CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH ARGUMENT

3.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

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

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

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

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

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

3.2 THE RESEARCH ARGUMENT

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

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

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

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

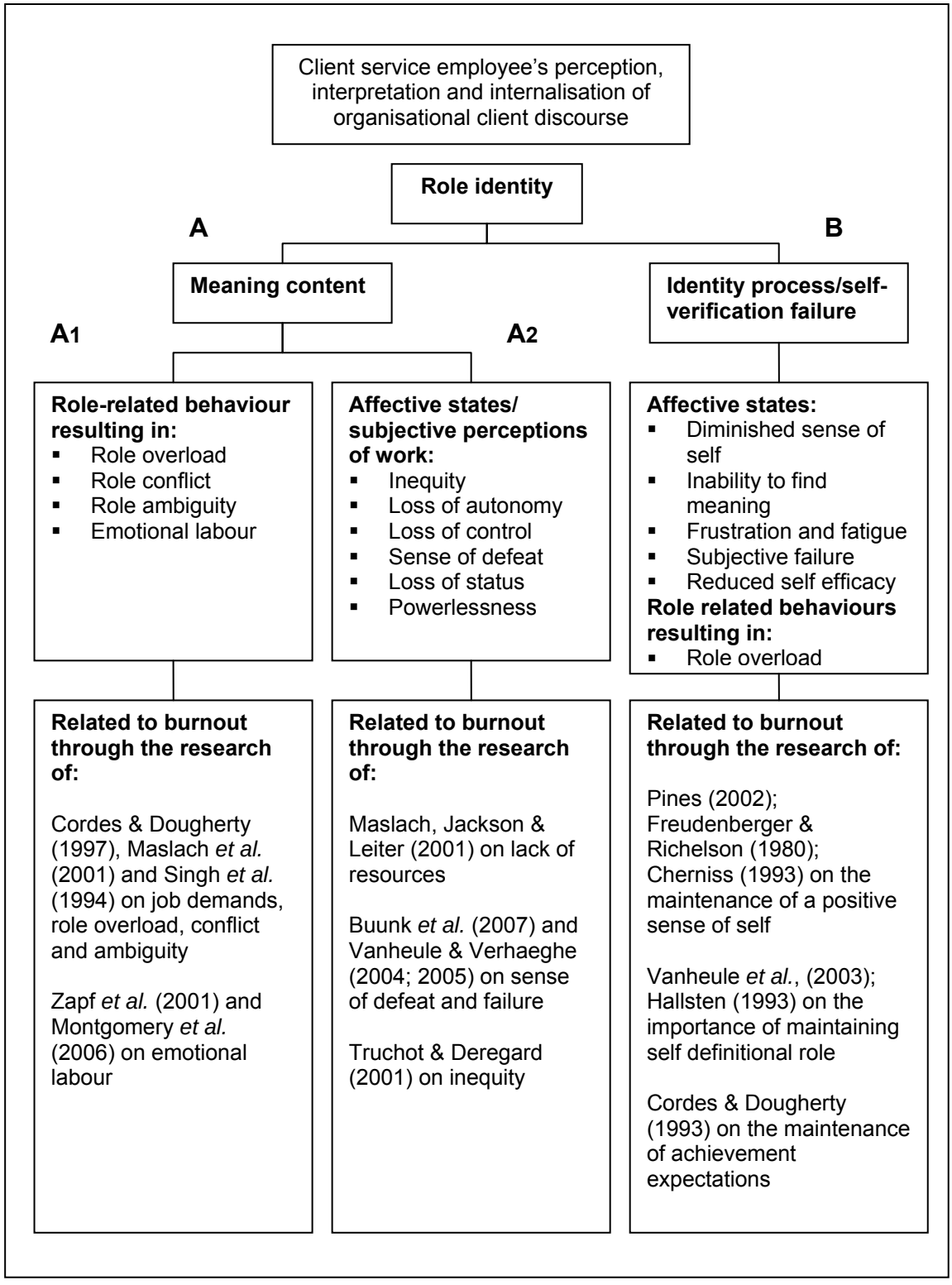

Figure 10: Conceptual framework linking role identity and burnout

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

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

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

3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5 CONCLUSION

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

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

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

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

4.2 THE SAMPLE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 4: Organisations approached to participate in the study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 5: Questionnaire response rates

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

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

4.3 THE QUANTITATIVE PHASE METHODOLOGY

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

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

2. To what extent are client service employees' burnout levels related to their orientation towards life, work and organisation?
3. In what ways do the role identities of higher burnout employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees?

