Similar or different? Profiling the unemployed from selected communities in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Title: Similar or different? Profiling the unemployed from selected communities in South Africa

Key terms: psychological need frustration, negative emotions, unemployment, psychosocial typology, affective experiences, employment commitment, job search behaviour

South Africa's unemployment rate poses a significant challenge, both at an individual and at a national level. The unemployment initiatives offered by the South African government (and other stakeholders) are mainly driven from an economic perspective, neglecting the psychological burden of unemployment. Economic intervention, as well as resultant (re-)employment, is one way to escape the psychological burden of unemployment, but the reality of few in South Africa. Furthermore, the unemployed who are psychologically well are often better positioned to find employment and to weather the challenges associated with a job search. Unemployment interventions should, thus, aim to alleviate the psychological burden of the unemployed. The effectiveness of these psychologically oriented interventions could be enhanced if they were to take a differentiated approach in their delivery, as research postulates that 'the unemployed' may not be a homogeneous group.

Previous research in South Africa supported the notion that 'the unemployed' consisted of several homogeneous subgroups. More specifically, four (sub)groups of the unemployed were identified, differing in their experiences of unemployment, their commitment to employment, and their job search behaviour. These four groups included the optimist, the desperate, the discouraged, and the adapted. Despite the value-add of previous research, two limitations were noted: the sample was not reflective of the South African unemployed, and the associations with negative emotions and psychological need frustration were not evaluated. Consequently, the first aim of the current study was to determine whether these four groups could be replicated in other unemployed communities in South Africa, using a more representative sample of the South African unemployed population. The second aim of the study was to examine the associations between these different types of unemployed people and negative emotions and psychological need frustration.

To achieve these aims, recruitment of participants occurred in two informal settlements in South Africa's Gauteng province. The study used a quantitative survey design, and data was collected with the Experiences of Unemployment Questionnaire, the Employment Commitment Scale, a job search behaviour scale, a discrete negative emotions questionnaire, and a shortened version of the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale.

Data was collected from a sample of 867 unemployed participants. Through latent profile analysis, the results indicated that the four unemployment groups could be replicated in other unemployed communities in South Africa and that they differed in their experiences of unemployment, their commitment to employment, as well as their job search behaviour. The results also showed that the different types of unemployed differed in the levels of negative emotions and psychological need frustration they experienced. The results paved the way for a differential approach to intervention design and implementation.

Recommendations were made for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1   INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation reports on an investigation into the replicability of four already identified unemployment profiles in different unemployed communities in South Africa. The study also explored the associations between these unemployment profiles and negative emotions and psychological need frustration, respectively. From a person-centred perspective, the study aimed to provide more insight into the differential experiences of unemployment, the commitment to employment, and the job search behaviour of unemployed South Africans.

This chapter aims to provide a short introduction and background to contextualise the study and to articulate the problem from which the general and specific objectives stemmed. Furthermore, the chapter provides a framework for the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis strategies that were used to investigate the problem. It concludes with an overview of the chapters.

1.1 Introduction and Background

South Africa is plagued by an unprecedented unemployment crisis. The Labour Force Survey (published in the first quarter of 2020) estimates South Africa's narrow unemployment rate at 30.10%, while its expanded unemployment rate is 39.70% (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2020). According to Stats SA (2020), South Africa's expanded unemployment rate has experienced a year-on-year increase of 1.70%. Unfortunately, a further unprecedented increase in the country's unemployment rate is expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown restrictions (Pillay & Barnes, 2020).

Unemployment rates are generally based on the share of the labour force who do not work but would like to work and are available to work (International Labour Organization [ILO], ILOSTAT database, 2019; Stats SA, 2020). In 1998, Stats SA formally accepted the narrow definition of unemployment as set out by the International Labour Organization. More than 80% of developed (as well as less developed) countries use this definition and only consider a person unemployed if the person has "taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview" – often referred to as the searching unemployed (Stats SA, 1998, p. 1). However, Stats SA goes beyond the narrow definition of unemployment and distinguishes a broad or expanded definition of unemployment, which takes discouraged jobseekers into account. Discouraged jobseekers include the following: those who want to work but have since lost hope and are no longer

actively searching for work; those who want to work, but for whom no jobs are available in their immediate area; and those who have been unable to find work that requires their specific skill set (Stats SA, 2020).

According to South African academics, the searching and the non-searching unemployed do not differ much from each other (Posel et al., 2013). If a country has a relatively low unemployment rate and uses the expanded definition of unemployment, the country's total unemployment rate will naturally only increase by a very small percentage (Posel et al., 2013). However, this is not the case in South Africa, where the inclusion of the non-searching unemployed makes a dramatic difference in the country's subsequent total unemployment rate, increasing it by an astounding almost 10 percentage points. Therefore, relying on the narrow definition of unemployment only results in a large number of unemployed people being excluded from studies (Posel et al., 2013). Hence, the current study included both the searching and the non-searching (for example, discouraged) unemployed.

The Stats SA data also highlights that the biggest concern could be among younger, black/African females. Of the unemployed falling within the expanded definition of unemployment, 44.10% are from the black/African population group, 43.40% are females, and 70.00% fall in the age group 15 to 24 (Stats SA, 2020).

1.2 Problem Statement

Unemployment is a challenging issue and is not only a significant economic and societal burden (for example, criminality, poverty, and substance abuse) on countries, but also a psychological burden on most unemployed individuals (Blustein & Guarino, 2019; Brand, 2015; ILO, 2020; Wanberg, 2012). Unemployment has a negative effect on an unemployed individual's levels of psychological well-being (for example, his/her quality of life) as well as his/her emotional well-being (for example, depression and anxiety) (Norström et al., 2019). For this reason, De Witte et al. (2010) emphasise the importance and necessity of psychological interventions, not only to maintain adequate levels of well-being, but also to ensure that jobseekers actively look for jobs. Reintegration of the (long-term) unemployed into the labour market requires flexible approaches extending beyond economic interventions (Bernstein, 2019).

Despite the importance of psychological interventions, few exist in South Africa. A study by Paver et al. (2019) found that unemployment programmes were mainly driven from an

economic perspective. As a result, these programmes neglected the psychosocial facets associated with unemployment. People do not pursue employment solely for its compensation possibilities, but also for the non-monetary (psychological) benefits it provides (for example, social contact, mutual goals, time structure, regular activities, and social status) (Jahoda, 1982). Consequently, unemployment leads to a decline in both the monetary and non-monetary aspects and is associated with lower levels of psychological well-being. By neglecting interventions that also include psychological aspects, which might make unemployment more tolerable, the unemployed may remain both without a job and psychologically unwell (Jahoda, 1982; Paver et al., 2019; Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

However, before one designs and implements such interventions, it is important to first establish whether the unemployed are a single homogeneous group or a heterogeneous group comprising several homogeneous subgroups (Knopf, 2013). By first establishing this, professionals are enabled to adapt interventions to better address the specific needs and expectations of the identified subgroups – ultimately improving the effectiveness of the interventions (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004; Moore et al., 2016; Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

Previous research (for example, De Witte, 1992) conducted among a sample of long-term unemployed people in Belgium pertaining to their experiences of unemployment (their feelings), the importance they attached to employment (their attitude), and their job search behaviour confirmed that 'the heterogeneous unemployed' population consisted of homogeneous subgroups. Using these three dimensions, De Witte identified five different types of unemployed: the (a) optimist, (b) desperate, (c) discouraged, (d) adapted, and (e) withdrawn. After the identification of these five different types of unemployed people, Van der Vaart et al. (2018) conducted a similar study in South Africa to determine whether the same types of unemployed could be identified in South Africa. The findings of the study by Van der Vaart et al. (2018) largely correlated with the findings of De Witte (1992), with four of the five types being replicated (the optimists, desperate, discouraged, and adapted).

Despite the value-add of the study by Van der Vaart et al. (2018), two limitations are worth mentioning. Firstly, the sample could have reflected the South African unemployed population (for example, inclusive of black/African individuals) better. Respondents were mainly Afrikaans-speaking (65.4%), and one can reasonably conclude that they were either white or coloured. Furthermore, according to Stats SA's Community Survey, only 12.2% of South Africans speak Afrikaans at home (Stats SA, 2018). The North West province, in which the study was conducted, is also mainly representative of Setswana-speaking people (71.5%) (About SA, 2020). More studies are needed in an attempt to validate the typology,

also because the golden standard in person-centred research is to attempt to replicate the results in different samples (Meyer & Morin, 2016). As a result, the current study investigated the replicability of the typology identified by Van der Vaart et al. (2018), using a more representative sample of the South African unemployed population. Secondly, another golden standard in person-centred research is to include covariates (for example, correlates) in the model to further validate the profiles (Meyer & Morin, 2016). Van der Vaart et al. (2018) included biographic variables as covariates but doing so provided no information regarding the 'psychological functioning' of the different types of unemployed people. In the current study, psychological variables (negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration) were included to explore their associations with the different types of unemployed to validate the profiles.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was twofold: (1) to determine whether the four already identified South African unemployment profiles could be replicated in other unemployed communities in South Africa and (2) to examine the associations between these profiles and negative emotions and psychological need frustration. The results would provide role players with valuable insight in both designing and implementing more effective and tailored intervention programmes from a suitably psychological perspective. Moreover, the results could help to inform policy and resource allocation. From a theoretical perspective, the study would add to the limited unemployment profile studies conducted in South Africa. Future research could use this typology to identify the outcomes associated with different types of unemployed people. Such associations would support the construct validity of this typology and enable its meaningful interpretation (Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 Dimensions of the Unemployment Experience

To increase people's prospects to transition from being unemployed to employed, it is important to lessen their psychological strain of being unemployed (Wanberg, 2012). Additionally, their levels of commitment to employment (that is, the importance they attach to work) and the intensity with which they search for employment will determine the likelihood of them transitioning (Kanfer et al., 2001). It is, therefore, important that psychological unemployment interventions speak to how the unemployed feel (that is, experience unemployment), think (that is, are committed to employment), and behave (that is, search for jobs) (De Witte, 1992; Vleugels et al., 2013). De Witte (1992) goes further by stating that these dimensions are inseparable. For example, a person's employment commitment may

relate positively to his/her search behaviour but may also increase his/her negative experiences. Likewise, a person will tend to search more for employment if he/she experiences unemployment more negatively, but will have more negative experiences as a result, especially if the search remains unsuccessful (De Witte, 1992).

