CHAPTER 5

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

5.1   BURNOUT LEVELS

As recommended by Maslach *et al.* (1996) scores on the MBI burnout continuum can be divided into thirds, corresponding to low, moderate and high burnout levels. Since burnout in the present study was computed using 21 items instead of the original 22 items proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1986), the continuum of burnout scores ranges from +0 to +126 instead of from +0 to +132.

Table 44 provides a detailed reflection of the scores corresponding to low, moderate and high burnout.

Table 44: Range of experienced burnout

	Burnout Total	*Reduced Accomplishment*	*Exhaust/Depers*
Range	0−126	0−42	0−84
Low	≤ 42	≤ 14	≤ 28
Moderate	43−84	15−28	29−56
High	≥ 85	≥ 29	≥ 57

As recommended by Maslach *et al*. (1996) scores on the MBI can be classified as low when they are in the lower third of the normative distribution. High scores are in the upper third, while moderate scores are in the middle third. Scores on the 14 item emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scale run from +0 to +84, while scores on the seven item personal accomplishment subscale run from +0 to +42. Since all personal accomplishment subscales are positively phrased, while emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation items are negatively phrased, the personal accomplishment items were reverse coded. A high score on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale would therefore indicate high burnout. In other words,

from this change reduced personal accomplishment means higher burnout as a result of a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

The mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of the present sample on burnout total, personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are reflected in **Table 45**.

Table 45: **Mean scores on burnout (N=100)**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Items
Burnout Total*	94	39.20	18.47	6	88	21
Reduced Accomplishment	100	9.98	6.88	0	28	7
Exhaust/Depersonalisation	94	24.93	15.84	4	71	14

* Burnout Total refers to the combined score for reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

With a total burnout mean of 39.20 (SD = 18.47), the sample represents a low total burnout score. The sample reflects a mean of 9.98 (SD = 6.88) on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale, which would also be classified as low burnout. A mean of 24.93 (SD = 15.84) on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale similarly indicates relatively low levels of burnout among the present sample.

5.2 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND DEMOGRAPHIC AND BIOGRAPHIC VARIABLES MEASURED ON DISCRETE SCALES

The statistical procedure Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether any statistically significant differences in burnout scores exist between groups characterised by biographic or demographic variables measured on discrete scales. Significance was measured using an F test, with $p \leq 0.05$ regarded as statistically significant. In cases where variables have more than two response categories, Scheffe's test was conducted to determine which pairs differ significantly. The results of the ANOVA procedure per burnout component are presented in sections below.

5.2.1 The relationship between reduced personal accomplishment and discrete demographic and biographic variables

Table 46 reflects the results of the ANOVA performed to measure whether any statistically significant differences exist between scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale and the discrete biographic and demographic variables. Mean scores per descriptive category are ranked from highest to lowest.

Table 46: Relationships between reduced personal accomplishment and discrete biographic and demographic variables (ANOVA)

Variable	F	p	Descriptive categories	N	Mean	SD
Company	8.55	0.0004	Company M	23	14.78	7.35
			Company F	20	9.30	6.43
			Company T	57	8.28	6.00
Gender	0	0.985	Male	55	10.18	6.66
			Female	45	9.73	7.22
Population group	4.29	0.0411	People of colour	25	12.48	8.76
			White	73	9.23	5.96
Marital status	0.72	0.399	Single	34	10.79	7.55
			Married or cohabiting	66	9.56	6.54
Education	5.38	0.0061	University degree	31	13.19	7.40
			Post-school certificate or diploma	40	8.78	6.98
			Secondary education	29	8.21	4.96

As reflected in the table, the F test for reduced personal accomplishment indicates significant differences between companies (F = 8.55, p = 0.0004); population group (F = 4.29, p = 0.0411) and educational level (F = 5.38, p = 0.0061). No significant

differences were observed for gender or marital status differences. According to the mean scores reflected in the table, people of colour display significantly higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than white respondents do.

Scheffe's test was then applied to test which pairs of companies and which pairs of educational levels differ on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale (**Table 47**).

Table 47: Scheffe's test – Reduced personal accomplishment and company

Company pair wise comparison	Difference between means	p
Company M/Company F	5.48	*
Company M/Company T	6.50	*
Company F/Company T	1.02	†

† p > .05

* p ≤ .05

According to the results of the Scheffe's test presented in **Table 47**, Company M displays significantly higher mean scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale than Company F and Company T. No significantly different mean scores are detected between Company F and Company T.

The result of the Scheffe's test to determine which pairs of educational levels differ significantly is presented in **Table 48**.

Table 48: Scheffe's test – Reduced personal accomplishment and educational level

Educational level pair wise comparison	Difference between means	p
University degree/post-school certificate or diploma	4.42	*
University degree/Secondary education	4.99	*
Secondary education/post-school certificate or diploma	0.57	†

† p > .05

* p ≤ .05

Table 48 shows that respondents with a university degree present higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than respondents with a secondary education or post-school certificate or diploma. No significant pair wise differences are observed between respondents with a secondary education and those with a post school certificate or diploma.

5.2.2 The relationship between emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and biographic and demographic variables measured on discrete scales

Table 49 reflects the results of the ANOVA performed to measure whether any statistically significant differences exist between emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation and groups characterised by discrete biographic and demographic variables.

Table 49: Relationships between discrete biographic/demographic variables and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation (ANOVA)

Variable	F	p	Descriptive categories	N	Mean	SD
Company	3.68	0.029	Company F	18	37.67	17.08
			Company M	23	28.13	13.34
			Company T	53	26.32	15.65
Gender	0.01	0.9304	Female	43	29.09	14.58
			Male	51	28.80	16.98
Population group	0.59	0.4444	People of colour	24	30.96	15.66
			White	68	28.04	16.09
Marital status	1.23	0.2711	Single	33	31.39	16.04
			Married or cohabiting	61	27.61	15.72
Education	0.02	0.9786	Post-school certificate or diploma	36	29.36	15.40
			University degree	27	28.78	18.63
			Secondary education	31	28.58	14.17

The F test indicates significant differences between the companies (F = 3.68 p = 0.029) on emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. None of the other discrete biographic and demographic variables accounted for significant differences in emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scores.

Results from Scheffe's test conducted to measure which pairs of companies differ significantly with regard to emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scores, are presented in **Table 50**.

Table 50: Scheffe's test – Emotional Exhaustion/Depersonalisation and company

Company pair wise comparison	Difference between means	p
Company F/Company M	9.54	†
Company F/Company T	11.35	*
Company M/Company T	1.81	†

† p > .05

* p ≤ .05

The results in **Table 50** show that Company F displays a significantly higher mean score on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale than Company T. No statistically significant differences are detected between the mean scores of Company F and Company M and Company M and Company T.

5.2.3 The relationship between burnout total and biographic and demographic variables measured on discrete scales

The results of an ANOVA to test for significant differences between burnout total and biographic/demographic variables measured on discrete scales are presented in **Table 51**.

Table 51: Relationships between biographic/demographic variables and burnout total (ANOVA)

Variable	F	p	Descriptive categories	N	Mean	SD
Company	3.68	0.0292	Company F	18	47.00	20.64
			Company M	23	42.91	15.53
			Company T	53	34.94	17.98
Gender	0	0.985	Male	51	39.24	19.56
			Female	43	39.16	17.33
Population group	2.01	0.1598	People of colour	24	43.75	17.96
			White	68	37.54	18.60
Marital status	1.27	0.262	Single	33	42.12	16.87
			Married or cohabiting	61	37.62	19.23
Education	0.51	0.6001	University degree	31	41.77	16.91
			Post-school certificate or diploma	36	38.69	17.83
			Secondary education	27	36.93	21.20

According to the data presented in **Table 51**, only client service organisation accounted for significant differences in burnout total scores (F = 3.68, p = 0.0292). No significant educational level, marital status, gender or population differences are observed.

The results of a Scheffe's test to determine which pairs of companies differ significantly with regards to scores on burnout total, show no significant pair wise differences (**Table 52**).

Table 52: Scheffe's test – Burnout Total and company

Company pair wise comparison	Difference between means	p*
Company F/Company M	4.09	†
Company F/Company T	12.06	†
Company M/Company T	7.97	†

† $p > .05$

* $p \leq .05$

5.3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES MEASURED AT THE RATIO LEVEL

Table 53 displays the relationship between selected demographic variables measured at the ratio level and burnout. In order to investigate the relationships between burnout and these demographic variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used. Correlations were regarded as significant $p \leq 0.05$ and practically relevant if $r \geq 0.25$.

Table 53: Relationships between selected demographic variables and burnout (N=94)

Variable	Burnout Total [a]	Reduced Accomp [b]	Exhaust/ Depers [c]
	(r)	(r)	(r)
V82.Age	-0.16[†]	-0.20*	-0.09[†]
V86.Years employed by current organisation	-0.14[†]	-0.19[†]	-0.08[†]
V87.Years working in a client service environment	-0.24*	-0.28***	-0.16[†]
V88.Years working in total	-0.19[†]	-0.26**	-0.11[†]
V89.Hours worked per week	-0.14[†]	-0.11[†]	-0.1[†]

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

The data presented in **Table 53** indicates that only one of the variables displays a significant relationship with burnout total. Variable V87 (years working in a client service environment) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, but the correlation is low ($r = -0.24$; $p = 0.0232$) and thus of low practical value.

Variables V87 (years working in a client service environment), and V88 (years working in total) display significant negative relationships with the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. This implies that the longer respondents have been working and the longer they have been employed in a client service environment, the lower their scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale and the less burnout they are likely to experience.

No significant relationships were observed between the selected demographic variables measured on a ratio scale and the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale.

5.4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND RESPONDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE CLIENT RELATIONSHIP

As mentioned in the research methodology chapter, an additional five questions (V74 to V78) were placed after the MBI items in the questionnaire. These questions were all positively phrased and were included on request by the management of Company M who felt that the majority of negatively phrased MBI items would leave their employees feeling negative about their jobs. As a result, respondents were asked to indicate their levels of agreement or disagreement with five statements on a five point scale, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. For ease of interpretation of the data, the items were all reverse coded for analysis so that 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. In order to investigate the relationships between burnout and perceptions of the client relationship, Spearman's Rho was used as the statistical procedure. Correlations were regarded as statistically significant if $p \leq 0.05$ and practically relevant if $r \geq 0.25$.

Table 54 reflects the relationships between perceptions of the client relationship, burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

Table 54: Relationships between perceptions of the client relationships and burnout

Variable	Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced accomp[b] (r)	Exhaust/ depers[c] (r)
V74. My clients are understanding	-0.23*	-0.19[†]	-0.23*
V75. I feel that I live up to the expectations of my clients	-0.28**	-0.35***	-0.18[†]
V76. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort to assist my clients	-0.27**	-0.34***	-0.15[†]
V77. I have power over my clients	-0.12[†]	-0.22*	-0.07[†]
V78. I have built effective relationships with my clients	-0.33**	-0.32**	-0.27**

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

Variables V75, V76 and V78 all display significant and practically relevant negative correlations with burnout total. In other words, higher levels of burnout total are associated with feeling less able to live up to the expectations of clients (V75); being less willing to put in effort to assist the client (V76) and building less effective relationships with the client (V78). Variable V74 (my clients are understanding) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, although the correlation is too low to be regarded as practically relevant.