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

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

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

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

4.3.1 The quantitative sample description

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

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

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

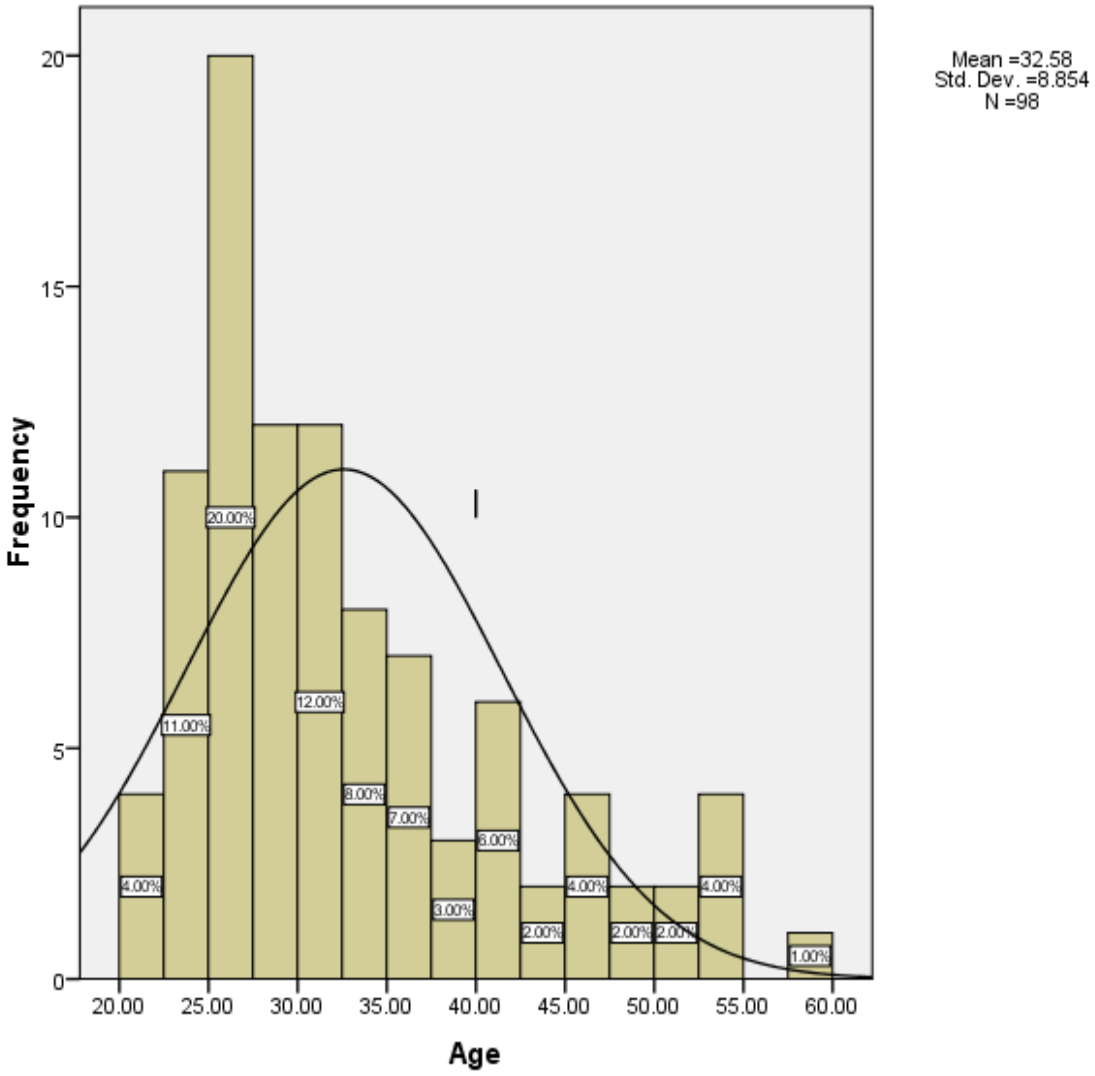

Figure 11: Age distribution of respondents (N=98)

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

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

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

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

Table 8 reflects the marital status of the respondents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