The psychosocial typology developed by De Witte (1992) focuses on unemployed people in Belgium's experiences of unemployment, the importance they attach to employment, and their job search behaviour. Firstly, the typology focuses on the *negative experiences* the unemployed endure because of the deprivation of five latent needs. This is based on Jahoda (1982)'s latent deprivation model, which suggests that employment not only provides manifest benefits, but also latent benefits, with manifest benefits referring to monetary rewards as a result of employment and latent benefits referring to mutual goals, social contact, time structure, regular activities, and the possible social status employment provides. Jahoda (1982) suggests that a decline in latent and manifest benefits can result in a reduction of psychological well-being. Nevertheless, according to Herbert et al. (2006), certain unemployed people still testify to positive experiences as a result of unemployment. Such people were subsequently included by Van der Vaart et al. (2018) as an added dimension in the study of the unemployed profiles of South Africans. Secondly, unemployed people's *commitment to employment* can be observed as a result of their attitudes towards employment – the importance they attach to employment (De Witte et al., 2012). "The extent to which a person wants to be engaged in paid work" is provided as the definition of an unemployed person's commitment to employment (Warr et al., 1979, p. 130). A person's commitment to employment also determines how central employment is in that person's life (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Lastly, Wanberg (2012) states that *job search behaviour* is the frequency with which a person searches for a job using several job search strategies during a particular time frame.

1.3.2 Types of Unemployed in South Africa

Based on the experiences, commitment, and job search behaviour of unemployed South Africans, Van der Vaart et al. (2018) were able to identify four types of unemployed South Africans: the optimists, the desperate, the discouraged, and the adapted.

The *optimists* were somewhat positive and negative about unemployment and somewhat committed to employment, but they were searching quite intensely for a job (De Witte, 1992; Van der Vaart et al., 2018). The South African optimists seemed to show involvement in problem-focused coping through job search behaviour (Van der Vaart, 2018). The *desperate*

experienced their unemployment situation as extremely negative, were extremely committed to employment, and engaged vigorously in job search activities (De Witte, 1992; Van der Vaart, 2018). The negative experiences of the desperate could possibly be attributed to them viewing work as important and searching for work profusely, but remaining unemployed (Paul & Moser, 2006).

The *discouraged* also scored high on employment commitment but were less involved in job searching than the optimists and the desperate. Their experiences of unemployment were less negative than those of the desperate (De Witte, 1992; Van der Vaart et al., 2018). Their negative experiences could be attributed to the discrepancy between their behaviour and values (Festinger, 1957); they valued employment, but did not invest much to find employment. However, they also experienced positive feelings that might indicate that they were devoting their time to something else that was considered worthwhile (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). The *adapted* had more positive than negative experiences, they were less committed to work than the desperate and the discouraged, and they engaged the least in searching for a job compared to the other profiles. It seemed that they had adapted to their unemployment status (De Witte, 1992; Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

The fifth type, the *withdrawn*, was initially identified in Belgium, but the profile could not be identified in South Africa (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). This might be attributable to the lack of thorough financial support available to the unemployed in South Africa versus in Belgium, which ultimately increased their financial strain and prevented them from withdrawing from the labour market (Klasen & Woolard, 2008; Nordenmark et al., 2006).

The current study took a confirmatory approach in identifying the number and configurations of profiles because of the availability of previous research in South Africa (see Van der Vaart et al., 2018). We did not expect the fifth profile to emerge in this sample for the reasons provided above, which would probably be even more applicable to previously disadvantaged groups.

1.3.3 Negative Emotions and Basic Psychological Need Frustration as a Function of Profile Membership

Profiles (for example, different types) can be expected to be differently associated with other variables (for example, correlates), which will further attest to their construct validity and practical relevance (Meyer & Morin, 2016). Negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration are two relevant psychological constructs in the unemployment context. Various

studies have shown that unemployed people have lower psychological and physical health compared to their employed counterparts (see McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Paul & Moser, 2009; Wanberg, 2012 for overviews). This could be due to the negative emotions associated with unemployment, but also the frustration of one's basic psychological needs. According to Borgen and Amundson (1987), negative emotions are often associated with unemployment. Moreover, Vansteenkiste and Van den Broeck (2018) are of the opinion that unemployed people could be more susceptible to experiencing frustration of their psychological needs.

Negative Emotions

'Affect' is an overarching term used to describe and capture a wide array of emotions, moods, and dispositions. Affect is also the neurobiological basis of emotions and discernible bodily sensations (Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Feldman Barret et al., 2007; Izard, 2010). A careful comparison of the literature on emotions and moods revealed that they differed in several important respects (Cropanzano et al., 2012; Lochner, 2016). Firstly, emotions are tied to a particular target, whereas mood is not (Cropanzano et al., 2012). Secondly, emotions are felt more strongly and may overwhelm the individual to such an extent that rational thought becomes difficult (Cropanzano et al., 2012; Pham, 2007; Shapiro, 2002). Thirdly, their duration differs, with emotions having a shorter duration than moods (Kumar, 1997; Morris & Keltner, 2000), although researchers do not fully agree on this (Cropanzano et al., 2012). In the fourth place, different taxonomies exist for emotions and moods. Emotions tend to be classified into a set of discrete or specific emotions (Barrett, 2006; Bradley et al., 2001; Butt et al., 2005; Clore & Ortony, 2013; Cropanzano et al., 2012; Lindquist, 2013; Morris & Keltner, 2000; Russell, 2003). Moods are usually classified as positive or negative affect (Barrett, 2006; Bradley et al., 2001; Clore & Ortony, 2013; Cropanzano et al., 2012; Lindquist, 2013; Russell, 2003). In the fifth place, emotional experiences contain different processes (feelings, cognitions, and behaviour) (Cropanzano et al., 2012; Daly, 1991; Frank, 1988). When someone experiences a particular emotion, an urge exists to behave in a certain way (Cropanzano et al., 2012). Based on these differences, emotions seemed to be more appropriate in this context than moods. Unemployment was the target, where the absence of rational thought might hamper (re-)employment and might result in a decline in well-being. Emotions could also be longer lasting, and specific emotions might allow for tailored interventions, especially in combination with attitudinal and behavioural consequences.

Three theoretical perspectives are usually utilised to explain emotions (Cameron et al., 2015). On the one side of the continuum are the basic emotion theories (Ekman & Cordaro,

2011; Frank, 1988; Izard, 2011; Keltner et al., 2006; Levenson, 2011; Panksepp & Watt, 2011). These theories postulate that emotions arise from biological mechanisms that operate to enhance adaptation (Cameron et al., 2015; Ekman & Cordaro, 2011). The basic emotion theories assume that all reactions to a particular emotion are the same (consistency) and that these reactions only differ if a different emotion is experienced (specificity) (Ekman & Cordaro, 2011), which is considered to be a major limitation of these theories (Cameron et al., 2015).

Arnold (1960) and Lazarus (1966) developed a well-known theoretical framework, the appraisal theory, to explain the environment-emotion interaction. The appraisal theory proposes that emotions are adaptive responses to environmental characteristics that follow one's evaluation of the environment. These adaptive emotional responses have significant implications for an individual's well-being and rational thinking (Moors et al., 2013). Appraisal theories posit that different individuals can have different emotional responses to the same situation because of differences in (a) previous exposure to the situation, (b) perceptions of goal congruence, and (c) perceptions of controllability over the situation. Appraisal theories assume that the relationship between the stimuli and emotions varies from person to person, but the relationship between the appraisals and emotions is the same. Generally, the same appraisals result in the same emotions, whereas different appraisals lead to different emotions (Moors et al., 2013).

On the other side of the continuum (Cameron et al., 2015) are the constructionist models of emotion (Barrett, 2006; Clore & Ortony, 2013; Cunningham et al., 2013; Lindquist, 2013; Russell, 2003). The fundamental proposition of these models is that different emotions arise from different situations depending on common ingredients: core affect and conceptual knowledge (Barrett, 2006; Clore & Ortony, 2013; Lindquist, 2013; Russell, 2003). Conceptual knowledge (semantic knowledge, autobiographical memories, and situation-specific knowledge) transforms core affect (the general physiological state of the body) into a particular discrete emotion (Barrett, 2013; Lindquist, 2013). From a constructionist viewpoint, there may be an infinite number of emotions (Lindquist, 2013), which complicates the study of emotions.

For the current study, the appraisal theory was deemed the most appropriate approach, as it allowed for both heterogeneity and homogeneity in individual experiences of emotions. Several other researchers also support the appropriateness of this approach to understanding the cognition-emotion relationship (Moors et al., 2013; Martinent & Farrant, 2015).

Mapping different emotions can be challenging because different classification systems exist (Feather et al., 2011). Metatheoretical choices guide the nature and number of the emotions one wishes to explain. These choices include whether one aims for 'less is more' and a focus on natural language descriptors of emotions or whether one aims for exhaustiveness and variety (Scherer, 1999). Similar to Carver (2001), Ashkanasy (2003) argues that adoption of the appropriate taxonomy of emotion is dependent on the question being addressed. In line with the appraisal theorists, the current study was guided by Lazarus and Cohen-Charash (2001)'s list of discrete emotions such as anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, envy, and jealousy. They regard these as instances of discrete emotions that are found in workplace settings. Furthermore, from a review of the emotion literature, emotions such as fear, sadness, and disappointment were added.

The optimist and adapted profiles should report the fewest negative emotions, followed by the discouraged, while the desperate should report the highest levels of negative emotions. As previously mentioned, negative emotions are important in the unemployment context due to their possible eroding effect on rational thinking and well-being. The discouraged and desperate are still searching for employment, more so than their adapted counterparts, and as a result, this increases their vulnerability due to rejections. When rejection does occur, they may experience emotions such as shame, sadness, or disappointment, but also possibly jealousy towards those who are indeed employed. They may also be angry about their unsuccessful attempts and fearful about whether future attempts will be more successful. The optimist and adapted profiles, in contrast, experience fewer negative emotions, as they are not searching for employment as actively and are less likely to experience the coinciding emotions of rejection. In addition, they attach less value to employment and have fewer negative experiences than the other two types. The adapted have also started experiencing a psychological adaptation to unemployment and may, as a result, experience fewer negative emotions (Van der Vaart et al., 2018; Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018).

Basic Psychological Need Frustration

Basic psychological need frustration can potentially be associated with the experiences, attitudes, and behaviour of the unemployed (Van der Vaart et al., 2020). According to Deci (1992), psychological needs are defined as "innate psychological nutriments that are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity and well-being" (p. 229). Psychological needs are, therefore, considered part of human nature, and their satisfaction is believed to be a crucial part of people's psychological wellness and health (Deci, 1992). From the

perspective of the self-determination theory (SDT), people must have these needs satisfied to be ideally motivated and feel well, both psychologically and physically. Need satisfaction is compared to plants that need water and sunshine to flourish. However, the SDT also notes people's vulnerabilities such as passiveness, defensiveness, and aggression. The deliberate frustration of psychological needs can lead to the actual awakening of such vulnerabilities (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020).

