS for Employees in a Co-operation in the North-West Province	32
Table 3	Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the Job Insecurity Scale	36
Table 4	MANOVA – Differences in Job Levels of Demographic Groups	37
Table 5	Differences in Job Insecurity Levels of Gender Groups	37
Table 6	Differences in Job Insecurity Levels of Cultural Groups	38
Table 7	Differences in Job Insecurity Levels of Qualification Groups	39

### Research Article 2

Table 1	Characteristics of the Participants	54
Table 2	Rotated Component Matrix of the HS for Employees in a Co-operation in the North-West Province	56
Table 3	Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the HS	57
Table 4	Component Matrix of the SWLS for Employees in a co-operation in the North-West Province	58
Table 5	Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the SWLS	58
Table 6	Correlation Coefficients between Hope agency, Hope pathway, Hope Total and Satisfaction with Life	59
Table 7	Multiple Regression with Happiness as Dependent Variable	60

### **Research Article 3**

Table 1	Characteristics of the Participants	78
Table 2	Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the Job Insecurity Scale, General Health Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and Hope Scale	81
Table 3	Correlation Coefficients between Job Insecurity, General Health, Engagement and Hope	82
Table 4	Multiple Regression Analysis with Engagement as Dependent Variable	83

### **Article 4**

Table 1	Characteristics of the Participants	103
Table 2	Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the Job Insecurity Scale, General Health Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and Satisfaction with Life	106
Table 3	Correlation Coefficients between Job Insecurity, General Health, Engagement and Satisfaction with Life	107
Table 4	Multiple Regression Analysis with General Health as Dependent Variable	108

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

### **Chapter 1**

Figure 1	Proposed research based on the research model for job insecurity in South African companies	9
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### **Article 3**

Figure 1	Slope plots of engagement in function of job insecurity and hope	84
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### **Article 4**

Figure 1	Interaction between job insecurity and happiness on general health	108
Figure 2	Standardised regression coefficients for the relationship between job insecurity and engagement as mediated by happiness	110



## SUMMARY

**Title:** Job insecurity and wellness of employees in a co-operation.

**Key words:** Job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope, happiness, moderation

The current economic situation has reconfirmed the importance of researching job insecurity and the impact it has on the individual as well as the organisation. An individual outcome which is normally negatively affected is general health. Engagement, although an experience on individual level, is an organisational outcome affected by job insecurity. With the introduction of positive psychology, emotions in the workplace created new research grounds. It seems that hope and happiness have a positive influence on negative consequences, which can assist managers in finding a competitive advantage in their human capital.

The objectives of this study were to investigate the relationship between job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness of employees ( $N = 286$ ) of a co-operation in the North-West Province by using a cross-sectional survey design. The measuring instruments used were Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), Hope Scale (HS), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWL), and a biographical questionnaire. The measuring instruments were translated into Afrikaans which is the language mostly used by the target population. Four articles explained the study through a brief literature review and empirical study in each.

Factor analyses were done to determine construct validity, and Cronbach's alphas and inter-item correlation coefficients assessed the internal consistency of the instruments. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the data and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient as well as regressions, MANOVA and ANOVA was done to determine relationships between variables. Hierarchical regression was performed to test for moderation and mediation.

JIS, GHQ, HS and SWLS confirmed their structural models and proved good internal consistencies. Gender, cultural group and qualification were found to have statistically significant influence on job insecurity. Females regarded the importance of job features and importance of changes to total job higher than their male colleagues. The cultural group 'other' indicated higher levels of job insecurity with regard to likelihood to lose a job feature. This fear was also experienced by participants with a qualification Grade 7 and lower as well as likelihood to changes in total job.

No correlation was found between job insecurity and general health, but job insecurity did show correlations with engagement and hope. Hope and happiness were also positively correlated and hope was found to predict happiness.

Hope did not moderate the job insecurity general health relationship, but did moderate the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. Hope explained 7% of the variance in general health and 14% of the variance in engagement. Happiness moderated the effect of job insecurity on general health but not of job insecurity on engagement. Happiness also showed a main effect of 13% on general health and predicted 10% of the variance in engagement. When tested, a partial mediation of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement was found.

Recommendations for the organisation and future research were made.

## OPSOMMING

**Titel:** Werksonsekerheid en gesondheid van werknemers in 'n koöperasie.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Werksonsekerheid, algemene gesondheid, werksbegeestering, hoop, geluk, moderasie

Die huidige ekonomiese situasie het die belangrikheid van navorsing oor die impak wat werksonsekerheid op die individu asook die organisasie weereens bevestig. 'n Individuele gevolg wat gewoonlik deur werksonsekerheid beïnvloed word is algemene gesondheid. Werksbegeestering, hoewel op individuele vlak ervaar, is 'n organisatoriese gevolg wat deur werksonsekerheid beïnvloed word. Met die koms van positiewe sielkunde, het emosies in die werksplek nuwe navorsingsterreine geskep. Dit wil voorkom of hoop en geluk 'n positiewe invloed op negatiewe gevolge kan hê wat bestuurders kan help om die kompeterende voordeel in hul menslike kapitaal te optimaliseer.

Die doelwitte van hierdie studie was om die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid, algemene gesondheid, werksbegeestering, hoop en geluk deur middel van 'n dwarsdeursnee ontwerp te bestudeer van werknemers ( $N = 286$ ) by 'n koöperasie in die Noordwes Provinsie. Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is, was die Werksonsekerheidskaal (JIS), Algemene Gesondheidskaal (GHQ), Utrecht Werksbegeesteringskaal (UWES), Hoopskaal (HS), Lewenstevredenheidskaal (SWLS) en 'n biografiese vraelys. Die vraelys is in Afrikaans vertaal wat die huistaal is van die meerderheid van die studie populasie. Vier artikels verduidelik die studie deur 'n kort literatuur oorsig en 'n empiriese ondersoek in elk.

Faktoranalises was gedoen om die konstruk geldigheid te bepaal en Cronbachs alphas en inter-item korrelasie koëffisiënte om die interne konsekwentheid van die instrumente te bepaal. Beskrywende statistiek is gebruik om die data te analiseer en Pearson produkmomentkorrelasies so wel as regressies en MANOVA en ANOVA is gedoen om die verhouding tussen veranderlikes te bepaal. Hiërargiese regressies is gedoen om vir moderasie en mediasie te toets.

JIS, GHQ, HS en SWLS het hul strukturele modelle bevestig en goeie interne konsekwentheid bewys. Geslag, kultuurgroep en kwalifikasie het 'n statisties beduidende invloed op werksonsekerheid aangedui. Vroulike deelnemers ag die belangrikheid van werkskenmerke en die belangrikheid van verandering aan die totale werk hoër as hul manlike kollegas. Die kultuur groep 'ander' het hoër vlakke van werksonsekerheid met betrekking tot die moontlikheid om 'n werkskenmerk te verloor getoon. Deelnemers met 'n kwalifikasievlak Graad 7 en laer het dieselfde ervaring gedeel asook die moontlikheid van verandering in die totale werk.

Geen korrelasie tussen werksonsekerheid en algemene gesondheid kon gevind word nie, maar wel tussen werksonsekerheid met werksbegeestering en hoop. Algemene gesondheid het met werksbegeestering, hoop en geluk gekorreleer. Hoop en geluk het ook positief gekorreleer en hoop het as voorspeller van geluk gedui.

Hoop het nie werksonsekerheid en algemene gesondheid se verhouding gemodereer nie, maar wel die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid en werksbegeestering. Hoop het op 14% van die verandering in algemene gesondheid gedui. Geluk het die effek van werksonsekerheid op algemene gesondheid gemodereer, maar nie van werksonsekerheid op werksbegeestering nie. Alhoewel, na verdere analise, het geluk 'n gedeeltelike mediëring van die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid en werksbegeestering getoon. Geluk het ook 'n hoofeffek van 13% op algemene gesondheid getoon.

Aanbevelings vir die organisasie en toekomstige navorsing is gedoen.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis is about job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness of employees in a Co-operation.

In this chapter, the problem statement is discussed and an outline is provided of the research objectives, research method and chapter division.

#### **1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The phenomenon, job insecurity, has extensively been researched on national as well as international levels over the past ten years (Van Wyk & Pienaar, 2008). South Africa is relatively new to the global village and finds itself competing against countries with strong economies and stable politics. The country also has to face the reality of neighbouring countries experiencing factors such as war and economic instability which result in a strain on the labour market, as millions of illegal immigrants compete for informal employment at a lower wage than local employees (Ray, 2008). According to Westcott (2009), the unemployment crises will worsen as the full impact of the economic downturn is felt. Scenarios are even more difficult to predict with consumer confidence and loyalty dropping during a time where the recession could possibly be a long term factor (Tyrer, 2009). Increasing levels of job insecurity can be associated with organisational restructuring, downsizing, mergers and acquisitions, and plant closures (Probst, Stewart, Gruys, & Tierney, 2007). An alarming fact that seems to emerge is the influence of job insecurity on the physical and emotional well-being of employees.

According to literature, the perceptions of job insecurity hold destructive consequences for employees' well-being (De Witte, 1999; Kinnunen, Mauno, Natti, & Happonen, 2000; Mohr, 2000; Silla, Gracia, & Peiró, 2005); relate to lower engagement levels (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Berntson, De Witte, & Alarco, 2008); influence employee mental health and family well-being (Larson, Weilson, & Beley, 1994); lead to harmful physical health outcomes (Cheng, Chen, Chen, &

Chiang, 2005; Hellgryn & Sverke, 2003; Mohren, Swaen, Van Amelvoort, Borm, & Galama, 2003); and higher reports of psychological distress (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Probst, 2000). Partenheimer (2001) also elucidates that the threat of layoffs puts the employee's health and safety at risk. The factors mentioned above cause concern for the employee as well as the organisation on a psychological, physical and economic level. The current global economic downturn causes an increase in financial-, economic- and job insecurities which in turn lead to a rise in stress and anxiety as well as a decrease in general mental health of employees (Paton, 2008).

In an effort to find something that could ensure that organisations survive these difficult times, the question arises: what will give the competitive advantage? The traditional production, financial and research sources are not enough. The key is in humans as a resource (Vokić & Vidović, 2008). The advantage that humans display over other resources is the ability to learn, grow and contribute. Not only the physical dimension, but also the cognitive- and psychological dimensions are crucial to the competitive advantage of an organisation (Vokić & Vidović, 2008). Therefore, it will be important to research variables that could moderate the effect of job insecurity on general health and engagement of employees.

Although a debated topic for many years, the need was recognised by 2002 for science to understand that positive emotion builds strength and value. According to Seligman (2002), positive emotions provide a guidepost for finding what Aristotle called "the good life". Yet, when scanning South African job insecurity research the focus is mostly upon negative, strain-related outcomes, such as ill-health or psychological distress. According to the researcher, industrial psychologists should take a stand and make a positive difference by investigating ways in which we can optimise employees' whole life experience instead of researching the negative impact that different variables have on the employee and organisation. Linley and Joseph (2004) state that a psychologist is not only responsible for helping a client solve a problem, but also to equip the person to optimise his functioning as a human. According to Aspinwall and Staudinger (2003), more and more researchers in psychology are interested in the positive side of well-being and health. Instead of focusing on negative aspects such as distress and disease, they are investigating

positive aspects such as creativity, willpower, socio-emotional intelligence and other human strengths (Aspinwall & Staudinger, 2003).

Job insecurity refers to an employee's negative feelings towards changes relating to their jobs. Job insecurity has been defined as expectations a person has about the continuity of a job situation (Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997); a general concern about the future continuation of a job (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996); a perception of a likely threat to continuity of the person's current job (Heany, Israel, & House, 1994); not having the power to sustain desired continuity in a threatened job situation (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984); experiencing feelings of low employability (Griffeth, Steel, Allen, & Bryan, 2005); and the individual's perception about potential involuntary job loss (De Witte, 2005), to give a few examples.

From early literature it is apparent that job insecurity can be defined either from a uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional perspective. In most instances, job insecurity has been defined according to the global viewpoint, signifying the threat of job loss or job discontinuity (Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, & Pinneau, 1980). Ashford, Lee, and Bobko (1989), however, introduced the view of multi-dimensional job insecurity which will be the theoretical view followed in this study. According to these researchers, job insecurity is more than just the fear of losing one's job. It has factors relating to certain job features and how important the job itself as well as the job features, is. In addition, the element of powerlessness also plays an important role when measuring the levels of job insecurity an employee is experiencing (Ashford et al., 1989).

Evidence found in literature suggests that job insecurity is detrimental to the well-being of employees as well as organisations. Strazdins, D'Souza, Lim, Broom, and Rodgers (2004) found that of participants experiencing extreme work stresses (high insecurity and high strain), 50% reported depression or anxiety, 41% physical health problems and 34% poor self-reported health. In a review of the international literature on job insecurity, De Witte (2005) summarised the findings of several researchers. According to De Witte (2005), specific background variables do have an influence on the experience of job insecurity. Britt, Castro, and Adler (2005) reveal that personality moderates the relationship between stressors and health. Generally, the underlying

theme of the various definitions is that job insecurity is a subjective phenomenon, i.e. based on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of the immediate work environment (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hartley, Jacobson, Klandermans, & Van Vuuren, 1991). Näswell, Sverke, and Hellgren (2005) explain that personality characteristics are expected to have a moderating effect on job insecurity. They provide two reasons for this statement: firstly, personality characteristics have an influence on the perception an individual has on the evaluation of a situation and personal well-being; secondly, personality influences the way an individual handles situations. Subsequently, it was found in their study that personality characteristics moderate the relation between job insecurity and strain.

Job insecurity is viewed as an important stressor (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995). Cooper, Dewe, and O'Driscoll (2001) state that work stress is a transaction in the relationship between the individual and the organisation. The symptoms of stress in the workplace can be seen as burnout, reduced work engagement, work intensification, poorer physical wellness and a general feeling of powerlessness (Mohren et al., 2003). According to Britt et al. (2005), relatively disengaged employees are less likely to focus their attention on or invest in performance. A higher level of work engagement benefits the employee in such a way that it has an impact on the competitive advantage of the organisation (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008).

According to De Witte (2005), longitudinal studies show that the impact of job insecurity on health and well-being is more severe than the impact of health and well-being on the perception of job insecurity. The conclusion from this is that job insecurity causes lower levels of well-being and not the other way around. Physical complaints, irritation, anxiety and psychosomatic symptoms are mentioned in relation to job insecurity. Generally, burnout and job insecurity correlate positively. Life satisfaction is lower in employees with higher job insecurity, even when controlled for job satisfaction. It was found that job insecure employees are not necessarily unhappy, but less happy than their more secure colleagues (De Witte, 2005).

The health and well-being of organisations are dependent on the health and well-being of all of its members (Nelson, 2000). The absence of disease or illness is not defined as health, but rather the absolute state of physical, mental and social well-being



(Taylor, 2006). Brodsky (1988) identifies various antecedents of psychological well-being including stress, physical health, work and career paths, and work environment. De Witte (1999) identifies specific job characteristics which correlate with well-being of which job insecurity are investigated in this research. The available research clearly suggests that perceived job insecurity is detrimental to employee well-being. Viljoen (2004) found that increased levels of affective and cognitive job insecurity were associated with increased levels of somatic symptoms, anxiety and sleeplessness, social dysfunction and severe depression. Reduced well-being can have a negative effect on the competitiveness of organisations, as the reduced wellness of the workforce caused by job insecurity, holds significant financial implications, for example in terms of increased absenteeism (Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001). Organisations should be aware of the hazards and stressors that may be present in the workplace of the future and take preventative measures not only to protect employee well-being, but also to protect themselves against any potential legal action from affected employees. The need to regulate the health and safety of employees is acknowledged in the Construction Regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act Number 85 of 1993 which was promulgated on 18 July 2003. According to this regulation companies in the construction industry should ensure that their employees are physically as well as psychologically fit (Deacon & Kew, 2005). Psychological fitness is defined as being energetic and to have the motivation to do the job the employee was appointed to do effectively and safely (Sapfi, 2009). The implication thereof is that organisations have a legal obligation to ensure that the mental and physical health of employees are attended to.

The person-environment fit model views psychological adjustment as the congruence between the employee and workplace characteristics. Sekiguchi (2004) explains that such congruence will result in positive outcomes for the individual as well as the organisation. If demands made by the environment cause a perceived imbalance, stress will occur to the extent to which the individual perceives himself to be able to cope with these demands (Probst, 2002). Job insecurity could be perceived by an employee as a change or possibility for change which demands adaptation. The reaction to this demand may cause stress. Failure to cope with potential future unemployment or loss of job features may have significant consequences. Bergh and Theron (2007) point out that symptoms such as stress, role conflict, role ambivalence

and burnout may be indicative of incongruent fit in the workplace. In an experimental study done by Helms and Williams (as cited in Walsh & Holland, 1992), it was concluded that congruent person-environment fit tends to positively influence satisfaction, personal stability and even performance. In situations where the fit is incongruent, people will explore a change in jobs in search for a better fit (Walsh & Holland, 1992).

May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) note that in order for the human spirit to thrive at work, individuals must be able to completely immerse themselves in their work, in other words they must be able to engage the cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions of themselves in their work. Work engagement is viewed as the antithesis of burnout. Accordingly, engagement is characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy. Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonz  les-Rom  , and Bakker (2002) explain that vigour (opposite pole of mental exhaustion) is characterised by high energy levels, mental resilience when working, willingness to exert effort into one's work and to persist even in the face of adversity; dedication (the opposite pole of cynicism) is related to enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge and a sense of significance; and absorption refers to a state where time passes quickly and where the individual has difficulty in detaching him- or herself from work. Engaged people create trust, because they are happy and this leads to a higher level of interest which leads to better service (Lambert, 2005). According to Britt et al. (2005), highly engaged employees are more concerned to perform well. The danger of disengaged people is an epidemic called: 'presenteeism', a term for being at work but being exhausted, overworked, distracted, and disengaged; or in short, being absent while being present (Bacon & Florez, 2004). De Cuyper et al. (2008) found a negative relationship between job insecurity and engagement.

As noted by Mak and Mueller (2001), previous research has pointed toward the significant role that cognitive appraisal plays in the stress-strain relationship. Personality aspects also seem to have a buffer effect on the negative consequences of stressors (Britt et al, 2005). One of the positive personality traits that were classified under Peterson and Seligman's (2004) broad virtue categories, was hope (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Hope is a relatively new theory and is based on the accepted view that it is the perception an individual has that his goals can be attained (Cantril, 1964;

Faber, 1968; Frank, 1975; Frankl, 1992). Over the past century medical and psychology students have examined the power of hope as a motivating factor (Lopez et al., 2004). Although most views have characterised hope as an emotion (Farina, Hearth, & Popovich, 1995), the new hope theory emphasises the thinking process; positive emotions should flow from the successful goal pursuit, but it is the goal-pursuit cognitions that cause emotions. Snyder (1996) suggested that hope is made up of two dimensions. Firstly, people act on goals they set by using their agency (motivation and drive). Secondly, alternate pathways (different ways or paths) are formed to reach these or other goals. Thus, hope can be defined as hopeful thoughts that reflect the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use those pathways. A goal can be a significant lifelong pursuit or an immediate, brief desire (Lopez et al., 2004). Research has found that high hope individuals tend to be more certain of their goals and to be challenged by them. They value progress towards goals as well as the goals themselves; enjoy interacting with others and readily adapt to new relationships; are less anxious; and are more adaptive to environmental changes (Snyder, 1997; Snyder et al., 2000).

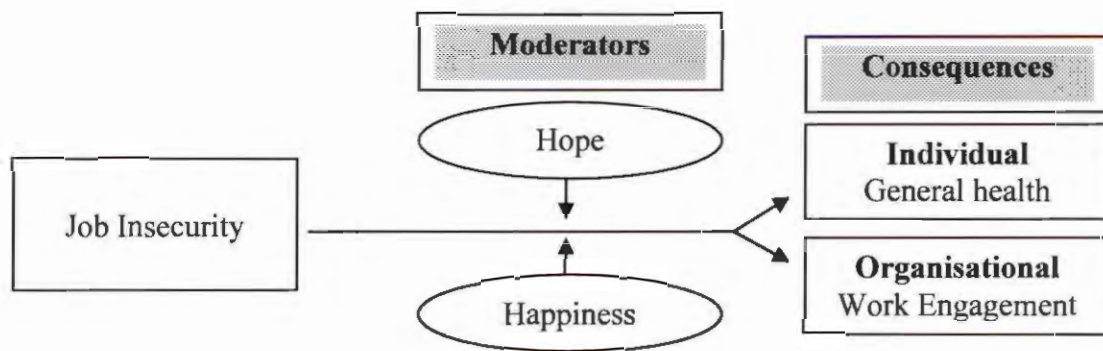
Hope was found to have a moderating effect on life satisfaction (Danoff-Burg, Prelow, & Swenson, 2004). Research done by Cheavens, Feldman, Woodward, and Snyder (2006), suggests that hope can improve productivity and satisfaction in life. As noted by Luthens and Youssef (2007), hope has a positive impact on work-related outcomes. From the above statements it can be deduced that hope has a positive effect on organisational outcomes. It seems that it also relates to individual outcomes as can be seen in the following research. Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2002) have found hope to be positively implicated in both primary and secondary health prevention. According to Davis (2005), hope also strongly relates to the health and well-being of older adults. Hope is conceptualised as both disposition and state-like, thus hope is open to development and change (Snyder et al., 1991). In this research, hope will be conceptualised and measured as a disposition (Snyder et al., 1991), as opposed to a state.