Variables V75, V76, and V78 also all display significant negative correlations with the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. In other words, levels of reduced personal accomplishment are lower when respondents feel they are living up to the expectations of their clients (V75); when they are willing to exert greater effort in order to assist the client (V76); and when they regard their relationships with the client as more effective (V78). Variable V77 (I have power over my clients) also displays a significant negative relationship with reduced personal accomplishment, but the correlation is too low to be regarded as practically useful.

Only variable V78 (I have built effective relationships with my clients) displayed a significant negative relationship with the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale, suggesting that lower levels of emotional exhaustion are associated with having built an effective relationship with the client.

5.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE AREAS

The relationship between burnout and the importance of various life areas is reflected in **Table 55**. Through items V96 to V99 respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = very important and 5 = not at all important) how important various components of their lives are. For ease of interpretation, these items have been reverse coded so that 1 = not at all important and 5 = very important. In other words, in positive correlations a stronger level of importance will correlate with higher levels of burnout.

Table 55: Relationships between importance of life areas and burnout

Variable	Burnout Total [a]	Reduced Accomp [b]	Exhaust/ Depers [c]
	(r)	(r)	(r)
V91. Importance of family	$-0.20^{\dagger}$	$-0.12^{\dagger}$	-0.21*
V92. Importance of friends	$-0.11^{\dagger}$	$0.13^{\dagger}$	$-0.20^{\dagger}$
V93. Importance of religion	$-0.19^{\dagger}$	$-0.10^{\dagger}$	$-0.20^{\dagger}$
V94. Importance of work	-0.37***	-0.33**	-0.27**
V95. Importance of service to others	-0.43***	-0.36***	-0.36***

† $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

The data reflected in **Table 55** indicates a significant negative correlation between V94 (importance of work) and V95 (importance of service to others) and burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

This means that the more important respondents regard work and service to others, the lower their burnout.   This finding is surprising since it was expected that respondents that regard work as important may invest more emotional energy into their work, and consequently experience more burnout.   The implications of this finding will be discussed in Chapter 7. Variable V91 (importance of family) displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, but this correlation is too low to be regarded as practically relevant. Other lifestyle variables like importance of friends and religion displayed no significant or practically relevant correlations with burnout or its dimensions.

5.6   THE   RELATIONSHIP   BETWEEN   BURNOUT   AND   PERCEIVED SATISFACTION WITH STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

The extent to which satisfaction with stakeholders in the client service environment correlates with burnout is presented in this section.   Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 = not satisfied at all and 5 = extremely satisfied) how satisfied they were with clients, supervisors, co-workers and subordinates. **Table 56** reflects the Spearman correlation coefficients pertaining to the relationships between burnout and satisfaction with stakeholders.

Table 56: Relationships between satisfaction with stakeholders and burnout total

Variable	Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced Accomp [b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers [c] (r)
V96. Satisfied relationships with co-workers	-0.21*	-0.10[†]	-0.22*
V97. Satisfied relationships with supervisors	-0.03***	-0.16[†]	-0.35***
V98. Satisfied relationships with subordinates	-0.09[†]	-0.01[†]	-0.08[†]
V99. Satisfied relationships with clients	-0.36***	-0.36***	-0.27**

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

Variable 99 (satisfied relationship with clients) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, suggesting that greater levels of satisfaction with the client relationship are associated with lower levels of reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. Although variables V96 (satisfied relationships with co-workers) and V97 (satisfied relationships with supervisors) display statistically significant negative relationships with burnout total, the relationships are weak. Variable V97 (satisfied relationships with supervisors) displays a significant negative and practically relevant relationship with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This indicates that greater levels of satisfaction with supervisor relationships are associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. Variable V96 displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, but this correlation is weak. Satisfaction with subordinate relationships showed no statistically significant relationships with burnout total or its dimensions. It is therefore evident that burnout in the present sample is not significantly associated with quality of subordinate or co-workers relationships.

5.7 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ORGANISATION

This section explores the relationship of burnout with levels of commitment and loyalty to the organisation. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of commitment and loyalty to the organisation on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree. For ease of interpretation, the items V100 to V104 have been reverse coded, so that 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. In other words, a positive correlation would indicate a positive relationship between burnout and increased levels of agreement with the statement. All items displayed in **Table 57** reflect significant correlations with burnout total.

Table 57: Relationships between employee attitudes towards the organisation and burnout total

Variable	Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced Accomp [b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers [c] (r)
V100. I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful	-0.30**	-0.38***	-0.17[†]
V101. I tell friends this is a good organisation to work for	-0.49***	-0.25*	-0.45***
V102. I feel very little loyalty to this organisation	0.29**	0.09[†]	0.30**
V103. I am proud to tell others I work for this organisation	-0.40***	-0.16[†]	-0.39***
V.104. Deciding to work for this organisation was a mistake	0.43***	0.12[†]	0.43***

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \leq .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

Variables V100 (I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful), V101 (I tell friends this is a good organisation to work for) and V103 (I am proud to tell

others I work for this organisation) reflect significant negative correlations with burnout total. Variables V102 (I feel very little loyalty towards this organisation) and V104 (deciding to work for this organisation was a mistake) reflect significant positive relationships with burnout total. In other words, the more committed to and proud the individual is of the organisation for which they work, the lower the levels of burnout total.

Only variables V100 (I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful) and V101 (I tell friends this is a good organisation work for) display significant negative correlations with reduced personal accomplishment. This means that lower levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with being willing to work hard to make the organisation successful and telling friends that the organisational is a good organisation to work for.

V101, V102, V103 and V104 display significant correlations with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, suggesting that greater levels of commitment to and pride in the organisation are associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

5.8 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND THE PERCEIVED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SELF AND THE CLIENT

This section presents data pertaining to the relationship between burnout and the perceived difference between the client service employee and the client on a set of bipolar adjectives. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, a new variable was created by calculating the difference (D) between the client service employees' ratings of themselves (self in role) and their ratings of the client (counter-role) on a set of bipolar adjectives. This represents how client service employees perceive themselves in relation to the client. **Table 58** reflects the correlations between burnout and its dimensions and the perceived difference between the self and the client on the set of adjective pairs.

Table 58: Relationship between perceived difference between the client and the self and burnout

Perceived difference between client and self		Burnout Total[a] (r)	Reduced Accomp[b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers[c] (r)
D1. Powerful	- Powerless	-0.15[†]	-0.29**	-0.07[†]
D2. Submissive	- Domineering	0.00[†]	0.12[†]	-0.03[†]
D3. Helpful	- Unhelpful	0.05[†]	-0.11[†]	0.11[†]
D4. Appreciated	- Unappreciated	-0.21*	-0.02[†]	-0.23*
D5. Considerate	- Inconsiderate	0.01[†]	-0.25*	0.15[†]
D6. Weak	- Strong	0.26*	0.29**	0.19[†]
D7. Nice	- Mean	-0.07[†]	-0.07[†]	-0.01[†]
D8. Aggressive	- Defensive	0.16[†]	0.03[†]	0.15[†]
D9. Restricted	- Unrestricted	-0.01[†]	0.13[†]	-0.06[†]
D10. Understanding	- Not understanding	-0.19[†]	-0.25*	-0.07[†]
D11. Superior	- Inferior	-0.15[†]	-0.08[†]	-0.15[†]
D12. Active	- Passive	-0.25*	-0.27**	-0.14[†]
D13. Respected	- Not respected	-0.14[†]	-0.10[†]	-0.14[†]
D14. Flexible	- Rigid	-0.05[†]	-0.17[†]	0.03[†]
D15. Important	- Unimportant	0.01[†]	0.07[†]	-0.02[†]
D16. Patient	- Impatient	-0.03[†]	-0.28**	0.13[†]
D17. Leading	- Following	-0.14[†]	-0.21*	-0.06[†]

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \le .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

As reflected in **Table 58**, two variables, D6 (weak−strong) and D12 (active−passive) reflect a significant positive correlation with burnout. This suggests that the more different client service employees perceive themselves to be from the client on a weak–strong and an active-passive continuum, the higher their levels of burnout. It is, however, not possible from the data reflected in the table to ascertain whether the client is regarded as more or less strong and/or passive than the self.

Table 58 also reflects the relationship between perceived difference between the client and self and levels of reduced personal accomplishment. From the data presented, a significant positive correlation exists between perceived difference on the weak−strong continuum (D6) and reduced personal accomplishment. This suggests that the greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the weak−strong continuum, the higher the levels of reduced personal accomplishment. A significant negative relationship exists between D1 (powerful−powerless), D5 (considerate−inconsiderate), D10 (understanding−not understanding), D12 (active−passive), D16 (patient−impatient) and scores on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that the greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the above-mentioned continuums, the lower the level of reduced personal accomplishment.

No significant and practically relevant correlations are observed between perceived difference between the self and client and the experience of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

5.9 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE COUNTER-ROLE

While the previous section explored the relationship between the perceived difference between the self and the client and levels of burnout, this section explores data pertaining to the relationship between the client service employee's description of the client on a set of bipolar adjectives and burnout. Table 59 reflects the Spearman correlation coefficients for the relationship between burnout and descriptions of the client (counter-role).

Table 59: Relationship between perception of the client and burnout

Variable		Burnout Total [a] (r)	Reduced Accomp [b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers [c] (r)
V18. Powerful	- Powerless	0.14[†]	0.093[†]	0.11[†]
V19. Submissive	- Domineering	0.07[†]	0.07[†]	0.07[†]
V20. Helpful	- Unhelpful	0.16[†]	0.08[†]	0.17[†]
V21. Appreciated	- Unappreciated	0.17[†]	0.25*	0.11[†]
V22. Considerate	- Inconsiderate	0.19[†]	-0.07[†]	0.29**
V23. Weak	- Strong	0.01[†]	-0.04[†]	0.02[†]
V24. Nice	- Mean	0.12[†]	0.10[†]	0.14[†]
V25. Aggressive	- Defensive	0.12[†]	0.05[†]	0.11[†]
V26. Restricted	- Unrestricted	-0.14[†]	-0.02[†]	-0.15[†]
V27. Understanding	- Not understanding	0.11[†]	-0.02[†]	0.21[†]
V28. Superior	- Inferior	-0.11[†]	-0.04[†]	-0.13[†]
V29. Active	- Passive	-0.06[†]	-0.01[†]	-0.05[†]
V30. Respected	- Not respected	0.21*	0.28**	0.13[†]
V31. Flexible	- Rigid	0.26*	0.09[†]	0.30**
V32. Important	- Unimportant	0.37***	0.44***	0.25*
V33. Patient	- Impatient	0.21*	-0.00[†]	0.29**
V34. Leading	- Following	0.10[†]	0.09[†]	0.09[†]

[†] $p > .05$ [a] $n = 94$

* $p \le .05$ [b] $n = 100$

** $p < .01$ [c] $n = 94$

*** $p < .001$

According to the data presented in **Table 59**, only V31 (flexible−rigid) and V32 (important−unimportant) reflect practically relevant and significant positive correlations with burnout total. In other words, the more rigid the client is perceived to be, the higher the level of burnout experienced by the client service employee. This positive relationship also suggests that the more unimportant the client service

employee perceives the client to be, the higher the level of burnout. Variables V30 (respected−not respected) and V33 (patient−impatient) also display a significant correlation with burnout total, but these correlations are too low to be considered practically relevant.