The SDT has been widely used as social-psychological theory in unemployment and job search. Besides Vansteenkiste and Van den Broeck's (2018) opinion that unemployed people could be more susceptible to experiencing frustration of their psychological needs, they, furthermore, postulate that the unemployed could interpret their daily activities as 'musts' and a 'sequence of obligations'. This interpretation is ascribed to the financial and social pressures of the search for a job, ultimately leading to their need for autonomy being frustrated. Additionally, (long-term) unemployed individuals may start doubting their own capabilities because of repeated rejections. Hence, their need for competence is frustrated. Their social networks may gradually disintegrate to the point of them feeling excluded and isolated from society. As a result, their need for relatedness is frustrated (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018).

In addition, the SDT states that, for people to experience optimal psychological functioning, their basic psychological needs should be satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Since basic psychological needs are essential and can have significant consequences for an individual's psychological growth, well-being, and integrity, it is essential to be aware of the level of satisfaction (or frustration) of these needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). If an unemployed person's psychological needs are satisfied, he/she may (a) have fewer negative experiences, (b) foster a more positive attitude towards employment, and (c) persist more in his/her job search. The frustration of these needs could have substantial consequences that reach beyond the mere absence of satisfaction of these needs (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Cordeiro et al., 2016), especially since the unemployed are more inclined to need frustration (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018).

The optimist and adapted profiles should report the lowest levels of psychological need frustration, followed by the discouraged, and ultimately the desperate, who should experience the highest levels of psychological need frustration. Both the optimists and the adapted group report more positive (and fewer negative) experiences than the desperate and the discouraged (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). They tend to obtain lower scores on items such as "My self-worth has decreased" and "I've lost my self-confidence" that are associated

with lower levels of feeling frustrated in their need for competence. They also typically respond more positively to items that are associated with lower levels of feeling frustrated in their need for relatedness, such as "I've made more friends since becoming unemployed" and "I can spend more time with family". In addition, they are inclined to disagree more with statements such as "You have to work to be a part of society or to be constructively occupied" that are associated with lower levels of feeling frustrated in their need for autonomy. Because they are less involved in job searching (Van der Vaart et al., 2018) and most likely less exposed to instructions and rejections from others, they may feel less frustrated in their need for autonomy and competence.

In this study, the discouraged and the desperate were expected to be worse off with higher levels of psychological need frustration. If individuals are desperately searching for work, yet remain unsuccessful, it will increase their levels of psychological need frustration: their confidence and self-esteem levels will be negatively affected due to constant job search failure (competence frustration); they will not have positive experiences, will feel let down by those around them, and will not feel part of their community (relatedness frustration); and they will ultimately view the job search as 'musts' and 'shoulds', which will inhibit their levels of control, and be willing to accept any job over being unemployed (autonomy frustration) (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018). This behaviour is typical of the discouraged and desperate unemployed profiles due to their high levels of both employment commitment and negative experiences, but lack of positive experiences compared to the optimists and adapted (Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- How are psychosocial profiles and their associations with negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration conceptualised in the literature?
- Can the four types of unemployed – based on the three-dimensional psychosocial profile – be replicated in selected communities in South Africa?
- How are the psychosocial profiles and negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration associated with one another?
- What recommendations can be made for future research and practice?

2   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives were divided into a general objective and specific objectives.

2.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to determine the replicability of the unemployment profiles and their association with psychological variables (for example, emotions and psychological need frustration) in selected communities in South Africa.

2.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research were:

- to conceptualise psychosocial profiles and associations with negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration according to the literature;
- to determine whether the four types of unemployed – based on the three-dimensional psychosocial profile – could be replicated in selected communities in South Africa;
- to explore the associations between the psychosocial profiles and negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration; and
- to make recommendations for future research and practice.

3   RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1:   Four unemployed types (that is, the optimist, desperate, discouraged, and adapted) exist, differing in their experiences, their commitment to employment, and their job search behaviour.

Hypothesis 2:   The optimists and the adapted will report the lowest levels of negative emotions (2a), followed by the discouraged (2b), with the desperate reporting the highest levels of negative emotions (2c).

Hypothesis 3:   The optimists and the adapted will report the lowest levels of psychological need frustration (3a), followed by the discouraged (3b), with the desperate reporting the highest levels of psychological need frustration (3c).

4   RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Research Approach

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a research design comprises three components: the philosophical world view, the strategy of enquiry, and the research method(s).

The *philosophical world view* is a "set of beliefs that guide actions" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). The study was conducted from a post-positivistic world view and followed the four characteristic elements of a post-positivistic world view as put forward by Creswell and Creswell (2018): the researcher is of the opinion that (1) causes determine outcomes, (2) ideas can be converted into testable hypotheses, (3) meticulous measurement of objective realities will answer these hypotheses, and (4) in order to improve our understanding of reality, theories can and should be confirmed (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The current study made use of secondary data collected as part of a bigger project on the psychological experiences of unemployment. The original study by Van der Vaart (2018) followed a quantitative research approach and used a non-experimental, survey design to collect cross-sectional data. The choice of design was applied to confirm the replicability of the psychosocial typology and to explore its association with other psychological variables. The objectives of the current study were both descriptive and exploratory in nature: to establish and describe the existence of the already well-defined typologies in other unemployed communities in South Africa and to explore the associations between these profiles and important psychological variables (for example, emotions and psychological need frustration). Primary data analysis was performed to test the hypotheses.

4.2 Research Method

4.2.1 Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review was conducted on the replication of various typologies of the unemployed in selected South African communities as well as the corresponding negative emotions and psychological need frustration pertaining to being unemployed. Articles and publications applicable to the study and primarily published between 2005 and 2020 were consulted to ensure that information and sources used were current, well informed, and appropriate in the unemployment sphere of South Africa. Databases included

EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Scopus, and Web of Science. Scientific journals and publications that were consulted predominantly included the following: *Multi-Level Issues in Organizational Behavior and Strategy*; *Personality and Social Psychology Review*; *Academy of Management Perspectives*; *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*; *Journal of Counselling and Development*; *Emotion*; *Annual Review of Sociology*; *Journal of Organizational Behavior*; *Emotion Review*; *Learning and Individual Differences*; *Unemployment and Health: International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*; *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*; *Cross-Cultural Research*; *Journal of Applied Psychology*; *Evolution and Social Psychology*; *Journal of African Economies*; *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*; *Emotions at Work: Theory, Research and Applications for Management*; *Journal of Social Psychology*; *Psychological Science*; *Journal of Personality*; *Psychological Medicine*; *European Societies*; *Review of General Psychology*; *Psychological Review*; *Psychological Inquiry*; and *Journal of Occupational Psychology*.

Keywords included, but were not limited to, South African unemployment, types of unemployment, psychosocial typology, unemployment statistics, basic psychological needs, psychological need frustration, autonomy frustration, competence frustration, relatedness frustration, discrete emotions, negative emotions, affective experiences, employment commitment, job search behaviour, and job search intensity.

4.2.2 Research Participants

Recruitment of participants was done in Boipatong and Orange Farm, which are two informal settlements (townships) in the Gauteng province of South Africa. A large component of Boipatong's residents is made up of past employees of a manufacturing firm, but the turmoil experienced in the global steel market compelled the firm to reduce its labour force radically (Maloma, 2005). Boipatong forms part of the greater Emfuleni area, with 202 543 of Boipatong's population being economically active (either employed or unemployed but searching for work) and with 34.70% of this economically active population being unemployed. It has an economically active youth population of 85 594 (ages 15 to 35), of whom 45% are unemployed (Stats SA, 2011a).

Orange Farm, which forms part of the City of Johannesburg, has been in existence for a much shorter time and was mainly established by former farm workers. It, consequently, attracted a lot of retrenched and unemployed farm workers from the late 1980s. Since then, it has grown to become one of the biggest and most densely populated informal settlements in South Africa, with most of its population being unskilled and living in inadequate housing

structures, known as 'shacks', as well as having poor community access (City of Johannesburg, 2015). Orange Farm has an economically active population of 2 261 490 (either employed or unemployed, but searching for work), with 25% of this economically active population being unemployed. Orange Farm has an economically active youth population of 1 228 666 (ages 15 to 35), of whom 31.50% are unemployed (Stats SA, 2011b).

Residents of Boipatong and Orange Farm are mainly black Africans, with this population group being the least employed population group in comparison to other races in South Africa, according to Stats SA (2020). In order to access and acquire a heterogeneous sample of these unemployed population groups, a multiphased sampling design – through both convenience sampling (recruitment through unemployed people wandering the streets as well as door-to-door recruiting) and volunteer sampling (advertisements on local radio stations as well as in local newspapers) – was followed.

4.2.3 Measuring Instruments

A *biographical questionnaire* was used to measure characteristics that are commonly measured in an unemployment context to describe the sample: gender, age, educational level, marital status, living situation, township, unemployment duration, employment history, social assistance (self or others) or another form of income earned by others in the household, and the number of individuals financially dependent on the unemployed participants.

The *Experiences of Unemployment Questionnaire* (EUQ; De Witte et al., 2010) was used to determine participants' affective experiences, attitudes towards employment, and job search behaviour. Questions that tapped into negative and positive affective experiences consisted of 10 and six items, respectively. Participants had to rate their negative (for example, "I feel bored") and positive (for example, "I have more time to spend with my family members") affective experiences on a three-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*often*), which was recoded to 0 (*never*) to 2 (*often*) for analysis. The decision to use a three-point frequency scale was based on the lower levels of literacy typical of unemployed populations and also to avoid confusion brought about by too many frequency options in the scales (Flaskerud, 2012). The negative affective experiences subscale was proven to be reliable (α = .91), as was the positive affect experiences subscale (α = .80) (Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

The *Employment Commitment Scale* of Warr et al. (1979) was used to measure the extent to which participants regarded work as important. The scale consisted of seven items, and participants had to indicate to what extent they agreed with a range of statements (for example, "It is better to accept any job than to be unemployed") on a scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 3 (*agree*). Previous research in the South African context supported the reliability of the scale (α = .73; .90) (De Witte et al., 2012; Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

Job search behaviour was measured by asking how many times participants had performed any of the five different behaviours (for example, "Asked friends, family or acquaintances if they were aware of any work" and "Searched for advertisements on the internet [e.g. job or organisational websites] or social media [e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn]"), reflected on a frequency scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*10 times or more*). This scale was found to be reliable in a South African context (α = .78; .91) (De Witte et al., 2012; Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

A self-constructed questionnaire, which was based on a comprehensive review of the emotions literature and existing questionnaires (such as the Job Affective Scale [JAS] and the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale [JAWS] [Burke et al., 1989; Van Katwyk et al., 2000]), was used to measure discrete *negative emotions*. Participants were required to rate their negative emotions (for example, anger, fear, and guilt) on a three-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*often*).

