

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND WORK
ENGAGEMENT AMONGST CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS AT A CORRECTIONAL
FACILITY IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

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ABSTRACT

The correctional facility, and in particular the job of the correctional officer, remain a unique field of study, as there has not been much research done on the population other than stress-related studies. Although the correctional environment is one of the most dangerous and volatile working environments, there is still a number of correctional officers who remain motivated in their role until the day they retire. Many studies conducted on correctional officers, focused on the negativity associated with the role, resulting in minimal positively focused research.

With the recent development in the field of positive psychology and the dimensions of psychological capital it is believed that human resources and psychological strengths assist with improving an employee's performance. At present psychological capital is seen as an important concept in helping employees cope with their working environments, resulting in the success of the organisation.

Research has also shown a link between an individual's psychological capital and their level of work engagement. Having correctional officers being positively engaged in their workplace, will firstly result in the successful operation of correctional facilities and secondly it will allow the department of correctional services to achieve their vision and mission in protecting society from harmful individuals and rehabilitating the inmates to successfully integrate into society again.

Data for this present study was collected through a biographical questionnaire, the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) and the work and well-being questionnaire (UWES-17). A convenience sample was utilized, with 122 correctional officers completing the questionnaires. The data was then analyzed using a statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS).

This study found that psychological capital does influence work engagement amongst the sample of correctional officers, specifically the psychological capital dimension hope influencing the work engagement dimension vigour. Furthermore optimism explained the greatest proportion of the variance in work engagement. Recommendations for the organisation and future research were proposed.

Key Words: Psychological Capital, Work Engagement, positive organisational behaviour, correctional officers, South African correctional environment, job demands, job resources, organisational resources, personal resources, wellbeing

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis "*The relationship between Psychological Capital and Work Engagement amongst correctional officers at a correctional facility in the Western Cape*" is my own work, and that the resources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete reference.

Full name : Tarryn Jade Ferreira

Signed

Date

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Correctional officers work under volatile conditions, faced daily with tensions within their facilities. According to Gillan (2001) the correctional environment is characterised by hostile inmates, shift work and often compulsory or optional overtime. Most correctional facilities are noisy, densely populated and lack many of the comforts found in other work environments. South African correctional officers in particular are confronted by prison gangs which have dominated South African correctional facilities for decades and the rise in the prison population also poses a challenge for correctional officers (Dissel, 2002). These less than favourable conditions pose an interesting area of study for human flourishing in the workplace.

Decades of continuous research on negatively orientated perspectives and problems in organisational behaviour and human resource management disciplines have not resulted in better understanding of human strengths and optimal flourishing of individuals in the workplace (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007). Psychology as an entity had previously paid little attention to healthy individuals in terms of growth development and self-actualisation. Seligman and other researchers redirected psychological research towards the two missions of positive psychology, helping people become happier, more productive and actualizing human potential (Luthans et al., 2007). This resulted in the rise of theory building and empirical research known as positive psychology.

The aim of positive psychology is to shift emphasis away from what people are doing wrong towards what people are doing right, to focus on strengths as opposed to weaknesses, be interested in resilience as opposed to vulnerability and to be concerned with enhancing and developing prosperity, wellness and the good in life (Luthans, 2002a). Psychological capital and work engagement are two variables that form part of the positive psychology paradigm. The study of these two variables within a correctional facility therefore aims to highlight how psychological strengths can improve work engagement in a less than desirable workplace context.

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the variables, psychological capital and work engagement, to be discussed and explored in the present study. It will further provide a justification to the study, problem statement, research hypothesis, and a framework of the study.

1.2 VARIABLES EXPLORED IN THE STUDY

The variables to be explored in the study are psychological capital and work engagement. The present study will explore whether psychological capital influences work engagement in a sample of correctional officers.

1.2.1 Psychological Capital

Positive organisational behaviour (POB) is a specific approach to employee management as it has an impact on human resource development and performance management. It is defined as the study and application of positively oriented human

resource strengths and psychological capacities which can be measured, developed and effectively managed for the improvement of performance in modern day organisations (Luthans, 2002a). It is seen as an important means of equipping employees with the personal skills needed to deal with the challenges of working life, as the investment in human capital has proven to be vital in ensuring organisational success (Luthans, Norman, Avolio & Avey, 2008).

For a psychological strength to be included in the conception of POB, it is required to be positive and relatively unique to the field of organisational behaviour. Most importantly, the scientific criteria needs to be theoretically based, research based, measurable, developmental and related to the outcomes of work performance (Luthans et al., 2007).

Psychological capital (PsyCap) according to Luthans and Youssef (2004) is a core construct of positive organisational behaviour (POB). POB is concerned with the study of positive human resource strengths which can be measured, developed and managed effectively, resulting in performance improvements within the workplace. The four dimensions of positive organisational behaviour, namely self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience are combined and represented as psychological capital.

PsyCap is a higher order core construct, integrating the various positive organisational behaviour criteria capacities, not only additively but also synergistically (Luthans et al., 2007). The resulting impact of investing, developing

and managing PsyCap on performance and attitudinal outcomes is expected to be larger than the individual, positive psychological capacities from which it is comprised of.

1.2.2 Work Engagement

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

1.2.2.1 Dimensions of work engagement

The vigour dimension is characterized by having increased levels of energy and mental resilience while one is working. Even when faced with difficult circumstances, individuals are able to persist and invest more time and effort in what one is doing in order to succeed (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

Dedication according to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) is when an individual experiences a strong sense of pride when doing their work. These individuals remain enthusiastic and tend to feel a real sense of significance in their particular position; furthermore resulting in them being challenged and inspired in their role.

Absorption according to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) is when individuals find themselves being fully engrossed in their work, resulting in them being happy and fulfilled by what they do. Furthermore these individuals tend to experience the time passing by faster than usual that have difficulty detaching themselves from their work.

1.3 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

In the everyday workplace, there are always risk factors or duties where an individual is required to dedicate more time, which may very often be out of the control of the individual. These risk factors according to Demerouti and Bakker (2011) are referred to as job related stressors. These risk factors are further divided into job resources and job demands.

Job demands according to Rothmann, Mostert and Strydom (2006) are aspects of the job that could possibly cause strain where they exceed the employee's adaptive ability. These demands may not necessarily be negative, but can contribute to stress if previous demands experienced by the employee was not dealt with adequately before experiencing new demands (Meijman & Mulder, 1998 as cited in Demerouti & Bakker, 2007).

Job resources however assist with reducing the job demands and stimulate an individual's growth, learning and development (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007). Job resources also provide the motivation to achieve one's work related goals (Hakanen,

Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Job resources according to Demerouti and Bakker (2007) can be classified into two levels, the organisational level and the personal level. At the organisational level job resources would include job security, career opportunities and salary, whereas the personal level includes resources such as support from co-workers and management and team work amongst colleagues (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007). Personal resources according to Schaufeli and Taris (2014) are the psychological characteristics of the individual that are generally associated with resiliency and are therefore referred to as having the ability to successfully control and impact what happens in one's environment. Furthermore, these personal resources assist with meeting work goals as well as stimulate growth and development.

The relationship between job demands, job resources and work engagement are explained in the job demands resource model. The Job demands resource model (JD-R) is a theoretical framework trying to integrate two independent research traditions, namely stress and motivation. According to Demerouti and Bakker (2011) studies have shown the JD-R model can predict the experience of burnout and work engagement. The assumption of the JD-R model is that the two research traditions evoke two psychologically different although related processes (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007). The first is an energy draining, health impairment process where job demands exhaust employees' mental and physical resources, leading to burnout and eventually ill-health. The second is a positive motivational process where job resources foster engagement and organisational commitment. Furthermore, the JD-R model specifies how the job demands and job resources interact with each other to predict organisational outcomes (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

The correctional facility, being a very unique working environment has its own job demands and organisational job resources. According to Gillan (2001) some of the job demands experienced by correctional officers, particularly in South Africa is having to perform tasks that do not make up the normal job description and not having sufficient staff to complete tasks. Botha and Pienaar (2006) go further by listing physical threats made by inmates towards correctional officers and lack of recognition as job demands. Correctional officers are the driving force behind any correctional facility (Hogan, Lambert, Jenkins & Wambold, 2006). Therefore it is crucial for correctional officers to be engaged in their workplace. As it may not always be possible to decrease the job demands, one way of increasing engagement may be to enhance the personal resources of the employees. Thus, studying the relationship between PsyCap, as a personal resource, and work engagement may provide direction to psychological strength development interventions to assist in maintaining high levels of work engagement in the correctional facility.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Correctional officers experience high job demands compared to individuals working in contemporary working environments. Job demands according to Bakker and Demerouti (2007) are categorized as pressures from the workplace, emotional demands and mental demands. It includes physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the individual's job which require large amounts of physical or psychological effort.

Currently South African correctional officers are faced with daily strains in their current working environment. The uniqueness of the Correctional officer's environment compared to the conventional workplace is that the threats come directly from the individuals whom they supervise (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). The job demands experienced by correctional officers include the constant threats by gangs and irregular working hours. Furthermore, having to do duties they were not previously assigned to, having inadequate equipment and not having enough assistance are also job demands. These job demands are likely to have negative influences on correctional officers, resulting in stress and burnout.

According to Botha and Pienaar (2006) it is important for correctional officers to be well balanced individuals who reach optimal functioning. This is however influenced by the increasing challenges in the working environment, making it difficult for correctional officers to achieve their expectations. According to the JDR model, job resources (including personal resources such as PsyCap) can mitigate the impact of job demands on an individual's work engagement.

As PsyCap draws on the theory of positive psychology, the four positive dimensions, hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience allow for correctional officers to draw from their psychological strengths, allowing them to persevere in their working environment. By utilizing these psychological strengths correctional officers will have the belief in themselves that they have the ability to successfully complete tasks, they will have the determination to meet their desired goals, to remain optimistic when things are not necessarily going their way and be able to bounce back after a

negative occurrence. Furthermore the utilisation of their psychological strengths may have a direct influence on the work engagement of correctional officers.

Therefore, the research question guiding the current study can be formulated as follows:

“To what extent does PsyCap explain the variance in work engagement within a sample of correctional officers?”

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are to determine:

- i) To provide an understanding of the relationship which exists between psychological capital and work engagement
- ii) To determine to what extent the dimensions of psychological capital respectively influence work engagement

1.6 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Based on the research question and the objectives guiding the present study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: There is a statistically significant relationship between the dimensions of PsyCap (namely hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) and dimensions of work engagement (namely vigour, dedication, and absorption).

Hypothesis 2: The dimensions of PsyCap (namely hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience) explain a significant proportion of the variance in work engagement.

1.7 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to add to the growing body of knowledge regarding psychological capital and work engagement. It too can add knowledge to the research on correctional officers and their working environment. It would be from a psychological strength perspective, hence not only placing emphasis on previous research conducted on the negative aspects such as stress and burnout.

1.8 FRAMEWORK FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Chapter 2 will provide an extensive overview of the growing literature of psychological capital and work engagement. The chapter begins with an overview of the context of where the study is placed, namely correctional officers within correctional facilities. This will include a discussion of the negative aspects of the working environment of correctional officers. A brief overview of the job demands resource model will provide additional information on how both psychological capital and work engagement influence positive emotions resulting in positive outcomes in the workplace.

The research methodology will be provided in Chapter 3, as well as a description of the measuring instruments that are to be analysed. Furthermore an elaboration on the psychometric properties of the measuring instruments will be provided.

An analysis of the data gathered from the sample of correctional officers will be presented in Chapter 4. The findings will be reported in the form of graphs and charts and will be organised based on the hypotheses of the present study.

Based on the findings reported in chapter four conclusions and recommendations will be provided in Chapter 5. The conclusion will provide the explanation and findings to the problem statement provided in chapter 1. Recommendations will be made for future research based on the findings and drawing from previous literature.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter one provided a background to the present study, followed by an introduction to the variables to be utilised. The problem statement provided a description of what is to be achieved by the research and the contribution the study will make to future research and its contribution to the improvement of individuals psychological capital and work engagement, particularly in a correctional services environment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This literature review will present a discussion of the variables, namely psychological capital and work engagement. It will include a review of existing literature on the two proposed variables. Psychological capital will be the first variable to be discussed as it may determine the influencing relationship with the second variable, work engagement. A definition and history of each variable will be provided, as well as a summary of the criticism of each construct.