When considering the relationship between descriptions of the client and reduced personal accomplishment, only variables V21 (appreciated−unappreciated), V30 (respected−not respected) and V32 (important−unimportant) display significant correlations with the personal accomplishment subscale. It appears therefore that higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with perceptions of the client as less appreciated, less respected and more unimportant.

The far right hand column of **Table 59** reflects the correlations between descriptions of the client and scores on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. Only variables V22 (considerate−inconsiderate), V31 (flexible−rigid), V32 (important−unimportant) and V33 (patient−impatient) are significantly positively correlated with the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. This means that higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with perceiving the client as more inconsiderate, more rigid, less important and more impatient.

5.10 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE SELF (SELF IN ROLE)

The final section of the data presentation examines the relationship between burnout and client service employee ratings of themselves (self in role) on the list of bipolar adjective pairs (see **Table 60**).

Table 60: Relationship between self in role and burnout

Variable		Burnout Total[a] (r)	Reduced Accomp[b] (r)	Exhaust/ Depers[c] (r)
V35. Powerful	- Powerless	0.22†	0.48***	0.22*
V36. Submissive	- Domineering	0.08†	-0.14†	0.08†
V37. Helpful	- Unhelpful	0.06†	0.32**	0.06†
V38. Appreciated	- Unappreciated	0.31**	0.19†	0.31**
V39. Considerate	- Inconsiderate	0.12†	0.42***	0.12†
V40. Weak	- Strong	-0.27**	-0.45***	-0.27**
V41. Nice	- Mean	0.186†	0.26**	0.18†
V42. Aggressive	- Defensive	-0.08†	0.02†	-0.08†
V43. Restricted	- Unrestricted	-0.08†	-0.20*	-0.08†
V44. Understanding	- Not understanding	0.36***	0.48***	0.36***
V45. Superior	- Inferior	0.09†	0.06†	0.09†
V46. Active	- Passive	0.11†	0.41***	0.11†
V47. Respected	- Not respected	0.30**	0.28**	0.30**
V48. Flexible	- Rigid	0.35***	0.45***	0.35***
V49. Important	- Unimportant	0.18†	0.25*	0.18†
V50. Patient	- Impatient	0.23*	0.49***	0.23*
V51. Leading	- Following	0.11†	0.46***	0.11†

† p > .05   [a] n = 94

* p ≤ .05   [b] n = 100

** p < .01   [c] n = 94

*** p < .001

The second column in **Table 60** reflects the correlation coefficients for the relationships between the self in role rating and burnout total. Variables V38 (appreciated–unappreciated), V44 (understanding–not understanding), V47 (respected–not respected); V48 (flexible–rigid) display significant positive and practically relevant correlations with total burnout scores. Higher levels of burnout are therefore associated with the client service employee feeling unappreciated, not

respected, less understanding and more rigid in their roles. Variable V40 (weak–strong) displays a significant and practically relevant negative correlation with burnout, suggesting that lower levels of burnout are associated with feeling strong in the client service role.

The reduced personal accomplishment subscale is significantly correlated with a number of self-in role descriptions. Variables V35 (powerful−powerless), V37 (helpful−unhelpful), V39 (considerate–inconsiderate), V41 (nice–mean), V44 (understanding–not understanding), V46 (active−passive), V47 (respected–not respected), V48 (flexible–rigid), V.49 (important–unimportant), V50 (patient–impatient) and V51 (leading−following) all display significant positive correlations with the reduced personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that the higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with feeling powerless, unhelpful, inconsiderate, mean, not understanding, passive, rigid, impatient, following, less important and less respected in their roles. Again, variable V40 (weak−strong) displays a significant negative relationship with reduced personal accomplishment, implying that client service employees who perceive themselves as stronger, rather than weaker, experience higher levels of personal accomplishment in their roles.

The last column in **Table 60** reflects the correlations between rating of the self in role and the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. Variables V38 (appreciated–unappreciated), V40 (weak−strong), V44 (understanding–not understanding); V47 (respected–not respected) and V48 (flexible−rigid) display significant positive correlations with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This implies that for client service employees, higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feeling unappreciated, less respected, less understanding and rigid in their roles. Variable 40 (weak−strong) displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, meaning that higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feelings of weakness.

Only variables V36 (submissive−domineering); V42 (aggressive−defensive) and V45 (superior−inferior) displayed no significant correlations with any of the burnout dimensions.

5.11 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The findings from the quantitative data of the research are summarised below:

1. The mean score for burnout for the study sample can be classified as low according to the criteria proposed by Maslach *et al.* (1996).
2. Gender and marital status do not contribute to significant differences in burnout scores.
3. People of colour display significantly higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than white respondents.
4. Company M displays a significant higher mean score on the reduced personal accomplishment subscale than Company T and Company F.
5. Company F displays a significantly higher mean score on the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale compared to Company T.
6. Respondents with a university degree present higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment than respondents with a secondary education or post school certificate or diploma do.
7. V87 (years of working in a client service environment and V88 (years working in total) display statistically significant negative relationships with the personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that the longer respondents have been working and/or have been employed in a client service environment, the higher their levels of personal accomplishment.
8. The perceptions among client service employees that they are living up to the expectations of their clients (V75) display a statistically significant negative relationship with both the burnout total and the personal accomplishment subscale. This suggests that reduced personal accomplishment and burnout scores are associated with perceptions that the client service employee is living up to expectations of the client.
9. Willingness to put in a great deal of effort to assist the client (V76) also showed a significant negative relationship with both burnout total and personal

accomplishment, implying that lower burnout employees are willing to put in greater effort to assist the client than higher burnout employees are.

10. The perception amongst client service employees that they have built effective relationships with the client (V78) displays a significant negative relationship with burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. This means that the more effective the client service employee perceives the relationship with the client, the lower his level of burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

11. The importance of work (V94) and the importance of service to others (V95) display significant negative relationships with the burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscales. This finding implies that lower burnout respondents regard work and service to others as more important than their higher burnout counterparts do.

12. Satisfaction with the client relationship (V99) displays a significant negative correlation with burnout total, personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This signifies that satisfaction with the client relationship is associated with lower levels of burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

13. Satisfaction with supervisors (V97) displays a significant negative correlation with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation, indicating that satisfaction with supervisor relationships is associated with lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation.

14. Variable 100 (I am willing to work hard to make this organisation successful) reflects a significant negative relationship with burnout total and reduced personal accomplishment, suggesting lower levels of burnout and reduced personal accomplishment are associated with being willing to work hard to make the organisation successful.

15. Telling friends that the organisation is a good organisation to work for (V101) presents a significant negative relationship with burnout total, reduced personal accomplishment and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This suggests that lower burnout employees tend to be more proud of the organisations for which they work than higher burnout employees are.

16. The more proud (V103) and loyal (V102) respondents are to the organisation, the higher their burnout total and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation scores.

17. Respondents that feel it was a mistake to work for the organisation (V104) experience higher levels of burnout total and emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation that those that do not feel it was a mistake.

18. The greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the powerful−powerless; considerate−inconsiderate; understanding−not understanding; active−passive; and the patient−impatient continuums, the lower the reduced personal accomplishment. This means that personal accomplishment is associated with greater perceived differences between the client and the self on the above-mentioned adjective pairs.

19. The greater the perceived difference between the client and the self on the weak−strong continuum, the higher the level of reduced personal accomplishment and burnout total. This means that higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment and burnout are related to feeling different to the client on a weak−strong continuum.

20. Descriptions of the client on the flexible−rigid (V31) and important−unimportant (V32) adjective scales display significant correlations with burnout total. In other words perceiving the client as rigid and unimportant is associated with higher levels of burnout.

21. Descriptions of the client on the appreciated−not appreciated (V21); respected−not respected (V30) and important−unimportant (V32) items show significant correlations with reduced personal accomplishment. This means that the belief that the client is not appreciated, not respected and unimportant is associated with lower levels of personal accomplishment.

22. Descriptions of the client on the considerate−inconsiderate (V22); important−unimportant (V32); flexible−rigid (V31) and patient−impatient (V33) adjective pairs are significantly correlated with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This indicates that the more inconsiderate, unimportant, rigid and/or impatient the client is perceived to be, the more emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation is experienced by the client service employee.

23. Respondent descriptions of the self in role displayed a number of significant correlations with burnout total. Variables V38 (appreciated−unappreciated); V40

(weak−strong); V44 (understanding−not understanding); V48 (flexible−rigid) and V47 (respected−not respected) all display significant correlations with total burnout scores. These correlations imply that lower levels of burnout are associated with feeling stronger, while higher levels of burnout are associated with feeling less understanding, more rigid, more unappreciated and less respected.

24. Scores on the personal accomplishment subscale display a number of significant correlations with the self in role descriptions. These correlations indicate that higher levels of reduced personal accomplishment are associated with feeling powerless, unhelpful, inconsiderate, mean, less understanding, passive, rigid, not respected, impatient, following, and unimportant. Lower levels of personal accomplishment are associated with feeling stronger rather than weaker in the role.

25. A number of the self in role items displayed significant correlations with the emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation subscale. Variables V38 (appreciated− unappreciated), V40 (weak−strong), V44 (understanding−not understanding) and V48 (flexible−rigid) display significant correlations with emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation. This suggests that higher levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feeling unappreciated, less respected, less understanding and more rigid. Lower levels of emotional exhaustion/depersonalisation are associated with feeling stronger as opposed to weaker.

The quantitative findings presented in this chapter will be interpreted in detail in Chapter 7. From the data presented in this chapter, however, it is clear that the company to which the client service employee belongs is significantly associated with levels of burnout. It is also interesting to note that contrary to expectations, there were few significant correlations between how client service employees perceive the client and their levels of burnout. It would therefore appear that how client service employees define themselves (self in role) is more strongly related to the development of burnout than how they perceive the client.

CHAPTER 6

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

6.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to presenting and interpreting the qualitative data produced through the 17 semi-structured interviews with client service employees.   The qualitative data analysis phase commenced with a process of open coding, which involved the application of preliminary codes to the data.   This was followed by a process of axial coding, where the initial codes were placed into code families or categories.   Through the process of selective coding, meaningful relationships were assigned to the codes.   Finally, the themes and relationships identified during coding were integrated into the conceptual framework developed in Chapter 3.