A shortened version of the *Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale* (BPNSFS; Chen et al., 2015) was used to measure basic psychological need frustration. The final version of the need frustration subscale contained 10 items, three items each for autonomous and competence frustration and four for relatedness. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with statements reflecting autonomy frustration (for example, "I feel pressured to do too many things"), competence frustration (for example, "I have serious doubts about whether I can do things well"), and relatedness frustration (for example, "I have the impression that people I spend time with dislike me") on a three-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 3 (*agree*). The BPNSFS was both developed and validated by Chen et al. (2015) on participants from four different studies in four different countries (the United States of America, Belgium, Peru, and China) and measured the internal consistency of the scale in the four different countries, ranging between .64 and .89.

4.2.4 Research Procedure

The Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (HHREC) of the North-West University (NWU-HS-2016-0002), as well as the Social and Societal Ethics Committee (SMEC) of KU Leuven (G-2016 01 452), granted permission for the original study. The Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) (NWU-00635-20-A4) granted permission for the use of the existing data in the current study.

The research team travelled to the respective sites of the Boipatong and Orange Farm informal settlements to collect the data. Participants received an information letter that abided by stringent ethical requirements as well as a consent letter that stipulated voluntary participation in the study. A cool-down period of 24 hours was allowed between receiving information and providing consent to participate. In anticipation of poor education and literacy levels of participants, precautionary measures were taken by the original researcher (that is, the supervisor of the current study). The fieldworkers (unemployed volunteers from communities other than those sampled) assisted research participants by means of structured interviews in completing the translated (for example, into isiZulu and Sesotho) questionnaires. It took participants approximately 60 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The fieldworkers were trained in basic research methodology and practice prior to data collection. Equivalence of the translated questionnaires was ensured by means of a back-translation judgemental design (De Kock et al., 2013).

4.2.5 Statistical Analysis

Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2019) was used to conduct latent profile analysis (LPA). Analysis started with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the factorial validity of the instruments. Due to the categorical nature of the data, the mean- and variance-adjusted weighted least squares (WLSMV) estimator was used. Factor scores were exported from the best-fitting measurement model and used in subsequent analyses. The degree of fit between the theoretically proposed model(s) and the data was evaluated using the recommendations of Kline (2016) and others: chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (*df*), the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR). CFI and TLI values higher than .95 were considered ideal (Hu & Bentler, 1999), but values higher than .90 were acceptable (Wang & Wang, 2020). Furthermore, RMSEA values lower than .08 and SRMR values closer to .10 indicated acceptable fit (Wang & Wang, 2020; West et al., 2012). Next, the reliability coefficients of the scales were computed by using the ordinal version of the

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The ordinal version is appropriate for estimating the reliability of variables at an ordinal (categorical) level (Gadermann et al., 2012). The 'scaleReliability' function from the 'userfriendlyscience' R package (Peters, 2018) was used to perform reliability analyses.

The second last step in the process was LPA. LPA was used to identify different types of unemployed in the sample. LPA is a model-based approach to cluster individuals or cases into groups (for example, latent profiles) based on their responses to observed continuous variables (Muthén & Muthén, 2000). Being model-based, formal statistical procedures were used to determine the optimal number of profiles (Wang & Wang, 2020). Furthermore, to determine model fit, the indices recommended by Tofighi and Enders (2008) were used: (1) information criterion indices such as the Akaike information criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1983), the consistent AIC (CAIC; Bozdogan, 1987), the sample-size adjusted CAIC (ACAIC), the Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978), and the adjusted BIC (ABIC; Sclove, 1987); (2) the Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio (LMR LR) test (Lo et al., 2001) and the adjusted LMR LR (ALMR LR) test; and (3) the bootstrap likelihood ratio test (BLRT; McLachlan, 1987; McLachlan & Peel, 2000). Mplus provided the AIC, BIC, and ABIC values. The model with the lowest information criterion indices value was the best-fitting model (Wang & Wang, 2020).

A significant p-value ($p < .05$) for the LMR LR test indicated a significant improvement in the (nested) model, and the model with more profiles was preferred (Wang & Wang, 2020). An alternative LR test, based on non-χ^2 distribution, is the BLRT (McLachlan, 1987; McLachlan & Peel, 2000). The BLRT p-value was interpreted in the same way as the LMR LR test (Wang & Wang, 2020). The results from simulation research were applied to evaluate the performance of these various indicators and to facilitate decision-making regarding the optimal number of latent profiles (Howard et al., 2016).

Once the best-fitting model had been identified (that is, the model reflecting the optimal number of profiles), individuals were allocated to a specific latent profile. Based on the individual's response pattern to the observed indicators, posterior profile membership probability was calculated. This indicator provided an indication of the probability of a person belonging to a specific profile (Wang & Wang, 2020). Once it had been established that the best-fitting model had, for example, four profiles, the probability of a person belonging to one or more of these profiles was calculated. If the highest probability value of person A was .90 for Profile 2, that individual was classified as representing Profile 2. The lowest acceptable posterior probability value was .70 (Nagin, 2005). Entropy (EN), or relative entropy (REN) in

the case of Mplus, was the second criterion used for evaluating the quality of profile membership. These values ranged between .00 and 1.00, with a value closer to 1.00 indicating better classification (Wang & Wang, 2020). Clark (2010) suggests the following interpretations of REN: high (.80), medium (.60), and low (.40) entropy. Following an evaluation of the quality of profile membership by means of posterior profile membership probability and the REN value, the number of individuals in each profile was observed, keeping in mind that profile sizes ought not to be too small (Wang & Wang, 2020).

After evaluating the quality of profile classification, the latent profiles were labelled. The profiles that were identified had to be theoretically interpretable, like factors derived in factor analysis. These "labels" were used to describe heterogeneity in the population (Wang & Wang, 2020). Finally, to explore the associations between the profiles and the correlates, the Bolck-Croon-Hagenaars (BCH) method was used (see Bakk & Vermunt, 2015 for a detailed description). Specifically, the levels of need frustration and negative emotions across the profiles were compared. BCH is the preferred method for continuous correlates (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2020).

4.2.6 Ethical Considerations

It was important to be cognisant of the different ethical dilemmas that could occur during the various phases of the research project (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Theron & Khumalo, 2015). Based on the recommendations below and in an attempt to alleviate risks as far as possible, the original study assessed (and the current study continued to assess) the risks during the different stages of the research (for example, the selection of the research problem, the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data, and the ultimate dissemination of the results).

Ethical Considerations as Part of the Research Problem

A research problem should be selected, and its execution motivated by its importance and the beneficial effects aimed at its participants and not based on the researcher's agenda (Punch, 2005). South Africa's unemployment rate is a severe challenge for the country and is expected to remain one well into the country's future. Therefore, it was the aim of this study to produce meaningful information to inform interventions towards the alleviation of the psychological burden faced by South Africa's unemployed and to tailor these interventions to the specific groups.

Ethical Considerations as Part of the Purpose and Questions

It is important for the research objectives of a study to be clearly communicated to all participants and stakeholders involved, as well as in a language that they comfortably understand, in order to avoid any deception and/or confusion (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sarantakos, 2005). The intent and purpose of the study were duly communicated to the advisory board of the community's representatives together with 24 hours' notice to the participants prior to providing consent. Information and organisational logos pertaining to the sponsors of the research project (VLIR-UOS and Optentia) were present on all forms of communication.

Ethical Considerations as Part of Data Collection

As per Creswell and Creswell (2018), Sarantakos (2005), and Theron and Khumalo (2015), ethical considerations that guided data collection included the following: (a) participants were respected at all times and not exposed to any unnecessary risk (regardless of the type of risk); (b) participants were requested to fill in a form to provide informed consent, which included aspects such as the aim of the research, inclusion criteria, expectations from participants, potential risks and their mitigation, assurance of confidentiality and voluntary participation, participants' right to withdraw from the study without any negative consequences, the researcher's contact details as well as the contact details of Lifeline in the event that a participant felt distressed, and potential publication avenues; and (c) precautions were taken to minimise and avoid any interference and disruption and to preserve the physical integrity of the research sites. Furthermore, before data collection commenced, the competence of all research assistants, fieldworkers, and translators was ensured through proper training. Fieldworkers who were of the same ethnicity as the research population were assigned, and all possible cross-cultural uncertainties or matters (for example, particular language or non-verbal characteristics) were addressed.

Ethical Considerations as Part of Data Analysis and Interpretation

During the phases of data analysis and interpretation, careful attention was given to the following: the student only had access to the results of the analysis and not to any identifiable information; the competence of the person (for example, the supervisor) responsible for data analysis was ensured through appropriate training and supervision; and the student's competence in data interpretation was ensured through training and

supervision. The accuracy of result interpretation was confirmed by relying on a peer review process.

Ethical Considerations as Part of Writing and Disseminating Results

The following considerations, as specified by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Theron and Khumalo (2015), provided guidance during the process of writing and disseminating research results: (a) using unbiased language and being sensitive to labelling or stereotyping (for example, "The participant's responses are typical of …", as opposed to "The participant is …"); (b) acknowledging participants as part of writing up results (for example, referring to "participants" as opposed to "subjects"); (c) representing results in an honest manner without manipulation to potentially favour somebody's needs; (d) giving due recognition to contributors; and (e) endeavouring to publish the findings of the study in a peer-reviewed journal where the public could have access to the results.

5   EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

5.1 Expected Contribution for the Individual

The findings of the study were aimed at increasing understanding of the various types of unemployed in different unemployed communities and determining whether the already identified types were indeed equally represented and apparent across such unemployed communities in South Africa. As a result, better insight could be provided into the prevalence, nature, and consequences of these types of unemployed people.

5.2 Expected Contribution for the Organisation

The study aimed to provide a better understanding of the various psychological needs that were frustrated as well as the different levels of negative emotions experienced by the types of unemployed individuals. Furthermore, by examining the associations between the unemployment types and their differing psychological variables, various role players could gain valuable insight into both designing and implementing more effective and tailored (re-)employment interventions. It is pertinent that organisations understand the different requirements and issues pertaining to the identified types of unemployed, both economically and psychologically, in order to optimally, sustainably, and successfully (re-)employ each respective unemployed type (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). The identification, as well as the

understanding, of the types could assist with the proactive development of interventions tailored to different people's needs (Vansteenkiste & Mouratidis, 2016).

5.3 Expected Contribution for Industrial-Organisational Literature

The study was aimed at addressing the limited profile studies conducted, particularly in South Africa, to strengthen the replicability and construct validity of the typology identified by Van der Vaart et al. (2018) and to facilitate meaningful interpretation of the typology. The study was also targeted at extending the existing research on unemployment typologies, from a methodological perspective, by making use of latent profile analysis (LPA) (Muthén & Muthén, 2000) as opposed to cluster analysis, which is often used.