However, first a definition and brief description of the correctional facility work environment will be provided. This will include a short history into the South African correctional environment context as well as the demands associated with the job.

The literature review will conclude by providing a review of the interventions associated with psychological capital, as the aim of the study is to determine if psychological capital influences work engagement. This would serve to inform possible interventions to improve psychological capital within the work environment.

2.2 CORRECTIONAL SERVICES: THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

South African and international organisations currently demand a great deal from their employees now more than ever before (Rothmann, 2003). Modern organisations expect their employees to take a proactive approach, develop a sense of responsibility, show initiative and to be committed to the implementation of high performance standards (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008). Therefore employees are required to feel energetic, dedicated and absorbed in their work, in other words, engaged in their work. To promote engagement in organisations, resources such as optimism, self-efficacy and resilience could be employed, as according to Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) these personal resources aid work engagement.

Correctional facilities are unique working environments in both context and purpose (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). They are places declared by the law of the nation to ensure the restraint and custody of individuals who are accused or convicted of violating a criminal law (Animasahum & Oludemi, 2013). Furthermore there are few organisations whose central task is supervising and securing an unwilling and potentially violent population.

The main objective of the South African correctional services is to correct the behaviour of offenders within a safe, secure and humane environment, in order to successfully rehabilitate the offender (South African Department of correctional services, 2005). The key objectives of correctional services is to implement the

sentences conferred by the courts, to break the circle of crime, to protect society from dangerous offenders, to provide a controlled environment for the purpose of rehabilitation, to provide guidance and support to those who have been allowed parole or probation within their communities, to provide inmates with programmes to assist in correcting their offending behaviour, to assist with the reconciliation of the offender into their communities, to enhance the productivity of the offender, to promote health family relations and finally to assert discipline within the correctional environment (South African Department of Correctional Services, 2005). The key component to meeting the objectives of Correctional Services is the relationship between the correctional officer and the inmates (South African Department of Correctional Services, 2005).

Correctional officers are professionals who utilize their skills within a prison environment (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2002). The role of a correctional officer is to (1) maintain a secure environment where people are held in confinement against their will (2) to provide inmates with care, at the same time as showing humanity (3) provide inmates with opportunities to correct their offending behaviour (i.e. rehabilitation initiatives) and (4) to assist with the everyday management of their complex working environment (Price & Liebling, 1998). The success or failure of a correctional facility is dependent on the correctional officer as it is the myriad of tasks and responsibilities that influence whether goals and objectives of correctional facilities are met.

2.2.1 South African correctional facilities

South African correctional services face a number of challenges pertaining to staff shortages, arrangement of overtime, negotiations with labour unions and the structures of most of the prisons with South Africa. Working under these conditions makes it very difficult for correctional officers to remain positive and often results in correctional officers experiencing very stressful events.

2.2.1.1 Work demands

The correctional environment according to Roy, Novak and Miksaj-Todorovic (2010), affects the emotional well-being of correctional officers, increases their level of stress, affects their job satisfaction and may ultimately result in job burnout.

Due to the South African correctional services accepting a new focus due to human rights, correctional officers had to deal with problems such as overcrowding and dangerous criminals (Rothmann et al., 2006). This is echoed by authors Botha and Pienaar (2006) who reported that correctional officers reported high job demands when having to do extra work and not having the manpower to produce good quality work, due to serious overcrowding in correctional facilities.

2.2.1.2 Prison overcrowding

The overcrowding of correctional facilities is a continuous problem in South African correctional facilities as the country does not have a jail system like the United

States of America (Luyt, 2001). Offenders who are awaiting trial, short term and long term offenders are incarcerated in South Africa's prison system. This is due to South Africa's police stations having limited space, thus only detaining offenders until they are transferred to correctional facilities (Luyt, 2001). According to the department of correctional services for the financial year of 2011/2012 the inmate population was on average 158 790. Sentenced inmates make up an average of 112 748. Between 2007 and 2010 there was an increase of 2 432 sentenced inmates, representing a growth of 0.71%. The highest increase in population is in inmates who have been sentenced to life imprisonment, increasing by 8.3%. The ratio of Correctional officer to inmate according to Mutingh (2009) stands at one correctional officer to 25 inmates.

2.2.1.3 Gangs

Gangs according to Dissel (2002) have dominated South African prisons for hundreds of years. Gangs within the correctional facilities continue to recruit new members, organise their activities and conduct dangerous activities, despite the knowledge by the department of correctional services. Gangs dominate most prisons, some controlling the allocation cells, the distribution of food, the drug trade, support of the corruption of correctional officers and most of the sexual activity. Approximately half of assaults in prisons are attributed to gangs.

Studies have indicated that particular job demands, commonly the stressors related to an individual's role in the organisation may have an influence on an employee's well-being and their work related outcomes (Lambert, Hogan, Paoline & Clarke,

2005; Tremblay & Messerver, 2011). The job demands associated with correctional officers pertain to overcrowding (Botha & Pienaar, 2006), role ambiguity, environmental safety or workplace violence and support from co-workers (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). It can therefore be concluded that the demanding situation correctional officers find themselves in does not necessarily present a positive organisational context.

2.3 JOB DEMANDS RESOURCE MODEL

The working environment may impact the wellbeing of employees (Rothmann et al., 2006). Job demands and job resources could be regarded as important causes of well-being at work as job demands and resources may affect the physical health, psychological well-being and organisational commitment through specific mediating factors for example burnout and work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The job demands resource model (JD-R model) developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) attributes the well being of employees to the characteristics of the work environment (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2007). Every occupation has characteristics associated with the job. These characteristics are all different in that they can either be job demands or job resources (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010).

As alluded to in Chapter 1, the JD-R model is a theoretical framework aimed at integrating two fairly independent research traditions, namely stress and motivation

(Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Demerouti and Bakker (2011) describe job demands as the initiators of a health impairment process. De Bruine and Roodt (2011) elaborates on job demands being a de-energising process as it exhausts an employee's mental and physical resources, which may lead to burnout and eventually ill health. Job resources are initiators of a motivational process (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). It promotes work engagement and may lead to organisational commitment (De Bruine & Roodt, 2011).

Job demands are the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job which require sustained physical or psychological efforts. These would include high work pressure, unfavourable working environment and irregular working hours (Demerouti & Bakker, 2001). According to Hockey's (1997 as cited in De Bruine & Roodt, 2011) compensatory control model, stressed employees struggle to protect their primary performance goals while dealing with increased job demands which require an increased amount of mental effort. It's according to this process that De Bruine and Roodt (2011) base their theory of job demands being a de-energising process. Job demands can further be divided into quantitative and qualitative job demands. Quantitative job demands includes work overload and time pressure, whereas qualitative job demands include role ambiguity, emotional demands, role conflict and adverse working conditions.

Job resources according to Demerouti and Bakker (2001) are the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job which are either functional in achieving work related goals, reducing job demands and associated physiological

and psychological cost and to stimulate individual growth, learning and development. According to Hobfoll (2001) primary human motivation is geared towards the maintenance and accumulation of resources. Resources have their own value as they are a means of protecting other valued resources. Job resources influence the employee's well-being intrinsically by fostering employee growth, learning and development, or extrinsically by assisting the employee to achieve their work goals (Hakanen et al. 2006).

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2007) job resources are located at four levels. The organisational level (wages, career opportunities, access to resources and job security), interpersonal and social level (supervisor and co-worker support and team climate) the organisations work level (role clarity and participation in decision making) and lastly the level of tasks (skill variety, autonomy, performance feedback and task significance).

A graphical depiction of the JDR model is presented in Figure 2.1.

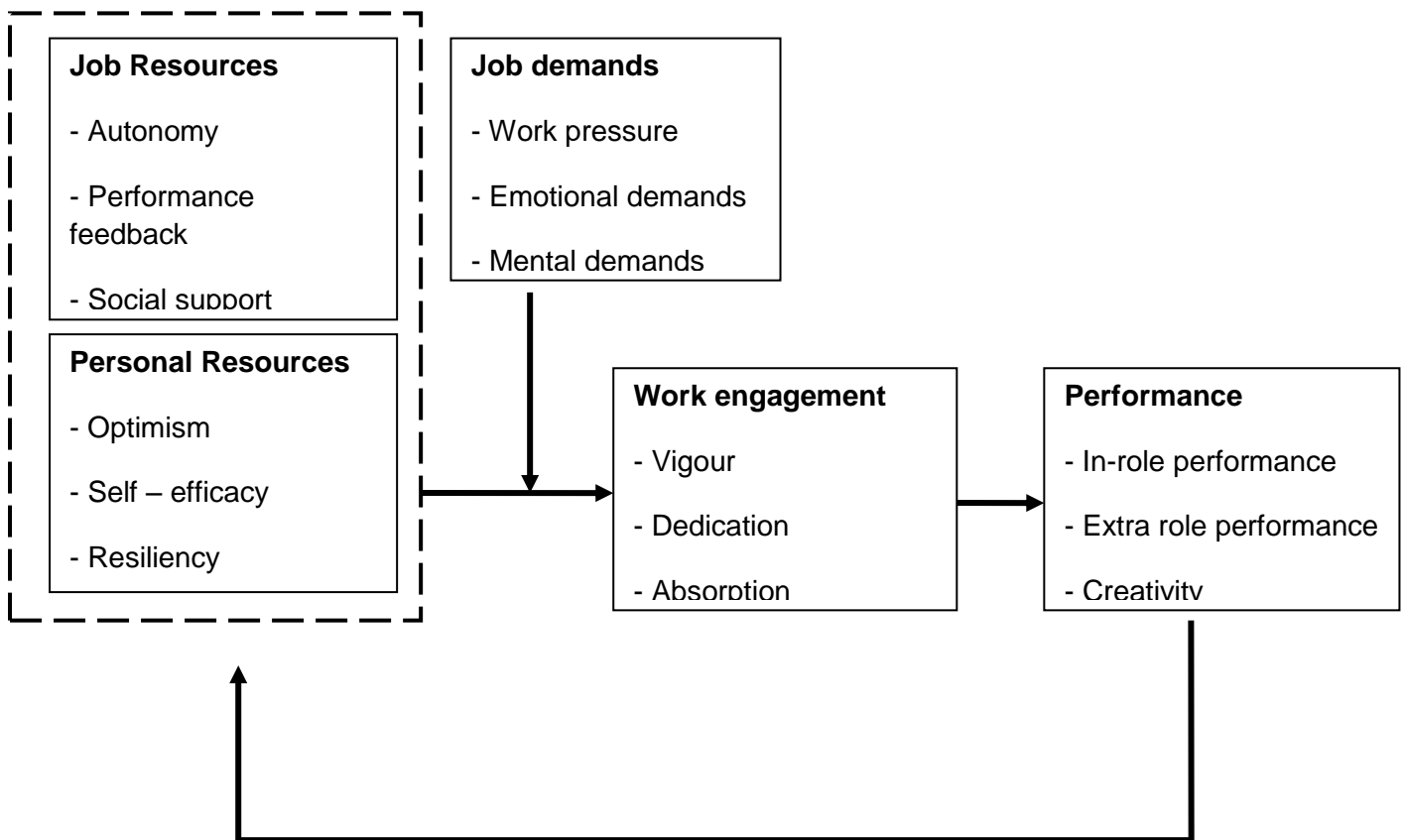


Figure 2.1: Job demands resource model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

2.3.1 Personal resources

Personal resources are aspects of the self generally linked to resiliency, making reference to the individuals' sense of their ability to control and impact their environment (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis & Jackson, 2003). Personal resources have been found to act as a mediator in the relationship between job resources and work engagement, suggesting job resources foster the development of personal resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

The characteristics of personal resources facilitate work engagement. Individuals with high optimism expect success when presented with a challenge. Furthermore it

can be said that high job demands may limit engagement through a decreased feeling of control, yet it can be counteracted by the resources of optimism, allowing a sense of personal control over the present demands (Karasek, 1979).