6.2   THE CODING PROCESS

Following a process of open and axial coding, 30 codes were generated within the higher burnout hermeneutic unit and 25 codes were created in the lower burnout hermeneutic unit.   The codes generated within the higher burnout hermeneutic unit are displayed in **Table 61**, while the codes generated in the lower burnout hermeneutic unit are displayed in **Table 62**.   The number appearing in the second column corresponds to the number of times the code appears across the interviews within each of the hermeneutic units.

Table 61: Axial codes occurring within the higher burnout hermeneutic unit

Higher burnout respondent codes	Times appearing
Feel powerless in helping the client	46
The client comes first no matter what	44
Expects something from the client relationship	36
Subordinate to the client	36
Engages in emotional labour	31
Personalises the client relationship	29
Experiences little self-verification	27
Controlling client	25
Evidence of exhaustion	25
Address client feeling	23
Builds client up	21
Management demands excellent client service	20
Empathises with client	20
Client is boss	19
Abusive client	19
Management does not understand what it is like	18
Management does not support us	16
Clients have unreasonable expectations	14
Take sole responsibility for the client	14
Builds relationship with the client	13
Powerless against the client	13
Expect a sense of self-verification from helping someone	11
Must help the client	11
Feel guilt for not helping the client	10
Not appreciated by client	10
Powerful client	9
Not respected by client	9
Feels management expectations are unreasonable	8
Client does not understand us	7
Must understand the client	7

Table 62: Axial codes occurring within the lower burnout hermeneutic unit

Lower burnout respondent codes	Times appearing
Experiences a sense of accomplishment	49
Able to manage the client	39
Must partner with the client	37
Solution-orientated	32
Clients are demanding	32
Does not take sole responsibility for the client	28
Expects something from the client relationship	27
Must give the client the best service possible	21
More knowledgeable than the client	21
Able to exert power over the client	19
Must be people-orientated	18
Has a sense of autonomy	17
Superior to the client	17
Client is appreciative	17
Positive feelings towards the client	14
Does not take role personally	14
Must help the client	13
Keep the client happy	10
Distances oneself from the work	10
Evidence of emotional labour	9
Clients trust us	8
Dependent on the client for information	6

Finally, a process of selective coding was initiated. This process developed deductively, in that the theoretical argument developed in Chapter 3 was consulted and 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. A number of themed questions, derived from the research questions posed in the research argument chapter, were constructed in order to facilitate the coding process:

- How do client service employees describe the client (counter-role)?
- 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 are associated with these identity standards?
- What kinds of role-related attitudes are associated with these identity standards?
- Is there evidence of self-verification or self-verification failure, and is there evidence of a diminished sense of self, feelings of subjective failure, reduced self-efficacy, frustration and fatigue?

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to presenting the coded data according to these themed questions, and interpreting these findings in light of the theoretical argument presented in Chapter 3. Primary importance is placed on describing the similarities and differences between the codes embedded in the higher burnout interviews and those embedded within the lower burnout interviews.

After the codes pertaining to both higher and lower burnout respondents are presented, quotation count reports reflecting the number of times each of the codes appears within a single interview will be discussed. In each case, selected quotations drawn from the semi-structured interviews are presented as evidence of the construction of a code.

6.3 DATA PRESENTATION

The qualitative data are presented in sections that correspond to the themed questions presented above. First, client service employee perceptions of the client (counter-role) are presented. This is followed by a section describing the client service role identity. Next, an analysis of role-related expectations and role-related behaviours are presented. This is followed by a section describing the emotional consequences of the role identity. The final section of presented data deals with

evidence of self-verification. Each section commences with a brief summary of data pertaining to both higher and lower burnout hermeneutic units. This is followed by a separate section pertaining to higher burnout respondents and then another pertaining specifically to lower burnout respondents.

6.3.1 Perception of the client (counter-role)

According to Burke (1980: 19) the role identity assumed by a particular individual in a specific position is always related to an alternative, relevant counter identity. In the case of client service employees this counter identity would be the client. The perception of the client counter identity is important to consider insofar as it will give an important indication of the manner in which client service employees view their own roles.

Once axial coding was completed, all codes relating to the client service employee's perception of the client (counter-role) were grouped into a code family titled *Perception of the client (counter-role)*. The individual codes comprising this code family are listed according to higher burnout and lower burnout respondents in the **Table 63**. The number in brackets corresponds to the number of times the code appeared across the lower burnout or higher burnout hermeneutic unit.

Table 63: Perception of the counter-role (client)

Higher Burnout Respondents	*Lower Burnout Respondents*
Controlling client (25)	Clients are demanding (31)
Abusive client (19)	Clients are appreciative (17)
Client is boss (19)	Positive feelings towards the client (14)
Clients have unreasonable expectations (14)	Clients trust us (8)
Powerful client (9)	
Not respected by client (9)	

As presented in **Table 63**, higher burnout respondents view the client as powerful and controlling. They perceive the client as abusive, authoritarian and having

unreasonable expectations. Lower burnout respondents, on the other, have significantly more positive perceptions of the client. Although they perceive the client as demanding, they view clients as appreciative and trusting.

6.3.1.1 Perceptions of the client amongst higher burnout respondents

Table 64 presents the quotation count per code across each of the higher burnout respondents. For ease of clarity, each respondent has been given a unique identification number. Higher burnout identification numbers have been designated an "H", while lower burnout respondents have been designated an "L". The Company (M, F or T) to which the respondent belongs is also indicated in the table below the respondent identification number.

Table 64: Quotation count report – Perception of the client (counter-role) amongst higher burnout respondents

Codes	H1 M	H2 M	H3 F	H4 F	H5 F	H6 F	H7 T	H8 T
Controlling client (25)	6	8	3	3	2	0	1	2
Clients are abusive (19)	7	1	5	4	0	2	0	0
Client is boss (19)	4	7	2	2	0	0	0	4
Clients have unreasonable expectations (14)	2	3	1	3	4	1	0	0
Powerful client (9)	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Not respected by client (9)	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0

All respondents except for respondent H6 view the client as controlling. In a number of instances they describe the client as abusive and as having unreasonable expectations. Most higher burnout respondents also perceive the client as being in a position of authority, and that they have to do what the client says no matter what.

Respondents H6 and H7 differ somewhat from the other higher burnout respondents because they display less negative perceptions of the client. Respondent H7, for instance, only describes the client as controlling, but does not perceive the client as abusive or describe the client as the boss. Upon further inspection of respondents H7's interview, it appears that he has built strong relationships with the clients and does therefore not describe them in negative terms. This may explain why he refers to them as controlling, but not necessarily abusive. Respondent H6 tends to personalise the client, and therefore seldom refers to the client in negative terms. The two respondents from Company M (H1 and H2) describe the client as powerful and disrespectful to them in a number of instances. These views are not shared by the other higher burnout respondents, which is an indication that the perception of the client as powerful and disrespectful is particular to respondents from Company M. Both respondents from Company M service a particularly powerful client company, which may explain this description.

6.3.1.1.1 Controlling, abusive and domineering clients

When asked to describe the relationships they have with their clients, higher burnout respondents often remarked on the domineering nature of most of their clients, as indicated in the selected quotes below:

> - "They [the clients] are very knowledgeable about their industry but they are quite arrogant with it, so if they have an idea in their minds that's how it should be." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
> - "No it doesn't always work – one-example – we had this project that we did and we told them [the clients] over and over again that it wasn't the correct way of doing it. They were adamant that that was the way they wanted it done." *Respondent H2, Company M.*
> - "There is this Afrikaans word – a gangryper – that's the guys that as you walk down the hall, they just pull you …please just sort this out for me." *Respondent H8, Company T.*
> - "Aaaag – most of the time, from our point of view, we don't have any say. I mean, I can't call the shots." *Respondent H8, Company T.*

> - "You are walking down the passage and they ask you if you can quickly come and help them." *Respondent H7, Company T.*
> - "Then you get the brokers that are in the same line as you are but are also pushing on you." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

Five of the eight higher burnout respondents perceive their clients as abusive. Words used to describe the abusive nature of clients include references to being "threatened" by the client, "taking punches" from the client, being "undermined" and "crushed" by the client. One respondent was made to feel like a "piece of dirt" beneath the client's feet, and another describes having clients that "crack you down as a person." The selected quotes below indicate the extent of the perceived psychological abuse experienced by higher burnout client service employees:

> - "It is quite hard to keep ourselves motivated – to actually want to work with these people, because sometimes they [the clients] are just downright ugly." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
> - "You really do feel like you are the piece of dirt beneath their [the client's] feet and that's not cool." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
> - "The client is swearing at you and you are taking the punches." *Respondent H4, Company F.*
> - "And they [the clients] hit you as a person. Some of them do that. They can crack you down as a person to get what they want." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

Five of the eight higher burnout respondents also perceive the client as being the boss and having to do as the client says no matter what. Clients are described as dictating procedures and tasks, even when these instructions are perceived by the client service employee as incorrect or detrimental to the client:

> - "Often they [the clients] come to you with a very specific idea of what they want done and that's not necessarily the best way of doing it, or the most effective or efficient way of doing it." *Respondent H2, Company M.*

- "Um, it's not so much Company M that I work for; it's the client that I work for." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
- "I think the main thing to remember is that your client is always right, no matter what." *Respondent H8, Company T.*

6.3.1.1.2 Clients have unrealistic expectations

Many of the higher burnout respondents also perceive the client as having unreasonable expectations and being inflexible:

- "They [the clients] are unreasonable, a lot of the time and because they are so big and they know they are big clients, they expect a lot from us." *Respondent H1, Company M.*
- "If deadlines could be more flexible that would be one of the biggest things. It adds unnecessary pressure sometimes." *Respondent H2, Company M.*
- "Aaaagh… they [the clients] expect things to be done NOW." *Respondent H5, Company F.*
- "Sometimes you do get people [clients] that couldn't be bothered and just want everything – they expect you to know everything." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

6.3.1.2 Perception of the client amongst lower burnout respondents

As indicated in **Table 65**, while all lower burnout respondents view the client as demanding, they do not view these demands as unreasonable. While the higher burnout respondents perceived the client to be demanding, controlling, inflexible and unreasonable, lower burnout respondents tend to find justifications for the demanding nature of most clients. They all display generally positive feelings towards the client, and perceive the client as needy and appreciative.

Table 65: Quotation count report − Perceptions of client (counter-role) amongst lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Clients are demanding (32)	11	5	2	2	2	7	1	1	1
Clients are appreciative (17)	2	2	2	1	1	3	2	2	2
Positive feelings towards client (14)	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	2	2
Clients trust us (8)	0	2	2	0	0	0	2	1	1

The interview transcripts of respondents L1, L4, L5 and L6 do not display evidence that they perceive the client as trusting although no evidence to the contrary could be found either. All three respondents, did, however, display favourable and positive perceptions of the client.