To maximise work satisfaction, a person needs to use his strengths to enjoy his job in such a way that his career becomes a calling rather than just a job (Seligman, 2002). Research suggests that more happiness causes increased productivity and higher

income. One study measured the amount of positive emotion of 272 employees and followed their job performance over the next eighteen months. The result was that happier people received better evaluations from their supervisors and higher pay (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994).

Regarding happiness and health, Cunningham (2005) stated that in a University College London study with 200 participants, happy people had the lowest levels of cortisol (stress hormone), in fact an average of 32% lower among happy individuals. Elevated cortisol increases the risk of developing high blood pressure, diabetes, abdominal obesity and decreased resistance to infection. Blood tests on the least happy people revealed up to 12 times higher levels of a liver-produced protein called plasma fibrinogen. Although fibrinogen helps to stop bleeding by forming clots, elevated levels have been associated with higher risk for cardiovascular disease (Cunningham, 2005). Most people have a steady level of joy in life, whatever our life circumstances may be. A 17-year study of German men and women supports the theory that happiness, over the long term, is more biological than environmental. Only 25% of people reported drastic fluctuations in life satisfaction. Diener, Lucas, and Oishi (2002), after studying different researcher's work, came to the conclusion that happiness can rather be classified as a stable trait over time than a state influenced by situations or other variables.

Already in 2003, Näswell and De Witte concluded that research is needed that focuses on reducing the experience of job insecurity and the negative consequences it has on both the organisation and the individual. Van Wyk and Pienaar (2008) propose a theoretical model for research on job insecurity in South African organisations. According to them, different antecedents lead to job insecurity which in turn results in consequences on individual, organisational and social level. The relationship between job insecurity and these consequences can be mediated and moderated by different factors. As indicated in figure 1, this study will focus on two factors which can moderate the impact of job insecurity on the individual as well as organisational level.



**Figure 1:** Proposed research based on the research agenda model for job insecurity in South African organisations (adapted from Van Wyk and Pienaar, 2008).

The objective of this research is to examine the validity of the Afrikaans version of the multidimensional Job Insecurity Survey (Ashford et al., 1989), the Hope Scale (Snyder et al., 1991) and the Satisfaction with Life Questionnaire (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985). The relationship between job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness in a co-operation will be determined. The possibility that hope and happiness will moderate the effect of job insecurity on general health and work engagement will also be investigated.

Based on the problem statement, the following research questions have been identified:

- How are job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness conceptualised in literature?
- What are the reliability and validity of the translated Afrikaans-versions of the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), the Hope Scale (HS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) for employees in a co-operation?
- What are the relationships between job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness of employees in a co-operation?
- Do hope and happiness have a moderating effect on the relationship between job insecurity and general health and between job insecurity and work engagement for employees in a co-operation?

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

### **1.2.1 General objective**

The general objective of this research is to determine the relationship between job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness in a co-operation.

### **1.2.2 Specific objectives**

The specific research objectives are:

- to conceptualise job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness and the relationship between these constructs from the literature;
- to determine the reliability and validity of the Afrikaans-versions of the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), the Hope Scale (HS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) for employees in a co-operation;
- to determine the relationship between job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness of employees in a co-operation; and
- to determine whether hope and happiness have a moderating effect on the relationship between job insecurity and general health and between job insecurity and work engagement for employees in a co-operation.

The following research problems can make a contribution to industrial psychology as a science:

- Standardised measuring instruments for job insecurity, hope and happiness, which have been proven valid and reliable, will exist for employees in a co-operation in Afrikaans.
- A causal model of job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness will exist for employees in a co-operation.

## **1.3 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method for all four of the articles will consist of a literature review and an empirical study.

### **1.3.1 Research design**

A cross-sectional survey design is used to reach the objectives of the research. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive by nature. This design can also be used to evaluate interrelationships among variables within a population (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

### **1.3.2 Participants**

The total population of 1500 employees of the North-West Co-operation is targeted. These participants are situated across various offices in the North-West Province. The population includes workers from all levels, ranging from semi-skilled to professional level. The lowest skilled employees are reported to have a level of literacy adequate enough to allow for valid completion of questionnaires.

### **1.3.3 Measuring battery**

Five questionnaires are used, namely, the Job Insecurity Survey (JIS) (Ashford et al., 1989), the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979), the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002), the Hope Scale (HS) (Snyder et al., 1991) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985).

The *Job Insecurity Scale (JIS)* (Ashford et al., 1989) is used in the measurement of job insecurity. This instrument measures five components of job insecurity. The first four subscales measure what Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) labelled 'the severity of the threat'. The fifth component, powerlessness, includes an individual's ability to counteract the threats identified in the first four components. The subscales are i) the



perceived threat to job features measured by 17 items; ii) the importance of the features in the first component measured by 17 items; iii) the perceived threat to events influencing the total job measured by 10 items; iv) the importance of the events in the third component measured by 10 items; and v) powerlessness measured by 3 items. All constructs are measured on a 5-point likert-scale. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach coefficients have been determined, with alphas ranging from 0,74 to 0,92 for all components (Ashford et al., 1989). Adkins, Werbel, and Farh (2001) measured alphas from 0,77 to 0,91 for the different scales.

The *General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)* (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979) is used to measure general health. For the purpose of this study the twenty-eight-item version will be used. Responses are given on a four point Likert-type scale, with the total scale ranging from 28 to 112. Four subscales with seven items each, measure the i) degree of somatic symptoms; ii) anxiety and insomnia; iii) social dysfunction; and iv) severe depression. A high value on the GHQ is indicative of a high level of psychological distress, whereas a low score implies a low level of psychological distress, in other words indicating a high level of general health. Isaksson and Johansson (2000), obtained a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,86 for the GHQ. Viljoen (2004) obtained a reliability coefficient of between 0,71 to 0,80 for the subscales of the GHQ.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) is utilised as a measure of work engagement. This seventeen-item questionnaire is arranged along a seven-point frequency scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (daily). This measure of work engagement has three scales, namely vigour (6 items), for example, "I feel strong and vigorous in my job"; dedication (5 items), for example, "I always persevere at work, even when things do not go well"; and absorption (6 items), for example, "In my job, I can continue working for very long periods at a time". High levels of vigour, dedication and absorption point to an individual who experiences a high level of job engagement. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach coefficients have been determined between 0,68 and 0,91 (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Fourie, Rothmann, and Van de Vijver (2008) found the UWES to be reliable with an alpha coefficient of 0,93.



*The Hope Scale (HS)* (Snyder et al., 1991) is used to measure hope in this study. This twelve-item scale has four agency items, for example, “I energetically pursue my goals”; and four pathways items, for example, “I can think of many ways to get out of a jam”. Comprising agency is the belief in one's capacity to initiate and sustain actions; and pathways are the belief in one's capacity to generate routes to reach goals. Four items are used as distracters and are not used for scoring. Answers are given on a frequency scale from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true). Snyder et al. (1991) indicate that a series of studies indicate acceptable internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The factor structure identifies the agencies and pathways components, and as predicted, the two components were positively correlated. Bailey et al. (2007) found the questionnaire reliable with a Cronbach alpha of 0,85.

*Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)* (Diener et al., 1985) is used to measure happiness. This is a 5-item scale and is measured on a frequency scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Answers are added up to indicate if a person is extremely dissatisfied with his life (score between 5-9) up to extremely satisfied with his life (score between 31-35). A satisfactory Cronbach alpha on each item was reported by Diener et al. (1985): 0,81; 0,63; 0,61; 0,75 and 0,66. In a South African study a reliability coefficient of 0,92 was reported by Westways and Maritz (2003).

#### **1.3.4 Statistical analysis**

The statistical analysis is carried out with the help of the SPSS-program (SPSS Inc., 2008).

Cronbach alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients are used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments (Pietersen & Maree, 2007). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, range, skewness and kurtosis) are used to analyse the data. The significance of differences between biographic groups is established by means of MANOVA, ANOVA and Tukey's HSD tests. A cut-off point of 0,50, representing a medium effect; and 0,80, representing a large effect; is set for practical significance of the results (Cohen, 1988). Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients are used to specify the relationships between the variables. The level of statistical significance is set at  $p < 0,01$ . The American

Psychological Association (APA) encourages the reporting of effect sizes in its Publication Manual (APA, 2001), but most of these measures are seldom found in published reports (Steyn, 2002). Therefore, effect sizes are computed to assess the practical significance of relationships in this study. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect) and 0,50 (large effect) (Cohen, 1988) will be set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. A stepwise multiple regression analysis is conducted to determine the percentage of the variance in the dependant variables (general health, work engagement, hope and happiness) that can be explained by the independent variable (job insecurity), as well as to test for moderation.

## **1.4 OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS**

- Chapter 2: Article 1: The validation of the Afrikaans version of the multi-dimensional JIS for employees in a co-operation.
- Chapter 3: Article 2: The validation of the Afrikaans version of the Hope Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale for employees in a co-operation.
- Chapter 4: Article 3: Job insecurity, general health, and work engagement of employees in a co-operation: The role of hope.
- Chapter 5: Article 4: Job insecurity, general health, and work engagement of employees in a co-operation: The role of happiness.
- Chapter 6: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## **1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 provided a discussion of the problem statement and research objectives. The measuring instruments as well as the research method were explained, followed by a brief overview of the chapters to follow.

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# **THE VALIDATION OF THE AFRIKAANS VERSION OF A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL JOB INSECURITY QUESTIONNAIRE**

## **ABSTRACT**

The primary objective of this research was to validate the Afrikaans version of the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS) for employees ( $N = 286$ ) in a co-operation in the North-West Province by conducting a cross-sectional survey design. Results demonstrated that the Afrikaans version of the JIS is reliable and valid with two items which need some refinement in future studies. Importance of job features and importance of changes to total job was higher for females. The cultural group 'other' indicated the higher levels of likelihood to lose a job feature compared to White participants. This was also experienced by participants with a qualification level of Grade 7 and lower compared to participants with a degree. Additionally these participants experienced higher levels in likelihood to changes in the total job in comparison to participants with a qualification level Grade 8-9, degree and post degree.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die hoofdoelstelling van hierdie navorsing is die validering van die Werksonsekerheidvraelys (JIS) se Afrikaanse weergawe vir werknemers ( $N = 286$ ) in 'n koöporasie in die Noordwes Provinsie. 'n Dwarsnecopname-ontwerp is gebruik. Resultate dui daarop dat die Afrikaanse weergawe van die JIS betroubaar en geldig is met twee items wat verfyn kan word in toekomstige studies. Vroulike deelnemers het hoër vlakke van werksonsekerheid, met verwysing na die belangrikheid van werkskenmerke en verandering in die totale werk, getoon. Die kultuur groep 'ander' wys op die hoogste vlakke van moontlikheid om 'n werkskenmerk te verloor as Wit deelnemers. Dit is ook gevind by deelnemers met 'n kwalifikasie van Graad 7 en laer teenoor 'n graad kwalifikasie. Daarbenewens het hierdie deelnemers hoër vlakke van moontlike verandering in die totale werk ervaar teenoor kwalifikasie groepe Graad 8-9, graad en nagraads.

The advent of democracy in South Africa signalled changes in many spheres of South Africans' lives. Organisations which had been sheltered by international sanctions suddenly had to adapt in order to enable them to compete in larger, more competitive markets. Additionally, labour legislation aimed at redressing past injustices and inequalities, has had a large impact on previously advantaged individuals' employability. Although the South African labour market has grown substantially over the past decade, the gap between the rich and poor has become larger. The South African labour market is characterised by high unemployment rates (23.5% during the second quarter of 2008) and as a result, this country has millions of people living in extreme poverty. Additionally, high crime rates and unsustainable salaries are leading to mass migration. Due to rising living costs, an increasing number of households are now dependent on a second income, whereas they could previously survive on one income. Beside more females joining the labour force due to financial necessity, the traditional roles of men and women are changing where both genders are expected to fulfil a full range of adult roles and responsibilities (Piburn, 2006). The US Department of Labour predicts that women will account for 51% of the increase in the total labour force growth between 2004 and 2014 ([www.dol.gov/factsheets/Qf-laborforce-05.htm](http://www.dol.gov/factsheets/Qf-laborforce-05.htm)). Essentially, the once secure and predictable environment has changed dramatically for many. Organisations have enough challenges already and with the international economic downturn, they will have to find a balance between short term pressures and long term objectives (Seegers, 2009). When current labour market conditions are taken into consideration, it becomes evident that even those individuals included in the 76.5% gainfully employed population, have very little reason to feel secure.

Van Wyk and Pienaar (2008) note that due to the extensive research that has confirmed the existence of job insecurity, the present focus is rather on measuring the impact of job insecurity on the individual, the organisation and the society. Current job insecurity related research is also focusing on creating interventions to reduce job insecurity and its impact. Evidence found in literature suggests that job insecurity is detrimental to the well-being of employees as well as organisations. Strazdins, D'Souza, Lim, Broom, and Rodgers (2004) found that of participants experiencing extreme work stresses (high insecurity and high strain), 50% reported depression or anxiety, 41% physical health problems and 34% poor self-reported health. De Witte

(2005) summarised the findings of several researchers in a review of the international literature on job insecurity. Longitudinal studies show that the impact of job insecurity on health and well-being is more severe than the impact of health and well-being on the perception of job insecurity. The conclusion from this is that job insecurity causes lower levels of well-being and not the other way around.

### **Definition of job insecurity**

Job insecurity refers to employees' negative feelings towards changes relating to their jobs. Job insecurity has been defined as an individual's "overall concern about the future existence of the job" (Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996, p.587); "perception of a potential threat to continuity in his or her current job" (Heany, Israel, & House, 1994, p.1431); "expectations about continuity in a job situation" (Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997, p.323); and "powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p.438), to give a few examples. The majority of research conducted in South Africa made use of measuring instruments that focused on the global dimension of job insecurity as described by the above definitions.

A multi-dimensional view on job insecurity was proposed by Ashford, Lee, and Bobko (1989). According to these researchers, job insecurity consists of five components, being i) the severity of the threat concerning job continuity or aspects of the job; ii) the importance of the job feature to the individual; iii) the perceived threat of the occurrence of a total negative affect on the job situation; iv) the total importance of the changes mentioned above; and the v) powerlessness and inability of the individual to control the above mentioned factors. According to Van Wyk and Pienaar (2008), the job insecurity measuring instrument designed by Ashford et al. (1989) seems to be used most frequently in international studies. Employees have fewer resources available, but increased responsibility without any control over the situation. Semi-structured interviews with South African managers (Van Wyk & Pienaar, 2008) highlighted aspects of the job itself such as the threat of the job position and future job prospects. The complication of re-employment or alternative employment due to high unemployment figures is also a great concern. The feeling of powerlessness caused by job insecurity was a theme agreed upon by 25% of the

participants. Observing the trend in the work environment, it could be deduced that people experience the aspects of job insecurity as measured by Ashford et al. (1989). This measure also proved to be generalisable to several cultural settings (Lee, Bobko, & Chen, 2006).

After studying the conceptualisations of job insecurity, both from a global and multi-dimensional perspective, Van Wyk and Pienaar (2008) identified five common job insecurity themes:

- Job insecurity as the perceived probability of loss, i.e. job insecurity is likely to be higher in an organisation undergoing change or a crisis.
- Job insecurity consists of objective and subjective components. An objective component could be an environmental cue, for example an upcoming restructuring, yet an individual will have a subjective estimation of his chance of job loss in this context.
- Job insecurity has cognitive and affective components. The cognitive aspect refers to concern about the probability of job loss, whereas the affective component relates to concern, beliefs and feelings about the insecurity. The cognitive appraisal of the future is an antecedent to the affective experience.
- Job insecurity has qualitative and quantitative dimensions. The quantitative element relates to losing the job itself, whereas the qualitative element relates to uncertainty about losing important job features and values.
- Job insecurity is a stressor in relation to its predictors and outcomes, i.e. job insecurity is a stressor irrespective of whether it is conceptualised as being global or multi-dimensional and can be studied from a stress framework.

According to the NEXUS Database System, completed research regarding Job Insecurity in South Africa between 2005 and 2007 found that out of the 31 studies, the majority used the Job Insecurity Inventory of De Witte (2000). Makhobotloane (2005); Leach (2006); and Ramakau (2007) used the multi-dimensional job insecurity measure of Ashford et al. (1989). Within these studies, no indication was found of Afrikaans translations of any Job Insecurity measure. In their recommendations on future research on job insecurity, Van Wyk and Pienaar (2008) suggested the

validation of measuring instruments in die multi-cultural South African context and investigating the reliability across cultural and language groups.

### **Predictors of job insecurity**

From previous research it is apparent that specific background variables do have an influence on the experience of job insecurity. In South African studies conducted since 2004 it was found that White participants experience higher levels of job insecurity than Black participants (Bosman, 2005; Buitendach, 2005; Laba, 2005; Van Schalkwyk, 2005), except for a study done in the mining industry in which the opposite was found (Rannonna, 2004). Other background variables that demonstrate an influence on job insecurity are age (Buitendach, 2005; Laba, 2005; Rannonna, 2004) and qualifications (Buitendach, 2005; Rannonna, 2004). People with lower qualifications seem to experience higher levels of job insecurity. Age groups vary in years, however the youngest and oldest groups in a sample are consistently the groups with higher job insecurity. Predictive validity could be established should background variables prove to influence multi-dimensional job insecurity experienced by employees in this organisation.

The organisation that took part in this research is based in the North-West Province of South Africa and forms part of a large rural community. South Africa is a multilingual country and Afrikaans is one of the official languages which is widely used in this community. The opportunity presented itself to translate the questionnaires into Afrikaans to suit the needs of the targeted population.

### **Translation of questionnaires**

According to Chang, Chau, and Holroyd (1999), it is important to explain the procedures undertaken during the translation of a questionnaire to ensure the validity of the equivalence between the primary and secondary language tool. The translation of questionnaires is on the increase as more cross-cultural studies are undertaken (Van der Vijver & Hambleton, 1996; Küçükdeveci, Sahin, Ataman, Griffiths, & Tennant, 2004). According to Sireci (n.d.), tests are adapted in different languages, especially in multilingual countries in order to provide an instrument in a person's home

language. Harkens and Schoua-Glusberg (1998) postulate that the most common reason for translating questionnaires is when the instrument is not available in the language required for utilisation. As noted, in this study the questionnaires were translated on request of the organisation as a large proportion of employees are Afrikaans speaking. Weiland, Beasley, and Strachan (n.d.) recommend the following steps for the translation of questionnaires:

- i) One (or more persons) who is familiar with the area in which the questionnaire will be used should translate the questionnaire. This person should be bilingual.
- ii) To find translations for difficult terms, ask professionals and people who have experienced such a situation to describe the term in local words.
- iii) A group of national experts should agree upon the most appropriate translation.
- iv) An independent translator should translate the questionnaires back into English.
- v) Pilot tests should be undertaken in populations that represent the study population.

Different methods to translate questionnaires exist. The method used in this study is the direct or one-way translation. According to McKay et al. (1996), the direct method is the translation of an original questionnaire from the “source” language to the “target” language by a person (or persons) that is bilingual in these languages. This method is the ‘simplest’ in terms of procedure and the most economical (Harkens & Schoua-Gulsberg, 1998).

The following hypotheses are formulated in relation to this article:

- H1: The JIS Afrikaans version can be defined as a five-dimensional construct which has acceptable levels of construct validity.
- H2: Job insecurity, as measured by the Afrikaans version of the JIS, demonstrates acceptable levels of internal consistency for each subscale.
- H3: The Afrikaans version of the JIS has acceptable levels of predictive validity.



## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reach the objectives of the research. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive by nature. This design can also be used to evaluate interrelationships among variables within a population (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997). De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport (2007) refer to this kind of design as a one-shot case study where a group is studied only once.