In a study conducted by Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2007) three personal resources (self-efficacy, organisational based self esteem and optimism) were examined in order to predict work engagement. Results showed employees who are engaged are highly self efficacious, they believe they will experience good outcomes in their lives (optimistic) and they believe they are able to satisfy their needs by participating in roles in the organisation. The personal resources self-efficacy and optimism form part of the PsyCap construct which will be discussed next.

2.4 PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

Psychological capital (PsyCap) is defined as an individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering towards goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success (Luthans, Youssef & Avolio, 2007, p.3). It is state-like and possible to be developed in a short, highly focused training session (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman & Combs, 2006).

The following sections will provide more detail on each of the PsyCap dimensions.

2.4.1 Self – Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a human resource strength which has the psychological capacity for development and effective performance management. Self-efficacy is defined as having the confidence in one's abilities to mobilize resources and courses of action to successfully execute a specific task (Luthans & Youssef, 2004). The self-efficacy construct is arguably the most recognizable based on its extensive theory building and research over the years. One aspect of the importance and pervasiveness of self-efficacy is that it is a psychological mechanism for positivity (Luthans, 2002b).

Individuals who portray self-efficacy are exciting to manage as they set new challenges which stretch their experience base (Lewis, 2011). These individuals hold a stronger belief in their ability to successfully perform challenging tasks, set more challenging goals for themselves, persevere, invest more resources and are able to handle failure experiences better than individuals with low self-efficacy (Heaven, 2006).

Furthermore individuals who demonstrate self-efficacy are distinguishable through five important characteristics.

1. They set high goals for themselves and self-select for more difficult tasks.
2. Welcome and thrive on challenges.

3. They are highly self-motivated.
4. They invest in the necessary effort to accomplish their goals.
5. When faced with obstacles, they persevere.

These five characteristics equip individuals with high efficacy with the capability to develop independently and perform efficiently, even with little external input for extended periods of time (Luthans et al., 2007). Individuals with high self-efficacy do not wait for goals to be set for them, on the contrary they create their own discrepancies by incessantly challenging themselves, setting higher goals.

Efficacy is believed to come from four primary sources associated to work engagement (Bandura, 1977). The first source is task mastery which is having the ability to successfully accomplish tasks, leading to the belief that success can be replicated in the future. When considered in relation to the job demands resource model, it would seem an important component of absorption. In summary it would mean that the individual is able to completely accomplish a particular task and become absorbed in the overall achievement of the task. It too should increase vigour as more energy becomes available to utilize towards the task (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010).

Modelling and encouragement are the second and third sources that are considered to be associated with efficacy. According to Bandura (1977) modelling or vicarious learning is when an individual models another individual they consider to be similar to themselves. Encouragement is receiving positive feedback or persuasion from a coach, mentor or other respected role model. Furthermore an individual's whose self

confidence is increased through modelling or encouragement may be able to personally identify being able to accomplish a task.

Fourthly Bandura (1977) identified that efficacy can be increased through the motivating of physical and emotional arousal. This in terms of work engagement could lead to vigour and increased energy (Bakker, 2008).

2.4.2 Hope

Researchers have attempted to describe, measure, and study hope in a variety of ways as the construct has been conceptualised as expectations about goals and the future (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Goals with considerable value to the individual are considered applicable to this construct. Furthermore goals do not remain the same as they are goals which will take months to achieve (short term) and those which take years to achieve (long term) (Snyders & Lopez, 2007).

Hope according to Luthans and Youssef (2004), is described as “having the will power and pathways to attain one’s goals” (p. 152). Snyder, Irving and Anderson (1991) further define hope as a positive emotional state based on an interactively derived sense of successful agency (goal orientated energy) and pathways (planning to meet goals).

The notion of agency or determination in maintaining the effort needed to achieve goals is a reflection of the individual's motivation and determination that their goals are attainable. It is the individual's belief that successful planning may be formulated to attain goals (Snyder, 2000). It therefore specifically reflects an individual's desire to work towards a goal and remain committed.

Pathways are an individual's perceived capabilities about generating routes to attaining desired goals (Snyder, 2009). Luthans et al. (2007) describes the pathway as a way in which an individual develops and alternative way or path to reach their desired goals, when their original path becomes blocked.

Hope, according to Snyder (2000), has been given the least attention than the other psychological capital constructs. Snyder goes further to state that hope is a construct that should be explored further as it can provide added benefits within the workplace as it is already related to employee performance and effective leadership.

2.4.3 Optimism

Optimism is more closely associated with overall positive psychology than any other construct (Luthans et al., 2004). It is a realistic, flexible and dynamic construct which can be learned and developed (Peterson, 2000). Individuals who are optimists expect positive and desirable events in the future. Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa and Li (2005) further elaborate that individuals who are optimistic approach setbacks as though they are challenges and opportunities that may possibly lead to success.

Optimism is not only about predicting positive things happening in the future. Rather it is dependable on the reasons and attributions one uses to explain why particular events have occurred, regardless if they were positive, negative, past, present or future (Luthans et al., 2007). Furthermore it can be said that individuals who are optimistic very rarely lose hope when following their innovative ideas, even when faced with stressful circumstances these individuals will find positive or better alternative ways to make these ideas a success (Ziyae, Mobaraki & Saeediyoun, 2015).

Optimism may also have dysfunctions in the workplace as employees who are physically healthy may be optimistic about their health in the future and may neglect their physical and nutritional maintenance at the present time (Tabaziba, 2015). According to Luthans and Church (2002) one may tend to find individuals who are not optimistic about their future goals in the present, such as wanting to win the companies golf tournament or meeting some unrealistic sales goal.

In order to address these dysfunctions, which could ordinarily result in a cost for the organisation, one needs to provide realistic optimism, which would involve an objective assessment of what an individual can accomplish within a specific context taking into consideration the available time and resources. Flexible optimism should also be provided which changes due to circumstances as is more functional in the work area (Peterson, 2002, Tabaziba, 2015).

Optimism plays an influential role in the way the individual approaches their work duties. Individuals with high optimism expect success when presented with a challenge (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010). However according to Avey et al. (2008) optimism is an individual level attribution, meaning individuals who are high in optimism have a high belief in their individual success, yet not at the group or organisational level. Furthermore those who are high in optimism tend to attribute their success to themselves and global attributes, while failures are attributed to external attributes or attributes specific to the situation.

2.4.4 Resilience

Resilience is defined as a “measurable characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts a positive outcome in the future on a specific outcome criterion” (Masten & Reed, 2002, p. 76). Distinctively, the characteristics identify cognitive abilities such as, temperament, positive self-perceptions, faith, a positive outlook on life, emotional stability, self-regulation, sense of humour and attractiveness as potential assets which may contribute to higher resiliency.

Being able to bounce back from adversity or dramatic positive changes is relevant in today’s chaotic business environment. Coutu (2002) states resilient people:

- 1) Are staunch in accepting reality.
- 2) Have a deep belief through values that life is meaningful.
- 3) An uncanny ability to improvise and adapt to significant change.

Tugade and Fredrickson (2004) further states that according to research, individuals who are resilient are better equipped in dealing with stresses brought on in the constant changing working environment, as these individuals are more open to new experiences and show more emotional stability when faced with adversity. According to Simons and Buitendach (2013) resilience has also been linked to coping mechanisms and behaviours which facilitate growth and development.

2.5 DEVELOPING PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

The four dimensions and overall psychological capital can be developed through micro-interventions utilizing the PsyCap Intervention (PCI). These interventions are conducted in one to three hour training workshops which utilize developmental mechanisms which include task mastery experience, positive role modelling, contingency planning, social support activities and goal setting (Luthans., et al 2006). Figure: 2.2 illustrates the model of PCI intervention

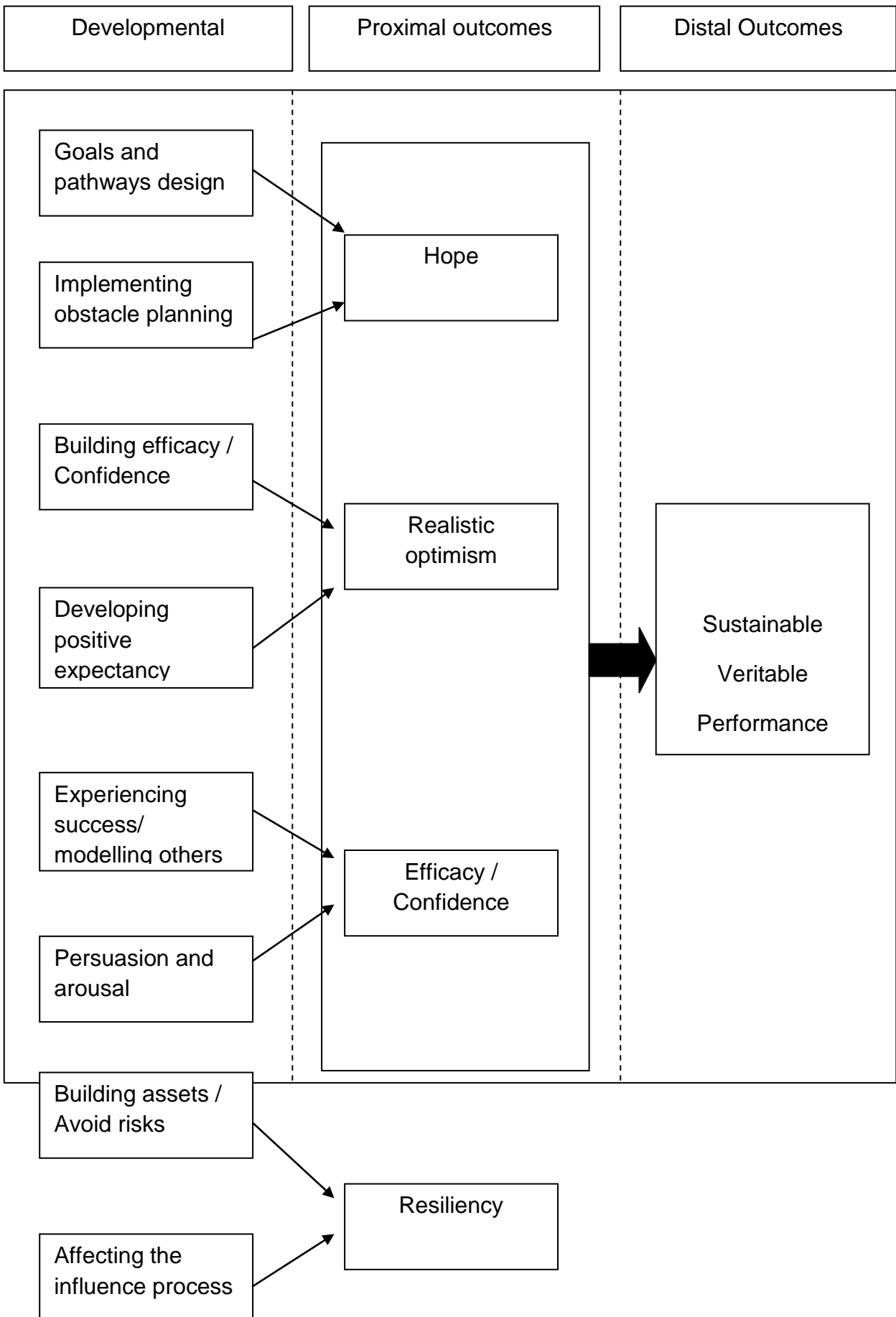


Figure 2.2 : The PsyCap development model

According to Luthans et al. (2007) studies on early micro interventions indicated that an individual's PsyCap increased on average by 2%. This had occurred in experimental groups undergoing PCI sessions as well as by participants or equal groups who had not received the interventions, yet they were measured on the same variables before and after the sessions.

These intervention sessions according to Luthans et al, (2006) included content relevant to developing each construct of PsyCap. Such content will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

2.5.1 Developing hope

Hope is influenced by goals, pathways and agency (Luthans et al., 2006). To develop hope, individuals practise generating work related goals that are personally valuable and realistically challenging, which includes a clear start and end point.