6.3.1.2.1 Clients are justifiably demanding

From the quotes listed below, it is evident that although the lower burnout respondents view the client as demanding and sometimes unrealistic, they do not perceive the demands as being unreasonable. While higher burnout respondents describe the client's demands in a negative light, lower burnout respondents describe the client as demanding, but at the same time indicate that they are able and willing to meet the client's demands. One respondent from Company T, for instance, relates the demanding requirements of the client, but states emphatically that he will do whatever the client asks him to do, suggesting a strong sense of self-efficacy and confidence.

> - "Whatever the issues they [the clients] may have with their permits, the badging, the printer, the computer – I have to be able to fix that problem there and then. You can't take an hour to fix it; it has to be done in a second because there is a long line of people. So that's basically what I do. **I do anything they ask me to do**." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

Similarly, another respondent from Company T reports that clients often have unrealistic expectations, but feels that he is able to meet these expectations.

> - "That's what is interesting about the challenge. It sounds bad really, they [the clients] say "Here is a cell phone, make a Porsche out of it." People say "Huuhggh, how we gonna do it?" But you can do it." *Respondent L4, Company T.*

Contrary to higher burnout respondents, lower burnout respondents are of the opinion that they can assist the client with their demands. A number of respondents also indicated in the interviews that the client is justified in terms of their demands and expectations.

> - "The tasks they [the clients] give you might sound impossible, but if you have the mentality of it's impossible, you are not going to get very far. The challenges are that nothing is impossible; it's a mindset." *Respondent L4, Company T.*
> - "It doesn't matter how crazy or impractical their [the clients] needs are, we are very much about doing whatever, or helping the client as much as possible." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

6.3.1.2.2 Clients are perceived in a positive light

All lower burnout respondents view the role of client in a positive light, and feel that the clients are appreciative. When asked to comment on what they like best about client service, a number of the lower burnout respondents mentioned the client. For

instance, one respondent mentioned that she liked client service because it enabled her to interact with highly-skilled clients:

> ▪ "I like to work with highly-skilled people although they are more difficult to work with – they keep you on your toes – you need to be ahead of them. On the other hand, you feel very satisfied if you achieve that little thing to get that other guy to understand and get them up to a certain level." *Respondent L5, Company T.*

One respondent from Company M describes her client as "close" and "organised", while another from company M describes her client as "lovely to deal with":

> ▪ "I have a client that is very close – I love dealing with her. I think it is someone who is organised on their side." *Respondent L3, Company M.*
> ▪ "She really appreciates what I do and she appreciates the effort I make and she is really lovely to deal with. At the moment she is quite ideal." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

Other lower burnout respondents described their clients as trusting and understanding:

> ▪ "The clients here are – I like to work with them, they are understanding and listen." *Respondent L8, Company T.*
> ▪ "Enjoyable − mostly. What I like about it is that we are building a better relationship with the client. A strong good relationship – we understand each other." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

All lower burnout respondents perceive the client as appreciative, citing numerous instances in which they received positive and welcome feedback from clients:

- "Clients often say it's a great presentation – thanks etc. That's what we work towards." *Respondent L3, Company M.*

- "I think they [the clients] give positive feedback. They send you positive feedback – 'Thank you for the good job' or whatever and also to your managers and I think also from the way that you see the relationship developing – they call you more often and trust you with other things; maybe not even to do with your own research." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

- "Even if it is bad news, they like the work you've done and find it useful. I like wowing the clients with something interesting." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

- "They praise you and go 'Wow, this guy knows what he is doing.' That is satisfying that they put you on a pedestal sometimes." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

- "The response from the client is great because we know what we are doing." *Respondent L7, Company T.*

- "Normally you get an e-mail from them [the clients] first, saying 'thank you for the great effort you put into resolving this situation and resolving this.' So they make it visible to everyone – they don't just keep it to themselves." *Respondent L8, Company T.*

- "End result − satisfied client – that's the best. When he comes back and gives recognition." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

It is clear from the data presented in this section that lower burnout respondents perceive the client differently to their higher burnout counterparts. Both higher and lower burnout respondents describe the client as demanding, but lower burnout respondents clearly feel able to meet the demands set by their client. Higher burnout respondents describe these demands in a negative light, and view the client as inflexible, controlling and abusive. Lower burnout respondents describe the client and the relationships they have built with the client in positive terms and believe the client is appreciative and understanding.

6.3.2   The client service role identity

The second themed question according to which codes were categorised was the client service employee role identity i.e. how do client service employees define their roles in relation to the client?   As indicated in the **Table 66**, higher burnout respondents view themselves as subordinate to the client, while lower burnout respondents define themselves as superior to the client and more knowledgeable than the client.

Table 66: The client service role identity

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Subordinate to the client (36)	More knowledgeable than the client (21)
	Superior to the client (17)

6.3.2.1   The client service role identity among higher burnout respondents

As depicted in the quotation count report in **Table 67**, all higher burnout respondents viewed themselves as subordinate to the client in some way.

Table 67: Quotation count report – Client service role identity among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Subordinate to client (36)	12	4	4	3	1	7	1	4

Due to the differing nature of the client service environments across each of the three companies included in the research, the sense of subordination felt by each of the respondents is portrayed slightly differently. In the case of Company F, respondents perceive severe penalties accruing to them if they do not provide adequate service to the client.   These penalties and "punishments" are enforced by the company

management, and seem to suggest to the client service employee that they are inferior to, or lesser than the client. They also indicate that they feel threatened by management and hence display feelings of apprehension. For instance, one respondent stated that:

> ▪ "The moment you mess up they find out that you messed up and they will come running after you with a pitchfork or something." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

Similarly, after relaying a mistake that she had made when dealing with a client, another respondent of the same company seemed to offer repentance for her error, which suggests a reverence for the client and a subordination of the self:

> ▪ "Yes, I was wrong, I won't say that was an exception but what I had to learn was to make sure – if you don't understand, ask." *Respondent H4, Company F.*

In a similar case, a respondent from Company F expressed her gratitude for having been taught how to speak to the client, and has, as a result, become a better person:

> ▪ "It teaches you to do your best. They teach you how to speak back to the client/brokers but it makes you a better person. We have gone through courses; we have gone through speech as to how to speak to the clients. It makes you a better person." *Respondent H4, Company F.*

Her constant reference to becoming a "better person" through the training, could suggest a feeling of subordination or unworthiness in the role. It is speculated that this could have occurred through the internalisation of an organisational discourse that advocates training for employees to become better client service employees and hence better people. This could be described as a subtle form of manipulation through company propaganda.

Another respondent from Company F was of the opinion that the organisation does not allow employees to express themselves if they have been poorly treated by the client. According to the respondent:

> ▪ "You just grit your teeth – some people can't. You can't just grit. But Company F has a way that you have to grit your teeth." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

The respondent clearly felt that her rights to self-expression are limited due to the fact that the client and his/her needs take priority over employee needs and concerns:

> ▪ "The client comes first in all cases, even though they are angry with us and scream at us, we get it sorted out." *Respondent H3, Company F.*

One respondent from Company F perceives a degree of humiliation from the company management, which he internalises as part of his identity. He refers to the company treating them like children, and humiliating them by placing a "floatie" above their heads if they score poorly on service delivery:

> ▪ "That's a good one – that they [management] treat us like a bunch of kids. They treat us like kids – every time you go on a break, you have to put up a flag – look, I'm going on a break, or look, I'm going on lunch or can I go to the bathroom! Look, we're not school kids anymore." *Respondent H6, Company F.*
>
> ▪ "They [management] rank us on a board – like you are number one – they even have this whole new humiliation thing, where the person who gets the worst calls or the worst statistics – 'cause everything is recorded and monitored, they put like a floatie tube above his desk to say to everybody 'Hey look, this is the drowner – this is the worst person we've got in here.' That isn't right – I mean, how does that person feel? Lucky it's not me." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

The role of the company client discourse in shaping the role identities of client service employees is clearly illustrated in the case of Company F. By implementing initiatives that humiliate employees if they do not perform adequately in terms of client service, employees are made to feel inferior and subordinate. Higher burnout employees from Company F perceive the company as curtailing their freedom of expression, which could also result in feelings of oppression and subordination.

In the case of Company M, feelings of subordination were experienced through direct contact with the client. One respondent was particularly vocal in her descriptions of subordination. When asked to list a couple of words or phrases that would explain what it is like being a client service employee, she mentioned the following:

> - "I think it would be "underdog", for one. I think I say underdog because most of the time we end up having to do what they [the client] say anyway." *Respondent H1, Company M.*

She then went on to describe how she was often made to feel worthless by the client:

> - "So ja, it does make you feel a little bit like you aren't adding anything and you are not worth much and I think you kind of get used to that." *Respondent H1, Company M.*

Another respondent from company M expressed similar sentiments, in that the he describes his role as keeping the client happy and not "irritating" them, implying a subordinate role when dealing with the client. He goes on to explain how clients often want things done that may not be in their best interests. He feels unable to prevent this, and suggests a feeling of defeat and subordination:

> - "They [the clients] were adamant that that was the way they wanted it done. So you try, but you soon realise – it's their money and they are spending it." *Respondent H2, Company M.*

Higher burnout respondents at Company T also feel subordinate and defeated as a result of client service work. One respondent from Company T describes how they as client service employees tend to experience the most criticism. Most higher burnout respondents display similar evidence of defeat when dealing with the client, suggesting feelings of low self-efficacy and possibly decreased feelings of personal accomplishment. According to a respondent from Company T:

> - "There are always a lot of parties involved in solving the problem. But we are the end guys so get the most flack about it." *Respondent H8, Company T.*

6.3.2.2 The client service role identity among lower burnout respondents

As illustrated in **Table 68**, all lower burnout respondents except L7 described themselves as more knowledgeable than the client. Similarly, all lower burnout respondents except for L8 described themselves as superior to the client.

Table 68: Quotation count report – Client service role identity among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
More knowledgeable that the client (21)	1	2	5	1	7	2	0	1	2
Superior to the client (17)	4	2	4	1	1	2	2	0	1

Lower burnout respondents in Company M, for instance, often describe the client as "stupid" and "not research literate" and view their role as educating the client and showing them that they (client service employees at Company M) are the experts:

- "You get used to it. After a few years you get to a level of expectation and you know they [the clients] are stupid and that they annoy you – but that is just who they are!" *Respondent L3, Company M.*
- "Some of them are…you need to baby them a bit to follow up on things, they are not very organised." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

One respondent expressed the fact that she sees herself as more knowledgeable than the client in a gentler fashion by explaining how she assists and coaches the client through research results without being condescending. This could be regarded as similar to the manner in which parents engage with their children, and suggests a feeling of maternalism on the part of the client service employee.