### **Participants**

A total of 700 questionnaires were circulated among the employees of the North-West Co-operation. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the staff of the co-operation. All questionnaires were professionally translated into Afrikaans. English and Afrikaans questionnaires were distributed, however, only the Afrikaans version was completed probably due to the study population being primarily Afrikaans speaking. A response rate of 286 (41%) was obtained. The characteristics of the participants are reported in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the Participants (N = 286)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male (1)	187	65,4
	Female (2)	99	34,6
	Total	286	100,0
Culture	African (1)	25	8,7
	White (2)	253	88,5
	Indian (3)	0	0,0
	Coloured (4)	6	2,1
	Other (5)	2	0,7
	Total	286	100,0
Citizenship	South African (1)	286	100,0
	Other (2)	0	0
	Total	286	100,0
Age	24 years and younger (1)	15	5,2
	25-35 years (2)	87	30,4
	36-45 years (3)	77	26,9
	46-55 years (4)	83	29,0
	56 years and older (5)	24	8,4
	Total	286	100,0
Qualification	0-Grade 7 (1)	13	4,5
	Grade 8-9 (2)	11	3,8
	Grade 10-12 (3)	168	58,7
	Diploma (4)	37	12,9
	Degree (5)	25	8,7
	Degree + (6)	32	11,2
	Total	286	100,0
Tenure	Less than 1 year (1)	27	9,4
	2-5 years (2)	72	25,2
	6-10 years (3)	72	25,2
	11-20 years (4)	72	25,2
	Longer than 20 years (5)	43	15,0
	Total	286	100,0

The sample consisted mainly of white participants (88,5%). This could be due to the fact that a low percentage of black employees are literate in Afrikaans or English, which were the languages in which the questionnaires were available. The black employees are also a poorly represented population group in this organisation. The highest percentage had a Grade 10-12 (58,7%) level of education. The majority of participants were male (65,4%), which again is consistent with the demographics of the organisation.

## **Measuring instruments**

In this study the *Job Insecurity Scale (JIS)* (Ashford et al., 1989) was used to measure job insecurity. This instrument measures five components of job insecurity. The first four subscales measure 'the severity of the threat' as categorised by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984), both in terms of important features of the job and total job. The fifth component, 'powerlessness', includes an individual's ability to neutralise the threats identified in the first four subscales. The scales are: i) the perceived threat to job features measured by 17 items; ii) the importance of the features in the first component measured by 17 items; iii) the perceived threat to events influencing the total job measured by 10 items; iv) the importance of the events in the third component measured by 10 items; and v) powerlessness measured by 3 items. All constructs are measured on a 5-point Likert-scale. Over some time, researchers questioned the relevance of the entire questionnaire, which in total consists of 57 items. The possible elimination of job features or powerlessness was considered (Lee et al., 2006). A study done in both the United States and China by Lee, Bobko and Chen to examine the usefulness of all the components of the JIS, found that the suggestion was untimely in both cultures and that more research on the utility of the full measuring instrument was needed (Lee et al., 2006). Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach alpha coefficients have been determined, with alphas ranging from 0,74 to 0,92 for all components (Ashford et al., 1989). In South Africa, Leach (2006) found Cronbach alphas ranging from 0,77 to 0,96.

## **Analysis of data**

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SPSS-program (SPSS Inc., 2008). Cronbach alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, range, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. A principal component analysis was used to assess the number of components in the JIS data. Subsequently, a principle axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation was carried out to analyse the factor structure of the JIS. Differences in job insecurity scores of biographical groups were determined by conducting MANOVA and ANOVA. A cut-off point of 0,50 was set for a difference

of medium effect and 0,80 for a difference of large effect in terms of practical significance (Cohen, 1988). Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0,01$  (Field, 2006).

## RESULTS

### Construct validity of the JIS

A simple principal components analysis was conducted on all the items of the JIS on the total research sample. Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than 1) and the scree plot indicated that five factors could be extracted, which explained 51% of the total variance.

Table 2

Rotated Component Matrix of the JIS for Employees in a co-operation in the North-West Province ( $N = 286$ ).

		Component				
		1	2	3	4	5
JIA1	<i>Geografiese ligging?</i>	-0,07	<b>0,22</b>	-0,00	0,11	0,06
JIA2	<i>Om bevorderingsgeleenthede te hê?</i>	-0,03	<b>0,55</b>	0,09	0,12	0,09
JIA3	<i>Handhawing van u huidige salaris?</i>	0,05	<b>0,27</b>	0,03	0,01	-0,25
JIA4	<i>Handhawing van geleenthede om periodieke salarisverhogings te verkry?</i>	-0,07	<b>0,55</b>	0,07	0,05	-0,25
JIA5	<i>Die status wat saam met u posisie in die organisasie kom?</i>	0,06	<b>0,51</b>	-0,11	0,10	0,15
JIA6	<i>Die vryheid om u eie werk te skeduleer?</i>	-0,01	<b>0,66</b>	-0,02	0,00	-0,12
JIA7	<i>Die vryheid om u werk uit te voer in die wyse wat u as geskik beskou?</i>	-0,02	<b>0,70</b>	0,02	0,01	-0,19
JIA8	<i>Toegang tot hulpbronne (mense, materiaal, inligting) in die organisasie?</i>	-0,04	<b>0,72</b>	0,20	-0,10	-0,12
JIA9	<i>'n Gevoel van gemeenskaplikheid deur saam met goeie kollegas te werk?</i>	-0,013	<b>0,58</b>	0,013	-0,04	0,03
JIA10	<i>Die terugvoer wat u van u toesighouer ontvang oor u prestasie?</i>	0,06	<b>0,66</b>	0,12	0,02	0,03
JIA11	<i>Die kwaliteit van toesighouding wat u ontvang?</i>	0,08	<b>0,50</b>	0,03	0,03	0,12
JIA12	<i>Die fisiese vereistes wat u werk op u plaas?</i>	0,07	<b>0,41</b>	0,09	0,14	0,22
JIA13	<i>Die geleentheid vir interaksie met die</i>	0,12	<b>0,55</b>	0,11	0,03	0,18

	<i>publiek?</i>					
JIA14	'n Werk waar u 'n verskeidenheid van take doen?	-0,03	<b>0,63</b>	0,13	-0,03	0,15
JIA15	'n Werk waar u 'n stuk werk van begin tot einde deurvoer?	0,14	<b>0,61</b>	0,15	-0,08	0,02
JIA16	'n Werk wat 'n betekenisvolle impak op ander het?	-0,05	<b>0,53</b>	0,06	0,01	0,11
JIA17	'n Werk waarin u kan sien hoe goed u doen sover as wat u gaan?	0,07	<b>0,67</b>	0,12	-0,04	0,05
JIB1	U geografiese ligging?	<b>0,45</b>	0,10	0,13	0,24	0,13
JIB2	U potensiaal om te vorder in die organisasie?	<b>0,57</b>	0,030	0,01	0,12	-0,13
JIB3	U potensiaal om u huidige salaris te handhaaf?	<b>0,65</b>	0,02	0,01	0,21	0,07
JIB4	U potensiaal om verhogings te verkry?	<b>0,69</b>	-0,04	0,01	0,19	-0,07
JIB5	Die status wat saam met u posisie kom in die organisasie?	<b>0,70</b>	0,07	0,02	0,18	-0,06
JIB6	U huidige vryheid om u eie werk te skeduleer?	<b>0,80</b>	0,07	-0,02	0,09	0,00
JIB7	U huidige vryheid om u werk uit te voer soos u mees geskik sien?	<b>0,81</b>	0,07	0,02	0,04	0,02
JIB8	U huidige toegang tot hulpbronne (mense, materiaal, inligting) in die organisasie?	<b>0,81</b>	0,01	-0,02	0,12	0,11
JIB9	U huidige gevoel van gemeenskaplikheid deur saam met goeie kollegas te werk?	<b>0,78</b>	-0,01	-0,03	0,16	-0,09
JIB10	Die hoeveelheid terugvoer wat u tans van u toesighouer ontvang?	<b>0,75</b>	-0,03	-0,07	0,16	0,01
JIB11	Die toesighouding wat u ontvang?	<b>0,73</b>	-0,07	-0,13	0,15	0,03
JIB12	Die fisiese vereistes wat u werk op u plaas?	<b>0,78</b>	-0,01	-0,09	0,09	0,02
JIB13	Die geleentheid om met die publiek interaksie te hê?	<b>0,77</b>	0,05	-0,05	0,03	0,08
JIB14	Die verskeidenheid van take wat u verrig?	<b>0,80</b>	0,04	-0,07	0,08	-0,00
JIB15	Die geleentheid om 'n stuk werk van begin tot einde te voltooi?	<b>0,83</b>	0,03	-0,09	0,06	-0,02
JIB16	Die betekenisvolheid van u werk?	<b>0,83</b>	0,01	-0,02	0,05	-0,11
JIB17	Die mate waartoe u u eie vordering kan meet terwyl u daarmee besig is?	<b>0,82</b>	-0,00	-0,05	0,08	0,00
JIC1	U kan u werk verloor en na 'n laer vlak in die organisasie skuif?	-0,08	0,10	<b>0,80</b>	0,10	-0,18
JIC2	U kan u werk verloor en na 'n ander werk op dieselfde vlak binne die organisasie skuif?	0,08	0,18	<b>0,53</b>	0,11	-0,11
JIC3	Die hoeveelheid werksure wat die	0,06	0,19	<b>0,39</b>	-0,04	0,29

	<i>organisasie u kan bied kan wissel van dag tot dag?</i>					
JIC4	<i>U kan geskuif word na 'n ander werk op 'n hoër vlak by u huidige ligging?</i>	0,03	0,18	<b>0,40</b>	-0,00	0,16
JIC5	<i>U kan geskuif word na 'n ander werk op 'n hoër vlak by 'n ander geografiese ligging?</i>	0,04	0,20	<b>0,37</b>	0,02	0,20
JIC6	<i>U kan vir 'n kort tydperk afgedank word?</i>	-0,10	-0,06	<b>0,86</b>	0,15	-0,09
JIC7	<i>U kan permanent afgedank word?</i>	-0,13	-0,01	<b>0,87</b>	0,10	-0,08
JIC8	<i>U departement of afdeling se toekoms mag dalk onseker wees?</i>	-0,08	0,19	<b>0,82</b>	0,04	-0,05
JIC9	<i>U kan dalk afgedank word?</i>	-0,13	0,043	<b>0,90</b>	0,09	-0,12
JIC10	<i>U mag dalk geforseer word om vroeë pensioen te neem?</i>	-0,13	0,07	<b>0,77</b>	0,10	0,02
JID1	<i>Verloor u werk en skuif na 'n laer vlak in die organisasie?</i>	0,21	0,12	0,13	<b>0,81</b>	-0,05
JID2	<i>Verloor u werk en skuif na 'n ander werk op dieselfde vlak binne die organisasie?</i>	0,13	0,18	0,15	<b>0,73</b>	0,03
JID3	<i>Vind dat die aantal ure wat die maatskappy u bied om te werk van dag tot dag kan wissel?</i>	0,30	0,00	0,03	<b>0,57</b>	0,19
JID4	<i>Om geskuif te word na 'n hoër posisie in u huidige ligging?</i>	0,01	0,11	0,12	0,25	<b>0,58</b>
JID5	<i>Om geskuif te word na 'n hoër posisie in 'n ander geografiese ligging?</i>	0,14	0,10	0,07	0,40	<b>0,55</b>
JID6	<i>Verloor u werk en is werkloos vir 'n kort rukkie?</i>	0,18	0,04	0,11	<b>0,80</b>	0,01
JID7	<i>Verloor u werk en is permanent werkloos?</i>	0,26	0,01	0,12	<b>0,79</b>	-0,02
JID8	<i>Vind dat u departement of afdeling se toekoms onseker is?</i>	0,20	-0,01	0,05	<b>0,73</b>	-0,10
JID9	<i>Verloor u werk deur afgedank te word?</i>	0,15	-0,03	0,04	<b>0,80</b>	-0,10
JID10	<i>Verloor u werk deur gedruk te word om vroeë pensioen te aanvaar?</i>	0,24	-0,03	0,03	<b>0,63</b>	-0,06
JIE1	<i>Ek het genoeg mag in hierdie organisasie om gebeurtenisse wat my werk mag beïnvloed te beheer.</i>	-0,12	0,02	-0,17	-0,11	<b>0,64</b>
JIE2	<i>In hierdie organisasie kan ek voorkom dat negatiewe dinge 'n impak op my werksituasie het.</i>	-0,06	0,08	-0,03	-0,16	<b>0,70</b>
JIE3	<i>Ek verstaan hierdie organisasie goed genoeg om dinge te beheer wat my affekteer.</i>	-0,01	0,16	-0,13	-0,16	<b>0,66</b>

Inspection of Table 2 indicated that all items loaded correctly except for items JID4 and JID5 from the scale 'likelihood of changes in total job', that loaded incorrectly on the powerlessness scale. The questions relate to being moved to a higher position in a current environment ("om geskuif te word na 'n hoër posisie in u huidige ligging?"); and being moved to a higher position in a different geographical environment ("om geskuif te word na 'n hoër posisie in 'n ander geografiese ligging"). This could be assessed as not having a choice, because if you do not accept the offer you might be without a job, thus loading on the powerlessness scale. The scale JIA measures the importance of job features whereas JIB measures the likelihood to losing job features. JIC refers to the importance of the total job and JID the likelihood of changes in the total job. Perceived powerlessness is measured by scale JIE. Hypothesis 1 can be partially accepted with the Afrikaans version of the JIS as having acceptable levels of construct validity, except for two items.

### Reliability of the JIS

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients of the JIS for employees ( $N = 286$ ) working in a co-operation, are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the Job Insecurity Scale*

Test and subscales	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Inter-item $r$	$\alpha$
JIA (Importance of job feature)	69,12	6,72	-0,62	0,70	0,27	0,85
JIB (Likelihood of losing job feature)	44,45	14,54	0,22	-0,29	0,54	0,95
JIC (Importance of changes in total job)	37,94	6,91	-1,28	1,20	0,42	0,88
JID (Likelihood of negative changes in total job)	24,24	7,62	0,37	-0,03	0,42	0,88
JIE (Perceived powerlessness)	6,70	2,27	-0,17	-0,76	0,57	0,80

As indicated in Table 3, all subscales were normally distributed. Field (2006) explains positive values of skewness as a distribution to the right and negative values as a distribution to the left. Positive values of kurtosis can be considered a pointy distribution and negative values a more flat distribution. According to the guideline of Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) of  $\alpha > 0,70$ , all the subscales can be considered to have acceptable levels of internal consistency. Inter-item correlation coefficients of all scales were consistent, except for the JIB and JIE subscales which fell marginally outside the guideline of Clark and Watson (1995) of  $0,15 < r < 0,50$ . This implies that the items of these subscales are somewhat similar, although scores are not extreme. Hypothesis 2 can therefore be accepted.

Next, MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) was used to test hypothesis 3. Demographic groups included were gender, culture, age, qualifications and tenure. Wilk's Lambda statistics were first used to determine statistical significance of differences with regard to job insecurity. ANOVA was then used to determine specific differences within the groups that were found to be statistically significant. Results of the MANOVA analysis are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

*MANOVA – Differences in Job Insecurity Levels of Demographic Groups*

Variable	Value	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	0,94	3,29	5	0.01*	0.06
Culture	0,85	2,98	15	0,00*	0,05
Age	0,88	1,68	20	0,03	0,03
Qualification	0,78	2,70	25	0,00*	0,05
Tenure	0.94	0,79	20	0,72	0.02

\* $p < 0,01$

In an analysis of Wilk's Lambda values, no significant differences ( $p < 0,01$ ) regarding tenure and age could be found, however gender, culture and qualification showed statistically significant differences. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to



analyse the relationships between job insecurity and the demographic groups that showed statistically significant differences.

The significance of differences in the job insecurity levels and gender groups are reported in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Differences in Job Insecurity Levels of Gender Groups*

Item	Male	Female	<i>p</i>	Partial Eta Squared
JIA (Importance of job feature)	68,39	70,70	0,01*	0,03
JIB (Likelihood of losing job feature)	44,61	44,12	0,78	0,00
JIC (Importance of changes in total job)	37,11	39,80	0,00*	0,03
JID (Likelihood of changes in total job)	23,72	25,01	0,19	0,01
JIE (Perceived powerlessness)	6,84	6,39	0,12	0,01

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,01$

a Practically significant differences from type (in row) where b (medium effect,  $d \geq 0,5$ ) or c (large effect,  $d \geq 0,8$ ) are indicated

Inspection of Table 5 indicates that female participants experience higher levels of job insecurity with regard to the importance of job features (JIA) as well as importance of changes in total job (JIC).

The significance of differences in the job insecurity levels and cultural groups are reported in Table 6.

Table 6  
*Differences in Job Insecurity Levels of Cultural Groups*

Item	African	White	Coloured	Other	<i>p</i>	Root MSE
JIA (Importance of job feature)	4.36	4.30	4.63	4.53	0,32	0.51
JIB (Likelihood of losing job feature)	3.25	2.72 <sup>a</sup>	3.09	3.76 <sup>b</sup>	0,01*	1.69
JIC (Importance of changes in total job)	3.67	4.23	3.60	4.45	0,00*	1.72
JID (Likelihood of changes in total job)	3.05	2.61	2.43	2.85	0,08	1.21
JIE (Perceived powerlessness)	3.21	2.90	3.28	3.67	0,28	1.14

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0,01$

a Practically significant differences from type (in row) where b (medium effect,  $d \geq 0,5$ ) or c (large effect,  $d \geq 0,8$ ) are indicated

Table 6 demonstrates that there are statistically significant differences between the levels of job insecurity (as measured by the likelihood of losing a job) of the various cultural groups. Regarding practical significance, results showed that the White participants demonstrate lower perceptions of likelihood of losing a job feature (JIB) compared to the participants falling in the Other category. Although statistically significant differences were found for the importance of changes in total job, these were not found to be practically significant, with  $d$  falling marginally below the 0,5 level.

The significance of differences in the job insecurity levels and qualification groups is reported in Table 7.

Table 7

*Differences in Job Insecurity Levels of Qualification Groups*

Item	0-Gr 7	Gr 8-9	Gr10-12	Diploma	Degree	Degree+	$p$	Root MSE
JIA	4.16	4.10	4.40	4.27	4.20	4.14	0,01*	0.82
JIB	3.24 <sup>b</sup>	2.93	2.89	2.81	2.21 <sup>a</sup>	2.41	0,00*	1.85
JIC	4.13	3.50	4.27	4.13	4.08	3.98	0,03	1.27
JID	3.46 <sup>b</sup>	2.55 <sup>a</sup>	2.63	2.87	2.30 <sup>a</sup>	2.43 <sup>a</sup>	0,00*	1.70
JIE	2.64	3.42	3.02	2.64	2.82	2.92	0,12	1.30

\* Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.01$

a Practically significant differences from type (in row) where b (medium effect,  $d \geq 0,5$ ) or c (large effect,  $d \geq 0,8$ ) are indicated

As indicated in Table 7, importance of job features showed statistically significant differences for different qualification groups. These differences were however not found to be practically significant. Likelihood of losing a job features also showed statistically significant differences for different qualification groups. In terms of practical significance, results showed that participants with a degree perceived less of such a likelihood of losing job features, as compared to participants with Grade 7 or less. Statistically significant differences were also found for qualification groups and the Likelihood of changes in the total job. Testing for practical significance revealed that those participants with a Grade 8 to 9 qualification, degree and post-graduate

degree experienced lower levels of such a perceived likelihood of changes to the total job when compared to those with a Grade 7 qualification or less.

## **DISCUSSION**

The main objective of this research was to validate the Afrikaans version of the JIS for employees of a Co-operation in the North-West Province of South Africa. Construct validity of the Afrikaans version of the JIS was satisfactorily with two from a total of 57 items not loading on the correct factor. Reliability was established with high internal consistency. Predictive validity was established although not all biographical predictors interacted similarly as in previous studies.

Hypothesis 1 tested the five-dimensional structure of the JIS, with acceptable levels of construct validity. A principal axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation was used after an assessment of a principal component analysis was done. The five factors explained 51% of the total variance. All items loaded on the correct scales except for JID4 and JID5 that loaded on the 'powerlessness' scale instead of 'the likelihood of negative changes in total job' scale. These two questions relate to being moved to a higher position in the current environment or to a higher position in a different geographical environment, which could be understood by the participants as something they cannot control; therefore conversely measuring on the powerlessness scale. As a result of the incorrect loading of the two items, Hypothesis 1 is only partially accepted.

As was the case in the original measuring instrument of Ashford et al. (1989) and previous research done in South Africa by Leach (2006), all scales of the JIS demonstrated acceptable levels of internal consistency. In this research the Afrikaans version exhibited Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.95. As proven, the items of the Afrikaans JIS measure the same attribute, and therefore Hypothesis 2 can be accepted.