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction
Chapter 2: Research article
Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations

6   CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter aimed to provide a short introduction and background to contextualise the study and articulate the problem from which the general and specific objectives stemmed. Furthermore, the chapter provided a framework for the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis strategies that were used to investigate the problem. It concluded with an overview of the chapters.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Similar or different? Profiling the unemployed from selected communities in South Africa based on their experience of unemployment

Abstract

Unemployment has negative consequences for individuals' psychological well-being. Consequently, interventions should be designed and implemented to alleviate the psychological burden of the unemployed. The design of these interventions should, however, be approached with care, as 'the unemployed' may not be a homogeneous group. The aim of the study was to determine whether the four already identified South African unemployment profiles could be replicated in other unemployed communities in South Africa. The study also aimed to examine the associations between these unemployment profiles and negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration. To establish the replicability of the types, a multiphased sampling design was followed to recruit 867 unemployed people residing in Boipatong and Orange Farm in the Gauteng province in South Africa. Through latent profile analysis, the study replicated the four profiles: the optimists, the desperate, the discouraged, and the adapted. The profiles were differentially associated with negative emotions and psychological need frustration, further attesting to the validity of the profiles. The results of the study can be applied towards creating tailored interventions for the different types of unemployed people from South African communities to enhance the efficacy of these interventions.

Keywords: attitudes, behaviour, experiences, latent profile analysis, psychosocial typology, unemployment

South Africa's unemployment rate ranges from 30% to 40% (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2020), depending on the definition used. A high unemployment rate is problematic because it means that a significant number of people suffer psychologically (for example, diminished quality of life, depression, and anxiety) (Bernstein, 2019; Brand, 2015). Despite the high unemployment rate and the associated detrimental psychological consequences, few psychologically oriented unemployment interventions exist in the South African context (Paver et al., 2019; Van der Vaart et al., 2018). We should, however, caution against blindly developing and implementing such interventions because 'the unemployed' may not be a homogeneous group (Knopf, 2013), and meta-analytic evidence shows that interventions tailored to the specific groups are more effective than one-size-fits-all approaches (Liu et al., 2014).

To this extent, De Witte (1992) developed a typology to categorise different types of unemployed based on their experiences, their attitudes towards employment, and the intensity with which they searched for jobs. Based on these three dimensions, five types of

unemployed were identified: the optimist, desperate, discouraged, adapted, and withdrawn. The typology was replicated in Belgium among a sample of female unemployed (De Witte & Wets, 1996). In a South African context, research also confirmed that 'the unemployed' consisted of homogeneous subgroups, but only four of the five types were identified (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). This echoes the findings of De Witte and Hooge (1995) among a sample of short-term unemployed in which the adapted were also absent.

Despite the value-add of previous research using this typology, three notable gaps exist. Firstly, research was mainly conducted in a more affluent country where unemployed individuals received unemployment benefits. Such benefits might account for differences in emerging profiles (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). Secondly, only one study was conducted in South Africa, and the sample was not a true reflection of the unemployed population. The sample consisted mainly of Afrikaans-speaking people (65.4%), who can reasonably be assumed to have been either white or coloured. However, Stats SA (2020) reports that 80.85% of South Africa's working population consists of black Africans, with the unemployment rate being the highest among them. Lastly, none of the previous studies explored the differences between these types based on their negative emotions and the frustration of their basic psychological needs. It is best practice in person-centred research to include covariates (for example, correlates) to strengthen the construct validity of the profiles and to enhance their utility for practice (Meyer & Morin, 2016; Morin et al., 2020).

The current study aimed to fill these gaps by determining whether the four already identified unemployment profiles could be replicated and by examining the associations between the profiles and negative emotions and psychological need frustration. Numerous studies have reported lower levels of psychological and physical health for the unemployed (compared to the employed), which could be attributed to the negative emotions and the frustration of their basic psychological needs experienced as a result of their unemployment (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018; Wanberg, 2012).

Dimensions of the Unemployment Experience

Individuals' experience of unemployment is a multifaceted construct and necessitates its study from a multidimensional perspective. Three dimensions are of importance from a psychological perspective: the unemployed's experiences, their commitment to employment, and the intensity with which they search for jobs (De Witte, 1992; De Witte et al., 2010; De Witte et al., 2012; Vleugels et al., 2013). Firstly, experiences relate to the unemployed's deprivation of the opportunity to (a) set mutual goals, (b) have contact with others, (c) structure their time, (d) engage in regular activities, and (e) gain social status (Jahoda, 1982). Some unemployed may also have positive experiences (Herbert et al., 2006; Van der Vaart et al., 2018). Secondly, "the extent to which a person wants to be engaged in paid

work" (Warr et al., 1979, p. 130) reflects their commitment to employment (De Witte et al., 2012). Thirdly, job search intensity refers to the frequency with which a person engages in various job search activities (Wanberg, 2012).

Not only are these dimensions important, but they also interact with one another. For example, an unemployed person might search for a job more frequently, but this could lead to more negative experiences, especially if these search attempts were to be unsuccessful (De Witte, 1992). Similarly, individuals might be committed to employment, which would enhance their search behaviour, but also their negative experiences (De Witte, 1992).

Based on these dimensions, four types of unemployed were identified in the South African context. The *optimists* experienced their situation as somewhat negative (but also as somewhat positive), and they were somewhat committed to employment, but were searching quite intensely for work. The *desperate* experienced unemployment as extremely negative, were committed to employment, and were likewise searching quite intensely for work. The *discouraged* were also negative, but they reported some positive experiences. Although work was important, there was little engagement in job search activities. The *adapted* had more positive than negative experiences, were less committed to work, and showed little interest in job search activities (Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

A fifth type, the withdrawn, was initially identified in Belgium. The withdrawn are characterised by few negative experiences, low levels of employment commitment, and very low levels of job search behaviour (De Witte, 1992; De Witte & Wets, 1996). This type was not identified in South Africa. The presence of the withdrawn in Belgium might be attributable to the existence of an unemployment grant, which allows them to temporarily withdraw from the labour market (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). Consistent with previous findings in the South African context, we hypothesised as follows:

Hypothesis 1: four unemployed types (that is, the optimist, desperate, discouraged, and adapted) exist, differing in their experiences, their commitment to employment, and their job search behaviour.

We expected these profiles to differ on their negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration. According to the appraisal theory (Arnold, 1960; Lazarus, 1966), emotions are adaptive responses that reflect judgements of environmental characteristics. Emotions have significant implications for a person's well-being and rational thinking (Moors et al., 2013). In line with the appraisal theory, the study was guided by a list of discrete emotions typically experienced in a workplace setting: anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, envy, and jealousy (see Lazarus & Cohen-Charash, 2001).

The optimists and adapted might experience fewer negative emotions, as they were less involved in searching for a job (with less opportunity for rejection), attached less value to employment (with less dissonance between their values and their employment status)

(Festinger, 1957), and reported fewer negative experiences. The adapted might also have adapted to unemployment psychologically (Van der Vaart et al., 2018), resulting in fewer negative emotions. The opposite would hold for the discouraged and desperate, as they were more involved in searching for a job (and faced more rejections), experienced greater dissonance, and reported more negative experiences. This would be even more so for the desperate with their higher levels of job search, commitment to employment, and negative experiences. Consistent with theory, we hypothesised the following:

Hypothesis 2: the optimists and the adapted will report the lowest levels of negative emotions (2a), followed by the discouraged (2b), with the desperate reporting the highest levels of negative emotions (2c).

According to the self-determination theory (SDT), people have three basic psychological needs: the need to feel that they can act in line with their wishes (that is, autonomy), that they are competent and that they can master their environment (that is, competence), and that they belong and are cared for (that is, relatedness). If satisfied, individuals experience optimal psychological functioning. However, need satisfaction is only one side of the coin, as these needs can be frustrated. The consequences of need frustration are more negative than mere low need satisfaction (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Unfortunately, unemployed people have a higher inclination towards need frustration than (low) need satisfaction (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018).

We expected a similar pattern for need frustration as for negative emotions. The optimists and adapted, receiving fewer instructions from others, experiencing fewer rejections, and placing less pressure on themselves (because of the value attached to employment) might feel less frustrated in their needs. The opposite would hold for the discouraged and desperate because of their intense job search, the high value they placed on employment, and their negative experiences of unemployment. Continuous unsuccessful attempts to find a job might lead to feelings of incompetence and isolation, especially if accompanied by pressure from others (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018). Consistent with theory, we hypothesised the following:

Hypothesis 3: the optimists and the adapted will report the lowest levels of psychological need frustration (3a), followed by the discouraged (3b), with the desperate reporting the highest levels of psychological need frustration (3c).

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 867 participants from Boipatong (54.20%) and Orange Farm (45.80%). Slightly more females (54.30%) than males (45.70%) participated. Almost all participants (99.20%) were black, and most spoke either Sesotho (46.80%) or isiZulu

(28.50%). The majority reported not having completed (58.70%) or only having completed (38.70%) secondary education. On average, they were 32 years old (SD = 10.46), and most had been unemployed for more than two years (64.90%). Several of them were single (79.30%). More than half were living with parents or grandparents (or other family members) (50.50%), with no other income in the household from either employment or self-employment (50.10%). On average, they had two individuals who were financially dependent on them (SD = 2), with two thirds (66.10%) reporting social assistance received by others in the household. Only 22.50% received grants themselves. The sample was mostly characteristic of the unemployed in South Africa: the unemployment rate is higher among black females, between the ages of 15 and 24, with a qualification lower than matric (Stats SA, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

The Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) (NWU-00635-20-A4) granted ethical approval for the study. A letter of information, adhering to strict ethical requirements, and a consent letter, requesting voluntary participation, were handed out to participants prior to completing the survey.

Instruments

A *biographical questionnaire* was used to measure characteristics that are commonly measured in an unemployment context: gender, age, educational level, marital status, living situation, township, unemployment duration, employment history, social assistance (self or others) or another form of income earned by others in the household, and the number of individuals financially dependent on the unemployed participant.

The *Experiences of Unemployment Questionnaire* (EUQ; De Witte et al., 2010) was utilised for measuring participants' affective experiences, attitudes towards employment, and job search behaviour. Questions tapping into negative and positive experiences consisted of 10 and six items, respectively. Participants had to rate their negative (for example, "I feel bored") and positive (for example, "I have more time to spend with my family members") experiences on a three-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*often*), which was recoded to 0 (*never*) to 2 (*often*) for analysis. The decision to use a three-point frequency scale was based on the lower levels of literacy typical of unemployed populations and also to avoid confusion brought about by too many frequency options in the scales (Flaskerud, 2012).