- "Certain clients you have to take through very gently and the way you give them their results is very different. Whereas the ones that are more research literate you can take the analysis to them at a high level, give them more complicated things and they can take it in and that is what they want." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

Lower burnout respondents from Company T also viewed themselves as more knowledgeable than the client. When asked to describe his role as a client service employee, one respondent defined his role as improving the client's business, thereby suggesting a position of knowledge and expertise:

- "My role is for the owner [client] not to waste processes and procedures and not waste…find new ways of work, better ways to work." *Respondent L4, Company T.*

Another respondent expressed his satisfaction at being able to help his clients fix simple computer matters:

- "They [clients] think you are intelligent because you can fix a computer." *Respondent L6, Company T.*
- "For me, maybe a printer would be giving up and they [the clients] can't figure it out, so after an hour of them trying to figure it out, they phone and it takes me like five minutes." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

Another respondent from Company T continually made reference to having to educate the client and make them understand things:

- "Like drawing a picture so that they [the clients] can understand it and then we take it from there." *Respondent L5, Company T.*

Similarly, two respondents from Company T describe the clients as thinking they know best, but not really being more knowledgeable than they are:

- "The client always thinks he is right. As soon as you get into a company that services clients, it's the first thing that you learn – the client is always right. Even though you know they are not." *Respondent L8, Company T.*
- "Most frustrating, well… they think they know everything and that they know better than you – even though they don't really." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

While higher burnout respondents display a sense of defeat when dealing with the client, lower burnout respondents experience a high degree of self-efficacy. They define themselves as the experts and believe that they can and will help the client. Higher burnout respondents perceive the client as prescriptive and unreasonable, and as a result, feel constrained and inhibited within their roles. Lower burnout respondents on the other hand, perceive the client as being receptive to their expertise.

Company T provides a service to their client service employees whereby they can initiate complaints against the client. This mechanism allows the employee to speak freely and openly about their roles and serves to create a separation between themselves and the client. The company is in a sense portraying a client service

discourse that acknowledges the employees difficult role in relation to the client and the potential for misunderstanding and abuse on the part of the client. This mechanism appears to validate the client service employee by providing him a forum to convey his complaints against the client:

> ▪ "So what I do is – if I have a complaint [about the client], which I never actually do, I would go to IM and tell them about my complaint and ask them if when they have a meeting with the client please tell them that this is my complaint." *Respondent L6, Company T.*

This discourse at Company T is further evidenced by the fact that one respondent feels that the client is less important than the employees in his company, and that client service employees should not subordinate themselves to the client:

> ▪ "The client is important, but not as important as our own people." *Respondent L7, Company T.*

From the analysis and quotations presented above, it is clear that lower burnout respondents define their role identities differently when compared to higher burnout respondents. Higher burnout respondents perceive themselves as subordinate to the client, while lower burnout respondents view themselves as superior to and often more knowledgeable than the client. While both higher and lower burnout respondents perceive the client as demanding, lower burnout respondents feel that they are able to meet these demands. Higher burnout respondents tend to display a sense of defeat when dealing with the client. They perceive abuse and control from the client, which also suggests a level of subordination to the client. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, generally express favourable attitudes towards the client, and feel trusted and respected by the client.

The meanings that are contained within the various role identities discussed above encompass a set of role-related expectations that prescribe behaviour that is considered appropriate within a specific role-related situation. According to Burke's (1991; 1997) cybernetic model of identity, role identities comprise a set of meanings

that act as a standard against which perceptions of the environment are compared. In the case of higher burnout respondents, the subordinated identity should carry with it specific behavioural expectations that are different from the expectations contained within the role identities of lower burnout respondents. The next question or theme according to which the codes were grouped made reference to these behavioural expectations.

6.3.3 Role-related expectations

In order to identify the role-related meanings of the interview respondents, codes generated during axial coding were grouped according to the question: What are the behavioural expectations implicit in the role identities of higher burnout and lower burnout respondents?   As indicated in **Table 69**, the behavioural expectation occurring frequently amongst higher burnout respondents is a belief that the client always comes first no matter what. Included in this expectation on the part of higher burnout respondents is a sense of self-sacrifice.   Higher burnout respondents are also particularly aware of the service standards expected by organisational management, and internalise these expectations as their own.

Table 69: Role-related expectations

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Client comes first no matter what (44)	Must partner with the client (37)
Expects something from the client relationship (36)	Expects something from the client relationship (27)
Management demands and expects excellent client service (20)	Endeavour to give the best client service possible (21)
Expects a sense of self-verification by helping someone (11)	Must be people-orientated (18)
Must help the client (11)	Keep the client happy (10)

Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, clearly endeavour to partner with the client. Since they do not see themselves in a subordinate role to the client, all lower

burnout respondents expressed an expectation to create a partnership with the client and work with the client. Lower burnout respondents believe that they should be people-orientated in helping the client and focused in keeping the client happy. While lower burnout respondents also aim to assist the client to the best of their ability, they are able to separate themselves from the role and do not take the client's demands personally.

Interestingly, both higher and lower burnout respondents expect something in return from the client. Higher burnout respondents only expect praise and appreciation, while lower burnout respondents expect co-operation as well as praise and appreciation from the client.

6.3.3.1 Role-related expectations among higher burnout respondents

As indicated in the quotation count report for higher burnout respondents (**Table 70**), all higher burnout respondents expect the client to come first no matter what.

Table 70: Quotation count report – Role-related expectations among higher burnout respondents

Code	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Client comes first no matter what (44)	10	1	4	3	8	2	3	13
Expects something from the client relationship (36)	13	4	3	3	1	1	6	5
Management demands and expects excellent client service (20)	3	3	4	3	1	3	1	2
Expects a sense of self-verification by helping someone (11)	0	0	2	6	1	1	0	1
Must help the client (11)	1	3	2	0	1	3	0	1

Higher burnout respondents perceive organisational management as demanding and expecting excellent client service. The internalisation of these managerial expectations coupled with a role identity that places the client service employee in a subordinate position to that of the client, seems to result in the higher burnout client service employee sacrificing his/her needs in favour of the clients'.

6.3.3.1.1 Client comes first no matter what

When describing their roles, all higher burnout respondents mentioned that they will often go above and beyond the call of duty in order to assist the client. The selected quotations presented below suggest that higher burnout respondents expect themselves to assist the client no matter what, often resulting in excessive effort on the part of the employee:

- "I always go the extra." *Respondent H7, Company T.*
- "I will make sure that I assist the client and get information. Sometimes it takes 4-5 people just to get some sort of information so that I can give feedback to the client. So instead of saying 'Call this person at this number' I would actually call them myself and say 'Look, this is the situation, this is the client's concerns – what can we do to assist this guy?' Also suggest let's do this or that." *Respondent H5, Company F.*
- "I don't know how a mother feels, but if a child wants attention here and a husband wants attention there, it is a lot of dragging on you. Sometimes it gets like you are pulled here and pulled there and you need to perform and help the client. The primary person in this whole thing would be the client." *Respondent H4, Company F.*
- "To assist the client to the best of your ability and obviously go that little bit extra. Instead of just sending it off to someone, phoning the tow truck – getting the tow truck there. And just that step further like phoning them half an hour later to find out if they did pitch up." *Respondent H6, Company F.*
- Then I also have to maintain the relationship in terms of ensuring that their requests are met, that anything they ask for, we say 'How high?'" *Respondent H1, Company M.*

Higher burnout respondents from both Company T and Company F are often prepared to go against company processes and procedures in order to keep the client happy and solve their problems. As implied by the quotations below, two respondents from Company T feel it is often necessary to go against company procedure in order to assist the client:

> - "But for that point if that guy [the client] has a serious problem you sort it out no matter what. No processes, no procedures – you do what you want." Respondent H8, Company T.
> - "Even though there are processes and procedures, there comes a time when you have to jump the bridge." Respondent H8, Company T.
> - "It is not the standard – sometimes you have to go beyond or change the standard a bit. " Respondent H7, Company T.

In many of the instances described above, respondents are aware that they may get into trouble with management for breaking organisational procedure in order to help the client. It could therefore be argued that these employees are either more fearful of the client than they are of their own organisation's management, or it could mean that they have internalised the subordinate identity and will, as a result, do anything for the client. Similarly, a number of respondents from Company F are also prepared to override company procedure to assist the client, as indicated by the quotations below:

> - "The client comes first in all cases, even though they [management] are angry with us and scream at us, we get it sorted out." Respondent H3, Company F referring to the reactions of management when she goes against procedure to assist the client.
> - "You have to make a decision. Even if it is not 100% following process – each and every call is a different scenario – it depends on what the client needs. And you have to make the call on your side as to what is the best thing." Respondent H5, Company F.

Again, these respondents are very aware that they may get into trouble for breaking company policy and procedure, and as a result, experience a sense of role conflict and dissonance. On the one hand they are expected to assist the client no matter what, but on the other hand they must report to company management who expects them to follow procedure. Management clearly disciplines them when they break with company policy, even if this was in aid of the client. The fact that these client service employees are still willing to do so, may suggest a subordination of the self in favour of the client.

Such expectations to assist the client at any cost could lead to role overload and role conflict, which could ultimately result in burnout, as argued through the research argument set out in Chapter 3. Higher burnout respondents perceive the client as controlling, powerful and superior and, as a result, define themselves as subordinate to the client. This subordinate role identity contains a set of expectations that should guide and/or constrain individual role-related behaviour. Higher burnout respondents expect the client to come first no matter what, and, as a result, engage in role-related behaviour that could result in role overload and role conflict. This expectation to assist the client no matter what, also appears to create role-related expectations that run counter to their pre-defined organisational roles, in that they are prepared to over-ride company procedures and processes in order to assist the client. As discussed in the literature review, role overload and role conflict are two of the primary contributors or antecedents to burnout. From the above qualitative illustrations it is clear that the manner in which client service employees define themselves in relation to the client i.e. subordinate, carries implications for their role-related expectations, which ultimately could result in role overload and role conflict and subsequently burnout.

Higher burnout respondents also expect themselves to make a number of personal sacrifices in order to assist the client. Some mentioned the impossibility of taking time off work in order to deal with daily chores, due to the fact that the client always comes first. One respondent mentioned that he is always on standby to assist the client, and is therefore unable to attend to personal matters:

- "It's one of those things, if you are going to be away 30 minutes – it's 30 minutes too long and you need to turn around and sort it out. It's like standby – you always have to be there for your guys and try and help." Respondent H8, Company T.

Similarly, another respondent commented on the fact that is it impossible to take any time off work:

- "Well, you need a lot of attention to detail, so you can't sort of break away and do other things like sometimes if you have to do personal things, you don't have the time or luxury to be able to do that during the day because you are consumed in a crisis management type of thing." Respondent H2, Company M.

Another respondent made frequent mention of the fact that a number of people working for the organisation will "kill" themselves working and trying to please the client:

- "It is very often that we get people that are mostly work. They will work till they die – which I don't think is a healthy thing at the end of the day." Respondent H1, Company M, commenting on the type of person employed at Company M.

6.3.3.1.2 Management demands and expects excellent client service

All higher burnout respondents included in the qualitative sample perceive the company as setting extremely high expectations insofar as client service is concerned. When asked whether they feel that these expectations are unreasonable, they generally expressed that they felt the expectations to be reasonable. This suggests that they have, most likely, internalised these company expectations into their own role-related expectations. The expectations of management were expressed in a number of different ways by each of the respondents.