Once exercises have been individually completed, each individual receives feedback from the group on additional or alternative pathways that may be utilized and obstacles that may be expected. According to Luthans et al. (2006), this form of hope development increases the individuals pathway, thereby generating skill and

their ability to identify and plan for obstacles, furthermore reducing the negative impact obstacles may have on agency/willpower.

2.6.2 Developing self-efficacy

In developing efficacy, individuals create stepwise techniques in order to achieve goals. Each step in the stepwise technique is explained to the group and the group will then respond by providing answers on how each step is achieved (Luthans et al., 2006). Furthermore by providing these answers, task mastery is developed for the design and pursuit of goals as well as vicarious learning as the individuals witnessed their fellow peers work towards their goals and listened to the stories on how their goals were achieved.

Further activities in developing efficacy according to Luthans et al. (2006) is emotional arousal, which is influenced by the positive expectation of achieving goals as well as the social persuasion of the facilitator. The group members also have an influence through the validation of how schedules, timelines and goals will be achieved.

2.5.3 Developing Optimism

The building of efficacy in pathways generation and obstacle planning provides a foundation for the development of generally positive outcomes (Luthans et al., 2006). This is achieved when individuals are able to confidently identify and plan to

overcome obstacles, thus resulting in an increase in their expectations to achieve goals. The negative expectations that goals may not be accomplished are then challenged by the individual to identify pathways in order to achieve success and to find options on how to overcome obstacles.

The feedback attained from the group increases the individuals' expectations as they witnessed how the other group members also expect and plan their success (Luthans et al., 2006). This results in the individual and the groups' optimism increasing as the individuals expectations of success increased.

2.5.4 Developing Resiliency

Resiliency is developed by building awareness of personal assets in the form of talents, skills and social networks (Luthans et al., 2006). The focus on these exercises is about making plans to avoid obstacles and to prevent them from becoming legitimate concerns. It is furthermore impacted by the individual becoming aware of their initial thoughts and feelings when faced with adversity and by choosing to focus on resilient thoughts which are based on their assessment of their resources and their options to overcome adversity (Luthans et al., 2006).

In the process to developing resiliency, individuals are asked to which resources they are able to prioritize in order to accomplish a particular goal. Once they have created a list of resources the other members along with their peer groups then identify resources which the individual may have excluded (Luthans et al, 2006). The

individuals are then asked to prioritize the resources as necessary. Furthermore when identifying resources, individuals are also able to identify in advance the obstacles which may influence their progress.

These indicate that the development of PsyCap is possible through highly focused micro interventions within the workplace (Luthans et al., (2007).

2.6 WORK ENGAGEMENT

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related well-being which may be seen as the antipode of job burnout (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). It is further defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption rather than a momentary and specific state. Engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective – cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour” (Bakker & Leiter, 2010, p.4). It is a motivational concept, as when employees are engaged they feel inspired to strive towards challenging goals. Furthermore, work engagement goes beyond responses to the immediate situation as employees accept a personal commitment to attaining goals.

Work engagement is assumed to be the opposite of burnout as employees who are engaged have energy and an affective connection with their work activities as well as seeing themselves as being able to deal with the demands of their jobs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

There are two schools of thought which exist based on the relationship between work engagement and burnout, assuming that they are on opposite poles of work related well-being (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, while burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism and reduced professional efficacy. Schaufeli and Bakker (2001) however define work engagement and burnout as two distinct concepts which should be assessed independently. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) these two concepts cannot be included at the same time in one model as there would be two negative consequences. Firstly it would not be plausible to expect that both concepts are negatively correlated. Secondly the relationship which exists between the constructs cannot be empirically studied when utilizing the same questionnaire.

2.6.1 Work engagement dimensions

The work engagement variable is independent of other variables. According to Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2007) the term work engagement is defined as a positive state of mind specifically associated with the workplace. Individuals in the workplace who are positively engaged are said to find their working environment fulfilling in that it meets their personal goals. Furthermore work engagement is characterized by three dimensions, this being vigour, dedication and absorption.

Vigour refers to the individuals feelings which possess physical energy (being energetic), emotional energy (interpersonally) and cognitive liveliness (mentally).

These are a set of interrelated affective states experienced at work (Shirom, 2003). It is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort into one's work and persevering even in the face of difficulties (Truss, Madden, Alfes, Fletcher, Robinson, Holmes, Buzzeo & Curries, 2014). Furthermore Sweetman and Luthans (2010) relates vigour to the four dimensions of psychological capital as it assists self-efficacy through providing motivation, it provides a way to achieving ones goals and it creates an expectation for future success.

Dedication refers to being “strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge” (Truss et al., 2014, p. 19). Dedication too has links to psychological capital, efficacy with being concerned with one's work, it is related to hope by the individual being dedicated to finding successful pathways and way power to reaching ones goals, to resiliency in that when one is faced with challenging obstacles, they remain enthusiastic and inspired to continue and to optimism by the individual having attributions of pride and significance (Sweetman and Luthans, 2010).

Absorption refers to an individual being fully concentrated and engrossed in their work, allowing time to pass by quickly resulting in difficulty detaching oneself from work (Truss et al., 2014). Absorption is related individuals' self-efficacy by having the confidence to be absorbed and engrossed in one's work (Cater, Nesbit & Joy, 2010).

Furthermore optimism is related to absorption through the individual expecting positive outcomes and related to resiliency as it influences individuals in being absorbed in the task that they are doing presently (Sweetman and Luthans, 2010).

Previous research has noted PsyCap overall provides a greater resource than the four constructs individually (Luthans et al., 2007). The four constructs build upon one another in order to create an upward spiral of resources which may lead to employee engagement (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Given the powerful relationship, the important key in developing work engagement would be found by developing PsyCap.

2.7 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

The four dimensions of PsyCap according to Sweetman and Luthans (2010) have a relation to the dimensions of work engagement.

2.7.1 Efficacy and work engagement

Efficacy, when applied to the workplace can be defined as an employee having the conviction or confidence in their abilities to mobilise the motivation, cognitive resources and courses of action required to successfully execute a specific task within the given context (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Rothmann (2003) found that the dimension self-efficacy had a mediating effect on work engagement. Furthermore, Simons and Buitendach (2013) reported a practically significant relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement.

2.7.2 Optimism and work engagement

Optimism can reduce cynicism and increase dedication as job demands can limit engagement through decreased feelings of control (Karasek, 1979). Optimism may also lower the adverse impact of stressors and make it feel more understandable (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Optimism enables an individual to be more psychologically available through the expectation of a positive outcome. This leads to higher levels of engagement through absorption (Kahn, 1990). In summary the component of optimism relates directly to the components dedication and absorption of work engagement (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010).

2.7.3 Hope and work engagement

Hope, known as the pursuit of goals is related to the vigour dimension of work engagement (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010). Hope is not only a positive contributor to work engagement, it may also be a requirement. A lack of hope is associated with

burnout as without having hope, will power will not be present for an individual to accept new challenges or way power to be able to determine pathways to achievement (Maslach et al., 1997).

2.7.4 Resiliency and work engagement

Resiliency is concerned with the capacity to positively adapt to significant changes (Luthans, 2002a). With regards to the job demands resource model resiliency is associated with persistence. The individual draws from psychological resources in order to exert resilient behaviours through motivation in work engagement, thus showing the vigour of persistence (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010).

The resources of resiliency can act as a buffer when work engagement is maintained despite job demands causing burnout (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010). According to Edwards and Rothbard (2000) the buffer of resiliency can be seen as being more state like, as it needs to be recharged following demanding aspects of the job. Not only does resiliency act as a buffer against job demands with high stress, it may also undo the negative effects of past stress (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010). It is able to reverse the effects of job demands, while creating a long lasting capacity for the future.

Resiliency is related to work engagement through increasing one's personal resources in order to handle the job demands. Drawing from this it can be said that resiliency is directly related to all three dimensions of work engagement (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010).

Based on previous studies a conclusion can be made that individuals will utilize their personal resources, or psychological capital in conjunction with job resources such as autonomy, social support and career opportunities for them to reach their desired goals in the workplace. These individuals are what is referred to as "good performers" as a result of them using their psychological capital, it will influence, or rather have an impact on the individuals work engagement, resulting in them having higher levels of engagement (Sweetman & Luthans, 2010). Therefore it can be said that individuals who are more engaged utilize their personal resources more often.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In summary this chapter looked at the literature associated with the variables of the study, thus being psychological capital and work engagement. It went further to provide an insight into the context of the correctional officer and to provide an overview of their working environment and the job demands associated with this particular career.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the methods to be used to investigate the research problem set for the current study. The chapter provides an explanation of the research design, specifically pertaining to the selected population and sample, data gathering instruments and techniques and the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments. The chapter will conclude with a review of the statistical analysis techniques used to determine the hypothesis.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Quantitative methods are characterized by the collection of information which can be analyzed numerically. These results are normally presented using statistics, tables or graphs (Acap, 2012). Yet there are a number of other researchers who define quantitative research differently. Cohen (1980) states "Quantitative research is defined as social research which employs empirical methods and empirical statements" (p.2). Furthermore an empirical statement is better defined as a descriptive statement.

Quantitative research is utilised in this study as the findings of the study will be analysed numerically in the form of graphs and tables, which will further be

interpreted. By conducting a quantitative study one is also able to report representative statistics for the study population.

3.2.1 POPULATION

The population according to Sekaran (2003) refers to “the entire group of people, events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate” (p. 266). The population for this study consisted of 1460 correctional officers from a correctional facility in the Western Cape. It consisted of male and female correctional officers from all departments within the correctional facility.

3.2.2 SAMPLE

The current study utilised a sample of 306 as this provides a representation of the population. According to Sekaran’s (2003) table for determining sample size an appropriate sample size of the population would be thirty percent for most research.

3.2.2.1 Sampling design

This study made use of a non probability convenience sample as the elements of the population had no probability attached to being chosen as the sample respondents. Furthermore it is a convenience sample as all correctional officers regardless of department were included. The total number of completed surveys was 112, representing a response rate of 37%. According to Sekaran (2003) a sample size which is larger than thirty and less than five hundred is appropriate for most

research, as it is this sample size and sample design that is important to determine the representation and generalizability.

3.3 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

This study utilizes a quantitative methodological approach. According to O'Neil (2009) this form of methodological approach utilizes statistics for the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

3.3.1 Survey research

For this study questionnaires were considered the best method for gathering the necessary information. According to Sekaran (2010, p. 233) questionnaires are a "reformulated written set of questions to which respondents recorded their answers, usually within rather closely defined alternatives".

A questionnaire is a more cost effective manner of data collection when collecting from a large population (Marshall, 2007). Furthermore questionnaires may yield a high quality of usable data, achieve good response rates and provide anonymity, which encourages a more honest manner in answering questions. This in-turn assists with reducing biasness.

Questionnaires may too yield their disadvantages. They are unsuitable for subjects who have poor literacy, are visually impaired and non-English speakers, unless the questionnaire is translated. Questionnaires could also have disadvantages for the researcher, as the researcher may not be aware if the survey has been completed by the respondents it was meant for. Furthermore if confusion were to occur during the answering of the questions, the researcher is unable to provide any clarity (Marshall, 2007).

The present study utilized a questionnaire consisting of a biographical questionnaire, used to describe the characteristics of the sample, the psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ) and the work and well being survey (UWES) to determine work engagement.

3.3.1.1 Biographical questionnaire

The biographical questionnaire collected information from the respondents pertaining to their age, ethnicity, gender, marital status, number of children and in which department they work. The purpose of this section of the survey was to describe the characteristics of the sample.

3.3.1.2 Psychological capital questionnaire

The PsyCap questionnaire (PCQ), developed by Luthans and colleagues (2006) consists of the four standard scales, hope, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience.