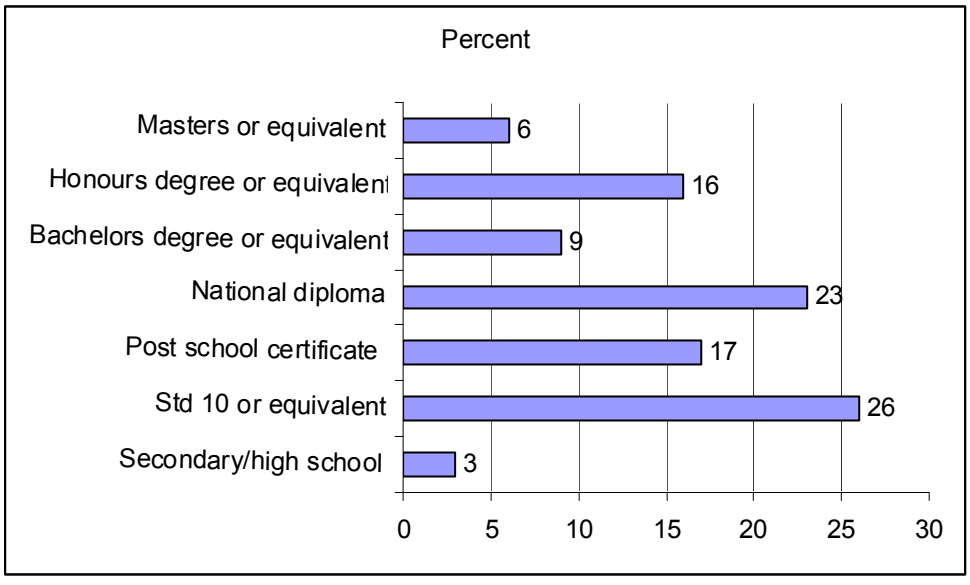

Figure 12: Educational level of respondents (N=100)

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

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

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

Only three percent of the sample is black, while 18 percent is coloured. One percent of respondents classified themselves as Indian. The sample is therefore not representative of the South African population from a population group perspective, since the majority of South Africans are black.

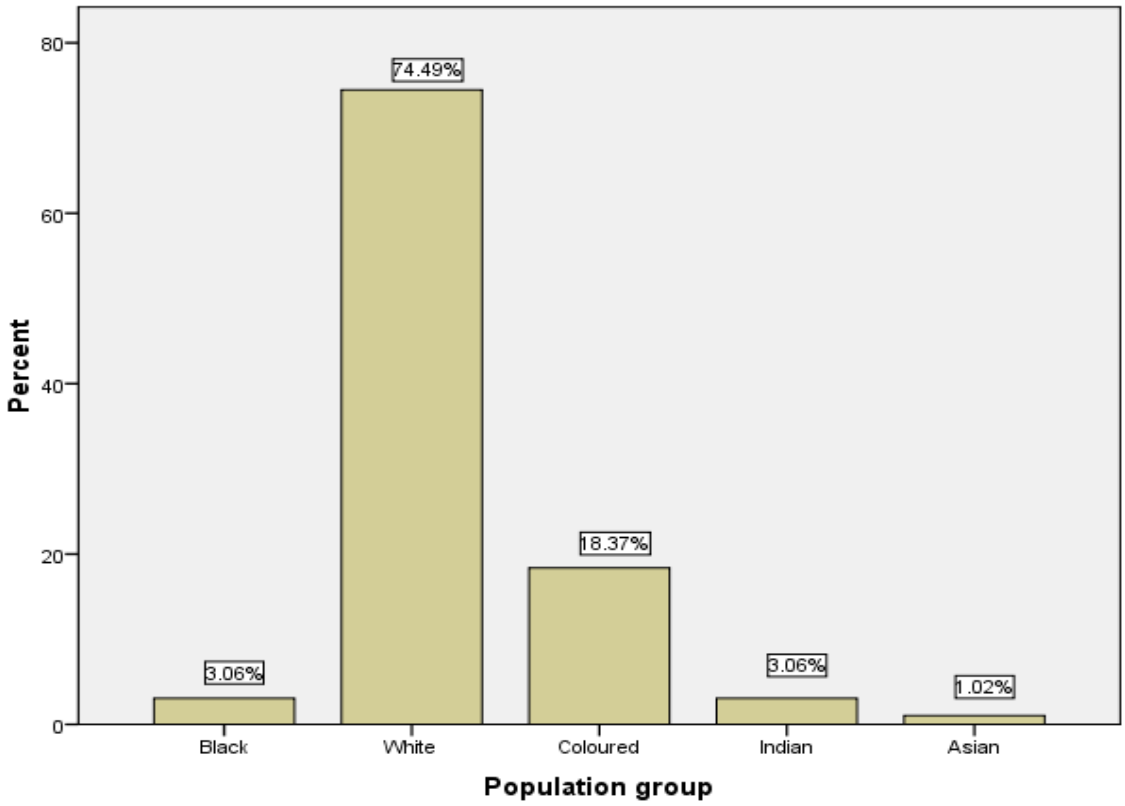

Figure 13: Population group distribution of the sample (N=98)