Most higher burnout respondents remarked on how their companies always strive to be the best in the business, and how management expects excellent client service from everyone, all the time. From the selected quotations below, it is clear that these employees perceive management as expecting excellent client service from them no matter what. These client service employees are therefore internalising a client discourse that suggests to them that they subordinate themselves in favour of meeting the client's needs. The internalisation of such a client discourse may also explain why higher burnout client service employees are prepared to go against organisational policy and procedure in order to assist the client. While they are aware that they may be disciplined for this, they do so regardless because it has been implicitly suggested to them through the client discourse.

- "They [management] expect you to go more than the extra mile to keep the client happy." Respondent H1, Company M.
- "I think they [management] expect us to always be on top of our game." Respondent H2, Company M.
- "For us the client is number one…. They [management] are very client-orientated – they are worried about what the client feels." Respondent H5, Company F.
- "They [management] expect us to do what we are supposed to do and that little bit extra." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "What they [management] do is they audit our calls – listen to our calls to see how I spoke to the client – perhaps I said "ja, ja" instead of saying "yes". They try to teach us to give 100% client service." Respondent H4, Company F.
- "They [management] are very focused on client centricity. It is one of the main legs of the Company T values." Respondent H8, Company T.

Some higher burnout respondents commented on the fact that their companies only employ the best in the business in order to ensure excellent client service:

> - "I think it is almost a company profile. They [management] are looking for the best people in the industry." Respondent H2, Company M.
> - "The people who work here are the best in the business – they, the big people on top are the best in the business and demand high customer service." Respondent H6, Company F.
> - "They [management] are looking for young people, fresh people, who can do the job and everything else; who doesn't have the grasp of, - should I say, what overload is." Respondent H3, Company F.

While it could be argued that client service employees may find strength and recognition in this, the expectation to always be the best becomes part of the identity standard. Burke maintains that failure to maintain a role identity in terms of the identity standard could result in a failed sense of self verification, which could ultimately lead to burnout. As shown later in this chapter, higher burnout respondents tend to construct role identities based on unrealistic standards, resulting in a failed sense of self-verification.

While higher burnout respondents clearly aim to assist the client no matter what, this expectation is reinforced and possibly informed by the discourse of organisational management. This discourse clearly seems to suggest that the client always comes first. This could carry implications for self-verification by higher burnout respondents. If, for instance, higher burnout employees are not able to act in accordance with the expectations contained in the identity standard, they may suffer failed self-verification, which could result in burnout.

6.3.3.1.3 Expectations of the client service role

As indicated in the quotation count, all higher burnout respondents expect something in return from the client service role. These expectations vary, but include an expectation to grow, learn and develop as a person; an expectation to feel fulfilled when helping someone; and an expectation to be appreciated by the client.

Two respondents expect to be challenged and learn through their work in order to grow and develop as people:

> - "You do want to be challenged, otherwise you won't grow and I must admit that this is the one positive about the client that I currently work on – they do challenge me – sometimes not in the most appropriate way – it is often condescending." Respondent H1, Company M.
> - "I feel I need to grow. I have learnt a lot like how to sympathise and have empathy for people." Respondent H4, Company F.

A number of higher burnout respondents expressed a need to be appreciated by the client, suggesting that they expect a degree of admiration when enacting the client service role:

> - "Actually, it would be quite nice for me to actually have a client that appreciates what we do and doesn't just take it for granted." Respondent H1, Company M.
> - "It is praise – you want praise the whole day – it's insane, because of this praise you got. Weird. It's like you are programmed to run on praise." Respondent H3, Company F.

Higher burnout respondents also want to derive a sense of satisfaction from helping someone. This also suggests that they expect to receive a level of appreciation when enacting the client service role:

> - "The thing is it feels good to make someone happy, especially if it was urgent stuff. It also makes you look good with your peers." *Respondent H8, Company T.*
> - "I have made that my aim in order to help people and meet new people." *Respondent H4, Company F.*
> - "Your first achievement as a man or woman and it feels good to be able to help somebody – it really does – especially if you can achieve what they expect from you." *Respondent H5, Company F.*

- "Otherwise it does feel good to be helping someone. To do some good for an old lady stuck next to the road – to be able to help her out. That's a good feeling." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

- "It becomes frustrating because now you have all this extra work of everybody phoning you all the time, but at least the user is still satisfied, and it builds my name anyway." *Respondent H7, Company T.*

The expectations reflected in the respondent quotations above are important to consider in the context of this study. As mentioned in the literature review and Chapter 3, role identities incorporate identity standards according to which individuals believe their roles should be enacted. These identity standards not only refer to behavioural expectations (i.e. how the individual should behave in the role), but also refer to expected rewards or outcomes from the enactment of a role. In other words, people are likely to enact a role in a specific way in order to accrue some kind of valued outcome from the environment. The role-related expectations of higher burnout employees expressed above are clearly incorporated into their respective identity standards. While they believe that the client should come first no matter what, they also aim to achieve appreciation and a sense of fulfilment from enactment of the role. Failure to achieve role-related outcomes that are congruent with the identity standard could lead to a failure of self-verification and a diminished sense of self. As will be shown later in the chapter, higher burnout respondents do not report high levels of appreciation from the client. This suggests that while they expect appreciation, they are not receiving it. This could ultimately lead to a sense of failed self-verification and could contribute to the development of burnout.

6.3.3.2 Role-related expectations among lower burnout respondents

As indicated in the quotation count report **Table 71**, lower burnout respondents also believe that they must give the client the best service possible and demand something from the client relationship.

Table 71: Quotation count report – Role-related expectations among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Must partner with the client (37)	4	4	9	4	7	1	2	1	5
Expects something from the client relationship (27)	2	1	5	4	4	5	2	2	2
Must provide the best client service possible (21)	2	4	3	1	6	2	1	1	1
Must be people orientated (18)	4	2	2	2	4	2	0	1	1
Must keep the client happy (10)	2	0	3	1	1	2	0	1	0

While higher burnout respondents demand appreciation, lower burnout respondents demand co-operation as well as appreciation from the client. Lower burnout respondents differ significantly from the higher burnout respondents in that they expect to partner with the client in solving the client's problems.

6.3.3.2.1 Expect to provide the best client service possible

As reflected in the **Table 71**, lower burnout respondents strive to provide the best client service possible and are often willing to go above and beyond the call of duty to assist the client. One respondent is willing to make personal sacrifices in order to assist the client, but no lower burnout respondents reported being willing to break with company policy in order to serve the client.

- "We want them [the clients] to come back to us. We want to give them better service than anybody else and we manage to do that – we go beyond the services that we are supposed to give them." *Respondent L5, Company T.*
- "I think we are very client-orientated – we don't just want the client to come to us and say we want this and give it to them. We want to do more." *Respondent L3, Company M.*

> - "Because they want the best service. I think all the employees have not just been employed randomly – they have been chosen for service, speed and education." *Respondent L6, Company T.*
> - "I do try to go the extra mile and see if there is something extra I can do for him (the client)." *Respondent L8, Company T.*
> - "All that is actually part of the customer focus that shows you that the most important thing is the customer or the client." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

6.3.3.2.2 Expect appreciation, co-operation and respect from the client

As is the case with the higher burnout respondents, lower burnout respondents also expect appreciation from the client as indicated in the selected quotations below:

> - "We have these performance appraisals twice a year, which determined our level of satisfaction regarding the company. So if our clients don't tell the managers that we are doing well, he can't give us a higher level." *Respondent L6, Company T.*
> - "I think I need the affirmation that you get from a client when you do something well." *Respondent L3, Company M.*

Two lower burnout respondents also expressed the desire to learn, grow and be challenged through the client service role:

> - "I like to work with the highly-skilled people although they are more difficult to work with – they keep you on your toes – you need to be ahead of them. On the other hand you feel very satisfied if you achieve that little thing to get the other guy [client] to understand and get them up to a certain level." *Respondent L5, Company T.*
> - "You meet different people, different cultures, you get to know their ways. Everybody teaches somebody else something – you live learning." *Respondent L4, Company T.*

Interestingly, however, the lower burnout respondents differ from the higher burnout respondents in that they demand information, co-operation and respect from the client. As indicated in the quotations below, lower burnout respondents believe they are only able to help the client sufficiently if and when the client co-operates with them, by either expressing his/her needs clearly, or by providing the necessary information:

- "I need to know what they [the clients] want in order to give it to them. I need to get the service from my company to give it to him. If he can't explain what he wants and I can't understand him how can I give him the service that he is supposed to get." *Respondent L5, Company T.*

- "Umm, people [clients] who don't know what they mean. People will say something without doing their homework. So get your facts right first and then call me." *Respondent L4, Company T when asked what he dislikes most about client service work.*

- "The client should be somebody who has trust in you and somebody who supplies you with what you need to help them timeously." *Respondent L1, Company M.*

- "I think there is more respect at the agency. They [the clients] have more respect for you being in that role whereas internally I think you are more of a punching bag for a lot of things." *Respondent L2, Company M stating that she prefers working at a research agency because the clients respect her.*

- "Well, the client has specific needs and the client also has his responsibilities. Everybody here has a business to run so there are some expectations of the client as well." *Respondent L7, Company T.*

- "You will never get the perfect client, but I want understanding clients that listen to your side of the story as well and don't just demand." *Respondent L8, Company T.*

- "I would say that there should be a mutual understanding between the client and us. They do need to understand our business." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

Although lower burnout respondents want to give the client the best service possible and will make sacrifices in order to assist the client, they do demand a certain level of co-operation and respect from the client in exchange. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, do not demand this kind of respect from the client. Since lower burnout respondents define themselves as somewhat superior to and more knowledgeable that the client, it is understandable that they would expect co-operation and respect from the client.

6.3.3.2.3 Expect to partner with the client

Probably one of the most notable differences between the lower burnout respondents and the higher burnout respondents is the fact that the lower burnout respondents expect to partner with the client in order to assist them and help them solve their problems. As illustrated in the selected quotations below, a number of lower burnout respondents actually used the word "partner" or "partnership" when describing the relationships they have with clients, while other lower burnout respondents refer to the relationship as symbiotic, where both the client and the client service employee or company derive some benefit from the relationship:

> - "If you can get the client to understand what it is all about, he can work **with** you." *Respondent L5, Company T.*
> - "Then they [the client] generally jump and help out. Unfortunately you sometimes get to a point where you have to threaten them and say, 'Listen, this is the timing for the project and I need this and this by then – if you can't get it to me, then unfortunately your study is going to suffer because I have to extend the timing – so we kind of need to **work together** here and are you willing to help?'" *Respondent L3, Company M when asked how she deals with difficult clients.*
> - "Somebody you can **partner** with, somebody who knows what they want but gives you freedom to advise them and listens to your advice." *Respondent L1, Company M.*
> - "We want to be a consultant role and really **work with the client** and become like a partner for them." *Respondent L2, Company M.*

- "And we **work together** – you know, we don't just work, they [the clients] do their bit as well. 'Listen guys, we got a problem' and **together we fix it**." *Respondent L4, Company T.*
- "In my eyes the perfect client would be the client that is honest, has integrity, there is a **trust relationship** and open communication – meaning that if there is any deviation, it comes from both sides." *Respondent L7, Company T.*
- "You try to make them [the client] understand that this is not just our process, that they [the client] and Company T sat **together** and worked this process out and this is the way it has to be." *Respondent L9, Company T.*

From the quotations provided above, it is clear that lower burnout respondents expect to partner with the client. Although lower burnout respondents define themselves as superior and more knowledgeable that the client, they do aim to assist the client no matter what. As a result, a partnership between themselves and the client provides the foundation upon which the client service role identity is based. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, view the client as superior and controlling. As a result, they aim to meet the client's needs while subordinating their own.