In order to test the predictive validity (as per Hypothesis 3) of the Afrikaans version of the JIS, MANOVA and ANOVA were conducted to determine the differences of

job insecurity scores of biographical groups. Wilk's Lambda values indicated that significant differences for gender, culture, and qualification could be found, but not for age and tenure. ANOVA demonstrated that female participants in this study experienced higher levels of job insecurity with reference to the importance of job features (JIA) and also in the importance of changes to total job (JIC). Interesting is the fact that female participants view job features as important but did not measure high on likelihood of losing a job feature. This could be interpreted as females viewing job features as either status symbols or a true asset in performing their jobs but do not fear losing these features. According to Kelan (2008), the decline of the male breadwinner has increased the responsibility of women to help take care of financial obligations. If individuals perceive themselves not to have the resources to cope with the consequences of the threat of job insecurity, they feel more vulnerable (Näswall & De Witte, 2003).

Further analysis indicated the cultural group 'other' experienced the higher levels of likelihood of losing a job feature (JIB) compared to the White cultural group. This could be ascribed to the fact that this is the least representative cultural group. In this study 'other' referred to cultural groups which did not fit the description of the major South African cultures, for example Chinese or other cultures from the African continent. Since this group is a minority in the Co-operation they could feel more insecure and in particular as is indicated with reference to losing a job feature.

Participants with qualification levels of Grade 7 and lower experienced higher job insecurity in terms of the likelihood of losing a job feature (JIB) in comparison to participants with a degree. Grade 7 and lower also experienced higher levels of likelihood in changes to total job compared to participants Grade 8-9, degree and post graduate degree. Previous research in South Africa found that participants with lower qualification levels experience higher levels of job insecurity (Buitendach, 2005; Ranonna, 2004).

It could be deduced that due to the discriminate value the questionnaire produced, the Afrikaans version of the JIS has predictive and concurrent validity, which provides grounds to accept Hypothesis 3.

The limitations of this research can firstly be discussed by referring to the exclusive use of self-report measures. On the other hand, self-report measures are an indication of the individual's experience and therefore valid when measuring the perception of job insecurity. Secondly, only the Afrikaans version of the questionnaire was completed and therefore it could not be compared to the original language. Results might have been more accurate if the translated version could be compared to an English version completed by participants from the same organisation. Using a more detailed translation method could refine results and translation to languages comfortable to participants could be beneficial.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the work environment in South Africa, it could be argued that the multi-dimensional job insecurity measurement is more suitable than global measures for research in this country. The Afrikaans version of the JIS was found to be reliable in a Co-operation in the North-West Province and therefore further research in different organisations is suggested to test the instruments' validity in a variety of industries. No items need to be added in subsequent studies, as the internal consistency was sufficient. Items JID4 and JID5 loaded incorrectly on the 'perceived powerlessness' scale instead of on 'the likelihood of changes to the total job' scale. Refinement of these two items could increase the construct validity of the Afrikaans version. Taking into account the fact that South Africa is a multi-linguistic country, the translation of the JIS to other South African languages could also be considered.

Some demographical differences were not in line with previous research. Previous research indicated that age plays a role in the experience of job insecurity and that the White cultural group measured higher levels of job insecurity experience (Bosman, 2005; Buitendach, 2005; Laba, 2005; Van Schalkwyk, 2005). This could either be as a result of the conceptualisation of job insecurity in this research or the type of industry. Measuring job insecurity with a global scale produces straightforward results with an answer to a question. This simplifies statistical procedures and is easy to compare with similar studies. The multi-dimensional questionnaire as used in this study offers the researcher the opportunity to investigate the concept in a more composite manner. However, it is not as easy to compare with similar studies as differences could be indicated on numerous scales. Reisel and Banai (2002) conducted a study comparing the predictive values of global and multi-dimensional job insecurity with regard to job attitudes and work behaviours. His results indicated that the job threat dimension held stronger predictive value towards outcome attitudes and behaviours than the job features dimension. Furthermore the global measure of job insecurity explained more variance in two out of three outcome variables.

More research is needed to examine which is the best approach to measure job insecurity in South Africa. Research is predominantly done where more participants

per square metre are available or large companies with more possible participants, typically in the urban areas. Less research is conducted in rural areas such as where this research took place. Trends and characteristics of the type of environment cannot easily be construed as more research is needed to compare results.

It is apparent that job insecurity, although a much debated topic, still needs a lot of attention from the research community. According to Robert Roe (2009, keynote speaker, 14<sup>th</sup> EAWOP congress, Spain) researchers should study diverse groups (for example different industries) and specify the relevance of findings based on the target group. Research findings should be linked to practical contributions.

Thus to summarise: translation of questionnaires into a language with which participants are comfortable, is important; researchers must understand how job insecurity is conceptualised in this environment and measuring instruments should be chosen accordingly; and research in this specific environment is needed to build a norm base for researchers against which to benchmark their samples.

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# **THE VALIDATION OF THE AFRIKAANS VERSIONS OF THE TRAIT HOPE SCALE AND THE SATISFACTION WITH LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE**

## **ABSTRACT**

The primary objective of this study was to validate the Afrikaans versions of the Trait Hope Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale for employees ( $N = 286$ ) in a co-operation in the North-West Province. The measuring instruments that were used are the Trait Hope Scale (HS), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and a biographical questionnaire. A cross-sectional survey design was conducted. Results demonstrated that both measuring instruments were reliable and valid with good construct validity and internal consistency. A positive correlation was found between the Hope Scale and Satisfaction with Life Scale. Through a multiple regression analysis hope was found to explain 16% of the variance in happiness. Recommendations on interventions for increasing both hope and happiness were made as well as for future research.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die hoofdoelstelling van hierdie navorsing is die validering van die Hoopvraelys en die Algemene Lewenstevredenheidsvraelys se Afrikaanse weergawes in 'n koöporasie in die Noord-Wes Provinsie ( $N = 286$ ). Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is, is die Hoopvraelys (HS); die Algemene Lewenstevredenheidsvraelys (SWLS) en 'n biografiese vraelys. 'n Dwarssneeopname-ontwerp is gebruik. Resultate dui daarop dat beide die meetinstrumente betroubaar en geldig is met sterk konstrukteldigheid en interne konsekwentheid. 'n Positiewe korrelasie tussen die Hoopvraelys en die Algemene Lewenstevredenheidsvraelys is gevind. Daar is deur middel van 'n meervoudige regressie analise bevind dat hoop 16% van die verandering in geluk verduidelik. Aanbevelings vir intervensies om hoop en algemene lewenstevredenheid te verhoog, sowel as aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing is gemaak.

In an uncertain global economy where discussions regarding a possible recession are increasing, organisations have to compete with fewer resources and higher demands. The deregulation and liberalisation of the agricultural sector of South Africa brought about many challenges and opportunities (Anon, 2008). Issues in the form of market assessment (global and local), upliftment of the rural poor and implementation of policies can be added to the environment of uncertainty. These factors have a direct impact on the emotions, hopes and happiness of employees of the organisation under investigation. In a world of despair and uncertainty, the industrial psychologist should research ways in which to enhance the human spirit to be able to embrace these challenges instead of experiencing them negatively. Research indicates that hope plays a promising role in developing human resources and improving performance (Luthans & Jensen, 2002).

Hope is an elementary human experience in a variety of contexts (Benzein, Saveman, & Norberg, 2000). They argue that hope should not only be investigated with reference to illness, but also among the healthy who are facing daily problems. An employee empowered with hope is able to reach a goal, even when facing obstacles and problems (Luthans & Jensen, 2002). According to Peterson and Luthans (2003), high-hope leaders have more profitable work units. The retention as well as satisfaction of their subordinates is better than leaders with less hope. These findings are confirmed in a South African study done by Luthans, Van Wyk, and Walumbwa (2004). Higher retention, job satisfaction and profits as a result of hopeful leaders can ensure successful transformation and growth in South African organisations.

Feldman and Snyder (2005) conclude in a study on 'hope and meaningful life' that hopeful thinking plays a significant role in meaningful life, but more research on how people construct meaningful lives is necessary. Evidence indicates that hope is a predictor of satisfaction of life also referred to as happiness (Bailey, Eng, Frish, & Snyder, 2007; Danoff-Burg, Prelow, & Swenson, 2004). Although the American Declaration of Independence stated more than 227 years ago that the pursuit of happiness is a God-given right, it did not explain the concept, or how to obtain it (Lindley & Joseph, 2004). Happiness includes different areas of life such as work, leisure, family and so forth. Each of these exists in its own right, but is also highly correlated (Starck, Argyle, & Schwarz, 1991). Enjoyment of life stimulates energy

and action. Happy people look at the brighter side and therefore find ways to solve problems easier and more efficiently than less happy people (Starck et al., 1991). South African organisations can benefit from a positive outlook and good problem solving from employees. According to Boninelli and Meyer (2004), we can be very proud of the unique way in which we managed to solve many problems with the peaceful transition from apartheid to a complete democracy. However, many challenges remain on the people front. South African organisations are faced with diversity issues, skills shortages, a mix of First and Third World economies and the competitive markets nationally as well as internationally (Boninelli & Meyer, 2004). Researching hope and happiness of people could lead to solutions to some of these obstacles.

## **Hope**

Benzein et al. (2000) explored the concept of hope and found that hope is an internal as well as an external process. The internal part relates to a person's being and the external part relates to a person's doing. They found that when hope relating to being takes place, energy is released. The energy of hope has its origin in the motivation of future promise or human agency (McGeer, 2004). McGeer (2004) emphasises that the quality of hope is important. Wishful hope is a consequence of failing to take full responsibility of agency and remains over reliant on external powers. Wilful hope on the other hand recognises one's own responsibilities to contribute to the realisation of hopes. Snyder (1996) suggested that hope is made up of two dimensions. Firstly, people act on goals they set by using their agency (motivation and drive). Secondly, alternate pathways (different ways or paths) are formed to reach these or other goals. Thus, hope can be defined as hopeful thoughts that reflect the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use those pathways. Research has found that high hope individuals tend to be more certain of their goals and challenged by them. They value progress towards goals as well as the goals themselves; enjoy interacting with others and readily adapt to new relationships; are less anxious; and are more adaptive to environmental changes (Snyder, 1997). Both agency and pathway thinking must be present for hope to prosper (Cheavens, Feldman, Woodward, & Snyder, 2006). Hope is conceptualised as both disposition and state-like, thus hope is open to development and change (Snyder et al., 1996). A state is

presumed to be influenced by factors such as time and situation whereas a trait is a relative stable variable. When measuring state-like hope, respondents are asked to review statements on how they experience it at this moment. Trait-like hope is measured by asking respondents to think across time and situations (Snyder, Rand, & Sigmon, 2002). In this research, hope will be conceptualised and measured as a disposition (Snyder et al., 1991).

The adult Trait Hope Scale has been translated into various languages such as Spanish, French, Slovak, Dutch, Chinese, Korean and Arabic (Abdel-Khalek & Snyder, 2007). Most translated forms confirmed the original two-factor structure and had good internal stability. In this study it is translated into Afrikaans.

## **Happiness**

Most people say that happiness is their goal in life, and many of them in turn believe that they would achieve it if they were wealthier. Though every reliable indicator shows that people in the west have grown wealthier in the past half-century, the degree to which they claim to be happy was not corresponding (Nettle, 2005). Work life is undergoing a major change, even in the wealthiest nations. Money is losing its power. More money is adding little or nothing to employees' subjective well-being (Bjørnskov, Gupta, & Pedersen, 2008; Nettle, 2005). Stein and Howard (2006) expressed the thought that once you're above the poverty line, more money contributes less to happiness. Most people have a steady level of joy in life, whatever our life circumstances may be. A 17-year study of German men and women supports the theory that happiness, over the long term, is more biological than environmental. Only 25% of people reported drastic fluctuations in life satisfaction. The inference that happiness is a rather stable trait is confirmed by different studies (Cummins & Nistico, 2002; Lai, Bond, & Hui, 2007; Schimmack, Oishi, Furr, & Funder, 2004; Steger & Kashdan, 2007). However, happiness as an emotion might differ when measured over a period of time versus at a specific time (Lucas, Diener, & Larsen, 2003), and might be different for various life domains (Rode, 2004). Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) used the term happiness to explain a person's satisfaction with life. Studies comparing different cultures' experience of satisfaction



of life are encouraged in recommendations of other researchers (Lai, Bond, & Hui, 2007; Starck, et al., 1991; Veenhoven, 2005).

## **Translation**

Harkenss and Schoua-Glusberg (1998) propose that the most common reason for translating questionnaires is when the instrument is not available in the language of the culture under investigation. Other reasons include people from the same country using different first languages; people from one country using different versions of the same language; and people from different countries using different versions of the same language. The Psychometrics Committee of the Professional Board of Psychology in South Africa suggests that people should have the opportunity to be measured in the language in which they are most proficient (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2008). In this study the questionnaires were translated on request of the organisation, as a large proportion of employees are Afrikaans speaking. In the past, instruments measuring hope and happiness have not been translated into Afrikaans in South Africa.

The following hypotheses are formulated in relation to this article:

- H1: The Afrikaans version of the Trait Hope Scale has acceptable levels of reliability and validity.
- H2: The Afrikaans version of the Satisfaction with Life Scale has acceptable levels of reliability and validity.
- H3: Hope as measured by the Trait Hope Scale predicts happiness as measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reach the objectives of the research. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive by nature. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, and Delport (2007) refer to this kind of design as a one-shot case study where a group is studied only once.

### **Participants**

A total of 700 questionnaires were circulated among the employees of the North-West Co-operation. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the staff of the co-operation. All questionnaires were professionally translated into Afrikaans. A response rate of 286 (41%) was obtained which can be considered representative of the total population. De Vos et al. (2007) provide a guideline for sampling where they suggest a percentage of 20% from a population of 500 and 14% of 1000. The population of this organisation consists of 1500 employees and would therefore need a sample of more or less 240. The response rate could be considered satisfactory. The characteristics of the participants are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Characteristics of the Participants (N = 286)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male (1)	187	65,4
	Female (2)	99	34,6
	Total	286	100,0
Culture	African (1)	25	8,7
	White (2)	253	88,5
	Indian (3)	0	0,0
	Coloured (4)	6	2,1
	Other (5)	2	0,7
	Total	286	100,0
Citizenship	South African (1)	286	100,0
	Other (2)	0	0,0
	Total	286	100,0
Age	24 years and younger (1)	15	5,2
	25-35 years (2)	87	30,4
	36-45 years (3)	77	26,9
	46-55 years (4)	83	29,0
	56 years and older (5)	24	8,4
	Total	286	100,0
Qualification	0-Grade 7 (1)	13	4,5
	Grade 8-9 (2)	11	3,8
	Grade 10-12 (3)	168	58,7
	Diploma (4)	37	12,9
	Degree (5)	25	8,7
	Degree + (6)	32	11,2
	Total	286	100,0
Tenure	Less than 1 year (1)	27	9,4
	2-5 years (2)	72	25,2
	6-10 years (3)	72	25,2
	11-20 years (4)	72	25,2
	Longer than 20 years (5)	43	15,0
	Total	286	100,0

The sample consisted mainly of white participants (88,5%). This could be due to the fact that a low percentage of black employees are literate in either Afrikaans or English, which were the languages in which the questionnaires were available. The black cultural group is also not well represented in this organisation. The highest percentage had a Grade 10-12 (58,7%) level of education. The majority of participants were male (65,4%). The reason could possibly be since the organisation where this research was conducted falls under a rural farming region of South Africa, and as a result thereof, traditional values of the male as breadwinner are still a characteristic of the environment. Despite positive changes for women in the workforce, this group is still under represented ([www.labour.gov.za/media-desk/speeches/2004/women2019s-](http://www.labour.gov.za/media-desk/speeches/2004/women2019s-)

day-celebrations), unlike the United States where the workforce comprised of 46% women in 2005 ([www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/Qf-labourforce-05.htm](http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/Qf-labourforce-05.htm)).

### **Measuring instruments**

*The Hope Scale (HS)* (Snyder et al., 1991) was used to measure hope in this study. This 12-item scale has four agency items, for example, “I energetically pursue my goals”, and four pathways items, for example “I can think of many ways to get out of a jam”. Comprising agency is the belief in one's capacity to initiate and sustain actions. Pathways are the belief in one's capacity to generate routes to reach goals. Four items are used as distracters and are not used for scoring. A 4-point scale was used in the earlier versions of this questionnaire, but was increased to promote diverse responses (Lopez, Snyder, & Teramoto-Pedrotti, 2003). Answers are now given on a frequency scale from 1 (*definitely false*) to 8 (*definitely true*). Snyder et al. (1991) indicate that a series of studies indicate acceptable internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The factor structure identifies the agencies and pathways components, and as predicted, the two components were positively correlated. Bailey and Snyder (2007) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0,85.

*Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)* (Diener et al., 1985) was used to measure happiness. This is a 5-item scale and is measured on a frequency scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Answers are added up to indicate if a person is extremely dissatisfied with his life (score between 5-9) up to extremely satisfied with his life (score between 31-35). A satisfactory Cronbach alpha on each item was reported by Diener et al. (1985): 0,81; 0,63; 0,61; 0,75 and 0,66. Schimmack, Oishi, Furr, and Funder (2004) reported good reliability of Cronbach alpha > 0.80. In a South African study a reliability coefficient of 0,92 was reported by Westways and Maritz (2003).

### **Analysis of data**

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SPSS-program (SPSS Inc., 2008). Cronbach alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments (Clark & Watson, 1995). Factor analyses were conducted on the Hope Scale (HS), as well as on the

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, range, skewness and kurtosis) were used to analyse the data. Pearson product moment correlations were used to analyse the relationship between hope and happiness. Statistical significance was set at  $p = < 0,01$  and practical significance at 0,30 (medium effect) and 0,50 (large effect) (Cohen, 1988). A regression analysis was done to determine whether hope predicts happiness.

## RESULTS

### *Validity of the HS*

A principal component analysis was carried out on the 8 items of the HS ( $N = 286$ ). Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than 1) indicated that two factors could be extracted. A Varimax rotation was done to improve factor loadings.

Table 2

Rotated Component Matrix of the HS for Employees in a Co-operation in the North-West Province ( $N = 286$ )

		Components	
HS1	<i>Ek kan aan baie maniere dink om uit 'n gemors te kom.</i>	-0,21	<b>0,87</b>
HS2	<i>Ek volg my doelwitte vol energie na.</i>	<b>0,72</b>	-0,01
HS4	<i>Daar is baie maniere om my probleem op te los.</i>	0,21	<b>0,66</b>
HS6	<i>Ek kan aan baie maniere dink om die dinge te kry wat vir my belangrik is in die lewe.</i>	0,27	<b>0,59</b>
HS8	<i>Selfs al word ander moedeloos, weet ek dat ek 'n manier kan vind om die probleem op te los.</i>	<b>0,65</b>	0,24
HS9	<i>My ervaringe van die verlede het my goed voorberei vir my toekoms.</i>	<b>0,79</b>	-0,04
HS10	<i>Ek was redelik suksesvol in die lewe.</i>	<b>0,75</b>	-0,06
HS12	<i>Ek behaal die doelwitte wat ek vir myself stel.</i>	<b>0,72</b>	0,02

Table 2 indicates that items 1, 4 and 6 load on the Agency subscale as expected. Item 8, however, loads incorrectly on the Pathway subscale. This could indicate that

participants experience this item, “even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem”, as a way to reach a goal rather than a motivation. Items 2, 9, 10 and 12 load correctly on the Pathway subscale. Refinement of item 8 should be considered in future research. The measurement can be considered valid.

### *Reliability of the HS*

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients of the HS for employees ( $N = 286$ ) working in a Co-operation, are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

### *Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the HS*

Test and subscales	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Inter-item r	$\alpha$
HS Agency	5,52	1,48	-0,62	0,28	0,35	0,60
HS Pathway	6,54	1,01	-1,33	3,17*	0,43	0,79
HS Total	6,08	1,01	-0,56	0,36	0,33	0,77

\* High skewness and kurtosis

On inspection of the Cronbach alphas reported in Table 3, both the Pathway subscale and the Total Hope scale measure satisfactorily above 0,70 as recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The Agency subscale measures slightly lower at  $\alpha = 0,60$ , however, Bland and Altman (1997) referred to different studies where one or two subscales had similar values and the questionnaires were still rated with satisfactory reliability. Inter-item coefficients were acceptable for items on all scales. The Total Hope and Agency scales are normally distributed with a slightly more leptokurtic (peaked) kurtosis for the Pathway scale. The Afrikaans version of the HS can be considered reliable for employees in this organisation. Hypothesis 1 can be accepted.

*A principal components analysis was carried out on the 5 items of the SWLS (N = 286).*

**Table 4**

**Component Matrix of the SWLS for Employees in a Co-operation in the North-West Province (N = 286)**

	<b>Component</b>
SWLS1 <i>In die meeste fasette is my lewe na aan my ideaal.</i>	0,82
SWLS2 <i>My lewensomstandighede is uitstekend.</i>	0,87
SWLS3 <i>Ek is tevrede met my lewe.</i>	0,87
SWLS4 <i>Tot dusver het ek die belangrike goed wat ek in die lewe begeer het, gekry.</i>	0,83
SWLS5 <i>As ek my lewe kon oorbê, sal ek amper niks verander nie.</i>	0,77

Analysis of eigenvalues (larger than 1) indicated that one factor could be extracted as shown in Table 4. The SWLS has proven to be valid.