The *Employment Commitment Scale* of Warr et al. (1979) was used to measure the extent to which participants regarded work as important. The scale consisted of seven items, and participants needed to indicate to what extent they agreed with a range of statements

(for example, "It is better to accept any job than to be unemployed") on a scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 3 (*agree*).

Job search behaviour was measured by asking how many times participants had performed any of the five different behaviours (for example, "Asked friends, family or acquaintances if they were aware of any work"), reflected on a frequency scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*10 times or more*).

A self-constructed questionnaire, which was based on a comprehensive review of the emotions literature and existing questionnaires (such as the Job Affective Scale [JAS] and the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale [JAWS] [Burke et al., 1989; Van Katwyk et al., 2000]), was used to measure discrete *negative emotions*. Participants had to rate their negative (for example, anger, fear, and guilt) emotions on a three-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 3 (*often*).

The *Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Need Frustration Scale* (BPNSFS; Chen et al., 2015) was used to measure basic psychological need frustration. The final version of the need frustration subscale contained 10 items, three items each for autonomous and competence frustration and four for relatedness. Respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with statements reflecting autonomy frustration (for example, "I feel pressured to do too many things"), competence frustration (for example, "I have serious doubts about whether I can do things well"), and relatedness frustration (for example, "I have the impression that people I spend time with dislike me") on a three-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 3 (*agree*).

Procedure

Participants were recruited from Boipatong and Orange Farm, two informal settlements in South Africa's Gauteng province. Convenience sampling (that is, door-to-door recruitment of unemployed participants as well as those wandering the streets) and volunteer sampling (that is, advertisements on local radio stations and in community newspapers) were used to obtain a heterogeneous sample of unemployed people who fitted the inclusion criteria consistent with the expanded definition of unemployment (Stats SA, 2017). Due to their lower levels of education, most participants participated in structured interviews based on the questionnaires. A back-translation judgemental design (De Kock et al., 2013) was employed to ensure the equivalence of the translated questionnaires.

Statistical Analysis

Mplus 8.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2019) was used for data analysis. The mean- and variance-adjusted weighted least squares (WLSMV) estimator was used to perform confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Model fit was evaluated based on the recommendations

of Kline (2016) and others. The scale reliability was calculated using the ordinal version of the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient as recommended by Gadermann et al. (2012). The 'scaleReliability' function from the 'userfriendlyscience' R package (Peters, 2018) was used to perform reliability analyses. Latent profile analysis (LPA) was performed using the factor scores saved from the best-fitting measurement models, a practice which has become more common in recent applications of mixture models (Meyer & Morin, 2016; Morin et al., 2016). LPA is a model-based approach to cluster individuals or cases into groups based on their responses to observed continuous variables (Muthén & Muthén, 2000). Being model-based, formal statistical procedures can be used to determine the optimal number of profiles (Wang & Wang, 2020). To determine the model fit in LPA, the indices recommended by Tofighi and Enders (2008) were used. Simulation research evaluated the performance of these various indicators to facilitate decision-making regarding the optimal number of latent profiles in the sample (see Howard et al., 2016 for a brief overview).

Finally, we used the Bolck-Croon-Hagenaars (BCH) method (see Bakk & Vermunt, 2015 for a detailed description) to compare the levels of negative emotions across the profiles, as BCH is the preferred method for continuous correlates (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2020).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the Profile Variables

Confirmatory factor analytic models were estimated to establish the factor structure for the typology (that is, profile) variables and the correlates. Factor scores were obtained from these models and used in subsequent analyses. The factor analytic models for the typology variables were specified without the correlates to retain independence between the profiles and the covariates. The four latent typology variables (that is, negative experiences, positive experiences, commitment, and job search) were specified as separate, but related, factors. Based on the fit statistics, the hypothesised model (Model 1) did not yield acceptable fit to the data. Model development was performed by deleting one item from the negative experiences scale ("I must save on my personal expenditure") and one item from the importance of work scale ("People do not have to work as such to be constructively occupied") because of inadequate factor loadings (.26 and -.07). The errors of two negative experience items ("My self-worth has decreased" and "I have lost my self-confidence") and two job search items ("Searched for advertisements in newspapers and weeklies" and "Searched for advertisements on the Internet [e.g. job or organisational websites] or social media [e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn]") were allowed to correlate due to high modification indices (81.92 and 62.61). The revised model (Model 1a) had a good fit according to most of the indices (see Table 1).

Table 1

Measurement Models (N = 867)

Model	χ^2	*p*-value	*df*	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Model 1	1305.91	.00	399	.85	.87	.05 [.05, .05]	.08
Model 1a	974.43	.00	342	.89	.90	.05 [.04, .05]	.07

The reliability coefficients for the respective scales were .90 (negative experiences), .79 (positive experiences), .89 (commitment to employment), and .89 (job search behaviour).

Latent Profile Analysis

Five models, with an increasing number of latent classes, were estimated, and their fit statistics were compared to determine the optimal number of classes. Table 2 shows the fit indices for the models.

Table 2

Comparison of LPA Models

Model	Log likelihood	#fp	Scaling	AIC	BIC	ABIC	Entropy	LMR LR test *p*	ALMR LR test *p*	BLRT *p*
1-profile LPA	-2659.52	8	.92	5335.03	5373.15	5347.75	-	-	-	-
2-profiles LPA	-2460.32	13	1.05	4946.64	5008.58	4967.30	.68	.00	.00	.00
3-profiles LPA	-2397.37	18	1.36	4830.74	4916.51	4859.34	.69	.09	.09	.00
4-profiles LPA	-2351.86	23	1.14	4749.72	4859.32	4786.28	.77	.00	.00	.00
5-profiles LPA	-2317.07	28	1.10	4690.14	4823.56	4734.64	.78	.00	.00	.00

The AIC, BIC, and ABIC values failed to reach a minimum, and the LMR, ALMR, and BLRT remained statistically significant ($p < .05$). Since these tests are all tests of statistical significance, determining the optimal number of profiles can be influenced by sample size (Marsh et al., 2009). It is likely that indicators may improve without reaching a minimum (Howard et al., 2016). Consequently, the plots were examined. The plots indicated that adding a fourth profile resulted in the addition of a qualitatively and quantitatively different profile (when compared to the three-profile solution) but adding a fifth profile resulted in a division of existing profiles into smaller profiles. Hence, the fifth profile did not add anything theoretically meaningful, and the more parsimonious four-profile solution was preferred. This solution was theoretically interpretable and yielded adequate profiling; the posterior class membership probabilities were all above .87, and the entropy value (.77) was also quite high (Clark, 2010).
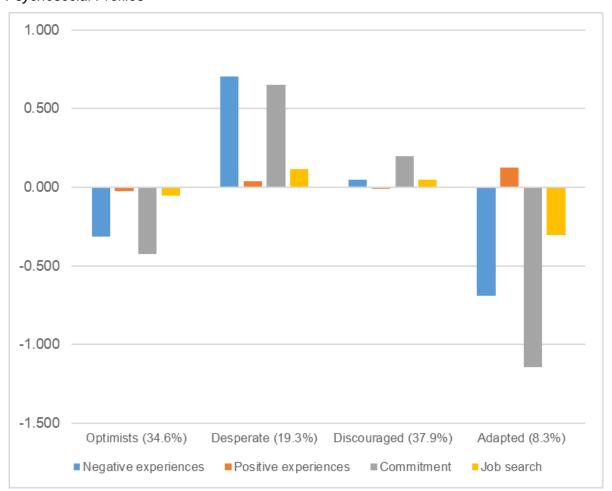
As displayed in Table 3 and Figure 1, four profiles could, thus, be identified, differing on the four psychosocial variables. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was accepted.

Table 3

Mean Level Differences for the Types of Unemployed (Psychosocial Variables)

	Optimists	Desperate	Discouraged	Adapted
Negative experiences	-.32	.70	.05	-.69
	(1.07)	(1.88)	(1.40)	(.77)
Positive experiences	-.03	.04	-.01	.12
	(.94)	(1.05)	(.96)	(1.06)
Commitment to employment	-.43	.65	.20	-.15
	(2.58)	(3.00)	(2.90)	(2.06)
Application behaviour	-.06	.12	.05	-.30
	(2.08)	(2.14)	(2.20)	(1.75)

Note: indicators estimated from scale scores indicated in brackets.

Figure 1

Psychosocial Profiles

Profile 1 (*optimists*) showed an equally moderate score on negative and positive experiences, considered work important (but less so than the desperate and the discouraged), and showed moderate application behaviour. The optimists constituted 34.60% of the sample. Profile 2 (*desperate*) scored high on negative experiences (outweighing the moderate positive experiences) and considered work to be very important (more so than the other profiles) but showed moderate application behaviour (although more than the optimists and the adapted). The desperate constituted 19.30% of the sample. Profile 3 (*discouraged*) scored moderately high to moderate on negative and positive experiences and considered work important (more so than the optimists and the adapted) but showed moderate application behaviour. The discouraged constituted 37.90% of the sample. Profile 4 (*adapted*) scored low on negative experiences and moderate on positive experiences, attached little importance to work, and showed moderately low application behaviour. The adapted constituted 8.30% of the sample.

Negative Emotions and Need Frustration as Correlates of Profile Membership

Two competing models were specified for the correlates. In the first model, negative emotions and psychological need frustration were both specified as unidimensional[1]. Based on the fit statistics, this model fitted the data poorly (χ^2 = 1070.85, df = 118, p < .001; RMSEA = .10 [.09, .10]; CFI = .86; TLI = .84; SRMR = .07). In the second model, negative emotions were specified as unidimensional, whereas psychological need frustration was modelled as three dimensions. Based on the fit statistics, Model 2 had a good fit (χ^2 = 420.79, df = 113, p < .001; RMSEA = .06 [.05, .06]; CFI = .96; TLI = .95; SRMR = .05). We examined mean-level factor score differences between the four types of unemployed regarding negative emotions[2] and psychological need frustration. As displayed in Table 4, significant differences can be reported between the different types of unemployed[3].

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[1] We had no theoretical rationale to expect differences between the types of unemployed and the different negative emotions and the different types of psychological need frustration. Hence, they were specified as unidimensional. Fit statistics, however, showed that psychological need frustration had to be treated a multidimensional.

[2] Post hoc analyses were performed in which the comparisons were made on the level of the separate emotions. The same pattern emerged for most of emotions, with the exception of shame (the optimists experienced less shame than the adapted) and jealousy (the optimists and the adapted experienced equal amounts of jealousy).

[3] Statistically significant associations were detected between the different profiles and certain demographic variables (age, educational level, unemployment duration, number of dependants, and grants), but these associations were, at best, only small effects.