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

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

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

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

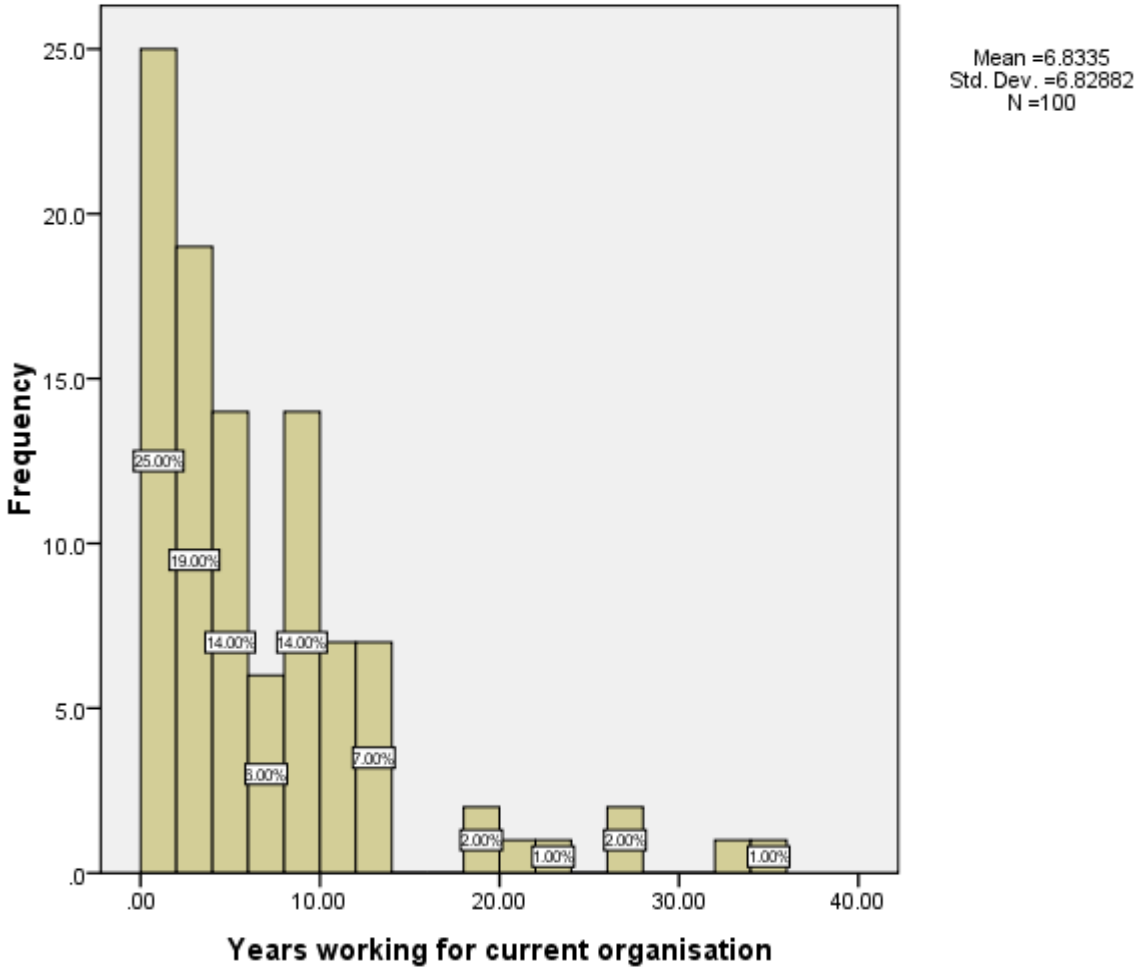

Figure 14: Years worked for current organisation

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

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