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients of the SWLS for employees (N = 286) working in a Co-operation, are reported in Table 5.

**Table 5**

*Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the SWLS*

<b>Test and subscales</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Skewness</b>	<b>Kurtosis</b>	<b>Inter-item r</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>
SWLS Total	20,68	5,70	0,87	0,05	0,61	0,88

As reported in Table 5, SWLS delivered an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,88. A normal distribution is indicated. According to the inter-item correlation coefficients this variable could possibly be measured with fewer items or by more

diverse, yet relevant, items. Using the norms set by Diener et al. (1985), employees in this Co-operation have slightly lower than average levels of happiness.

Table 6

*Correlation Coefficients between Hope agency, Hope pathway, Hope Total and Satisfaction with Life*

	1	2	3
1. Hopeagency			
2. Hopepathway	0,41 <sup>++</sup>		
3. Hopetotal	0,79 <sup>+++</sup>	0,88 <sup>+++</sup>	
4. SWLStotal	0,45 <sup>++</sup>	0,28 <sup>*</sup>	0,43 <sup>++</sup>

\* Statistically significant  $p \leq 0,01$

+ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,30$  (medium effect)

++ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,05$  (large effect)

Table 6 indicates a positive correlation of medium effect between Satisfaction with life scale and Hope total as well as between Satisfaction with life scale and Hope agency. Even though the correlation between Satisfaction with life scale and Hope pathway is not of practical significance, it is statistically significant. Bailey and Snyder (2007) also found positive correlations between the total scores of the Hope Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale.

Next a multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the whether hope predicts happiness. Step 1 was used to control for the influence of biographical variables. Hope was entered in step 2 and happiness was included as dependent variable.



Table 7

*Multiple Regression with Happiness as Dependent Variable*

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
		B	SE	Beta						
1	(Constant)	4,02	0,54		7,39	0,00	2,75	0,12	0,02	0,04
	Gender	-0,20	0,18	-0,07	-1,16	0,25				
	Culture	0,04	0,17	0,02	0,25	0,80				
	Age	0,16	0,08	0,12	2,05	0,04				
	Qualifications	0,14	0,07	0,12	2,07	0,04				
2	(Constant)	0,51	0,69		0,74	0,46	53,57*	0,44	0,18	0,16
	Gender	-0,08	0,16	-0,03	-0,47	0,64				
	Culture	0,09	0,16	0,03	0,56	0,58				
	Age	0,18	0,07	0,14	2,53	0,01*				
	Qualifications	0,10	0,06	0,09	1,64	0,10				
	Hope	0,58	0,08	0,40	7,32	0,00*				

\*  $p < 0,01$ 

Table 7 indicates that 2% of the variance in happiness is predicted by the biographical variables ( $F = 2,75$ ,  $p < 0,03$ ). None of the biographical variables made a significant contribution to the variance explained. Adding hope ( $F = 53,57^*$ ,  $p < 0,00$ ) in step 2 statistically significantly increased the  $R^2$ , explaining 18% of the variance in happiness. Hope therefore predicted 16% of the variance in happiness. Bailey et al. (2007) as well as Danoff-Burg et al. (2004) also found hope to be a predictor of happiness. Hypothesis 3, hope as predictor of happiness, can therefore be accepted.

## DISCUSSION

The objectives of this study were to determine whether the Afrikaans version of the Trait Hope Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale is reliable and valid for measurement of hope and happiness of employees in a Co-operation in the North-West province. It was also done to determine whether hope predicts happiness. All

three hypotheses were accepted. The following discussion will explain the findings of each hypothesised statement.

The results in this study indicated that the Afrikaans versions of both the Trait Hope Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scales are reliable and valid as measurements of hope and happiness in a Co-operation in the North-West province. Factor analysis of the Hope Scale resulted in a two-factor structure which correlates with the original instrument, except for item 8 which loaded incorrectly on the Pathway scale. This indicates that participants understood the item, “even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem”, as a way to reach a goal rather than a motivation. The HS measured a Cronbach alpha of 0,77 which is acceptable. Hypothesis 1 is therefore supported. Satisfaction with Life Scale formed a single scale as was expected. The inter-item correlations were slightly high, indicating that fewer items could be used to measure the construct. A Cronbach’s alpha of 0,88 was established. These results indicate that Hypothesis 2 is accepted. The results of this study are reliable and can therefore be used to make recommendations for the organisation. Abdel-Khalek and Snyder (2007) found acceptable reliability for the Arabic translation of the Hope and Satisfaction with Life Scale.

Hypothesis 3 was tested by means of correlations and regressions. Positive correlations of practical medium effect were found between the Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Hope Total Scale as well as the Hope Agency Scale. The correlation between the Satisfaction with Life Scale and Hope Pathway Scale was positively statistically significant, however not practically significant. Practically this means that in the event of an increase one of these variables the other will also increase. Predictive validity is tested by confirming results of previous studies when using the same measuring instrument (Struwig & Stead, 2003). Bailey and Snyder (2007) also found positive correlations between hope and satisfaction with life in a study using the same instruments as the current research, which indicates predictive validity. Hope explained 16% of the variance in happiness with a statistically significant effect. This means organisations could predict an increase of happiness in their employees if they focus on hope interventions. As an alternative, measuring the hope levels of recruits could give an indication of the happiness they are experiencing. Appointing high hope individuals most probably would produce happier employees which in turn

should result in healthier employees (Cunningham, 2005; Pressman & Cohen, 2005; Starck et al., 1991); better solutions to problems (Benzein et al., 2000); and energised people who are action orientated (Starck et al., 1991).

Carson and Barling (2008) suggest that although positive psychological theory was applied to clinical practice, it has now crossed to other disciplines. Positive psychology searches for ways to improve employees' life at work. This should however not be the end goal, but rather investigating and understanding the employee's full potential and capabilities in order to achieve individual and organisational optimal functioning (Carson & Barling, 2008). These researchers make a further statement that although positive psychology, work and well-being fascinate researchers and scholars and much has been investigated up to now, few interventions have been evaluated to implement the findings in practice.

Although no norms exist for the Trait Hope Scale, by examining the mean value in relation to the rating scale used, one can reason that employees in this Co-operation are more inclined to find ways to reach goals and to believe that it is possible to reach these goals. In general, hope can be associated with performance, health, coping and psychological adjustment (Snyder, Ritschel, Rand, & Berg, 2006). Luthans and Jensen (2002) elaborate on the potential that hope brings to the human resource field. They argue that developing hope and building on the individual's existing strengths will result in enhanced employee and organisational performance.

Employees of the Co-operation under investigation report that they experience lower than average satisfaction with their lives. 'A happy worker is a productive worker' is not just a phrase, but more and more research suggests that well-being is linked to positive business outcomes (Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003). It seems that happier employees are more punctual, helpful towards colleagues, more co-operative, time-efficient and less frequently absent (Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the Trait Hope Scale proved to be valid, one item (“even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem”) did not load correctly and rephrasing this item could refine the instrument. The inter-item coefficients of the Satisfaction with Life Scale indicates that fewer items could measure the same construct or that other more discriminate items could be included. Future researchers might consider translating these instruments into more languages. Cross-industry research could also appraise the reliability and validity of the items on the scales.

Hope allows problems to be experienced as an opportunity to learn or as a challenges rather than a problem (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). A few interesting interventions to enhance hope in individuals are suggested by Luthans and Jensen (2002): a) mentors can be appointed to discuss goals and barriers; b) increase the positive and decrease the negative, for example solution focussed meetings instead of problem solving meetings; c) hope-reminding techniques by recollection of previous successes; d) daily use of hopeful thoughts; and e) use of imagery by mentally performing the steps towards a goal.

Organisations can also increase hope by changing the culture to a high-hope environment. This can be achieved through reward systems, strategies, leadership, commitment and motivation (Luthens & Jensen, 2002). Youssef and Luthans (2007) found strong positive correlations among hope and work happiness as well as several other positive outcomes. Cheavens et al. (2006) found, through experimental trials of hopeful interventions, that hopeful thoughts can be increased and that this enhances productivity and satisfaction in life.

Increasing happiness will have a positive effect on the individual as well as the organisation as Diener, Lucas, and Oishi (2002) note that happy people have an increased positive work attitude and are more incline to volunteer. As referred to by Diener et al., evidence was found in studies done by Fordyce (1977 & 1983) that peoples’ happiness can be increased. This study indicates that this could be done by increasing hope. By learning to imitate traits of happy people, lasting results of increased well-being were reported in follow-up studies 9-28 months later. Some of

these characteristics include developing a positive outlook, being organised, spending more time socialising and keeping busy (Diener et al., 2002). Waterman (1993) remarked that happiness comes from a lifelong action towards self-development.

In future, researchers could consider a qualitative approach in order to investigate how hope and happiness are conceptualised by people in an agricultural environment as well as in other environments. Future researchers could also investigate the difference in the experience of satisfaction with life as was recommended in previous studies (Lai et al., 2007; Starck et al., 1991; Veenhoven, 2005).

In conclusion, consider the remark of Lopez and Snyder (2003) that people who embrace their strengths and follow healthy processes create fulfilling lives for themselves and through this find meaning in their relationships at work during the good and the bad times.

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ARTICLE 3

CHAPTER 4

# **JOB INSECURITY, GENERAL HEALTH, AND WORK ENGAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN A CO-OPERATION: THE ROLE OF HOPE**

## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this study was to investigate the relationships between job insecurity, general health, work engagement and hope. A cross-sectional survey design was conducted among employees of the co-operation ( $N = 286$ ). The measuring instruments that were used are the Job Insecurity Scale, General Health Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, Trait Hope Scale, and a biographical questionnaire. Results demonstrated no correlation between job insecurity and ill health. Statistically significant correlations between job insecurity and engagement and job insecurity and hope were found as well as between general health and hope. A practically significant relationship between general health and engagement and engagement and hope was determined. Hope was not found to moderate of the relationship between job insecurity and general health, but moderated the relationship between job insecurity and engagement.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die hoofdoelstelling van hierdie navorsing is om werksonsekerheid te ondersoek in verhouding tot algemene gesondheid, werksbegeestering en om die moontlike rol van hoop as moderator te ondersoek in 'n Koöporasie in die Noordwes Provinsie. Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is, is die Werksonsekerheidsvraelys, Algemene Gesondheidsvraelys, Utrecht-Werkbegeesteringsvraelys, die Hoopvraelys en 'n biografiese vraelys. 'n Dwaarsneeopname-ontwerp is gebruik ( $N = 286$ ). Resultate dui op geen korrelasie tussen werksonsekerheid en algemene gesondheid nie. 'n Statistiese betekenisvolle verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid en begeestering en werksonsekerheid en hoop is gevind, asook tussen algemene gesondheid en hoop. 'n Praktiese betekenisvolle verhouding is tussen algemene gesondheid en begeestering, sowel as begeestering en hoop gevind. Hoop het geen moderende rol in die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid en algemene gesondheid gespeel nie, maar het die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid en begeestering gemodereer.

Being part of the global village, South Africa finds itself competing against countries with strong economies and stable politics. The reality of some of the country's neighbours going through war and economic instability results in a strain on the labour market as millions of illegal immigrants compete for informal employment at a lower wage than local employees (Ray, 2008). Almost a decade ago evidence indicated that South Africa's agricultural sector (where the current research was conducted) was experiencing difficult times, with employment in this sector declining at an alarming rate (Simbi & Aliber, 2000). The decrease of permanent employment and the increase of casual workers are giving rise to feelings of job insecurity. According to a report by Statistics South Africa (October, 2008), unemployment is South Africa's greatest economic challenge and the agricultural sector has been hit the hardest. The unemployment crises will worsen as the economic downturn reaches momentum (Westcott, 2009).

Much has been written about the negative consequences of job insecurity, thus only a few examples will be mentioned to establish the context. Job insecurity has been negatively related to performance (Anon, 2009) and higher reports of psychological distress (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Probst, 2000). In their literature research, Martinez-Tur and Peiró (2009) report various studies which found a negative relationship between job insecurity and trust. Grunberg, Moore, Greenberg, and Sikora (2008) implied that during a longitudinal study in a company experiencing workplace changes, the impact of job insecurity on the work engagement levels of employees never fully recovered over the time span of the research. It seems that this engagement rather turned into family and leisure activity engagement. Previous research confirms that the perception of job insecurity holds serious consequences for employee well-being (Barling & Kelloway, 1996; De Witte, 1999; Kinnunen, Mauno, Natti, & Happonen, 2000; Mohr, 2000); employee mental health and family well-being (Larson, Weilson, & Beley, 1994); leads to harmful physical health outcomes (Cheng, Chen, Chen, & Chiang, 2005; Hellgryn, & Sverke, 2003; Mohren, Swaen, Van Amelsvoort, Borm, & Galama, 2003); and higher reports of psychological distress (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Probst, 2000; Vander Elst, Bosman, De Witte, & De Cuyper, in press). Partenheimer (2001) elucidates that the threat of layoffs increases the risk to the employee's health and safety. Even the reassignment of employees has a negative influence on the individual's well-being

(Galais & Moser, 2009). The factors mentioned above cause concern for the employee as well as the organisation on a psychological, physical and economic level. Therefore it will be important to research variables that could moderate the effect of job insecurity on general health and engagement.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), job insecurity harms health more than unemployment does ([www.who.dk](http://www.who.dk)). In the UK alone stress-related complaints and illnesses have lead to 30 000 lost working hours during 1998. Recently, at an international conference of 'Mental health and well-being at the workplace' in Germany (March, 2009), it was stated that absenteeism from work was mainly caused by mental health problems ([www.mental-wellbeing.net](http://www.mental-wellbeing.net)). A longitudinal study (Hellgren & Sverke, 2003) found that job insecurity had a significant effect on physical health complaints. Musich, McDonald, and Chapman (2009) explain that both the individual and the organisation play a role in maintaining healthy lifestyles which would lead to increased health and productivity benefits for employee and employer. Health is seen as an important social and personal resource which, if nurtured, can lead to economic and social benefits ([www.who.dk](http://www.who.dk)). Pressman and Cohen (2005) found that positive trait emotions had a strong link with health.

In 1990 Kahn proposed a theoretical framework based on an individual's engagement at work (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). Three psychological conditions exist, namely meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness in this framework can be defined as the purpose or value of a work goal in relation to the individual's own principles. Factors such as work role fit, co-worker relations and job enrichment are important in meaningfulness. Safety is seen as the individual's ability to express himself without fear of negative consequences. Supervisor and co-worker relations as well as co-worker norms play a part in feeling safe to be yourself in the work environment. Availability is the physical, emotional and cognitive resources the individual needs to be engaged in his work. Outside activities can draw energy away from work and work role security as well as resources are important factors having an influence on availability (May et al., 2004).

Regarding engagement-related research, a positive relationship between typical positive psychological constructs and employee performance was found (Ramlall,

2008). As established in the research of Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, and Taris (2008), engaged employees experience higher levels of energy and identification with their work and could therefore perform better. Employees with higher levels of engagement often experience positive emotions such as happiness, joy and enthusiasm. The impact on the organisation is constructive and could add to its competitive advantage (Bakker et al., 2008). Engaged employees deal well with job demands and display an effective connection with their work activities (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006).

May et al. (2004) note that in order for the human spirit to succeed at work, they must be able to engage the cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions of themselves in their work. This implies that individuals must be able to completely immerse themselves in their work. Engagement is characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy. Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) explain that engagement is recognised by high levels of energy, mental resilience when working, and willingness to apply effort into one's work and to persist even in difficult circumstances. Engagement is related to enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge and a sense of significance. Schaufeli et al. (2002) also explain that when one experiences a state where time passes quickly and where the person has difficulty in detaching himself from work, engagement is present. Engaged people create trust, because they are happy. They provide better service, because they are more interested in their work (Lambert, 2005). The danger of disengaged people is an epidemic called 'presenteeism', a term for being at work but being exhausted, overworked, distracted, and disengaged; or in short, being absent while being present (Bacon & Florez, 2004). Organisations need employees that are engaged and full of energy. Bosman (2005) found that job insecurity is negatively related to work engagement.

Benzien, Saveman, and Norberg (2000) found that energy is released when hope of 'being' exists and that this energy is necessary to lead to 'doing' hope. McGeer (2004) made a statement that if our own action was not so limited with respect to what we desire, we would not hope but just do. Hope is a social phenomenon which holds future promise and energy. McGeer (2004) distinguishes between wishful hope and wilful hope. The latter being the hope that Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon (2002) discuss in their Hope Theory. Individuals should be able to view themselves as being capable of comprising routes towards goals which is called 'pathways thinking'. The 'agency

thinking' is the motivational component of the perception of one's capacity to reach the goal.

Research found hope to be linked to positive psychological and health-related outcomes (Bailey & Snyder, 2007; Danoff-Burg, Prelow, & Swenson, 2004; Snyder et al., 2002), as well as to performance, organisational commitment, job satisfaction and work happiness (Youssef & Luthans, 2007). Literature suggests the moderating capacities of hope: hope seems to have a moderating effect on coping strategies (Danoff-Burg et al., 2004); and in a study conducted by Giacalone, Jurkiewicz, and Deckop (2008), hope revealed a moderating effect on the relationship between ethics and social responsibility to materialism and postmaterialism. High hope leaders could have a positive impact on organisations as it was found that high hope leaders had more profitable work units and better job satisfaction and retention rates among the employees under their supervision (Peterson & Luthans, 2003).

Substantiating the value of hope in an organisation, Luthans and Jensen (2002) proposed in their research that hope can assist employees to cope and thrive in the workplace and that the organisation can benefit from more effective human resources. Luthans, Van Wyk, and Walumbwa (2004) mention that although hope is similar to other positive constructs, it demonstrates conceptual independence and discriminative validity. The importance of hope in South African organisations was researched in a study by Luthans et al. (2004), who concluded their findings by expressing that hope can be seen as a powerful means for South African leaders to meet challenges and empowering organisations by including hopeful goals in organisational strategies.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether hope has a moderating effect on the relationship between job insecurity and general health and on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. It is important to understand the concept moderation as it is often confused with mediation (Holmbeck, 1997). A mediator has a causal effect on the outcome. A moderator is a variable that weakens or amplifies the causal effect of the relationship between two variables (Kenny, 2004). Although structural equation modelling (SEM) is preferred by some researchers, proper use of multiple regressions can provide meaningful analysis of the research question (Holmbeck,



1997). With smaller sample sizes, regression techniques could be more appropriate because of power considerations (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

As noted by Vander Elst et al. (in press), most studies have been concerned with the direct relationships between job insecurity and potential outcomes. Limited knowledge exists about potential moderators of the job insecurity-outcome relationship. The objective of this research is to determine whether hope moderates the effect of job insecurity on general health and of job insecurity on engagement. According to Vander Elst et al. (in press), this is important in view of identifying ways to buffer potential costs associated with job insecurity and also because researchers have only recently begun to introduce more positive outcomes in the broad area of Work and Organisational Psychology. De Witte (2005) suggests that the detection of moderators has a dual aim: firstly, it broadens the theoretical knowledge about how job insecurity influences well-being and attitudes; and secondly, it is of practical use when one aims to reduce the negative effects of job insecurity.

The following hypotheses are formulated in relation to this study:

- H1: A significant relationship exists between job insecurity, general health, engagement and hope.
- H2: Hope moderates the relationship between job insecurity and general health.
- H3: Hope moderates the relationship between job insecurity and engagement.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reach the objectives of the research. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive by nature. This design can also be used to evaluate interrelationships among variables within a population (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

### **Participants**

The total population of 1500 employees of the North-West Co-operation was targeted; 700 questionnaires were sent out as participation was voluntarily and finally only 290 employees responded. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the staff of the co-operation. After the non-response factor was taken into account, a response rate of 286 (41%) was obtained. The characteristics of the participants are reported in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*Characteristics of the Participants (N = 286)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male (1)	187	65,4
	Female (2)	99	34,6
	Total	286	100,0
Culture	African (1)	25	8,7
	White (2)	253	88,5
	Indian (3)	0	0,0
	Coloured (4)	6	2,1
	Other (5)	2	0,7
	Total	286	100,0
Citizenship	South African (1)	286	100,0
	Other (2)	0	0,0
	Total	286	100,0
Age	24 years and younger (1)	15	5,2
	25-35 years (2)	87	30,4
	36-45 years (3)	77	26,9
	46-55 years (4)	83	29,0
	56 years and older (5)	24	8,4
	Total	286	100,0
Qualification	0-Gr 7 (1)	13	4,5
	Gr 8-10 (2)	11	3,8
	Gr 10-12 (3)	168	58,7
	Diploma (4)	37	12,9
	Degree (5)	25	8,7
	Degree + (6)	32	11,2
	Total	286	100,0
Tenure	Less than 1 year (1)	27	9,4
	2-5 years (2)	72	25,2
	6-10 years (3)	72	25,2
	11-20 years (4)	72	25,2
	Longer than 20 years (5)	43	15,0
	Total	286	100,0

The sample consists mainly of white participants (88,5%). The strongest representative qualification is participants with a Grade 10-12 (58,7%) level of

education. The majority of participants are male (65,4%). The demography of the organisation leans towards more males as well as white employees.