Based on face validity, six items were selected by a panel for each of the four standard scales, thus resulting in the 24 item questionnaire measuring PsyCap. The items are measured on a six-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= somewhat disagree; 4= somewhat agree; 5= agree and 6= strongly agree). Examples of the questions pertaining to each of the constructs are (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 237):

“I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management” (Efficacy);

“At the present time, I am energetically pursuing my work goals” (Hope);

“I usually take stressful things at work in stride” (Resilience); and

“I always look at the bright side of things regarding my job” (Optimism)

3.3.1.2.1 Reliability of the PCQ

Reliability is concerned with the degree to which a measure is likely to produce the same result on different occasions. This is known as consistency (Clark-Carter, 2010). In a study conducted by Avey, Patera and West (2006), Cronbach alpha reliability was reported on the overall PsyCap measure as 0.90. With regard to the individual dimensions, the following results were found: self-efficacy $\alpha = 0.82$, hope $\alpha = 0.81$, resilience $\alpha = 0.78$ and optimism $\alpha = 0.65$.

A further study by Avey, Luthans, Smith and Palmer (2010) reported a reliability of overall PsyCap as $\alpha = 0.93$. The dimensions were also found to be reliable with hope $\alpha = 0.87$, efficacy $\alpha = 0.87$, resilience $\alpha = 0.72$ and optimism $\alpha = 0.78$.

The PCQ has also demonstrated acceptable reliability coefficients when utilised in a South African context. A study conducted by Simons and Buitendach (2013) on call centre staff in South Africa reported a reliability of $\alpha = 0.91$. Görgens-Ekermans and Herbert (2013) study on the internal and external validity of the psychological capital questionnaire done on a South African sample reported reliability of $\alpha = .70$ for the dimensions of hope and efficacy. Thus it has been determined that the PCQ has acceptable reliability in both international and South African contexts.

3.3.1.2.2 Validity of the PCQ

Validity according to Foxcroft and Roodt (2002) is when an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The PCQ was constructed based on the content and face validity (Luthans et al., 2007). A panel of experts indicated the face validity of the items used. Furthermore, the items were extracted from existing reliable instruments. Six items were determined for each dimension, making up the 24 question PsyCap questionnaire. The wording of the questionnaire was adapted for it to be state-like and for the working environment.

Further analyses indicated that the construct validity of the PCQ is also intact. The factor structure of the PCQ has demonstrated four distinct factors quite consistently

(Dawkins, 2013). This has also been confirmed in studies on South African samples where the original factor structure of the PCQ demonstrated good fit (Görgens-Ekermans & Herbert, 2013; Simons & Buitendach, 2013).

3.3.1.3 Work and well being survey (UWES)

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) originally included 24 items, vigour had 9 items and dedication had 8 items. This had largely consisted of Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) items which had been positively rephrased (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). These MBI items were later reformulated and supplemented by the original vigour and dedication items, as well as the new addition of the items for absorption, which then constituted the UWES-24. A psychometric evaluation was later conducted on two different samples comprising of students and employees. Based on the findings it was concluded that seven items were found to be unsound and therefore eliminated from the UWES. This resulted in the current 17 item UWES comprising of six items for vigour, five items for dedication and six items for absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003).

Responses to the UWES are answered using a 7 point Likert scale (0= never, 1= almost never/ a few times a month, 2= rarely/ once a month or less, 3= sometimes/ a few times a month, 4= often/ once a week, 5= very often/ a few times a week; 6= always/ everyday). The mean scale scores of the three subscales are computed in order to derive at the totals. The scores of a particular subscale are added together and then divided by the total of items on that particular subscale.

The vigour dimension is assessed based on six items which refer to high levels of energy, resilience, the willingness to invest effort, not being easily fatigued and persisting in the face of difficulties. An example of an item follows:

“At my work I feel bursting with energy.”

Dedication is assessed according to five items. An example item follows:

“I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose”.

The five items make reference to deriving a sense of significance from one’s work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about one’s job as well as feeling inspired and challenged by it.

Absorption is measured using six items which refer to being completely and happily immersed in one’s work and often having difficulty detaching oneself, in such a manner that time passes quickly and one forgets everything happening around them.

An example of an absorption item is:

“Time flies when I’m working”.

3.3.1.3.1 Reliability of the UWES

The UWES has been used extensively throughout South Africa in research. According to Bell and Barkhuizen (2011) with regards to internal consistency, reliability coefficient for the three subscales fell within the boundaries of 0.68 and

0.91. A further study by Field and Buitendach (2011) conducted on a South African sample reported reliability scores of 0.96, considered to be acceptable.

3.3.1.3.2 Validity of the UWES

The UWES may be considered a one dimensional and a three dimensional construct. Studies by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) reported high correlations between the factors of UWES suggesting that although psychometrically the instruments are composed of three dimensions, the three factors can be collapsed into one factor for practical purposes.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

In order to test the hypotheses set for the present study, inferential statistics will be utilised. The techniques include Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression analyses.

3.4.1 Pearson product moment correlation

A Pearson product moment correlation will be used in the present study to determine if a significant relationship exists between the dimensions of psychological capital and work engagement. By utilising this method, the strength and magnitude of the relationship between the variables are established (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010).

3.4.2 Multiple regression analyses

Multiple regression analysis according to Sekaran (2003) is used to understand how much variance in the dependent variable is explained by independent variables. With regards to the present study it is to determine whether psychological capital dimensions significantly explain the variance in work engagement.

3.5 DATA GATHERING PROCEDURE

The department of correctional services were consulted for permission to conduct the present study, which was granted. A meeting was held with the head of Human Resource Management of the correctional facility where the study was to be conducted, to explain the purpose of the research and arrange a suitable time for the questionnaires to be administered.

The head of the Human Resource department then held meetings with departmental heads at the facility, explaining the intent to do research at the facility, the aim and purpose of the study. The questionnaires were then distributed, each containing an information letter providing the aim of the study, informed consent form, explaining the confidentiality of the responses as well as an explanation of the anonymity of the participants and voluntary nature of their participation.

Once the respondents had completed the questionnaires, they were then collected by the head of human resources and placed in a sealed box, which only the

researcher had access to. The distribution and collection of the questionnaires took approximately two months to complete as a number of the participants were unwilling to participate.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Permission was requested from the Department of Correctional Services in order to conduct the survey at a particular correctional facility in the Western Cape. Once consent to conduct the study was granted, questionnaires were then distributed to correctional officers at the chosen facility. Consent forms were distributed along with the questionnaires, which required participants to sign before completing the questionnaire.

Anonymity was taken into account with the present study, as it was stated in the information letter to the participant that they were allowed to remain anonymous when answering the questionnaires. Participants were also made aware that the informed consent forms and surveys were gathered separately to maintain anonymity.

The cultural background of the participants were taken into consideration, which is why questionnaires were used which were previously found to be valid and reliable for use in a South African context.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an explanation of the research design, data gathering procedures and the data analysis procedures to be employed to test the research hypotheses.

The chapter to follow will provide the results obtained for the present study.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the data gathered. It provides insight into the findings which are numerically and graphically represented to interpret the results. The chapter will commence with the descriptive statistics, indicating graphically the biographical findings of the sample.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This section pertains to the demographics of the biographical information indicated by the respondents obtained through the questionnaires. The section will begin with the illustration and discussion of the gender distribution followed by the age of the respondents, ethnicity, marital status, how many children the respondents have and lastly which organisational departments the respondents are situated in.

4.2.1 Distribution of gender

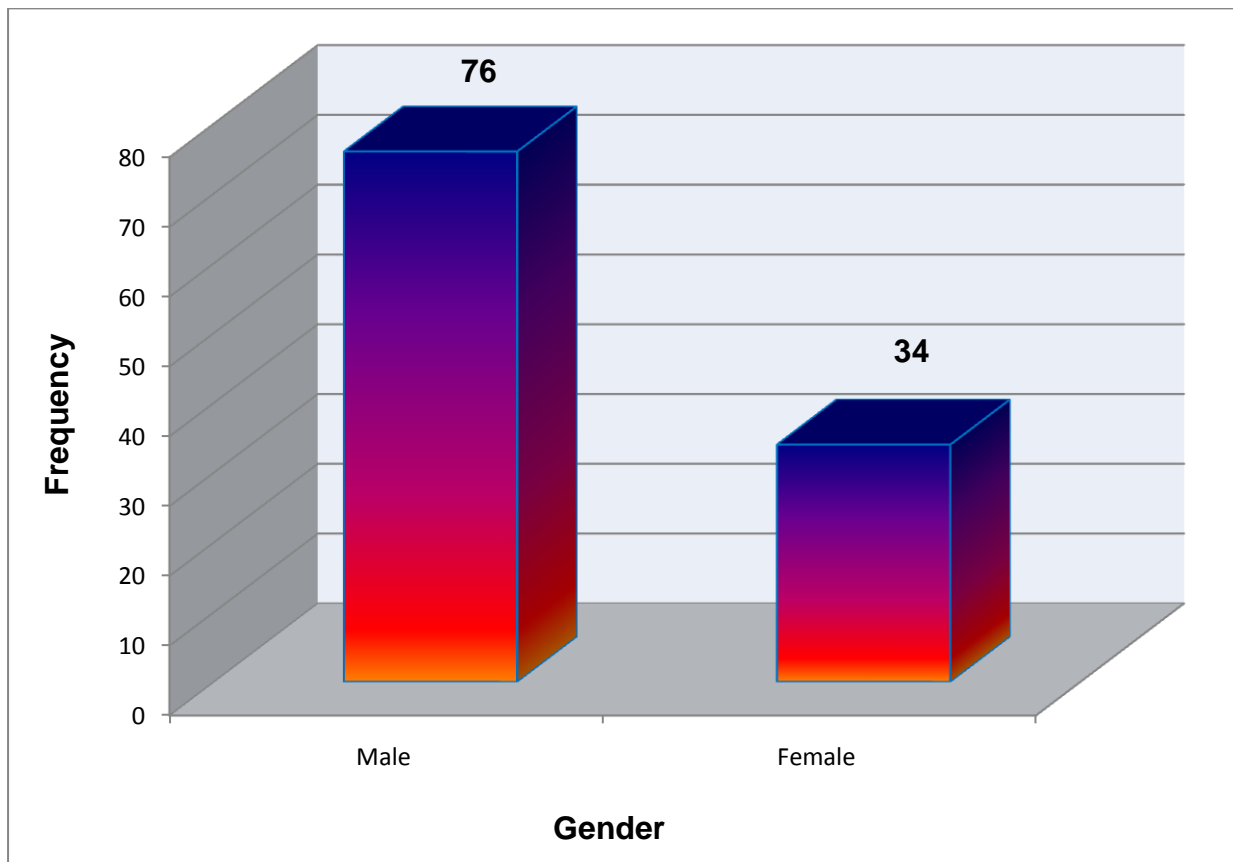


Figure 4.1: Gender distribution

Figure 4.1 represents the gender differences of the respondents. The majority of the respondents were male, specifically 62.3% (n=76) and 35.2% (n=34) female.