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

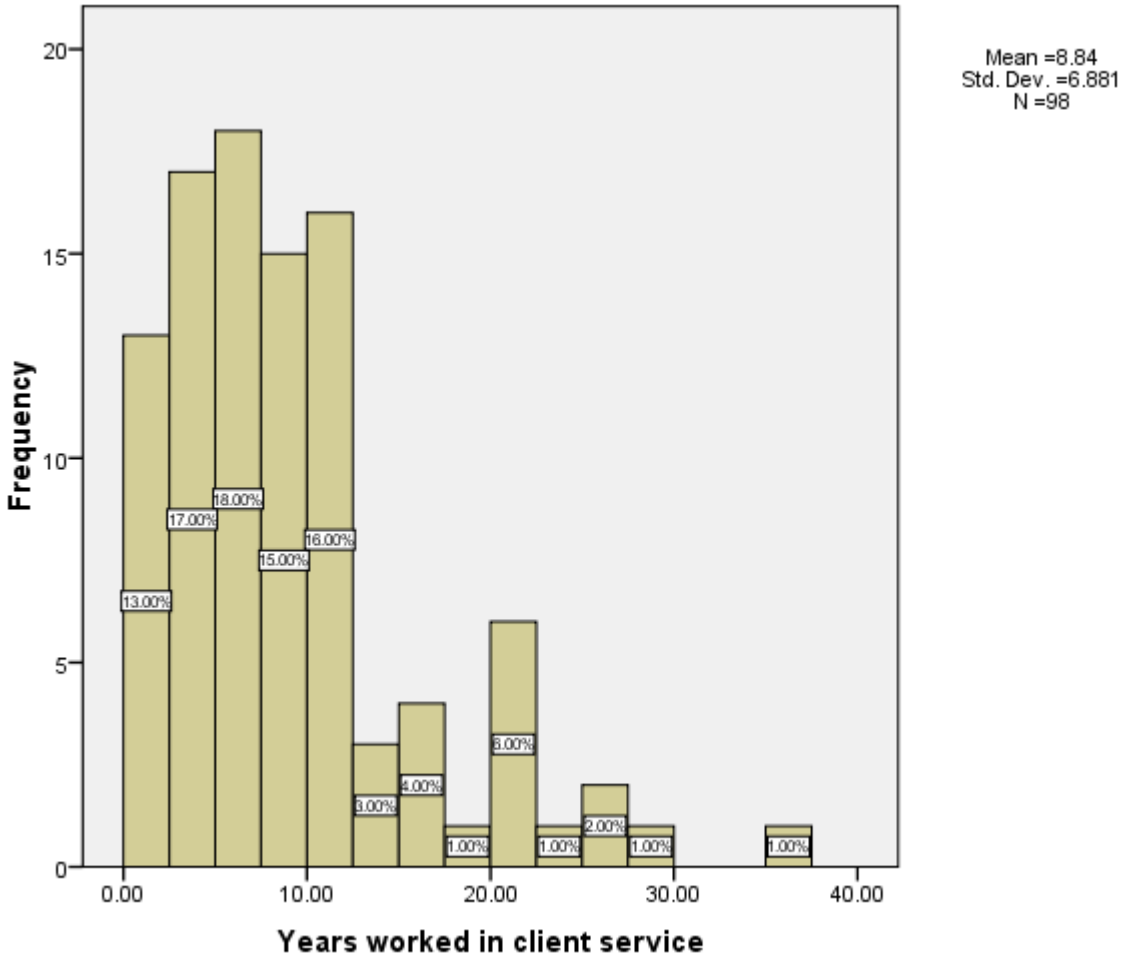

Figure 15: Years worked in client service

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

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

Table 13: Hours worked per week

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

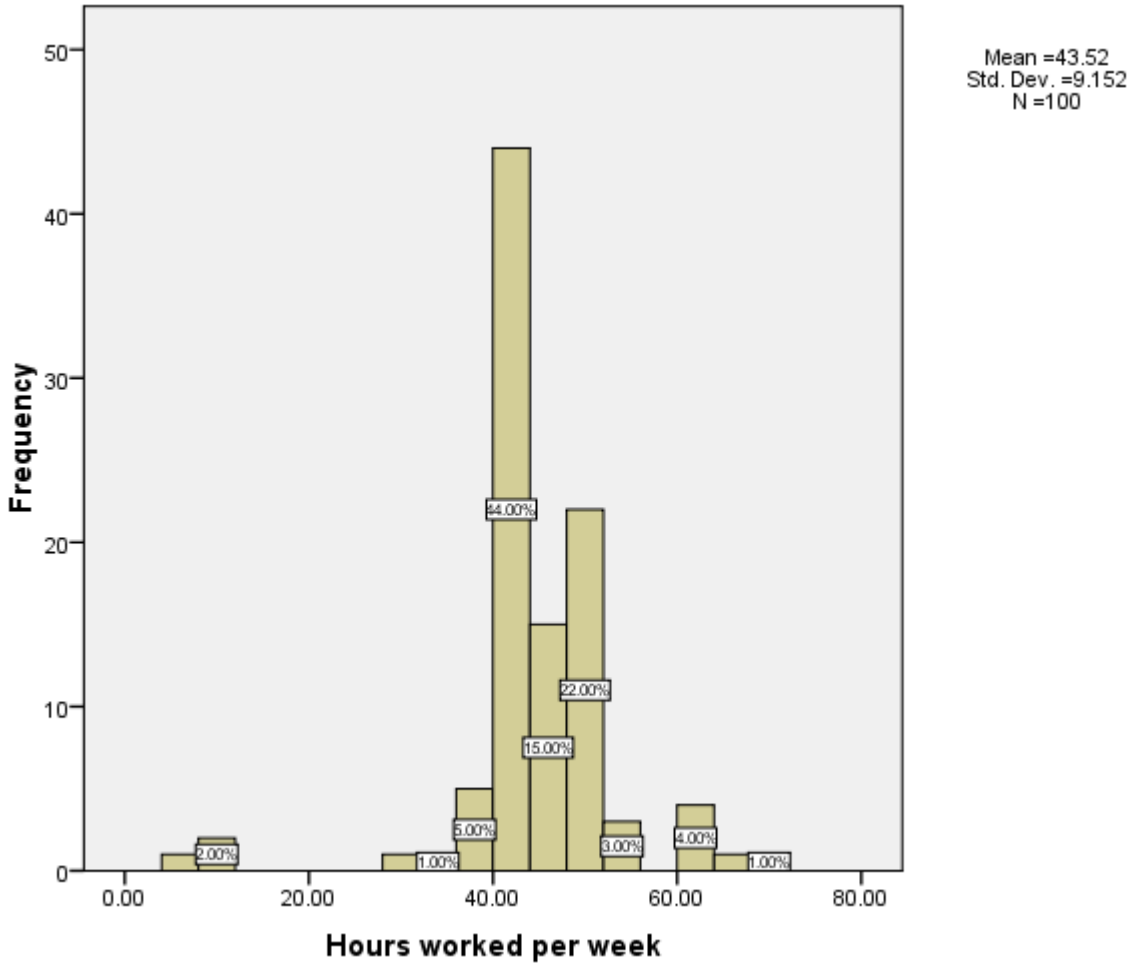

Figure 16: Hours worked per week (N=100)