### **Measuring instruments**

The *Job Insecurity Scale (JIS)* (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989) was used in this study to measure job insecurity. This instrument measures five components of job insecurity which classify it as a multi-dimensional instrument. The first four subscales measure 'the severity of the threat' (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). The fifth component, 'powerlessness', includes an individual's ability to counteract the threats identified in the first four components. The subscales are: i) the perceived threat to job features measured by 17 items; ii) the importance of the features in the first component measured by 17 items; iii) the perceived threat to events influencing the total job measured by 10 items; iv) the importance of the events in the third component measured by 10 items; and v) powerlessness measured by 3 items. All constructs are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Satisfactory Cronbach's alpha coefficients have been determined with alphas ranging from 0,74 to 0,92 for all components (Ashford et al., 1989). Leach (2006) reported Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0,77 to 0,96 for the different subscales.

The twenty-eight-item *General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)* (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979) was used to measure general health. Responses were given on a 4-point Likert-type scale, although during the data capturing phase it was inserted as a bi-model scale (0-0-1-1). This indicates the absence or presence of symptoms rather than frequency as measured by the traditional Lickert-type scale (Naughton & Wiklund, 1995). The subscales measure the degree of somatic symptoms; anxiety and insomnia; social dysfunction and severe depression. A high value on the GHQ is indicative of a high level of psychological distress, in other words indicating a low level of general health. Isaksson and Johansson (2000) obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0,86. In South Africa Viljoen (2004) obtained reliability coefficients ranging from 0,71 to 0,80 for the subscales of the GHQ.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was utilised as a measure of work engagement. This seventeen-item questionnaire is measured through a 7-point frequency scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (daily). This measure has three scales, namely vigour (6 items), for example, “I feel strong and vigorous in my job”; dedication (5 items), for example, “I always persevere at work, even when things do not go well”; and absorption (6 items), for example, “In my job, I can continue working for very long periods at a time”. Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients have been determined between 0,68 and 0,91 (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Storm (2002) obtained alpha coefficients of 0,78 for vigour, 0,89 for dedication and 0,78 for absorption for the UWES in a sample of 2396 members of the South African Police Services. In a study among South African workers, Vander Elst et al. (2009) found the reliability of the UWES total scores consistent at 0,94.

The *Hope Scale (HS)* (Snyder et al., 1991) was used to measure hope in this study. This twelve-item scale has four agency items, for example, “I energetically pursue my goals”; and four pathways items, for example “I can think of many ways to get out of a jam”. Agency consists of the belief in one's capacity to initiate and sustain actions and pathways are the belief in one's capacity to generate routes to reach goals. Four items are used as distracters and are not used for scoring. Answers are given on a frequency scale from 1 (definitely false) to 8 (definitely true). Snyder et al. (1991) specify that a series of studies indicate acceptable internal consistency and test-retest reliability. The factor structure identifies the agencies and pathways components, which are positively correlated. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of 0,74 to 0,84 was reported by Bailey and Snyder (2007).

### **Analysis of data**

The statistical package, SPSS version 16 (SPSS Inc., 2008) was used in the analysis of the data. The internal consistency of the measuring instruments was determined by Cronbach’s alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients (Clark & Watson, 1995). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, range, skewness and kurtosis) was used to analyse the data. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. The level of statistical significance is set at  $p < 0,01$ . Effect sizes will be computed to

assess the practical significance of relationships. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect) (Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. Regression analyses were used to test for moderation with the level of statistical significance set at  $p < 0,05$ . To control for multicollinearity the predictor values was centered by subtracting the total of each score from the mean of the group. The two centered values were multiplied to obtain the inter-item variable.

## RESULTS

### *Construct validity of the measuring instruments*

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients of the JIS, GHQ, UWES and HS for employees (N = 286) working in a Co-operation are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

### *Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the Job Insecurity Scale, General Health Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and Hope Scale*

Test and subscales	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Inter-item r	$\alpha$
JIA (Importance of job feature)	69,12	6,72	-0,62	0,70	0,27	0,85
JIB (Likelihood of losing job feature)	44,45	14,54	0,22	-0,29	0,54	0,95
JIC (Importance of changes in total job)	37,94	6,91	-1,28	1,20	0,42	0,88
JID (Likelihood of negative changes in total job)	24,24	7,62	0,37	-0,03	0,42	0,88
JIE (Perceived powerlessness)	6,70	2,27	-0,17	-0,76	0,57	0,80
GHQ	0,12	0,19	1,99*	3,83*	0,34	0,93
UWES Total	4,85	1,03	-1,41	2,15	0,47	0,93
HS Total	6,08	1,01	0,56	0,36	0,13	0,77

\* High skewness and kurtosis

As indicated in Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the JIS subscales range from 0,80 to 0,95. GHQ, UWES as well as the HS scores proved to be reliable with alphas higher than 0,70 (Field, 2006). All test scores seem normally distributed except for GHQ with a somewhat positive skewness and leptokurtic kurtosis, indicating that responses are distributed more to the right of the normal distribution and have a peak distribution. Slightly elevated inter-item correlation coefficients on JIB and JIE suggest that these scales could possibly be measured with fewer items, as there might be a strong overlap in the item formulations. According to norms published in the UWES preliminary manual (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), the employees in this organisation experience high engagement levels.

Table 3

*Correlation Coefficients between Job Insecurity, General Health, Engagement and Hope*

	JI Total	GHQ Total	ENG Total
GHQ Total	-0,01	1,00	
ENG Total	0,20*	-0,37**	1,00
HS Total	0,02*	-0,26*	0,35**

\* Statistically significant  $p \leq 0,01$

+ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,30$  (medium effect)

++ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,50$  (large effect)

According to Table 3, job insecurity exhibits a statistically significant relationship with engagement, as well as with hope. Engagement correlates with a practically significant negative effect with general health and with a practically significant positive effect with hope. This suggests that as engagement increases, general health (ill health) tends to lower and hope tends to be higher. Hope and general health were found to have a statistically significant negative correlation. No relationship is evident between job insecurity and general health. Hypothesis 1 can therefore be partially accepted.

Testing Hypothesis 2, a hierarchical regression was conducted to test whether hope moderates the relationship between job insecurity and general health. As suggested by

Aiken and West (1991), the predictor values were centered. An interaction term was obtained by multiplying the centered values of job insecurity and hope. General health was entered as dependent variable. In the first step biographical variables were entered. In step 2, the centered values of job insecurity and hope were entered and lastly in step 3 the interaction term was added. Although the  $R^2$  changed with 1% from step 2 to 3, the beta coefficients for the interaction term was not significant ( $p = 0,107$ ). No moderating effect was established. The possibility that hope could act as a mediator rather than moderator (due to the possibility of hope being experienced as state-like) in this relationship could also not be determined as the first condition for mediation, being that the independent variable predicts the dependent variable as prescribed by Baron and Kenny (1986), was not met. Hope did however explain 7% of the variance in general health. Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Next, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test whether hope moderates the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. The predictor value (job insecurity) and the moderator value (hope) were centered to minimise problems with multicollinearity. In order to obtain an interaction variable, the new centered values for job insecurity and hope were multiplied. After controlling for biographical variables, job insecurity and hope were entered as predictors. The multiplicative term job insecurity\*hope was entered in the third step.

Table 4

*Multiple Regression Analysis with Engagement as Dependant Variable*

Predictors	Step 2	Step 3
Job insecurity	0,14*	0,17**
Hope	0,32***	0,32***
Job insecurity*Hope	-	-0,12*
$R^2$ (adjusted)	0,14	0,15
$\Delta R^2$	0,14	0,01
$F^{\text{change}}$	22,03***	4,12*

Note. Only step 2 and step 3 of the regression analyses are reported.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



Table 4 reports the  $\beta$ ,  $\Delta R^2$  and F change statistics. In the first step it was controlled for biographical variables that had no significant influence on the dependent variable, engagement. In the second step it was found that job insecurity ( $\beta = 0,14$ ,  $t = 2,47$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) and hope ( $\beta = 0,32$ ,  $t = 5,50$ ,  $p = 0,00$ ) showed a significant influence on engagement. In the third step the inclusion of the interaction term increased the variance explained as statistically significant ( $p = 0,04$ ) with 1%. Hope explained 14% of the variance in engagement, thus a portion of engagement is predicted by hope. Next a slope analysis was done to interpret the direction of the interaction. As can be seen in Figure 1, due to the small interaction effect of 1%, slope is not visible.

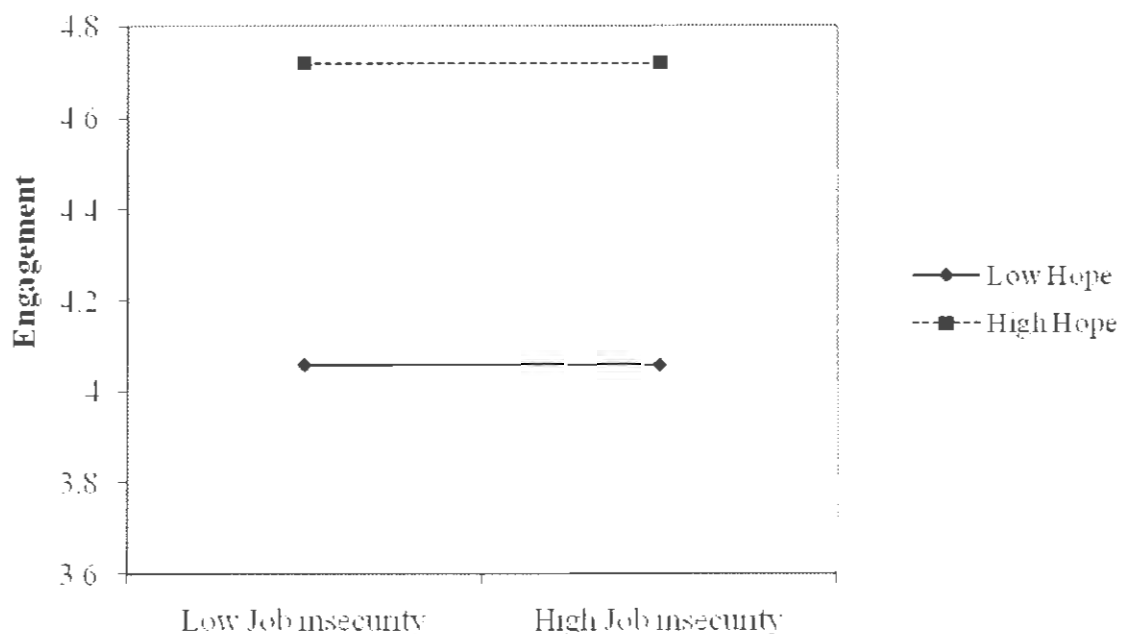


Figure 1: Slope plots of engagement in function of job insecurity and hope

In Figure 1, two levels of engagement, one low (one standard deviation below mean) and one high (one standard deviation above mean) was used. The interaction effect is very small (1%) and for this reason it is difficult to detect a slope. Upon closer inspection of Figure 1, and as a result of the 1% increase in the adjusted  $R^2$ , it appears that employees with high levels of hope and high levels of job insecurity experience a slightly less pronounced reduction in engagement, when compared to individuals with low levels of hope. Hypothesis 3 can therefore be accepted.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this article the objectives were to determine whether a significant correlation exists between job insecurity, general health, engagement and hope. Furthermore, the intention was to establish if hope moderates the relationship between job insecurity and general health and the relationship between job insecurity and engagement.

In contrast with other South African research findings (Mofokeng, 2007; Viljoen 2004), there was no significant relationship between job insecurity and general health. However, most studies in South Africa used the job insecurity measurement of De Witte (2000) measuring two scales on a global dimension (Van Wyk & Pienaar, 2008), as opposed to this study which took a multi-dimensional view of job insecurity. There is a possibility that the difference in job insecurity measuring instruments influenced the outcome of the relationship between the constructs. Another fact to consider is the background where the research was conducted. Few studies have been done in the South African agricultural environment and therefore it is unsure if a relationship between job insecurity and general health could be predicted in this Co-operation.

Statistically significant correlations were measured between job insecurity and engagement and between job insecurity and hope. The correlation between hope and general health was also statistically significant. The sample size could have an impact on the statistical significance of a correlation. Large sample sizes increase the likelihood of statistical significance (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Effect sizes were therefore also computed and a practically significant correlation of medium effect (Cohen, 1988) was found between general health and engagement, as well as between engagement and hope. The correlations between general health and engagement were negative, implying that as the one variable increases the other will decrease. The correlation between engagement and hope was positive, which implies that as the one variable increases so will the other. Employees experience high engagement levels according to norms set by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003).

All variables, except the relationship between job insecurity and general health showed statistically significant correlations; therefore Hypothesis 1 could only be partially accepted.

Considering the objective of Hypothesis 2, it is reported that hope was not found to moderate the relationship between job insecurity and general health and therefore the hypothesis is rejected. Correlation of the predictor and outcome variable is not a requirement for moderation. The impact of the interaction term on general health was 1%, but was not statistically significant. Although hope had a statistically significant ( $p = 0,00$ ) effect on general health, it did not influence the relationship between job insecurity and general health. Hope explained 7% of the variance in general health. Previous researchers found hope to be linked to health (Bailey & Snyder, 2007; Danoff-Burg et al., 2004; Snyder et al., 2002).

Hope was found to play a slight moderating role in the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. Thus, Hypothesis 3 can be accepted. Job insecurity also had a statistically significant correlation with engagement. The implication for the organisation is that they could enhance engagement levels by decreasing job insecurity or increasing hope levels of employees. A combined approach, i.e. focussing on increasing hope and decreasing job insecurity, would in all likelihood yield the most significant impact.

A limitation in this study is the measurement of perceptions and experiences at a moment in time. In order to establish reliable data for causal interpretation a longitudinal design is preferable. Not enough background information about the organisation was gathered and this made the interpretation of data slightly more difficult as the context could not fully be understood. This could have shed some light on results not corresponding with literature.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

No correlation was found between job insecurity and general health. This is contradictory to previous research findings and it could be valuable to make use of a qualitative approach (for example interviews or focus groups) in this Co-operation in order to determine how the employees experience the concepts job insecurity and general health. Enough research indicates the detrimental cause of job insecurity on health to warrant further investigation into this phenomenon. Using the multi-dimensional job insecurity questionnaire of Ashford et al. (1989) in future studies could indicate if the results of this study are duplicated. Van Wyk and Pienaar (2008) report that the multi-dimensional job insecurity measurement of Ashford et al. (1989) is most frequently used in international studies. In South Africa however, the global scale of De Witte (2000) is more commonly used. In a study comparing global and multi-dimensional job insecurity, Reisel and Banai (2002) found that the job threat dimension held stronger predictive value with regard to work attitude and behaviours. This is an indication to managers to make use of a multi-dimensional instrument to measure job insecurity if they want to identify employees who are at risk of having less positive work attitudes and behaviours.

Hope did not moderate the relationship between job insecurity and general health. Therefore, based on these results an intervention focused on increasing hope to buffer the impact of job insecurity on health, would be unlikely to have a significant impact, although increasing hope will have a direct impact on general health levels. Intervention programmes on general health itself can also be considered as a healthy workforce can increase job performance (Musich et al., 2009). This is not only the responsibility of the organisation, as employees need to pursue healthy lifestyles on an individual level as well. This could include healthy eating habits, regular exercise, positive social relationships and engaging in mental growth opportunities. Hope was found to relate to positive work outcomes (Youssef & Luthens, 2007); and primary and secondary health prevention (Davis, 2005). According to Newell (2004), primary intervention focuses on reducing the causes of stress. The aim of secondary interventions is to increase the employee's resilience towards the effects of stress.

The moderating effect of hope on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement, although only 1%, was statistically significant. The implication is that interventions to decrease job insecurity could increase engagement levels, but could be even stronger if combined with interventions to increase hope levels, although given the empirical findings, this impact will be slight. Hope is energy leading to doing (Benzien et al., 2000). Hope is also correlated with engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002) which is linked to energy. High hope individuals should have high energy levels which are to the benefit of the organisation. More research on the link between hope and engagement in South Africa is needed.

Hope seems to have a positive impact on general health as well as engagement levels. Organisations could improve hope by using mentors to discuss goals and barriers, breaking goals into smaller, more achievable sizes, using recollection of previous successes and mentally performing the steps towards a goal (Luthens & Jensen, 2002).

More research is needed, especially in the agricultural context to understand the concepts job insecurity, general health, engagement and hope and how they impact on one another.

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# **JOB INSECURITY, GENERAL HEALTH, AND WORK ENGAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES IN A CO-OPERATION: THE ROLE OF HAPPINESS**

## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between job insecurity, general health, engagement and happiness for employees ( $N = 286$ ) in a co-operation in the North-West Province making use of a cross-sectional design. The measuring instruments that were used are the Job Insecurity Scale, General Health Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and a biographical questionnaire. Results demonstrated no correlation between job insecurity and general health in this study. Correlations were found between job insecurity and engagement, as well as between general health, engagement and happiness. A moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and general health was found. However, no moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement could be established. Partial mediation was revealed with further analysis.

## **OPSOMMING**

Die doelstelling van hierdie navorsing is om die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid, algemene gesondheid, begeestering en lewenstevredenheid van die werknemers in 'n koöporasie in die Noordwes Provinsie te bepaal ( $N = 286$ ) met behulp van 'n dwarsnedeopname-ontwerp. Die meetinstrumente wat gebruik is, is die Werksonsekerheidsvraelys, Algemene Gesondheidsvraelys, Utrecht Werkbegeesteringsvraelys en Algemene Lewenstevredenheidsvraelys, asook 'n biografiese vraelys. Resultate dui op geen korrelasie tussen werksonsekerheid en algemene gesondheid in hierdie studie nie. Korrelasies tussen werksonsekerheid en werksbegeestering asook tussen algemene gesondheid, werksbegeestering en geluk is wel gevind. Geluk het 'n modererende effek op die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid en algemene gesondheid getoon. Geluk het geen modererende effek getoon op die verhouding tussen werksonsekerheid en werkbegeestering nie. 'n Gedeeltelike mediërende effek is egter met verdere analise ontdek.

Whereas Freud, described the scope of psychology as falling within the realms of the mental illness in the early 1900s; Maslow, in and about the 1960's, was already considering the possibilities of self-actualising experiences in organisations (Carson & Barling, 2008). By the late 1900s, Seligman (2002) argued that the time had come for science to understand that positive emotion builds strength and virtue and provides a guidepost for finding what Aristotle called 'the good life'. According to Seligman (2002), Industrial psychologists could make a positive difference by investigating ways in which we can optimise employees' whole life experience instead of researching the negative impact that different variables have on the employee and organisation. In 2002, Turner, Barling, and Zacharatos (2002) acknowledged that a more positive workplace could improve the financial bottom line and develop healthy people.

Presently, Taranowski (2009) points out that in order to stay competitive, improving the quality of workplace life will become even more important in future. To promote employee well-being, a positive organisational climate needs to be created. As noted by Carson and Barling (2008), the field of organisational behaviour has undergone significant and fundamental changes and challenges still lay ahead as a result of the paradigm shift. In the opinions of Carson and Barling (2008), research on work and wellness has gained momentum in the Industrial Psychology field. Various journals are devoted to the topic (e.g. *Work and Stress* and *Journal of Occupational and Health Psychology*), whereas other journals devote considerable attention to exploring the effect that work has on wellness (e.g. *Journal of Occupational Behavior* and *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*). Conferences focused on work and wellness are also at the order of the day (e.g. *European Conference on Positive Psychology* and *South African Conference on Positive Psychology*).

Already in the previous decade, job security was proven to be an important factor in the work environment. In a survey done on 'what motivates employees', job security surfaced as the third highest motivator among ten options (Wiley, 1997). Vander Elst, Bosman, De Witte, and De Cuyper (in press) found that most job insecurity-related studies are similar in three respects. Firstly, these studies have mostly been conducted in Europe and the United States, occasionally in an Asian setting. With exception of

the rare national publication, studies in an African context are few and far between, a finding that can, according to these researchers, be generalised to Occupational Health Psychology research in general. Secondly, job insecurity research tends to be focused on negative, mostly strain-related outcomes. It is only recently that researchers started to introduce more positive outcomes in the broad area of Work and Organisational Psychology. Thirdly, most studies have concerned linear relationships between job insecurity and potential outcomes and limited knowledge exists regarding potential buffers of the job insecurity-outcome relationship (Vander Elst et al., in press).