4.2.2 Distribution of age

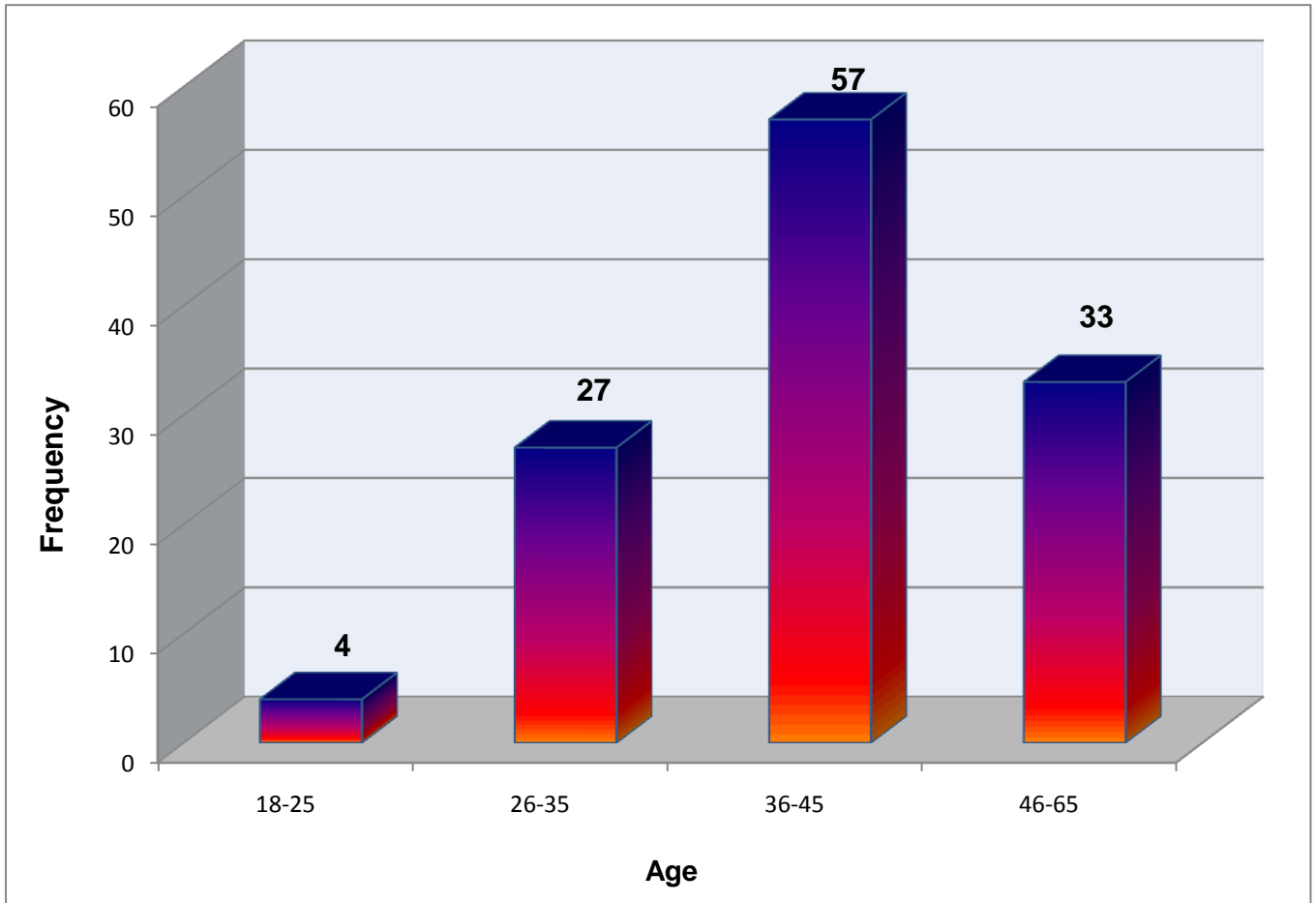


Figure 4.2: Age Distribution

A representation of the age of the respondents is graphically represented in figure 4.2. Majority of the respondents 46.7% are in the age category 36-45 (n=57) while the second highest percentage of respondents, 27% fall into the age category 46-65 (n=33). Those between the ages of 26-35 (n=27) made up 22.1% of the sample respondents, with the remainder of respondents, 3.3% being between the ages of 18-25 (n=4).

4.2.3 Distribution of ethnicity

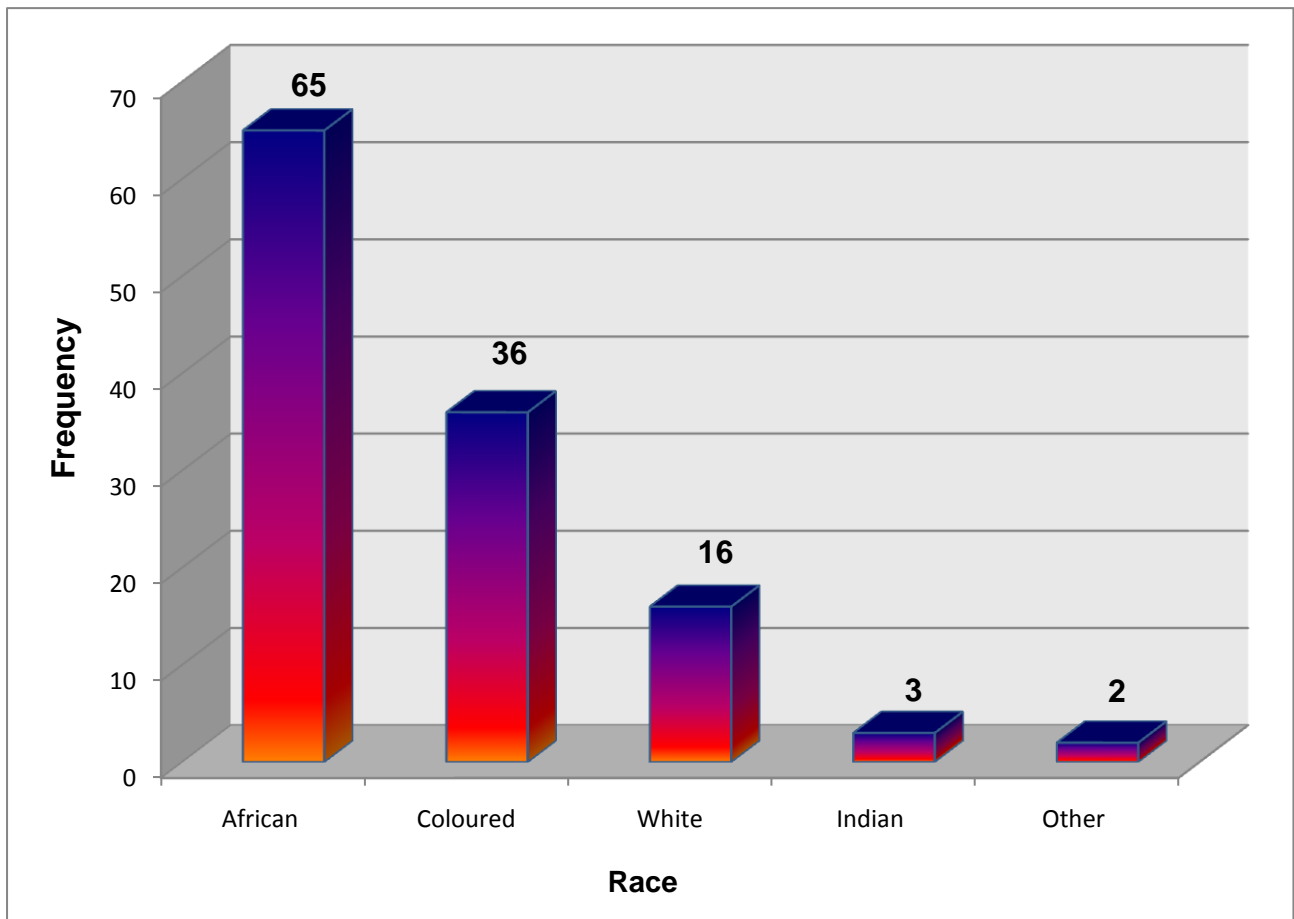


Figure: 4.3 Ethnicity Distribution

Based on the findings for ethnicity, figure 4.3 illustrates the majority of respondents 53.3%, n=65 were of african descent, 29.5% (n=36) were coloured and 13.1% of the respondents where white (n=16). The remaining 2.5% (n=3) of respondents were Indian while two respondent (n=2) totalling 0.8% indicated they were of other descent.

4.2.4 Distribution of marital status

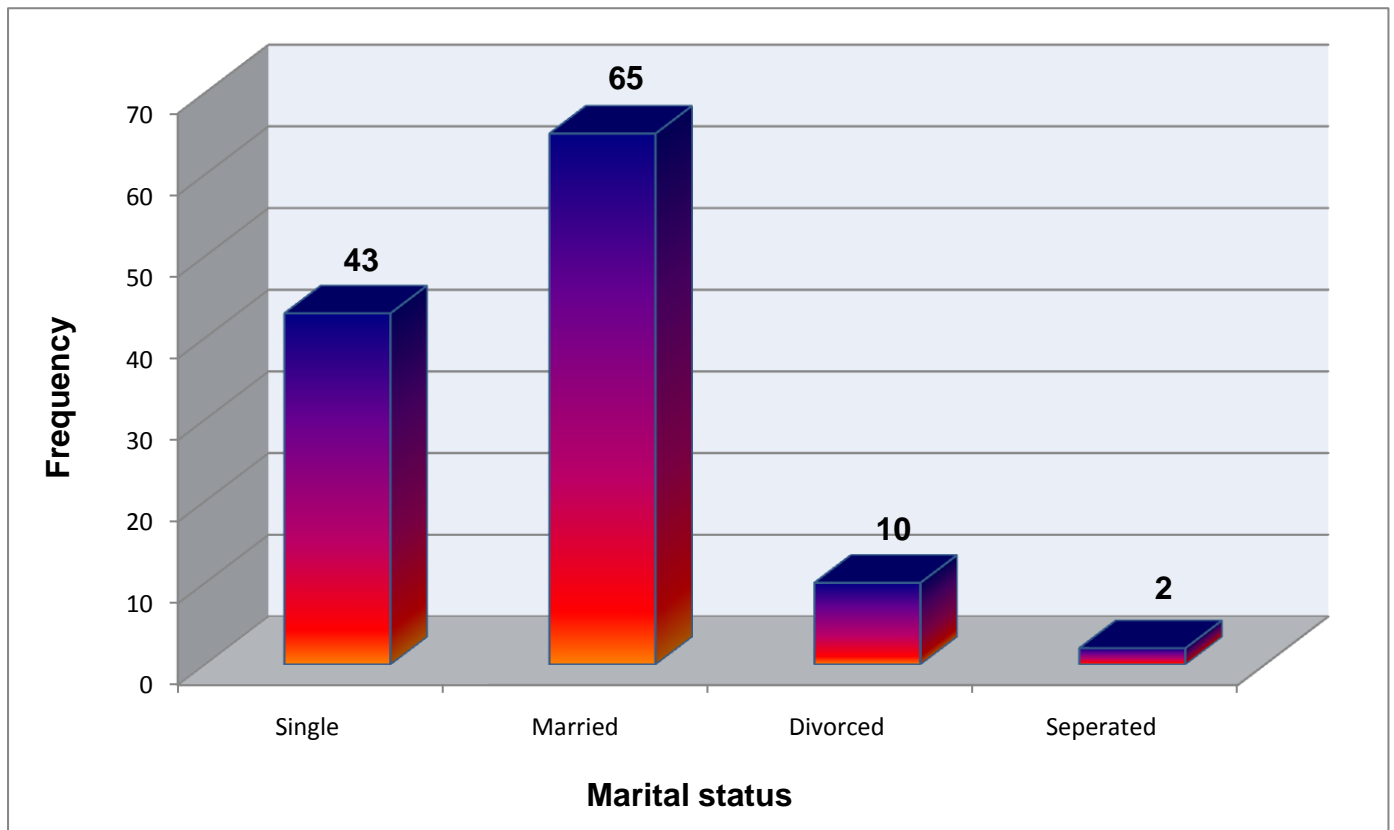


Figure: 4.4 Marital status Distribution

Figure 4.4 illustrates the marital status of the respondents. The majority of the respondents 53.3%, $n=65$ were married while a further 35.2% ($n=43$) of respondents indicated they were single. Furthermore 8.2% ($n=10$) were divorced and the remaining 1.6% ($n=2$) of respondents indicated they were separated.