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

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

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

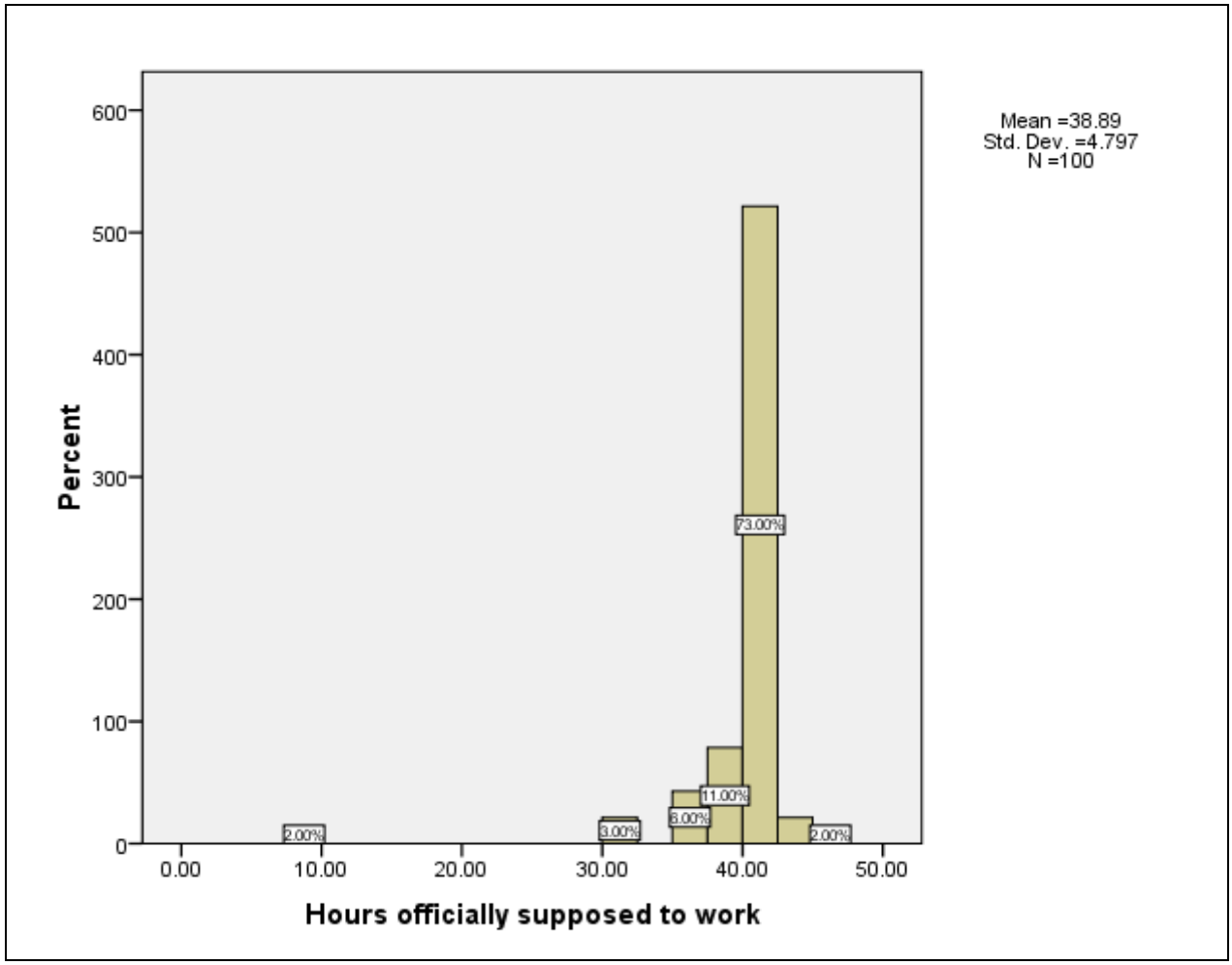

Figure 17: Hours officially required to work per week (N=100)

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

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

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

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

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

Table 16: Importance of family (N=100)

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

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

Table 17: Importance of friends (N=100)

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

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

Table 18: Importance of religion (N=100)

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

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

Table 19: Importance of work (N=100)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 23: Relationships with supervisors (N=100)

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

Table 24: Relationships with subordinates (N=100)

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

Table 25: Relationships with clients (N=100)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3.2 Measuring instruments

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

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

4.3.2.1 The Maslach Burnout Inventory

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 31: Categories of MBI Scores

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

(Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996:6)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3.2.3 Questionnaire structure

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

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

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

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

4.3.2.4 Questionnaire pilot

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

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

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

4.3.2.5 Questionnaire administration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3.3 Data analysis procedures

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.3.4 Factor structure of the MBI−HSS

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

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

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