Table 4

Mean Level Differences for the Types of Unemployed (Correlates)

	Optimists	Desperate	Discouraged	Adapted
Negative emotions	-.24[c]	.60[a]	.03[b]	-.51[d]
	(2.03)	(2.64)	(2.27)	(1.79)
Autonomy frustration	-.10[c]	.23[a]	-.00[b]	-.12[c]
	(1.99)	(2.36)	(2.16)	(1.99)
Competence frustration	-.10[c]	.24[a]	.03[b]	-.14[c]
	(1.79)	(2.02)	(1.90)	(1.77)
Relatedness frustration	-.19[c]	.47[a]	-.01[b]	-.21[c]
	(1.83)	(2.37)	(2.01)	(1.82)

Note: indicators estimated from scale scores indicated in brackets; within rows, means with different letters are significantly different from one another.

The *desperate* reported the most negative emotions, followed by the *discouraged* and the *optimists*, with the *adapted* reporting the fewest negative emotions. Therefore, Hypotheses 2a to 2c were accepted. The *desperate* reported that they experienced the most psychological need frustration, followed by the *discouraged*. The *optimists* and the *adapted* experienced equal amounts of psychological need frustration, but less than the other two profiles. Therefore, Hypotheses 3a to 3c were accepted. The results also showed that the different types of unemployed followed the same pattern for all three needs (desperate > discouraged > adapted = optimists).

Discussion

The first aim of this study was to establish whether the four unemployment profiles could be replicated in other unemployed communities in the country. In line with our expectations, the four types were replicated, differing in their experiences, their commitment to employment, and their job search behaviour. Hence, 'the unemployed' was not a homogeneous, but rather a heterogeneous, group, consisting of several homogeneous subgroups. The profile composition was in line with previous research (see De Witte & Hooge, 1995; Van der Vaart et al., 2018). However, the prevalence of the respective profiles bore noteworthy differences from previous research (De Witte, 1992; Van der Vaart et al., 2018). For example, roughly three times more optimists were identified in this sample than in the one by Van der Vaart et al. (2018) and roughly a quarter more than in the study by De Witte (1992). Also, roughly a third fewer desperate were identified compared to the previous South African study. Furthermore, the number of discouraged remained very similar in comparison to the previous South African study by Van der Vaart et al. (2018) but was almost three times higher than the initial research by De Witte (1992). The adapted decreased by almost two thirds from the prevalence found by previous studies (De Witte, 1992; Van der Vaart, 2018).

The differences between the studies could be ascribed to five aspects: legislation, beliefs, family arrangements, structural challenges associated with job search, and high levels of poverty. In South Africa, legislation such as the Employment Equity Act and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act makes provision for redressing past imbalances through preferential treatment of black South Africans when appointing employees (Horwitz & Jain, 2011). In a recent study, Du Toit et al. (2018) found that the unemployed believed in the power of external forces to secure employment. Both legislation and beliefs might account for the higher prevalence of optimists and lower prevalence of the desperate among this sample. Furthermore, according to Barnett (2008), multigenerational and extended family living arrangements (common in South Africa) generally provide a buffer against the negative effects and help to absorb the impact of unemployment, which would also account for fewer desperate unemployed. Even though South Africa's unemployed are extremely poverty stricken, Fourie (2015) highlights desperate individuals' constant battle in trying to overcome various barriers (for example, the cost of searching for a job and the local unemployment rate) to employment, ultimately leading to discouraged jobseekers. Poverty, especially among disadvantaged communities, might also result in fewer adapted unemployed, as they do not have the luxury to withdraw from the labour market (Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

The second aim of this study was to examine the associations between these profiles and two important psychological variables, namely, negative emotions and psychological need frustration. Examining these associations further attested to the validity of these profiles and provided valuable insights for intervention development. The optimists and adapted experienced fewer negative emotions and less psychological need frustration compared to the desperate and discouraged. This result could be the consequence of three aspects. Firstly, the optimists and the adapted were less involved in job search behaviour and, as a consequence, less exposed to the challenges and rejection accompanying a job search. Secondly, they were less committed to employment (the adapted even more so than the optimists), which further lowered their negative emotions and psychological need frustration. In addition, the adapted might be engaged in a 'psychological adaptation process' in which they had adapted to their role as unemployed (De Witte et al., 2010). In the third place, the optimists were more employable (younger, educated, and short-term unemployed) (Van der Vaart et al., 2018) compared to the other groups, resulting in more positive outcomes. In contrast, the results indicated that the desperate and discouraged experienced more negative emotions and psychological need frustration. This could be attributed to their high levels of employment commitment, their continuous involvement in job search behaviour and subsequent rejection, the constant need to overcome various obstacles and challenges (Fourie, 2015), and their higher levels of employment commitment.

Practical Implications

Having concluded that 'the unemployed' is not a homogeneous group, but rather a heterogeneous group, consisting of several homogeneous groups, it is important for these identified groups to be optimally supported according to their differential experiences. Since the optimists and adapted have fewer negative emotions and their needs are less frustrated, interventions that optimise these aspects are ideal. For these two groups, economic interventions (for example, job creation) may be more beneficial. The desperate and discouraged, in turn, require psychological interventions. Interventions should be targeted at lowering their negative emotions and their psychological need frustration (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018). Ultimately, implementing tailored interventions that rely not only on skills development, but also on the psychological requirements of each unemployed group's needs, would enhance their psychological well-being and would increase the effectiveness of unemployment interventions (Koopman et al., 2017).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The study made use of a cross-sectional design, which limited any claims about causality. The study was only conducted in two communities, and this might limit the generalisability of the findings. Due to the lower levels of literacy of typical unemployed people, understanding of the content of the various questionnaires could have proven more difficult. Future studies could employ a longitudinal design, and they could also replicate the study in more communities to strengthen, validate, and ensure meaningful interpretation of the different types of unemployed people in a more collectivistic and non-Western context. A longitudinal study would additionally enable researchers to explore the transitioning of unemployed individuals between different profiles as well as to detect changes in the levels of psychological need satisfaction and identified variables as a consequence of (changes in) profile membership. Furthermore, future research could investigate positive emotions and psychological need satisfaction to provide a comprehensive overview of the psychological functioning of the unemployed.

Conclusion

The study confirmed the existence of four types of unemployed people in South African communities; in other words, 'the unemployed' are similar in that they are unemployed, but different in that they experience unemployment differently. The types also differ on certain psychological variables, and for this reason, they require interventions that are tailored to their needs.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

3   CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to showcase the conclusions of the study in accordance with its objectives. Furthermore, the chapter provides an overview of the methodological and theoretical limitations of the study and ends with recommendations for future research as well as practice.

3.1 Conclusions

The general objective of this study was to determine the replicability of unemployment profiles and the association with psychological variables (for example, emotions and psychological need frustration) in selected communities in South Africa.

The first specific objective of the study was to conceptualise psychosocial profiles – and their associations with negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration – according to the literature. De Witte (1992) originally identified five types of unemployed based on a range of psychosocial variables: the optimists, desperate, discouraged, adapted, and withdrawn. The *optimists* experienced their situation as somewhat negative (but also as somewhat positive), and they were somewhat committed to employment, but they searched quite intensely for work. The *desperate* experienced unemployment as extremely negative, were committed to employment, and also searched quite intensely for work (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). The *discouraged* were likewise negative, but they reported some positive experiences. Although work was important, there was little engagement in job search activities. The *adapted* had more positive than negative experiences, were less committed to work, and showed little interest in job search activities (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). The *withdrawn* were characterised by few negative experiences, low levels of employment commitment, and very low levels of job search behaviour (De Witte, 1992).

De Witte's types were replicated among a sample of unemployed females (De Witte & Wets, 1996), but not among a sample of the unemployed in South Africa (Van der Vaart et al., 2018). In the South African context, the withdrawn were not identified. The results of Van der Vaart et al. (2018) corroborated the results of De Witte and Hooge (1995). However, De Witte and Hooge (1995) used a sample of short-term unemployed. The literature indicates that different types of unemployed (that is, psychosocial profiles) exist, but that there may be slight differences between contexts. A review of the literature showed that the psychological health of unemployed people was lower than their employed counterparts (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). The decline in their psychological health might be ascribed to higher levels of

negative emotions experienced by them (Borgen & Amundson, 1987) as well as the frustration of their basic psychological needs (Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018). Because different types of unemployed people could be identified, the extent to which they experienced negative emotions and need frustration might differ as a function of the variables used for profiling (that is, experiences, attitudes towards employment, and the frequency with which they searched for jobs).

The second objective of the study was to determine whether the four types of unemployed – based on the three-dimensional psychosocial profile – could be replicated in selected communities in South Africa. It was concluded that these four types of unemployed were present in the sample, but that their prevalence differed somewhat from what was reported by Van der Vaart et al. (2018). Three times more optimists were present, and a third fewer desperate and two thirds fewer adapted individuals were found. The number of discouraged was very similar to the previous study. These differences may be ascribed to legislation, beliefs, family structures, structural challenges associated with a job search, and high levels of poverty. The results also indicated that these four types of unemployed differed in their levels of reported experiences, commitment to employment (that is, attitude), and job search behaviour. Overall, the findings supported the notion that 'the unemployed' were not a homogeneous group, but belonged to several subgroups (De Witte, 1992; De Witte & Hooge, 1995; De Witte & Wets, 1996; Kulik, 2001; Nordenmark, 1999; Van der Vaart et al., 2018).

The third objective of the study was to explore the associations between the psychosocial profiles and negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration. The results from the study indicated that the different types of unemployed differed on both variables in the following ways: the optimist and adapted profiles reported the lowest experiences of negative emotions, followed by the discouraged and the desperate. The desperate experienced the highest levels of negative emotions. Finally, the optimists and adapted experienced equal, but lower, levels of psychological need frustration compared to the discouraged and the desperate. The desperate experienced the highest levels of psychological need frustration.

The differences in the extent to which negative emotions and psychological need frustration were experienced could largely be attributed to the optimists and the adapted being less involved in job search behaviour. Consequently, they were subjected less to the rejection and challenges associated with searching for a job (Fourie, 2015; Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018; Wanberg et al., 2005). Furthermore, they were less committed to employment

(De Witte, 1992; Van der Vaart et al., 2018), and the discrepancy between their attitudes (or values) and their employment status was smaller (Festinger, 1957) than for their discouraged and desperate counterparts. The adapted had also adapted to their unemployment status (De Witte et al., 2010), leading to fewer negative emotions and less frustration of their psychological needs. The findings were in line with theory and further supported the construct validity of the typology.

3.2 Limitations

The limitations of the study will be discussed from both a methodological and a theoretical perspective.