Already in the beginning of the millennium it seemed that South Africa's agricultural sector (where the current research was done) is experiencing difficult times with employment in this sector declining at an alarming rate (Simbi & Aliber, 2000). The decrease of permanent employment and the increase of casual workers are giving rise to feelings of job insecurity. According to a report by Statistics South Africa (October, 2008), unemployment is South Africa's greatest economic challenge and the agricultural sector is the hardest hit. The unemployment crises will worsen as the full impact of the economic downturn is felt (Westcott, 2009). An alarming fact that seems to emerge is the influence of job insecurity on the physical and emotional well-being of employees.

Considering the fact that perceived job insecurity is harmful to employees and as a result to the organisation, it could be valuable to study variables that can moderate or mediate the relationships. Consequences of job insecurity were found for employees' well-being (Barling & Kelloway, 1996; De Witte, 1999; Kinnunen, Mauno, Natti, & Happonen, 2000; Mohr, 2000); employee mental health and family well-being (Larson, Weilson, & Beley, 1994); physical health outcomes (Cheng, Chen, Chen & Chiang, 2005; Hellgryn & Sverke, 2003; Mohren, Swaen, Van Amelsvoort, Borm, & Galama, 2003); and psychological stress (Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Probst, 2000; Vander Elst et al., in press). The reassignment of employees has a negative influence on the individual's well-being (Galais & Moser, 2009) and the threat of layoffs puts the employee's health and safety at risk (Partenheimer, 2001). The factors mentioned above cause concern for the employee as well as the organisation on a psychological, physical and economic level.

A longitudinal study (Hellgren & Sverke, 2003) found that job insecurity had a significant effect on physical health complaints. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), job insecurity harms health more than what unemployment does ([www.who.dk](http://www.who.dk)). In the UK alone stress-related complaints and illnesses have led to 30 000 lost working hours during 1998. Recently, at an international conference of 'Mental health and well-being at the workplace' in Germany (March, 2009), it was stated that absenteeism from work was mainly caused by mental health problems ([www.mental-wellbeing.net](http://www.mental-wellbeing.net)). Health is seen as an important social and personal resource which, if nurtured, can lead to economic and social benefits ([www.who.dk](http://www.who.dk)). However, reduced well-being can have a negative effect on the competitive advantage of organisations, as the reduced wellness of the workforce holds significant financial implications (Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001). Pressman and Cohen (2005) found that positive trait emotions had a strong link with health. Psychological well-being is frequently measured with the General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg and Hillier, 1979 (Nagyova et al., 2000). General health is measured on four subscales in this instrument, namely somatic symptoms, anxiety/insomnia, social dysfunction and severe depression. Several studies confirming the original structure of the questionnaire were completed in different countries. It seems that the 28-item version was most stable over time (Werneke, Goldberg, Yalcin, & Üstün, 2000). Nagyova et al. (2000) reported higher experiences of somatic symptoms for women. According to the Occupational Health and Safety Act Number 85 of 1993, organisations have a legal obligation to attend to the mental and physical health of employees (Deacon & Kew, 2005).

In 1990 Kahn proposed a theoretical framework based on the individual's engagement at work (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). Three psychological conditions exist namely meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness in this framework can be defined as the purpose or value of a work goal in relation to the individual's own principles. Factors such as work role fit, co-worker relations and job enrichment are important in meaningfulness. Safety is seen as the individual's ability to express himself without fear of negative consequences. Supervisor and co-worker relations as well as co-worker norms play a part in feeling safe to be yourself in the work environment. Availability is the physical, emotional and cognitive resources the individual needs to be engaged in his work. Outside activities can draw energy away



from work and work role security as well as resources are important factors having an influence on availability (May et al., 2004).

Engagement is an important factor in the work place. Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, and Taris (2008) found that engaged employees experience higher levels of energy and identification with their work and could therefore perform better. Employees with higher levels of engagement often experience positive emotions such as happiness, joy and enthusiasm. The impact on the organisation is constructive and could add to its competitive advantage (Bakker et al., 2008). Engaged employees deal well with job demands and display an effective connection with their work activities (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). May et al. (2004) mention that being able to engage in the cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions of their work, gives the human spirit the best grounds for succeeding at work. This implies that individuals must be able to completely immerse themselves in their work. Engagement is characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonz  les-Rom  , & Bakker, 2002). Engagement is related to enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge and a sense of significance. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) characterised engagement as displaying vigour, dedication and absorption. Vigour is described as emotional energy, physical strength and cognitive awareness. Being inspired and proud of one's job relates to dedication; and experiencing absorption can be linked to being totally emerged in your work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engaged people create trust, because they are happy. They provide better service, because they are more interested in their work (Lambert, 2005). The danger of disengaged people is an epidemic called 'presenteeism', a term for being at work, but being exhausted, overworked, distracted, and disengaged, or in short, being absent while being present (Bacon & Florez, 2004). Organisations need employees that are engaged and full of energy. Bosman (2005) found that job insecurity is negatively related to work engagement.

According to Starck et al., (1991), experiencing happiness and good health would seem to be a 'normal' condition. These authors postulate that happiness preserves health. In a literature review, Pressman and Cohen (2005) found evidence that happiness and health have an average correlation. Cunningham (2005) stated that happy people had the lowest levels of cortisol (stress hormone). Satisfaction with life is determined by the gap between an individual's aspirations and the actual

achievement rather than the level of objective welfare (Bjørnskov, Gupta, & Pedersen, 2008). For the purpose of this study the terms happiness and satisfaction with life will be seen as synonyms. Diener, Lucas, and Oishi (2002) explain three views on happiness: happiness is derived from needs and goals; originates from process or activity theories; could be genetic and personality predispositions. The needs as well as activity theorists argue that an individual's happiness will change with the conditions in people's lives. Others are of opinion that there is an element of stability which cannot be explained by conditions (Diener et al., 2002). The structure of emotions such as happiness, joy, hope, and other positive emotions may differ when measured at a specific moment versus over a period of time (Lucas, Diener, & Larsen, 2003). However, in a longitudinal study, Steger and Kasdan (2007) found satisfaction with life to be a stable variable. It is therefore clear that debate exists as to whether satisfaction is more state- or trait-like.

Bjørn and Stein (2008) discovered moderating properties of personality traits on the relationship between job insecurity and health. The purpose of this study is to determine whether happiness has a moderating effect on the relationship between job insecurity and general health. The moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement will also be investigated. It is important to distinguish between the concept moderation and mediation (Holmbeck, 1997). A moderator is a variable that weakens or amplifies the causal effect of the relationship between two variables, whereas a mediator is presumed to cause the outcome (Kenny, 2004).

The following hypotheses are formulated in relation to this study:

- H1: A significant relationship exists between job insecurity, general health, engagement and happiness.
- H2: Happiness moderates the relationship between job insecurity and general health.
- H3: Happiness moderates the relationship between job insecurity and engagement.

## **METHOD**

### **Research design**

A cross-sectional survey design was used to reach the objectives of the research. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is ideally suited when the aim of the study is predictive and descriptive by nature. This design can also be used to evaluate interrelationships among variables within a population (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister, 1997).

### **Participants**

The total population of 1500 employees of the North-West Co-operation was targeted; although finally only 700 questionnaires were sent out. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the staff of the co-operation. A response rate of 286 (41%) was obtained which according to De Vos, Stydom, Fouche, and Delpont (2007), is a good response rate when taking the number of the total population into account. The characteristics of the participants are reported in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Characteristics of the Participants (N = 286)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male (1)	187	65,4
	Female (2)	99	34,6
	Total	286	100,0
Culture	African (1)	25	8,7
	White (2)	253	88,5
	Indian (3)	0	0,0
	Coloured (4)	6	2,1
	Other (5)	2	0,7
	Total	286	100,0
Citizenship	South African (1)	286	100,0
	Other (2)	0	0,0
	Total	286	100,0
Age	24 years and younger (1)	15	5,2
	25-35 years (2)	87	30,4
	36-45 years (3)	77	26,9
	46-55 years (4)	83	29,0
	56 years and older (5)	24	8,4
	Total	286	100,0
Qualification	0-Gr 7 (1)	13	4,5
	Gr 8-10 (2)	11	3,8
	Gr 10-12 (3)	168	58,7
	Diploma (4)	37	12,9
	Degree (5)	25	8,7
	Degree + (6)	32	11,2
	Total	286	100,0
Tenure	Less than 1 year (1)	27	9,4
	2-5 years (2)	72	25,2
	6-10 years (3)	72	25,2
	11-20 years (4)	72	25,2
	Longer than 20 years (5)	43	15,0
	Total	286	100,0

The sample consists mainly of white participants (88,5%). This is consistent with the demographics of the organisation. The strongest representative qualification is participants with a Grade 10-12 (58,7%) level of education. The majority of participants are male (65,4%), which is representative of the population.

### Measuring instruments

The *Job Insecurity Scale (JIS)* (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989) is a multidimensional instrument measuring five components of job insecurity. The first four subscales

measure 'the severity of the threat' as summarised by Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984). The fifth component, 'powerlessness', includes an individual's ability to counteract the threats identified in the first four components. The subscales are: i) the perceived threat to job features measured by 17 items; ii) the importance of the features in the first component measured by 17 items; iii) the perceived threat to events influencing the total job measured by 10 items; iv) the importance of the events in the third component measured by 10 items; and v) powerlessness measured by 3 items. All constructs are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Internal consistency, proven to be satisfactory, with alphas ranging from 0,74 to 0,92 for all components (Ashford et al., 1989). Leach (2006) reported Cronbach alpha's ranging from 0,77 to 0,96 for the different subscales in a South African study.

The *General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)* (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979) was used to measure general health. The twenty-eight-item version with responses given on a 4-point Likert-type scale was used and then transformed to a bi-model output (0-0-1-1). Four subscales measure the degree of somatic symptoms; anxiety and insomnia; social dysfunction and severe depression. A high value on the GHQ is indicative of a high level of psychological distress, in other words indicating a low level of general health. Isaksson and Johansson (2000) obtained a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0,86 for the GHQ. In South Africa Viljoen (2004) obtained reliability coefficients ranging from 0,71 to 0,80 for the subscales of the GHQ.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was utilised as a measure of work engagement. This seventeen-item questionnaire is measured through a seven-point frequency scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (daily). This measure has three scales, namely vigour (6 items), for example, "I feel strong and vigorous in my job", dedication (5 items), for example, "I always persevere at work, even when things do not go well", and absorption (6 items), for example, "In my job, I can continue working for very long periods at a time". Regarding internal consistency, Cronbach's coefficients have been determined between 0,68 and 0,91 (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Storm (2002) obtained alpha coefficients of 0,78 for vigour; 0,89 for dedication; and 0,78 for absorption for the UWES in a sample of 2396 members of the South African Police Services. In a study among South African

workers, Vander Elst et al. (in press) found the reliability of the UWES total scores consistent at 0,94.

*Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)* (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffen, 1985) was used to measure happiness. This is a 5-item scale and is measured on a frequency scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Schimmack, Oishi, Furr, and Funder (2004) found the Cronbach alpha reliable at 0,80. In a South African study a reliability coefficient of 0,92 was reported by Westways and Maritz (2003).

### **Analysis of data**

The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SPSS-program (SPSS Inc., 2008). Cronbach's alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency of the measuring instruments (Field, 2006). Descriptive statistics (e.g. means, standard deviations, range, skewness and kurtosis) was used to analyse the data. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. The level of statistical significance is set at  $p < 0,01$ . The American Psychological Association (APA) encourages the reporting of effect sizes in their Publication Manual (APA, 2001). Therefore, effect sizes will be computed to assess the practical significance of relationships with a cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect) and 0,50 (large effect) (Cohen, 1988).

Regression analysis will be carried out to determine the moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and general health and on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. Both the predictor and moderator values will be centered and the interaction term will be calculated (Frazier, Tix, & Barron, 2004).

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha coefficients and inter-item correlation coefficients of the JIS, GHQ, UWES and SWLS for employees ( $N = 286$ ) working in a Co-operation are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients and Inter-Item Correlation Coefficients of the Job Insecurity Scale, General Health Questionnaire, Utrecht Work Engagement Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale*

Test and subscales	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Inter-item $r$	$\bar{\alpha}$
JIA (Importance of job feature)	4,32	0,42	-0,62	0,70	0,27	0,85
JIB (Likelihood of losing job feature)	2,78	0,92	0,22	-0,29	0,54	0,95
JIC (Importance of changes in total job)	4,17	0,77	-1,28	1,20	0,42	0,88
JID (Likelihood of negative changes in total job)	2,65	0,83	0,37	-0,03	0,42	0,88
JIE (Perceived powerlessness)	2,94	0,96	-0,17	-0,76	0,57	0,80
GHQ	0,12	0,19	1,99*	3,83*	0,34	0,93
UWES Total	4,85	1,03	-1,41	2,15	0,47	0,93
SWLS Total	4,82	1,38	-0,74	0,18	0,61	0,88

\* High skewness and kurtosis

As indicated in Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the JI, GHQ, UWES as well as the SWLS proved to be internally consistent. The GHQ indicates a positive skewness and leptokurtic kurtosis. Similar results for the GHQ's skewness and kurtosis were found in a previous South African study (Cooks, 2007). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) established norms for the UWES that indicates employees in this organisation exhibit high engagement.

Table 3

*Correlation Coefficients between Job Insecurity, General Health, Engagement and Satisfaction with Life*

	Total JI	Total GHQ	Total ENG
Total GHQ	-0,01	1,00	
Total Eng	0,12*	-0,37*+	1,00
Total SWLS	0,14	-0,38*+	0,38*+

\* Statistically significant  $p \leq 0,01$

+ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,30$  (medium effect)

++ Correlation is practically significant  $r \geq 0,50$  (large effect)

Table 3 indicates that job insecurity and engagement have a statistically significant correlation. General health shows practically significant negative correlations of medium effect with engagement and happiness. Engagement and happiness show a positive, practically significant correlation of medium effect. No correlations were found for job insecurity and general health and therefore Hypothesis 1 can only be partially accepted.

In order to test whether happiness moderates the relationship between job insecurity and general health, a hierarchical regression analysis was conducted. The predictors job insecurity and happiness were centered to control for multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). To form an interaction term, the centered values of job insecurity and happiness were multiplied. General health was entered as dependent variable. The results are reported in Table 4.



Table 4

*Multiple Regression Analysis with General Health as Dependent Variable*

Predictors	Step 2	Step 3
Job insecurity	0,04	-0,01
Happiness	-0,38***	-0,36***
Job insecurity*Happiness	---	0,16**
R <sup>2</sup>	0,13	0,15
$\Delta R^2$	0,13	0,02
F <sup>change</sup>	21,66***	7,80**

Note. Only step 2 and step 3 of the regression analyses are reported.

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

Table 4 indicates that job insecurity has no statistically significant influence on general health ( $\beta = 0,04$ ). Happiness displays a significant influence on general health ( $\beta = -0,38$ ). In the third step the interaction term significantly predicted general health ( $\beta = 0,16$ ). To interpret the direction of the interaction, a slope plot was used.

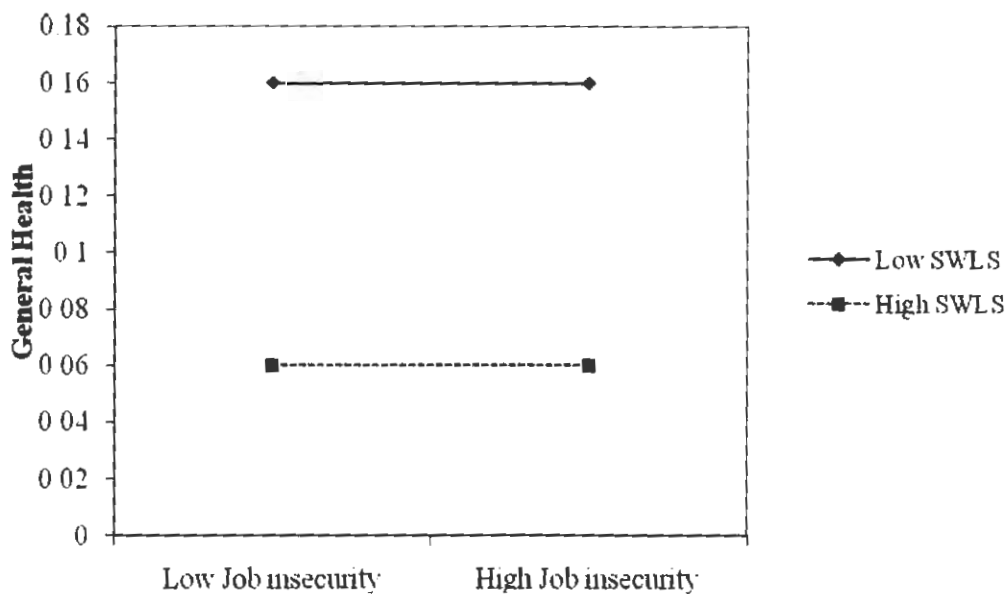
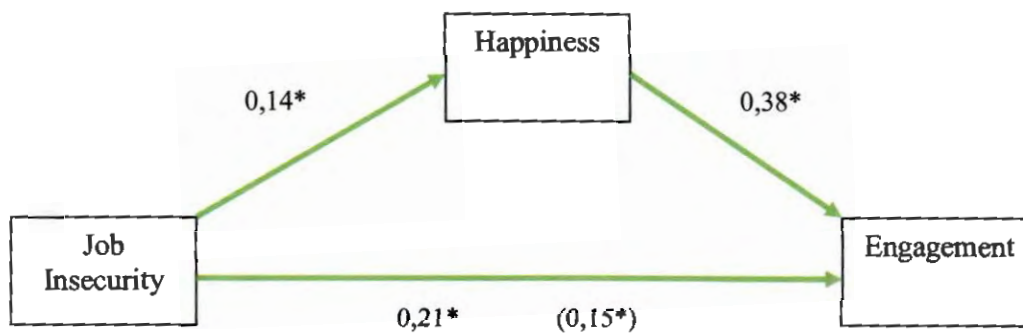


Figure 1: Interaction between job insecurity and happiness on general health

The interaction effect is very small (2%) and therefore it is difficult to read the slope graph. Upon closer inspection of Figure 1, and as a result of the 2% increase in the adjusted  $R^2$ , it appears that employees with high levels of happiness and high levels of job insecurity experience slightly fewer general health problems. Hypothesis 2 can therefore be accepted.

Next, the moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement was tested in a hierarchical regression analysis. The predictors job insecurity and happiness were centered to control for multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). An interaction term was formed by multiplying the centered values of job insecurity and happiness. Engagement was entered as dependent variable. However, no moderation was found with the interaction term not being statistically significant ( $p = 0,085$ ). As literature has several discussions on whether happiness is a state or a trait, it was thought to test for mediation as an alternative (Cummins & Nistico, 2002; Rode, 2004). The possibility of happiness mediating the relationship could not be examined in the relationship between job insecurity and general health, as these constructs were not correlated.

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), there are four steps in establishing mediation. In the first step it should be established whether the independent variable (job insecurity) has an influence on the dependent variable (engagement). In step two the dependent variable (engagement) should be influenced by the mediator (happiness). It is important in step 3 to find an influence of the independent variable (job insecurity) on the mediator (happiness). In the last step, the dependent variable (engagement) should be regressed on the independent variable (job insecurity), controlling for the mediator (happiness). To establish full mediation, the effect of job insecurity on engagement controlling for happiness should be zero. Kahn (2006) suggests that complex regression procedures like mediation is best explained with a combination of plain language and a figure. Therefore, the results of the test for mediation are presented in Figure 2.



*Figure 2:* Standardised regression coefficients for the relationship between job insecurity and engagement as mediated by happiness. The standardised regression coefficient between job insecurity and engagement controlling for happiness is in parentheses.

\* $p < 0,05$

The relationship between job insecurity and engagement was partially mediated by happiness. As indicated in Figure 2, the standardised regression coefficient between job insecurity and engagement decreased substantially (0,21 to 0,15) when controlling for happiness. Full mediation requires the standardised regression coefficient to decrease to zero, whereas in this case there is only evidence of partial mediation. Given that no moderating effect was established, Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

## DISCUSSION

In this article the aim was to determine whether significant correlations exist between job insecurity, general health, engagement and happiness. Furthermore, the moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and health as well as on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement was to be tested.