Table 32: Cumulative proportion of variance on three factors

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

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

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

Table 33: Rotated factor loadings (three factors)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 35: Cumulative proportion of variance (two factors)

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

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

Table 36: Rotated factor loadings (two factors)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.4 THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

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

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

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

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

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

4. To what extent do the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of higher burnout employees differ from the role-related behaviours and subjective perceptions of lower burnout employees?
5. Are lower burnout respondents able to self-verify more easily than higher burnout respondents?
6. To what extent do higher burnout employees experience, interpret and internalise the organisational client discourse differently when compared to lower burnout client service employees?

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

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

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

4.4.1 Qualitative sample selection and description

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

Table 41: Respondents ranked from highest to lowest burnout scores

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

High Burnout respondents					
Code	*Company*	*Town/Region*	*Gender*	*Population Group*	*Interview Duration*
H1	M	Cape Town	Female	White	35 min
H2	M	Cape Town	Male	White	25 min
H3	F	Cape Town	Female	Coloured	40 min
H4	F	Cape Town	Female	Coloured	40 min
H5	F	Cape Town	Male	Coloured	35 min
H6	F	Cape Town	Male	White	30 min
H7	T	Mpumalanga	Male	White	30 min
H8	T	Mpumalanga	Male	White	32 min
Low Burnout respondents					
Code	*Company*	*Town/Region*	*Gender*	*Population Group*	*Interview Duration*
L1	M	Cape Town	Female	White	30 min
L2	M	Cape Town	Female	White	26 min
L3	M	Cape Town	Female	White	28 min
L4	T	Free State	Male	White	41 min
L5	T	Free State	Female	White	31 min
L6	T	Mpumalanga	Male	White	35 min
L7	T	Free State	Male	White	40 min
L8	T	Free State	Male	White	41 min
L9	T	Free State	Male	White	35 min