3.2.1 Methodological Limitations

Several methodological limitations are worth mentioning and should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. In the first place, the study made use of a self-constructed emotions questionnaire, which did not undergo a pilot study. Even though the questionnaire demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties and the theory was consulted in selecting the emotions, the substantive phase of scale validation was omitted. The substantive phase of scale validation refers to steps taken to ensure that the content of the constructs under investigation is covered accurately and comprehensively. It is an important prerequisite for the structural phase in which psychometric properties of the scale are evaluated (Flake et al., 2017). Secondly, participants were limited in their selection of response categories, with most of the instruments only having three options from which to choose. Although this is recommended when surveying participants with lower levels of literacy (Flaskerud, 2012; Sauro, 2019), it restricted analysis to the range of analytical techniques available for categorical data.

Thirdly, the sample only comprised unemployed residents from two selected communities. This could have potentially caused selection bias, with the opportunity to choose participants being dictated by, and restricted to, only the two chosen communities (Clancy, 2019). The sample could potentially have compromised the population validity and created response bias by not being a true representation of the target population (Clancy, 2019; Gaither et al., 2018). In the fourth place, the time frame of the completion of the measuring instruments could have imposed limitations. The questionnaires asked participants to reflect on several aspects in the preceding one to three months. Consequently, their current emotional status might have led to memory (or recall) bias (Breslin & Mustard, 2003). In the fifth place, the

study made use of a cross-sectional research design. No claims of causality could be made, and it was assumed that variables were static. Hence, the study treated negative emotions and psychological need frustration as correlates (as opposed to determinants or outcomes), but this meant that there was no clarity on whether the profiles were a consequence of negative emotions and psychological need frustration or whether the profiles determined negative emotions and psychological need frustration. Moreover, people's experiences, attitudes, and behaviours could change over time (Da Motta Veiga & Gabriel, 2016; De Witte et al., 2010), potentially also changing their membership of a particular unemployed group, which could not be captured by a cross-sectional design. A sixth limitation was that the current study modelled the constructs by using the independent cluster model (ICM) approach to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The ICM-CFA is problematic, as it restricts items to their own factors, leading to biased parameters because it fails to recognise that items are fallible and imperfect. ICM-CFA contrasts with newer modelling approaches, such as exploratory structural equation modelling (ESEM), in which items can cross-load on theoretically related constructs (see Morin et al., 2016, 2018 for more detail). These assumptions are more realistic in psychological research and lead to more accurate parameter estimates (Howard et al., 2020). Lastly, the current study took a person-centred approach to study the variables. Although this was warranted, a variable-centred approach in which the relationships between variables are the focus of the investigation may complement the person-centred approach taken (Morin et al., 2017).

3.2.2 Theoretical Limitations

Several theoretical limitations are worth mentioning. The first is that the study focused only on negative emotions and the frustration of basic psychological needs, neglecting positive emotions and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs. Even though part of the aim of the study was to determine the effects of negative emotions and basic psychological need frustration and was theoretically justified, the unemployed may also experience positive emotions and need satisfaction. Secondly, it is important to note that many other factors could also play a role in the psychological experiences of unemployment (Paul & Moser, 2009; Wanberg, 2012). For example, Hammarström (1994) showed that stress was a significant predictor of a person's subsequent (un)employment status. Furthermore, studies have shown that mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety are significantly higher among unemployed than employed people and play a significant role in the psychological experiences of unemployment (Dauth et al., 2016; Howard et al., 2020; Linn et al., 1985).

3.3 Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided, subsequent (but not limited) to the above limitations.

3.3.1 Methodological Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that future research address the substantive phase of scale validation (a) through a thorough review (Gehlbach & Brinkworth, 2011) of the emotions literature, (b) through an expert review of items (Gehlbach & Brinkworth, 2011), and (c) by conducting cognitive interviews (Willis, 2005). Response options can be increased by making use of graphic rating scales (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013), and future studies should consider using these to reap the benefits of analytical methods available for continuous measures. In the absence of a list of unemployed, generalisability can be enhanced by conducting the study in more communities in South Africa to evaluate whether the results are replicable. Recall bias can be addressed by including other sources of information such as a trusted family member or friend. Future research should also collect data at different points in time to evaluate the transition between groups or the development of groups over time as well as the causal relationships between profiles and their antecedents or outcomes (Wang & Wang, 2020).

With more recent developments occurring in the field of factor analysis, it is important to remain aware of more sophisticated and less restrictive methods that can be applied for scale validation. In particular, referring to ESEM, the flexibility of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the accessibility of the advanced analytical methods of CFA can be combined in the same model (Howard et al., 2020; Morin et al., 2016, 2018; Tóth-Király et al., 2020). It is recommended that future studies employ the ESEM framework to model the variables. Future research could also combine person- with variable-centred analysis to disentangle the variables and to understand the relationships between the variables constituting the profiles.

3.3.2 Theoretical Recommendations for Future Research

Recent research has shown that basic psychological need satisfaction is related to the unemployment experience (Van der Vaart et al., 2020). Hence, it is recommended that future studies include need satisfaction to gain a nuanced understand of the psychological experience of unemployment. A person's levels of stress because of his/her unemployment could have a significant influence on the duration of that person's unemployment (Breslin &

Mustard, 2003; Perreault et al., 2020). Consequently, stress and mental health, as well as their impact on profile membership, could be investigated in future research.

Research has also found that adolescents who grow up in autonomy-supportive homes develop a higher desire for autonomy-satisfying situations (Van Petegem et al., 2017; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020). Research among athletes supports the beneficial effects of autonomy-supportive coaching, as opposed to controlled, regulated, and overly prescriptive coaching behaviours (Delrue et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2017). Consequently, an investigation is recommended into the degree to which the different types of unemployed value different interventions and how effective different interventions are for these different types of unemployed.

Several studies have found that the degree of support received from friends and family mitigates the negative effects of unemployment (Caplan et al., 1989; Eden & Aviram, 1993; Linn et al., 1985; Vinokur & Van Ryn, 1993). The workplace is often identified as an important source of self-esteem and self-identity; however, when the workplace interactions no longer exist, supportive family relationships become even more important in dealing with unemployment. Supportive familial relations enhance the unemployed's self-esteem and self-efficacy (Slebarska et al., 2009) and encourage their search for a job (Garrett-Peters, 2009; Slebarska et al., 2009; Waters & Moore, 2002a, 2002b). Therefore, future research could focus on the significance of supportive family relationships in dealing with the effects of unemployment and how this differs between the different types of unemployed.

Notwithstanding the exceptionally high unemployment rate, the long periods of unemployment, and the need frustration experienced by unemployed people, future research could add valuable insight into the mechanisms, resilience, and coping strategies employed by the four different types of unemployed in an effort to endure their circumstances (Du Toit et al., 2018; Van der Vaart et al., 2020). Special attention should also be given to the changes in participants' employment status in a prospective study. In this way, it would be possible to draw conclusions about the employability of the respective groups.

Finally, future research could employ qualitative interviews guided by the capability approach (CA) (Egdell & Beck, 2020). The CA approach, originally developed by Amartya Sen (1985, 1999), emphasises that individuals should have the capabilities to develop, pursue, and change their life plans (Alkire, 2002, 2005; Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017). One is considered capable when one has the freedom to do what one wishes to do and wishes to be; one is both able and enabled (Sen, 1999). What one values 'doing' or 'being' is referred to as

'functionings'. The CA also recognises conversion factors – the personal, social, and environmental factors that determine how well (or whether) a person is able to convert resources into 'functionings' (Robeyns, 2005, 2017). From this perspective, researchers could start with the differences in the unemployed's 'functionings', that is, the value they attach to being employed. Subsequently, they could determine (a) whether the different types feel that they have the capability (that is, freedom and opportunities) to pursue the life plans they value (whether these include employment or not) and (b) which conversion factors enable them to pursue these life plans.

3.3.4 Recommendations for Practice

Various studies have highlighted the importance of both physical and psychological health and the negative effect unemployment has on both (Hammarström, 1994; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Paver et al., 2019; Wanberg, 2012). Therefore, (re-)employment initiatives should not simply be driven from a physical or economic perspective, but also from a psychological perspective (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Wanberg, 2012). Unfortunately, South Africa has very few unemployment programmes driven from a psychological perspective (Paver et al., 2019).

However, these interventions should not follow a one-size-fits-all approach. As was proven by the findings of the study, the unemployed comprised various homogeneous subgroups, and these groups had vastly different experiences. The optimists constituted 34.60% of the sample. A qualitative study by Du Toit et al. (2018) also indicated that hope and optimism were prominent themes among the unemployed in informal settlements. In spite of their precarious circumstances, the optimists and the adapted unemployed individuals were less negative about their situations than the discouraged and desperate types. Thus, they could benefit more from economically driven job creation interventions (Du Toit et al., 2018; Paver et al., 2019; Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018). Their lower experiences of negative emotions should equally and simultaneously be optimised through psychological interventions as well (Van der Vaart, 2018). However, both types of interventions (economic and psychological) are required relatively concurrently in order to keep the optimists and the adapted optimistic and avoid their becoming discouraged or desperate. Even though the adapted constituted a relatively small portion of the sample (8.30%), the discouraged formed the single largest group (37.90%). Both the adapted and discouraged were relatively inactive in their job searching activities and might, as a result, require more economically driven interventions. These two types should, however, not be stimulated towards only economic

activity in a careless manner, as it could quickly convert them into desperate instead of optimistic jobseekers (Van der Vaart, 2018).

The desperate type had the highest negative experiences and psychological need frustration stemming from their unemployment. As a result, it is recommended that the focus be on interventions that aim at lowering their negative experiences of unemployment as well as interventions that focus on increasing their positive experiences. One way to achieve this is through need-supportive interventions. When their psychological needs are satisfied, they might have fewer negative experiences and might present a more positive attitude towards job searching (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Cordeiro et al., 2016; Vansteenkiste & Van den Broeck, 2018). These psychological needs could be satisfied by stakeholders who are dealing with the unemployed. For example, their need for autonomy could be satisfied by involving the desperate more in decision-making processes, encouraging and creating opportunities for self-initiated behaviour, providing opportunities to encourage and allow their input, and demonstrating an understanding of their perspectives and circumstances (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003; Ntoumainis & Mallet, 2014). Their need for competence could be enhanced by initiatives that focus on equipping them to deal with difficult situations and challenges (Matosic et al., 2016), helping them with goal-setting behaviour, and providing them with uplifting and detailed feedback (Ntoumanis & Mallett, 2014). Lastly, their need for relatedness could be supported through behaviour such as displaying empathy, providing support, and simply showing interest (Pulido et al., 2017; Rocchi et al., 2017).

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter contained the conclusions in accordance with the formulated objectives of this mini-dissertation. Furthermore, the chapter identified and clarified the methodological and theoretical contributions of the study and provided recommendations centred on the limitations and empirical conclusions of the chapter.

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