4.2.5 Number of children

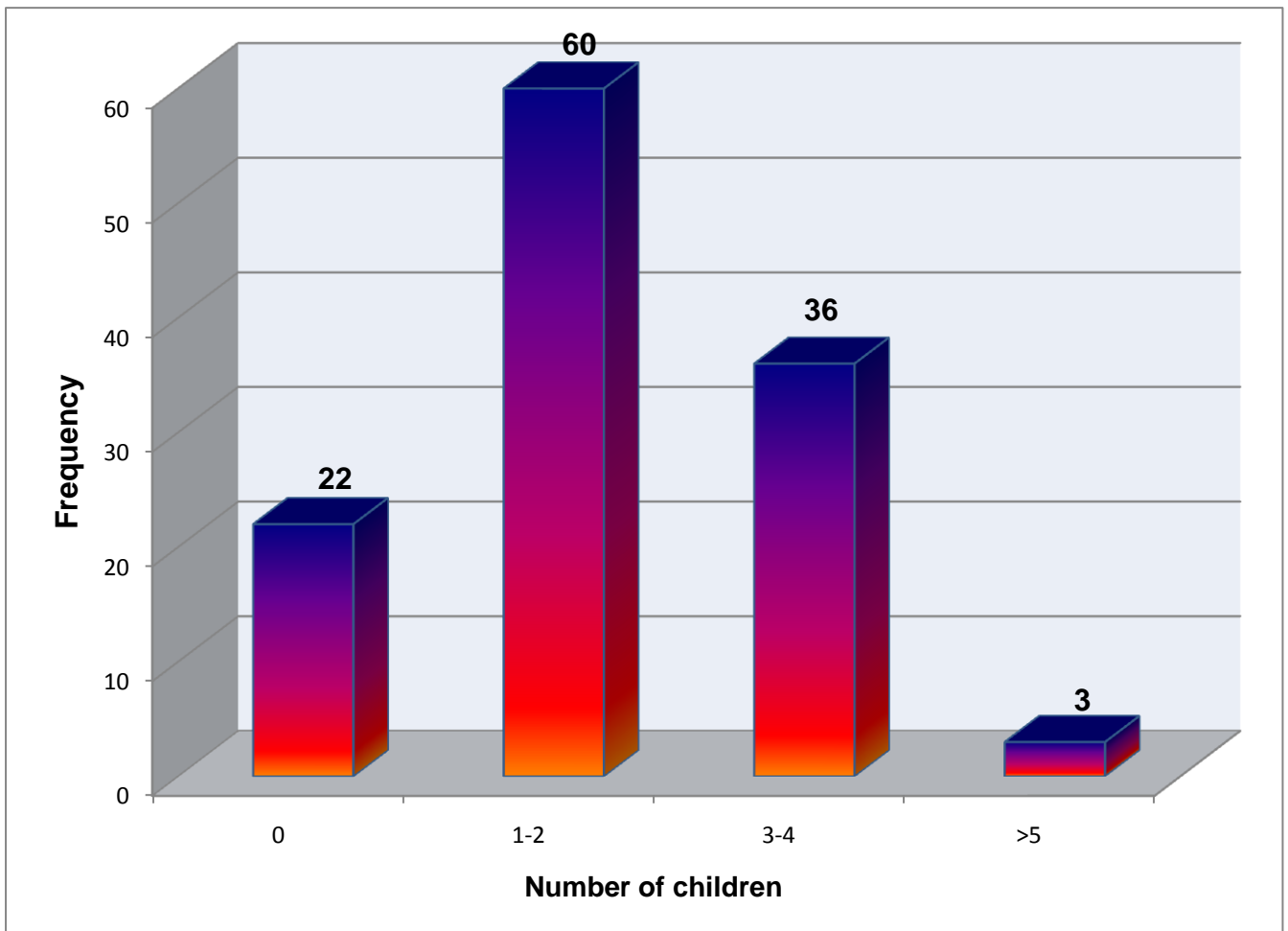


Figure: 4.5 Number of children distribution

Figure 4.5 presents the mode of respondents, (49.2%, n=60) have between one to two children while 29.2% (n=36) have between three and four children. Furthermore 18% (n=22) of the total respondents indicated they have no children with the remainder 2.5% (n=3) indicating they have more than five children.

4.2.6 Organisational department distribution

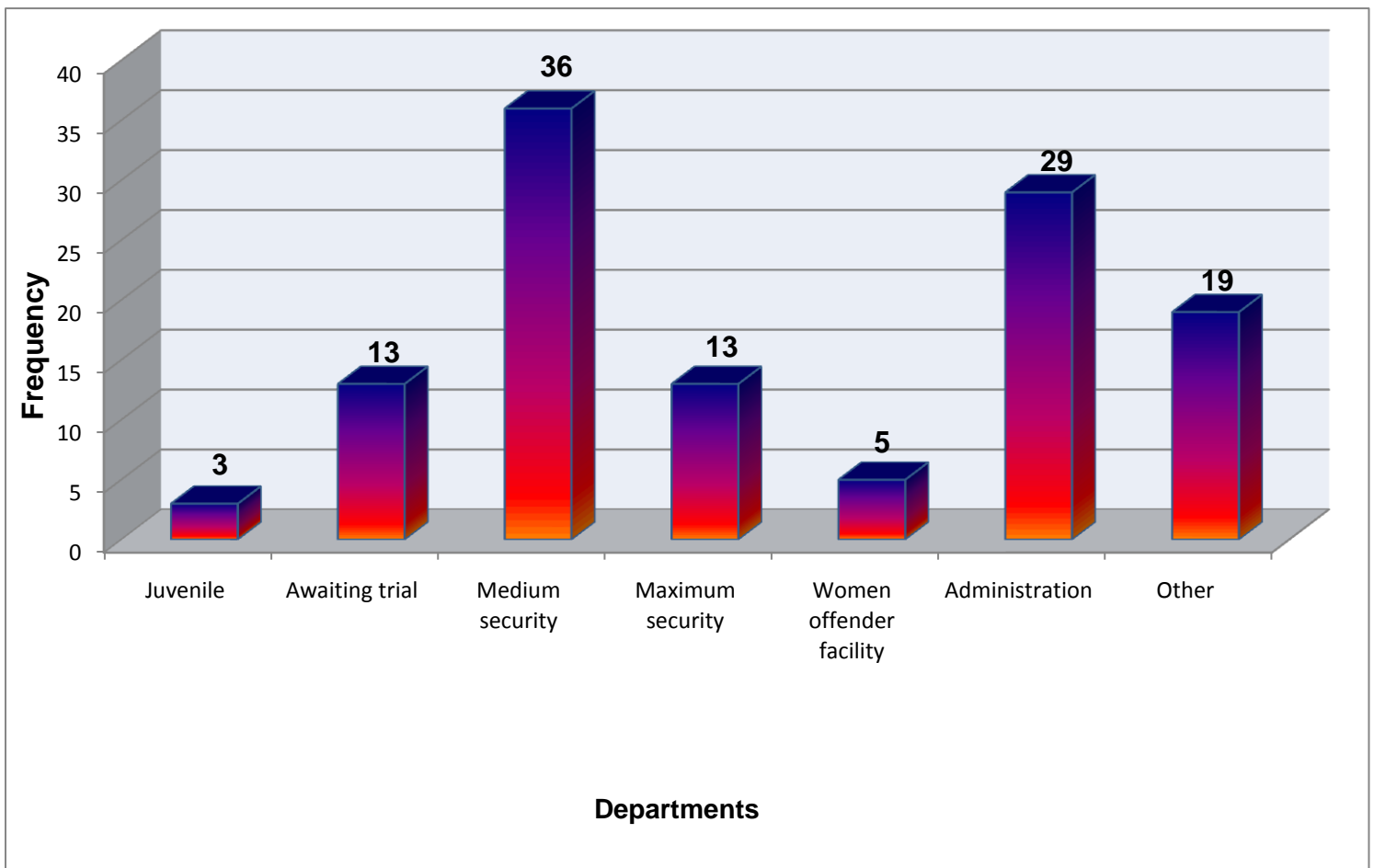


Figure: 4.6 Organisation Departments Distribution

Figure 4.6 illustrates the mode of respondents 29.5% (n=36) work in medium security while 23.8% (n=29) are situated in administration. Fifteen point five percent of respondents (n=19) indicted they are situated in an 'other' facility in the prison. Furthermore an equal frequency of respondents 10,7% (n=13) work in awaiting trial and maximum security facilities. A further 4.1% (n=5) of respondents work in the women offender facility, while the remainder 2.5% (n=3) are from the juvenile facility.

4.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE VARIABLES

The following section presents information on the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation for the dimensions of psychological capital and work engagement as well as the reliability coefficients reported for the individual dimensions of psychological capital and work engagement. Furthermore a brief description on the findings in each table is provided below.

Table 4.1 : Descriptive statistics for PsyCap and work engagement

| Variable | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------|----------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| PsyCap Efficacy | 122 | 1.00 | 6.00 | 4.14 | 1.08 |
| PsyCap Hope | 122 | 1.00 | 6.00 | 4.29 | 1.07 |
| PsyCap Resilience | 122 | 1.83 | 6.00 | 4.16 | 0.85 |
| PsyCap Optimism | 122 | 2.00 | 5.50 | 3.92 | 0.67 |
| WE Vigour | 122 | 0.00 | 6.00 | 3.56 | 1.07 |
| WE Dedication | 122 | 0.00 | 6.00 | 3.71 | 1.17 |
| WE Absorption | 122 | 0.00 | 6.00 | 3.52 | 1.00 |

The participant's responses indicated a mean score of 4.14 for efficacy, which according to the Likert scale used indicated that, on average, the participants somewhat agreed with the items indicating that they are confident in their beliefs that they can succeed, by setting high goals for themselves and remaining highly motivated.

The mean score reported for hope was 4.29. This according to the Likert scale indicated that the participants somewhat agreed with the items. This is an indicator that they somewhat agreed that it is possible to create pathways in order to achieve a goal.

The reported mean score for resiliency was 4.16. This indicated that the participants somewhat agreed with the items. Moreover, this indicates the participants somewhat agreed that it is possible to bounce back when faced with difficult challenges in the workplace.

Based on the mean scores, optimism had a mean score of 3.92. This indicates that the participants somewhat agreed that they are able to predict events that are to occur in the future, whether these events are negative or positive.

The participant' s responses indicated a mean score of 3.56 for vigour. Based on the Likert scale it is an indication that the correctional officers feel that a few times during the month, they are bursting with energy, resulting in them being able to persevere when things get difficult.

Dedication had a mean score of 3.71, which indicates that the correctional officers in this study sometimes feel that they are dedicated to their work.

The mean score reported for absorption is 3.52. This indicates the correctional officers in the study only sometimes feel they are completely absorbed in their work in such a way that the time passes by quickly.

4.4 RELIABILITY OF THE MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT

The reliability findings on the study are reported below. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients are used to report on reliability which provides an indication of the stability, consistency and freedom of error.

Table 4.2 Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients (N=122)

| Variable | No of items | Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| Efficacy | 6 | 0.91 |
| Hope | 6 | 0.91 |
| Resilience | 6 | 0.73 |
| Optimism | 6 | 0.43 |
| Vigour | 6 | 0.86 |
| Dedication | 5 | 0.88 |
| Absorption | 6 | 0.83 |

The Cronbach alphas reported for the reliability of the dimensions of work engagement ranged between 0.83 and 0.88 which according to Leary (2008) is acceptable. PsyCap reported acceptable scores between 0.73 and 0.91 for the dimensions hope, resilience and efficacy. However it was found that the PsyCap dimension, optimism reported the lowest reliability.

A study conducted by Luthans, Avolio, Avey and Norman (2007) on high technology manufacturers which included technicians and engineers reported low levels of reliability for optimism, whereas the other psychological capital dimensions reported higher levels of reliability. A study conducted by Gørgens-Ekermans and Herbert (2003) reported low reliability levels for the dimensions optimism and resilience, compared to hope and self-efficacy, which reported high reliability. Similarly, a study conducted on Chinese workers by Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa and Li (2005) reported low reliability levels for optimism compared to the other dimension of psychological capital. The optimism dimension also has the most reverse scored items, which may have an impact on the consistency of the scale.

As lower reliability for the optimism dimension was confirmed in other studies as well, it was decided to include the optimism dimension in further analyses despite its low reliability coefficient.

4.5 INFERENCE STATISTICS

This section presents the results obtained to ascertain the relationship between psychological capital and work engagement amongst correctional officers at a correctional facility in the Western Cape. This section aims to present findings relating to the hypotheses of the study

4.6 HYPOTHESIS 1 :

There is a statistically significant relationship between the dimensions of PsyCap (namely hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience) and the dimensions of work engagement (namely vigour, dedication and absorption).