Although slight skewness and kurtosis occurred in single scales, it was not strong enough to warrant the application of Spearman correlations (Struwig & Stead, 2003), therefore Pearson correlations were done. Contrary to expectation, no correlation was found between job insecurity and general health. In South Africa, several studies indicated the positive correlation between job insecurity and general health (Cooks, 2007; Mofokeng, 2008; Viljoen 2004). De Cuyper and De Witte (2006) revealed that employees with temporary contracts were less affected by the impact of job insecurity

on general health. They link this to a psychological contract perspective which could imply that employees in this organisation experience a different perspective on the psychological contract they have with their employer. Job insecurity did prove to have a statistically significant correlation with engagement. General health showed a practically significant negative correlation of medium effect with engagement and happiness. This implies that as general health (ill health) increases, engagement and happiness respectively will decrease. A practically significant positive correlation of medium effect was found between engagement and happiness. This implies that happiness and engagement will increase commensurately. Hypothesis 1 could only be partially accepted, given the lack of a correlation between job insecurity and health.

As per Hypothesis 2, the moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and general health was tested. Evidence suggesting moderation was found with happiness having a slight amplifier reaction on the relationship between job insecurity and health. Rode (2004) discusses findings where happiness could be linked to health outcomes. Happy people showed the lowest levels of the stress hormone, cortisol (Cunnigham, 2005). In reality, even though happiness is a moderator between job insecurity and general health, the effect is so small (2%) that intervention programmes increasing happiness as an attempt to decrease the impact of job insecurity on engagement will not give noticeable results or provide a substantial return on investment. Hypothesis 2 is partially accepted. Happiness does however contribute 13% of the variance in general health. This main effect indicates that by increasing happiness the levels of ill health should be less.

Happiness was not found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement, therefore Hypothesis 3 was rejected. The question arose that if happiness was viewed as a state instead of a trait, would there be evidence of mediation? Literature has several schools of thought on this topic, thus mediation of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement was tested. Interestingly, a partial mediation occurred with the standardised regression coefficient of job insecurity and engagement decreasing statistically significantly with the introduction of the mediation variable. As a result it could be reasoned that employees in this organisation interpreted and experienced happiness rather as a state than a trait, i.e. subject to their environment and circumstances. Diener et al. (2002) discuss

possibilities that to some degree people are born with a happiness 'set point'. On the other hand, researchers such as Rode (2004) explained that happiness is not stable across different life domains.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The unusual result of job insecurity not correlating with general health should be investigated. Previous South African research that found a correlation between these constructs mainly made use of De Witte's (2000) Job Insecurity Scale (JIS). The JIS is a global measurement, which consists of a cognitive (an objective evaluation relating to what a person 'thinks' regarding his job security) and affective (a subjective appraisal on what the person 'fears' about his job security) scale. The measuring instrument used in this study was the multidimensional Job Insecurity Scale (Ashford et al., 1989). This instrument measures importance of job features and total job as well as the likelihood for these to change negatively. Perceived powerlessness with regard to the above dimensions is also measured. These two job insecurity measuring instruments conceptualise job insecurity in very different ways, the one focusing much more on probable job loss as opposed to possible job loss or changes in the job. Probst (2008) states that the content domain of job insecurity needs better specification and the measures assessing job insecurity had undergone almost no psychometric development. In addition she mentions that with the use of a multidimensional instrument, it is important to clearly distinguish between the scales as a quantity of it might explain some variance in the total concept. Therefore, it is recommended to future researchers to explore the manner in which job insecurity manifests in and impacts on South African employees as well as how to measure it.

The moderating effect of happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and general health was not strong but moderation was nonetheless found. A combination of interventions focusing on lowering job insecurity and improving health as well as increasing levels of happiness might deliver a more favourable return on investment. Organisations might consider the negative impact of job insecurity when faced with decisions on decreasing budgets as in the long term it might not be cost effective (Probst, Stewart, Gruys, & Tierney, 2007). Future research could focus on

intervention programmes directed at increasing happiness. The efficacy of these interventions should be investigated for return on investment.

No evidence was found to support the notion that happiness moderates the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. However, when tests were conducted to examine the possibility of mediation, happiness proved to have a partially mediating effect on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. Again the effect was not strong enough to form the basis of an intervention recommendation. Nonetheless, based on these results it can be expected that the negative impact of job insecurity on engagement might be slightly buffered if the intervention addresses methods to increase happiness as well. Given the finding that the empirical results suggested that happiness might be more state- than trait-like, future research is required in a South African context to determine the nature of the happiness construct. Rode (2004) suggested that satisfaction with life is different for different life domains. This suggests the need for measuring happiness differently in various domains such as work, family and spiritual.

Carson and Barling (2008) note that a review of specialist journals makes it all too clear (e.g. *Journal of Occupational Health and Work and Stress*) that few studies aimed at the evaluation of individual- and organisational-level interventions for enhancing well-being exist. These researchers recommend that quasi-experimental studies be conducted when interventions are implemented by organisations. Longitudinal research could help clear ambiguity around the manifestation of job insecurity, its moderators, mediators and outcomes, as well as the interaction between these constructs.

In an attempt to help shape an agenda for research on well-being and work, Carson and Barling (2008) note that while the focus on the positive is necessary, it should not be done at the expense of the negative. They suggest that researchers should examine both positive and negative influences and outcomes as well as the interaction between these. Lopez and Snyder (2003) suggest that the impact of the weakness of a person can be reduced by using resources of which personal strengths are only one. First strengths should be measured to find the hidden resources in each individual and thereafter they can be enhanced.

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## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter contains information on conclusions of the literature as well as the empirical study. Limitations regarding this research will be discussed and recommendations based on the findings will be provided for both the participating organisation and future researchers.

#### **6.1 CONCLUSIONS**

Conclusions with regard to the theoretical and empirical objectives will be made in the following sections.

##### **6.1.1 Conclusions based on the specific theoretical objectives**

Indicated as an objective in Chapter 1, the constructs job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness were conceptualised from literature.

Job insecurity was found to be widely researched, although it seems that there is still much to be uncovered. The construct is well-defined. The majority of researchers view job insecurity from a uni-dimensional view (Davy, Kinicki, & Scheck, 1997; De Witte, 2005; Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Griffeth, Steel, Allen, & Bryan, 2005; Heany, Israel, & House, 1994; Rosenblatt & Ruvio, 1996). In South Africa the majority of studies used the De Witte Job Insecurity Questionnaire based on the global (uni-dimensional) view. Another viewpoint is that of Ashford, Lee, and Bobko (1989) defining job insecurity as a multi-dimensional construct. This view can be linked to the different experiences of job insecurity as qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative refers to the importance of job features whereas quantitative job insecurity refers to the perceived threat of losing the job. Job insecurity is more of a subjective perception from an individual as opposed to a cognitive fact. People experience job insecurity differently even in the same or similar positions because of personality or characteristic diversity. Evidence established that job insecurity is a stressor, having negative effects on general health and work engagement.

Literature made it clear that general health is not only the absence of illness, but the presence of well-being. Reduced levels of well-being can be costly to organisations on a physical, economic and strategic level (Sparks, Faragher, & Cooper, 2001). Organisations are urged to find preventative ways to enhance well-being, which implies that more research is needed in this regard. In South Africa the realisation of this fact caused the government to proclaim the Construction Regulations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act Number 85 of 1993 on 18 July 2003. Organisations are obligated to take care of the mental and physical health of their employees. Adhering to the law seems beneficial as a psychologically fit employee is more energetic and motivated.

Work engagement can be defined as being absorbed in your work, experiencing vigour and feeling dedicated to your job (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The experience of work engagement should take place on a cognitive, emotional and physical level. Engagement is about energy and energy and enthusiasm are related to positive work attitude. Organisations will benefit from having highly engaged employees as these employees see difficulties as challenges or opportunities and are willing to put more effort into their work. In the literature review of this study, it was apparent that the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonz  les-Rom  , & Bakker, 2002) was most frequently used in national and international studies. In 1990, Kahn proposed a theoretical model for engagement at work stating three psychological conditions, namely meaningfulness, safety and availability (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004).

Much research has been done on hope in relation to medical conditions. Recently, with researchers investigating positive aspects in the work environment, hope has found itself a new platform. McGeer (2004) is of the opinion that humans will merely survive without hope. Hope brings energy, support and possibilities. A difference between wishful and wilful hope was established: wishful hope is 'hoping for the best' without making plans to obtain a desired goal; wilful hope is described as taking responsibility to contribute to the outcomes of hope. The latter is hope that can add value to the individual as well as the organisation. The attainment or non-attainment of a goal is influenced by an individual's pathway- and agency hope. The process

pathway hope is the view a person has on his capability to generate obtainable routes to achieve a goal. In motivation, agency hope is applied to the perception of having the capacity to use the pathways in order to attain the goal. Hope can be measured either as a trait or state depending on the researcher viewing it as either a disposition or a state. Both views of hope can be supported through literature. Hope seems to have predictive properties with regard to happiness.

Most people would say they want to be happy, but defining happiness differs from person to person. The factors contributing to happiness also seem to vary among individuals and even countries. In essence it seems that happiness is a subjective perception of the gap between what a person wants to achieve and how far he is from that goal. Literature debates on whether the concept should be treated as a trait or a state. After a longitudinal study, Stegar and Kasdan (2007) concluded that happiness can be considered a trait; however Lucas, Diener, and Larsen (2003) discuss the instability of positive emotions such as happiness when measured at different periods in time. Measurements of positive emotions seem highly correlated.

### **6.1.2 Conclusions based on empirical objectives**

The first empirical objective was to determine the reliability and validity of the Afrikaans versions of the Job Insecurity Scale (JIS), the Hope Scale (HS), and the Satisfaction of Life Scale (SWLS). The validation of the Afrikaans version of the JIS was discussed in article 1. The JIS was found to be reliable and valid for employees in a Co-operation in the North-West Province. Five scales were confirmed, with two items needing to be refined if used in future studies. Internal consistency was established for all scales with Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.80 to 0.95. Regarding biographical groups, it was found that only gender, culture and qualifications showed predictive value toward job insecurity. Results showed that females experienced higher levels of job insecurity with regard to the importance of job features and the importance of changes in the total job. The cultural group 'other' perceived the highest levels of likelihood to lose a job feature. With regard to qualification level, the group Grade 7 and lower scored highest on likelihood to lose a job feature as well as highest on likelihood to changes in total job. The group Grade 10-12 experienced the highest levels of importance of job features.

The validation of the Afrikaans versions of the HS and SWLS was discussed in article 2. The reliability and validity of both the HS and SWLS were satisfactory. However, one Agency item loaded on the Pathway scale of the HS. The HS had a Cronbach's alpha of 0,77 and the SWLS 0,88. A slightly elevated inter-item coefficient was displayed with the descriptive statistics of the SWLS. This indicates that items measure the same thing very closely and that either fewer items can be used or an adjustment can be made to make the current items more distinct. A positive correlation was found between the two constructs. Using the norms as set by Snyder et al. (1991), employees in this organisation were slightly less happy than average. Employees are highly engaged according to norms set by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). Hope was found to predict 18% of the variance in happiness which can lead to recommendations to increase hope in order to have happier employees.

Hope as a moderator between job insecurity and general health as well as between job insecurity and engagement was investigated in the second objective. Hope did not moderate the relationship between job insecurity and general health, but moderation was found for the relationship between job insecurity and engagement, even though it was minuscule. Statistically significant relationships were found between job insecurity and engagement; job insecurity and hope; and general health and hope. Furthermore a practically significant relationship of medium effect was found between general health and engagement and between engagement and hope.

The third and last empirical objective was to determine whether happiness can act as a moderator between job insecurity and general health and between job insecurity and engagement. Happiness proved to have a moderating effect on the relationship between job insecurity and general health. No support for moderation by happiness on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement could be found. The concept happiness is described in literature as either a state or a trait and therefore it was decided to experiment by testing for mediation. Interestingly, support for partial mediation by happiness was found on the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. This signifies that happiness in this organisation is experienced as a state more than a trait. This conclusion could be considered positive since the happiness levels are slightly below average and a state is more easily influenced by interventions



than a trait. In the previous article relating to hope as moderator, similar reasoning was used, though hope was measured with the trait scale. Also, no significant relationship existed between job insecurity as predictor and general health as outcome variable which is a requirement for mediation.

## **6.2 LIMITATIONS**

The questionnaires were completed in one language. Not being able to compare the questionnaire of the target language with the original language lessens the power of the validity study. Convergent validity was not tested which, if planned for, could have added value to the results. Even though the area where the participants are situated is more inclined to be Afrikaans speaking it is not the home language of the entire population of the Co-operation. Translation to other languages could have resulted in better feedback. Due to financial constraints the measuring instruments were translated by using the one-way translation technique. A more comprehensive method could have provided stronger effects.

The results in this study were obtained during one moment in time. A longitudinal study could determine whether the concepts hope and happiness are experienced as states or traits in this organisation, as literature has evidence towards both sides. This would ensure a better background in decisions about testing for moderation or mediation.

The current study made use of a quantitative research method which might have been premature. Qualitative research to explore the concepts job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness as viewed by employees in a Co-operation could have clarified the constructs and how best to measure them.

More information on the environment and organisational culture could have added value towards drawing conclusions about the results in this study.

No South African norms exist for job insecurity, general health, work engagement, hope and happiness against which to compare employees of the Co-operation.

## **6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.3.1 Recommendations for the organisation**

The results of the empirical study did not provide adequate evidence for the creation of an intervention programme focused on increasing happiness and/or hope as a mechanism to buffer the effects of job insecurity. Literature strongly reasons that job insecurity has negative effects on the individual as well as the organisation. Evidence exists that good general health and high levels of engagement are beneficial to individual as well as organisational level. Hope and happiness were both proven in several previous studies, as well as in this study, as having a positive impact on work engagement and general health. Therefore, the organisation can enhance the work environment by introducing separate or combined interventions to improve each construct that was investigated in this study. In the following paragraphs some ideas to enhance the experience of job security, improve general health, and increase levels of engagement, hope and happiness will be shared.

Job insecurity has become a part of work life. Management can decrease the negative impact of job insecurity through transparent communication and including employees in decision-making. Mentors, coaches and career counsellors can motivate employees to develop skills and abilities in order for them to stay employable. Taking into account the impact the psychological contract has on employees' perceived fairness; it might be good to consider how to influence the psychological contract. De Cuyper and De Witte (2006) found that although temporary workers were more job insecure than permanent workers, it did not serve the same negative influence. The conclusion was that temporary workers have a different expectation from the organisation. Clarifying expectations or redefining the psychological contract might buffer the effect of job insecurity. Organisations could do assessments on the skills individuals need to become more employable. If an individual has the confidence that he will easily find alternative employment it could buffer the effect of job insecurity.

General health was previously seen as the responsibility of the individual. The introduction of legislation forced organisations to focus on this aspect. Several

organisations introduced formal Employee Wellness Programmes which provide support towards aspects such as stress management, healthy eating habits and fitness programmes. The role of the industrial psychologist is to develop interventions to promote healthy behaviours and adjust poor ones (Taylor, 2006). According to Virtanen, Kivimäki, Elovainio, Vahtera, and Ferrie (2003), job insecure people often neglect themselves by not consulting a medical practitioner in fear of being absent from work. In light of this, Musich, McDonald, and Chapman (2009) advise organisations to personalise health interventions for employees; provide health management testing; provide extensive information on websites for a self-help function; and give financial incentives for wellness. Although health programmes need financial support, health promotion seems more cost effective than disease control (Taylor, 2006). Good communication on the benefits of a healthy life style could help to increase a positive attitude towards mental and physical health care.

Efforts are normally focused on decreasing the effects of stress or after care for unwellness. Enough research regarding the antecedents to ill-health exists which enables organisations to identify the health-risk groups and act preventatively (personal communication, Dr J Bosman, 22 November 2009). Newell (2003) states that primary initiatives are aimed at promoting employees' physical and mental health and preventing negative effects of stress. Secondary programmes target employees' resilience towards the stressors and tertiary initiatives help employees cope with stress already experienced. The focus of health care programmes should therefore be on the primary or preventative initiatives.

In order to be engaged, a person should be in the correct career with positive working conditions. The person-environment fit plays an important role in this case. Being competent in what you do could also increase engagement levels, therefore assessing employees on what to develop and train, could be beneficial. Organisations can use Kahn's theoretical model as base to increase engagement, focusing on aspects to ensure meaningfulness, safety and availability. May et al. (2004) make some suggestions based on Kahn's model. Firstly, effectively design jobs to enhance meaningfulness; select employees based on fitting specific work roles and understand aspirations and goals of employees, thereby developing meaningfulness. Secondly, increase perceptions of safety by developing good relations between managers and

employees; use open communication; and let employees take part in decision-making. Thirdly, encourage employees to develop their own skills; make better use of resources and balance outside-work activities in order to be available for work activities.

McGeer (2004) made an interesting statement about how hope is influenced by other people's hopes and being involved in the hopes of others. The organisation could therefore take part in social and community projects by involving the employees. Managers can provide a good breeding ground for hope by giving employees the opportunity to set goals and giving them support and resources to obtain these goals. As Luthens and Jensen (2002) suggested: i) mentors can discuss goals and barriers; ii) focus on solutions rather than problem solving; iii) use recollection of previous success as a hope-reminding technique; and iv) mentally perform the steps towards a goal. An organisation can create a culture which fosters hope by strategically managing reward systems, leadership, commitment and motivation (Luthens & Jensen, 2002). Snyder (2000) suggests breaking goals into smaller, easy-to-obtain goals and to enjoy the success of each step. Plan ahead for alternative pathways and action plans if obstacles appear, but also know when to re-define a goal (Snyder, 2000). 'Stretch-goaling' can increase hope in individuals by setting the goal just a small scale more difficult (Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Encouraging employees to think creatively and finding alternative ways in reaching goals can lead to hope enhancement (Luthens & Youssef, 2007). In this study hope predicted 7% of the variance in general health and 14% of the variance in engagement. Therefore by increasing hope the organisation could benefit from healthier and more engaged employees who should be more productive.

Even though the debate surrounding happiness as a state or a disposition is ongoing, it could be said that happiness comes from inside the person self. You might feel more happy in one life domain than the other and over a period of time happiness levels might increase or decrease, but in order for an individual to be happy, he must accept himself and be happy with who he is. Cummins and Nistico (2002) emphasise the role of self-satisfaction in order to experience life-satisfaction. Self-development could pave the way to a happier individual. Diener, Lucas, and Oishi (2002) suggest imitating traits of happy people. Some of these traits include developing a positive

outlook, being organised, spending more time socialising and keeping busy. Happiness was found to predict 13% of the variance in general health and 10% in engagement in this study. Happiness was also recognised as a partial mediator in the relationship between job insecurity and engagement. Increasing happiness in this organisation could lead to highly engaged employees with few general health complaints.

### **6.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

A limitation in this study was that the researcher could not test for convergent validity. Future researchers could consider adding questionnaires that test the same or similar constructs in order to determine the correlation between them. Including questionnaires in the original language can enhance the power of the validity testing. A few items on the different questionnaires loaded on the incorrect scales, therefore future researchers could re-define these items with translation. Translation done in this study was the direct translation. Although this is the most cost effective way (Harkens & Schoua-Gulsberg, 1998), adding back-translation to the language of origin could prevent items being misunderstood (Weiland, Beasley, & Strachen, n.d.).

Different research approaches, such as a qualitative approach, could clarify the understanding of the concepts in this environment by using interviews or focus groups. Longitudinal research could improve our understanding with regard to the nature of hope and happiness (state or trait). In general, research needs to be conducted on how to measure health as it can not be defined as the absence of ill health. The measurement of health was mentioned in a discussion with a researcher on why positive constructs are mostly measured in relation to negative consequences and the conclusion was that researchers do not know how to measure health (Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Another important fact in relation to understanding concepts is the testing of bi-directionality, as research designs generally assume the existence of one-directional causality (Carson & Barling, 2008).

Self-report questionnaires are satisfactory when measuring perceptions and emotions (Diener et al., 2002), but including some objective measures such as days absent due to physical and mental ill health, could enhance a study. Another recommendation for

research is measuring the daily fluctuations of experiences in order to conclude long term effects (Carson & Barling, 2008). Taking into account that the relationship between work and well-being is not necessarily linear, researchers should look at different stages of work life in relation to well-being (Carson & Barling, 2008). Something that could increase work engagement in the initial stage of an individual's work cycle might be a frustration at a later stage.

In South Africa job insecurity was mostly measured with a global scale. Internationally it seems that the multidimensional measurement is favoured for measuring job insecurity. Research comparing the global and multidimensional job insecurity measures could clarify which is more beneficial in the South African context.

Most researchers recommend intervention strategies. An added recommendation to this would be to use pre- and post tests to evaluate the return on investment from such interventions. Carson and Barling (2008) suggest quasi-experimental research to ensure that interventions are effective when implemented by organisations. In an experimental design, the researcher manipulates the situation in order to test cause-and-effect. If all variables cannot be controlled, it is known as quasi-experimental research (Struwig & Stead, 2003).

#### **6.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided the reader with a summary of the results of the theoretical and empirical research objectives. Limitations were discussed and recommendations to the organisation as well as future research were made.

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