4.4.2 The qualitative interview method

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

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

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

4.4.2.1 The interview schedule

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4.4.2.2 Interview administration

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

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

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

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

4.4.3 Qualitative data analysis and interpretation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

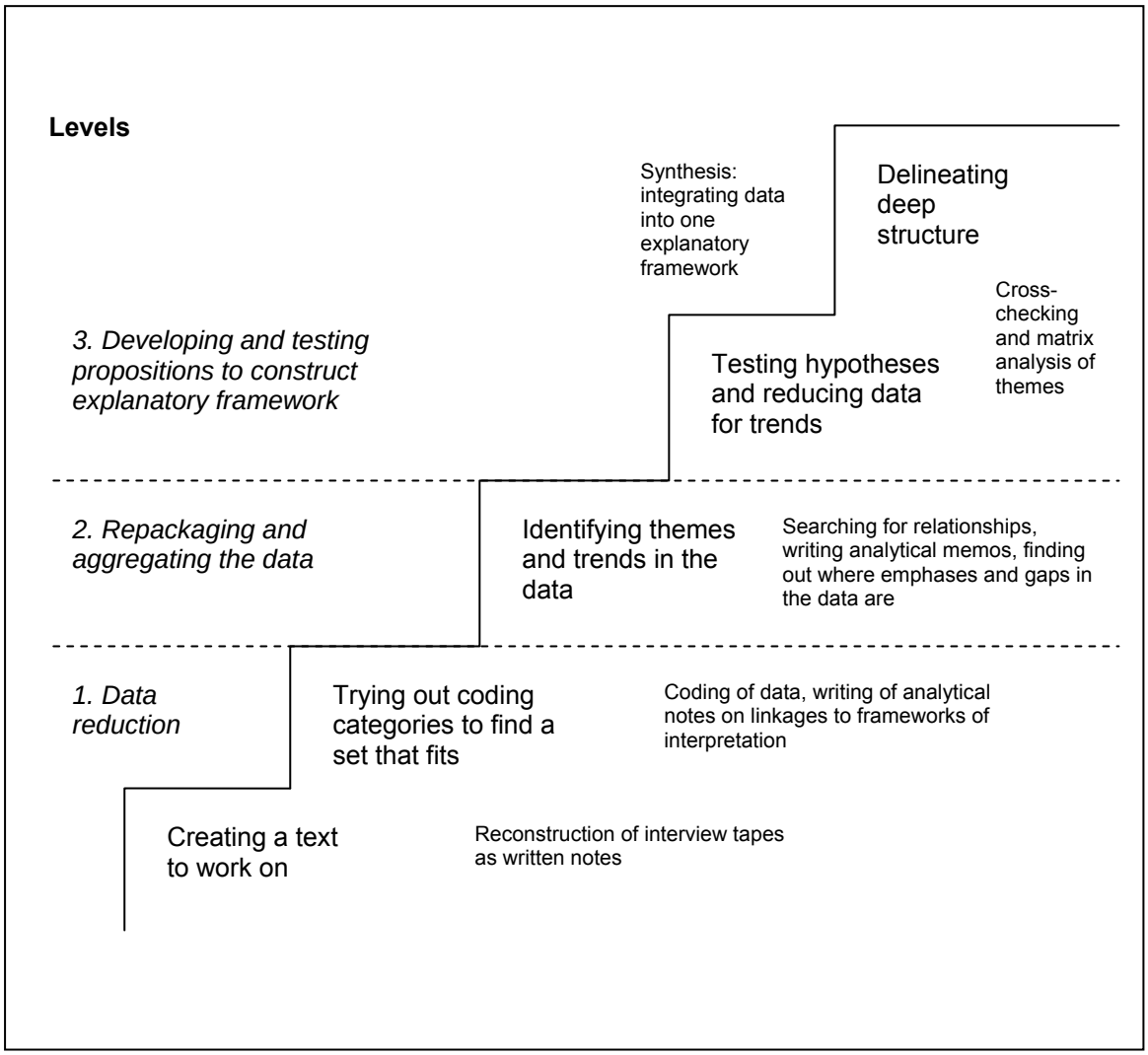

Figure 18: The ladder of analytical abstraction (Carney, 1990 as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994: 92)

4.4.3.1 Open coding

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

Table 43: Questions used to illuminate themes in qualitative data

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

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

4.4.3.2 Axial coding

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

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

4.4.3.3 Selective coding

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

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

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

The themed questions used during selective coding include:

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

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

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

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

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

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