Table 4.3 Correlation coefficients of the dimensions of psychological capital and work engagement (N = 22)

| | | PsyCap Efficacy | PsyCap Hope | PsyCap Resilience | PsyCap Optimism | Work Engagement Vigour | Work Engagement Dedication | Work Engagement Absorption |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| PsyCap Efficacy | Pearson Correlation | 1 | 0.839** | 0.749** | 0.578** | 0.594** | 0.515** | 0.488** |
| PsyCap Hope | Pearson Correlation | 0.839** | 1 | 0.718** | 0.641** | 0.625** | 0.601** | 0.499** |
| PsyCap Resilience | Pearson Correlation | 0.749** | 0.718** | 1 | 0.569** | 0.533** | 0.472** | 0.469** |
| PsyCap Optimism | Pearson Correlation | 0.578** | 0.641** | 0.596** | 1 | 0.609** | 0.590** | 0.444* |
| Work Engagement Vigour | Pearson Correlation | 0.594** | 0.625** | 0.533** | 0.609** | 1 | 0.887** | 0.867** |
| Work Engagement Dedication | Pearson Correlation | 0.515** | 0.601** | 0.472** | 0.590** | 0.887** | 1 | 0.837** |
| Work Engagement Absorption | Pearson Correlation | 0.488** | 0.499** | 0.469** | 0.444** | 0.867** | 0.837** | 1 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 4.3 indicates the relationship between the dimensions of psychological capital and work engagement. According to Cohen (1988 as cited in Hemphill, 2003)

correlation coefficients measuring 0.10 are considered small, 0.30 is considered moderate and 0.50 is strong in terms of magnitude of effect sizes. The relationships between the dimensions of psychological capital and work engagement range between 0.444 and 0.625 and can thus be classified (according to Cohen's categorisation) as moderate to strong relationships. All correlations between the dimensions of the two variables are significant at the $p > 0.01$ level. Furthermore the highest relationship was found between hope and vigour ($\alpha = 0.625$; $-p < 0.01$), whilst optimism and absorption indicated the lowest correlation coefficient ($\alpha = 0.444$; $p < 0.01$).

4.7 HYPOTHESIS 2:

The dimensions of PsyCap (namely hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience) explain a significant proportion of the variance in work engagement.

In order to determine whether the dimensions of psychological capital explain the variance in work engagement, multiple regression analysis was done.

Table 4.4 Multiple regression results with work engagement as dependent variable

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------------------|------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| PsyCap dimensions | 0.65 | 0.43 | 0.41 | 13.39 |

Based on the findings in table 4.4 43% ($R^2 = 0.43$) of the variance in work engagement is explained by the dimensions of psychological capital.

Table: 4.5 Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|--------------------|
| Regression | 15938.10 | 4 | 3984.52 | 22.21 | 0.000 ^b |
| Residual | 20982.90 | 117 | 179.43 | | |
| Total | 36921.00 | | | | |

Based on the findings in table 4.5, the 43% variance explained in work engagement is significant, $F(4, 117) = 22.21$, $p = 0.00$.

Table 4.6 Beta coefficients of the psychological capital dimensions with work engagement as dependent variable

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 (Constant) | -0.84 | 7.55 | | -0.11 | 0.91 |
| PsyCap Efficacy | 1.83 | 2.24 | 0.11 | 0.81 | 0.41 |
| PsyCap Hope | 4.54 | 2.25 | 0.28 | 2.01 | 0.04 |
| PsyCap Resilience | 1.05 | 2.28 | 0.05 | 0.46 | 0.64 |
| PsyCap Optimism | 7.75 | 2.42 | 0.30 | 3.19 | 0.00 |

Table 4.6 indicates that hope is a significant predictor of work engagement at the $p < 0.05$ level ($\beta = 0.280$), and optimism is a significant predictor at the $p < 0.01$ level. With a beta coefficient of 0.30, it is clear that optimism contributes the biggest proportion of the variance explained in work engagement.

4.8 CONCLUSION

In summary this chapter provided an explication of the statistical findings of the study.

A Pearson correlation was used to determine the relationship between the dimensions of psychological capital and work engagement. The findings generated indicated that hypothesis 1 is accepted as there is a significant relationship between the dimensions of PsyCap and work engagement.

Hypothesis 2 was tested using multiple regression analysis and ANOVA. Based on the findings hypothesis 2 is accepted as PsyCap does explain a significant proportion of variance in work engagement. Furthermore, optimism explained the biggest proportion of the variance in work engagement.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS AND RECCOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the study in relation to the hypotheses that were set. Furthermore, the acceptance of the hypotheses is substantiated with previous empirical findings. Furthermore the limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations are provided for future research and practical application in the organisation.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The following section will provide a discussion of the most salient findings of the study.

5.2.1 Demographic characteristics

Of the total sample of correctional officers, 73 out of the total were male. Using this as a representation of the population, one can see that males remain dominant within the correctional facility. This is what is generally expected considering the dangerous nature of the job. Furthermore it can be said based on the findings that the majority of the sample was reported to be within the medium housing facility of the prison.

5.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 4.1 indicates that the correctional officers had high levels of self-efficacy ($M = 4.14$; $SD = 1.08$) and dedication ($M = 3.71$; $SD = 1.17$) indicating they persevere during the most difficult times and that they do not allow the challenges of their working environment to let them down or hinder them in any way. They are also dedicated to their work as they find meaning in what they do.

Correctional officers remain hopeful in their working environment in that they have the willpower to develop alternative pathways to achieving their desired goals ($M = 4.29$; $SD = 1.07$). The correctional officers also portray vigour ($M = 3.56$; $SD = 1.07$) indicating that although their environment has a number of challenges they remain energetic and devote a great amount of effort to achieving their work related goals, even during trying times at work.

Absorption amongst correctional officers reported that they sometimes feel absorbed in their work ($M = 3.52$; $SD = 1.00$). This indicates that the correctional officers in the study occasionally feel as though time passes by quickly.

Furthermore Resilience was reported as almost always ($M = 4.16$; $SD = 0.85$) indicating that it is common for correctional officers to bounce back when they are faced with difficult challenges. Optimism was also reported as occasionally ($M = 3.92$; $SD = 0.67$) indicating that correctional officers are able to foresee events as positive, regardless if they are negative.

5.4 INFERENCE STATISTICS

Hypothesis 1: *There is a statistically significant relationship between the dimensions of PsyCap (namely hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience) and the dimensions of work engagement (namely vigour, dedication and absorption).*

Based on the finding of the correlation coefficients, there is a statistically significant relationship between the dimensions of PsyCap and the dimensions of work engagement. The result of the positive relationship may be as a result of correctional officers utilising their psychological strengths of self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience to influence how engaged they are in the workplace.

There is a moderate to strong relationship between the dimensions of PsyCap and work engagement. The dimensions hope and vigour reported the highest correlation, indicating that the sample of correctional officers remain goal orientated and have the will power and plan to reach their goals, even though they are faced with difficult circumstances in their daily work environment. They do not allow their working conditions to influence their drive to meet their desired goals. This is confirmed by Sweetman and Luthans (2010) that vigour relates to hope in that it provides the willpower to help develop alternative ways to achieving goals.

Furthermore a study conducted by Simons and Buitendach (2013) also reported a positive relationship between the dimensions vigour and hope, when tested amongst call centre agents in South Africa.

A study conducted by Mache et al. (2014), contradicts the relationship between the psychological dimension hope and work engagement, in that they reported a negative relationship between hope and the dimensions of work engagement. The correlations varied between -0.18 and 0.27. However positive correlations between the dimensions self-efficacy, resilience and optimism were reported as being between 0.27 and 0.33.

Hypothesis 2: *The dimensions of PsyCap (namely hope, self-efficacy, optimism and resilience) explain a significant proportion of the variance in work engagement*

A multiple regression analysis was used to determine the result that the dimensions of PsyCap explain a significant proportion of the variance in work engagement. The findings reported that the PsyCap dimensions explain a variance of 43.2% ($R^2 = 0.432$) in work engagement. A similar result was found in a study conducted by Harris (2012) where psychological capital explained a variance of 53% in work engagement amongst automotive dealers in South Africa. The dimensions efficacy, hope and resilience were found to have a positive relationship with work engagement. Optimism however was found to have a small relationship with work engagement compared to the findings of the present study.

The findings of this study found that optimism is not reliable ($\beta = 0.30$) in work engagement. This is an indication that work engagement experienced by correctional officers is explainable due to their levels of optimism. Employees who are optimistic

see the future as being positive. This is important for correctional officers as they are faced with a number of job demands that can be very challenging along with the uncomfortable working conditions. With relevance to correctional officers it is an indication that if correctional officers approached their job demands in an optimistic way, they would be more engaged in their workplace. It can also be said that correctional officers who are optimistic have a more positive way of viewing their working environment and the possible influence they can have in the workplace, which results in them being engaged in their workplace. As a practical example, a correctional officer who is optimistic about the rehabilitation of inmates may be more engaged in their work.

5.5 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The concept of work engagement and psychological capital is still new in the context of South Africa. As a result there is limited literature available reporting on studies conducted on these variables in varying contexts. Due to this limited availability of literature, literature was drawn from an international context.

A limitation to the present study is the sample (n=122) was small, thus making it difficult to generalise the results to the entire population. There was difficulty with the present sample not being willing to participate in the study, as there was a consensus that correctional officers will not be benefiting from the research. By increasing the sample size and conducting research at more than one correctional facility it may yield an increase in results and more of a willingness to participate.

The time frame between the distribution of the questionnaires and the collection may also be seen as a limitation of the study. There was a hindrance with the distribution and collection of questionnaires, as a few participants were not willing to participate in the study until they were motivated, by explaining reason behind the study. There were also the December holidays which contributed to the questionnaires taking a time to be handed back. Correctional officers were allowed to view the survey before hand and when the time came to actually filling in the questionnaire, things may have changed over that period of time. This would include, receiving a bonus, promotions may have taken place, and salaries may have increased, resulting in a different response that would have initially been received.

Difficulty arose when gathering data, as correctional officers were not willing to participate unless given some form of compensation as it was felt that not only one person should benefit from the research. This may be an indication of the organisational culture within the correctional facility. This could be an interesting avenue to pursue for future studies.

The subscale of optimism was found to be unreliable, possibly due to the amount of negatively worded items in the questionnaire.

5.5.1 Recommendations for future research

With many studies focusing respectively on the concepts of psychological capital and work engagement, there are few, whose main research question is to determine the relationship between the two, especially in a South African context. More research needs to be conducted in this regard to get a better understanding of the constructs.

For future studies, the job demands and the job resources can be measured to understand the dilemmas associated with the work correctional officers do and the resources that are available to them.

When conducting the study, it was found that a number of the correctional officers requested compensation for completing the questionnaire and survey. This is an indication that correctional officers may be extrinsically motivated. This should be studied further as it may also provide insight as to the reason for many correctional officers remaining within their positions in the facility.

5.5.2 Recommendations for the organisation

It is important for organisations to assist employees with the development of their psychological capital as it may result in the employees being more engaged in their workplace. Specifically within the correctional environment, it would be beneficial for the department to assist correctional officers with the development of the psychological strengths as it will result in the successful management of the correctional facility, thus meeting the organizations vision and mission.

It would be beneficial to develop the dimension of optimism as it explained the largest proportion of variance in work engagement. This indicates that the department of correctional services need to invest in training programs specifically designed to develop optimism.

5.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY/ CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is that it can assist the department of correctional services to understand what psychological strengths within the individual allows them to be more engaged in their workplace. Based on the findings of the present study correctional officers who are optimistic are positively engaged in the work place. This indicates that it would be beneficial for the department of correctional services to develop optimism to help correctional officers become more engaged.

It can also be said that from this study, the department of correctional services are able to understand what it is that drives their employees on a daily basis. It will allow them to look past the negative aspects which are always portrayed in the media and to focus rather on what it is within the correctional officer that drives them in their workplace.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Based on the finding in this study a conclusion can be drawn that psychological capital explains a significant proportion of the variance as to why correctional officers are engaged in their workplace, placing specific reference to the dimension of optimism. It can be said that optimism is the biggest driver behind correctional officers being engaged in their unique, yet risky working environment.

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