6.3.4 Role-related behaviours

The next themed question according to which the data were coded makes reference to the behavioural implications of the expectations contained within the identity standards of both higher and lower burnout employees.

As indicated in **Table 72**, the behaviour of higher burnout respondents towards the client differs from the behaviour of lower burnout respondents.

Table 72: Role-related behaviours

Higher Burnout Respondents	*Lower Burnout Respondents*
Engage in emotional labour (31)	Able to manage the client (39)
Personalises the client relationship (29)	Solution-orientated (32)
Address client feeling (23)	Does not take sole responsibility for the client (28)
Build client up (21)	
Take sole responsibility for the client (14)	Able to exert power over the client (19)
Build relationship with the client (13)	Distances oneself from the client (10)
	Engage in emotional labour (9)

Higher burnout respondents engage in more emotional labour than lower burnout respondents do. Higher burnout respondents tend to personalise the client relationship and focus to a large extent on engaging with the client on an emotional or affective level. They also tend to take sole or personal responsibility for the client and want to build the client up. Although they do engage in emotional labour from time to time, lower burnout respondents do not take sole responsibility for the client. They are able to manage the client relationship and exert considerable power over the client. While higher burnout respondents personalise the client relationship, lower burnout respondents are solution orientated, focusing instead of the task at hand rather than becoming personally involved in the client situation.

6.3.4.1 Role-related behaviour among higher burnout respondents

Table 73 reflects the quotation count report for role-related behaviours amongst higher burnout respondents.

Table 73: Quotation count report – Role-related behaviour among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Engages in emotional labour (31)	2	0	12	6	4	3	1	3
Personalises the client relationship (29)	0	3	5	7	3	4	6	1
Addresses client feeling (23)	4	4	2	3	1	2	2	5
Build client up (21)	1	4	3	2	2	3	1	5
Take sole responsibility for the client (14)	1	1	2	1	4	2	1	2
Build relationship with the client (13)	2	2	2	1	1	0	5	0

Only one (H2) higher burnout respondent did not display evidence of engaging in emotional labour. All higher burnout respondents attempt to take sole responsibility for the client and attempt to deal with the client on an affective level by addressing the client's feelings.

6.3.4.1.1 Engage in emotional labour

Most of the quotations pertaining to the use of emotional labour include negative reference to the client service role, where respondents express having to act or behave in a certain way (often contrary to the way they actually feel) in order to keep the client happy:

- "On the phone I can't lose my temper, I just keep calm and try to sort it out. But you can't always be upbeat and happy and 'thank you for calling!'" *Respondent H6, Company F.*

- "When I am alone there are a lot of thoughts going through my mind. 'Jis, this client hey!' But when you are face to face 'Ja, it's our problem, we'll fix it for you, are you happy now?'" *Respondent H8,* Company T.

- "As I said though, when it comes to larger clients this becomes a bit blurred – it is not easy to say to the client 'just bugger off you idiot' and we sometimes have to take things and swallow, which we wouldn't normally have to do." Respondent H1, Company M.

- "And sometimes we are so controlled and so robot like." Respondent H3, Company F.

- "Like myself, you get your on days and you get your off days. And when you get your off days, just try and pretend a bit." Respondent H4, Company F.

Displays of emotional labour were frequently required in Company F, due largely to the nature of call centre work. All respondents in Company F explained how they were required to "learn" how to engage appropriately with the client, and often needed to alter their tone of voice in order to sound pleasant to the client:

- "I have grown a lot – to speak to people, for instance. The type of work that I am doing, we don't see the person face to face but the person can pick up, by the tone of your voice if you are agitated, if you are trying to help, if you are trying to put down the call as quickly as possible." *Respondent H4, Company F.*

- "How we assist the client, how we talk to the client – certain words that we use. We are measured in – if I could say – just our general approach to the call." *Respondent H5, Company F.*

- "Talk to the person nicely – that's what they look for. Friendly and upbeat – we are a call centre at the end of the day and people have to feel like you enjoy working here when people phone in." *Respondent H6, Company F.*

It appears from the selected quotations above that higher burnout employees seem to engage in surface acting, where they attempt to control their emotional expressions in accordance with the display rules of the organisation (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2003; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). According to the higher burnout respondents interviewed, they have been taught to engage with the client in a particular way, and often have to hide their true/authentic emotions.

6.3.4.1.2 Address client feeling

As shown in the selected quotations below, higher burnout respondents are very focused on ensuring that the client is feeling happy. While lower burnout respondents are generally more task and solution orientated, higher burnout respondents were largely focused on making the client feel comfortable and good about themselves. They do this by identifying with the client's emotional state and/or empathising with them.

One respondent from Company T, for instance, makes an effort to ensure that clients do not feel like their computer problems are their (the client's) fault. Furthermore, a large proportion of the displays of emotional labour are specifically utilised in an effort to make the client feel comfortable and keep the client happy. This requires considerable effort on the part of the client service employee, and could potentially lead to emotional exhaustion:

- "If you come across as agitated, obviously the person on the other side will also feel that way." Respondent H4, Company F.

- "You have to listen to the person's [client's] tone of voice, if they are angry, if they are happy – hardly ever are they happy. You have to assess every call as it comes in and make sure – not make sure – you have to assess the situation and find out what that person needs you to do and follow up the call." Respondent H6, Company F.

- "If you had to irritate a client or jeopardise that work, that is a financial stream that gets compromised so ja, I think it is really about keeping them happy and giving them what they need so that they don't go elsewhere." Respondent H2, Company M.

- "You kind of make a guardian angel or angel of some sort. You are there to listen to the client's problems and assist them. Most of the time it is – I mean it is a personalised business." Respondent H5, Company F.

- "Also to really just make sure that they [the clients] are feeling comfortable and confident." Respondent H1, Company M when asked what her primary responsibilities towards the client are.

- "I try not to let the client feel that it is their fault." Respondent H8, Company T.

6.3.4.1.3 Empathise and identify with client

Higher burnout respondents tend to empathise with the client. In the case of Company F, this came to the fore strongly as most of these employees identify with the difficult situations experienced by their clients and then try to personally assist the client by engaging with them on an emotional level. This is an unexpected finding in the case of higher burnout respondents, since one of the primary distinguishing factors of burnout is the depersonalisation of the client relationships. The findings of the present study suggest that the higher burnout respondents personalise the client relationship by identifying with the client, while lower burnout employees are able to distance themselves from the client:

- "You have to be able to be kind, for the lack of another word. You have to be understanding of a particular person's situation. They listen for that in your voice. Somebody phones in – their son died in a crash – you can't be rude – we have to have that certain sympathy – you can hear it in a person's voice. Talk to the person nicely – that's what they look for. Friendly upbeat – we are a call centre at the end of the day and people have to feel like you enjoy working here when people phone in." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "Like with the floods that we had. I think it was in Mossel Bay there were like people that lost houses and I mean millions of rands and we had to, as a team we had to come together and discuss how we were going to handle this, as we cannot just give them a new home. We started encouraging the people and from them on I learnt to have empathy." Respondent H4, Company F.
- "You can imagine yourself in the same predicament [as the client] and then all you get is a company on the other side saying, 'No we can't do that.'" Respondent H5, Company F.
- "Well, our ethic is actually very professional, they [management] regard the professionalism that you have to care and empathise with the situation that the client has." Respondent H3, Company F.

Higher burnout respondents from Company M also tend to identify with the client by empathising with the client's often stressful or difficult situations. Both respondents, for instance, understand that the client cannot always be considerate due to the amount of stress they face internally:

- "So, I think their [the client's] stress levels and the pressure they are under just ripples into us." Respondent H1, Company M.
- "I think they [the client] also get placed under a lot of pressure from their side when they service their internal clients. They are often stuck between us and another department, so there is pressure on their side that we don't see." Respondent H2, Company M.

Two respondents also express understanding and empathy for the fact that clients get angry and upset:

- "Well, it's quite easy, if a client complains he complains with good reason." Respondent H8, Company T.
- "But sometimes we do mess up because we deal with so many people and people (the clients) do get angry, but for good reason." Respondent H5, Company F.

The selected citations above could be regarded as examples of deep acting – a form of emotional labour where the client service employee changes the way he or she feels in order to be in accordance with what is organisationally required (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). By identifying and empathising with the client on an emotional level client service employees attempt to feel for the client – a clear example of deep acting. As cited in the literature review, Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) and Brotheridge and Lee (2003) have conducted extensive research on the implications of deep and surface acting for the development of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal accomplishment. The implications of this in the context of the present study will be discussed in greater detail in the Chapter 7.

6.3.4.1.4 Establish relationships with the client

Higher burnout respondents are focused on building relationships with the clients. In many instances, this relationship is rather personal and familiar in nature. Again, this is an unexpected finding in the case of higher burnout respondents since it was anticipated that they would depersonalise the relationship with the client. Respondents in Company T and Company F, for instance, enjoy the fact that they are able to establish these familiar relationships with the client.

- "It's just a name to you, but with me its more than a name – I know their [the clients'] family, where they come from, what they do and what their task is in the company." Respondent H7, Company T.
- "I think if you are not a people's person you might have a different feeling – but I love people. It's always interesting and you make friends." Respondent H8, Company T.
- "When you talk to them [the clients] with a query and you fill in the spaces, so you gradually learn to comment on the day or the work and so you build a relationship, they know you by name." Respondent H3, Company F.

It could be argued that the establishment of personal relationships with the client could contribute to the development of burnout. Client service employees that establish personal relationships with the client may be less likely to separate themselves from the role due to over-identification with the client. This could result in them taking their roles personally, resulting in role overload and feelings of guilt when they are unable to satisfy the client.

6.3.4.1.5 Take sole responsibility for the client's problems

Because they tend to engage with the client on a personal level, higher burnout respondents tend to take sole responsibility for the client and the client's problems. In some cases, this is reflected by the way they internalise the client's needs or problems and then feel guilty for not being able to help them. One respondent, for instance, expressed helplessness at not being able to assist the client, suggesting a sense of personal responsibility or accountability for the well-being of the client:

- "Not helping the way …. they [the clients] have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp what that need is. I am not giving the full help that I can." Respondent H3, Company F.

Another respondent from Company T also expressed helplessness and confusion at not being able to assist the client, and felt like the client's problems may be his fault:

> - "You always get a problem – a client – you are so confused by what is happening because, like I said, there are so many parties involved. At the end of the day, you wonder whether it is your fault." Respondent H8, Company T.

Similarly, both respondents from Company M admit to internalising the client's problems and carrying responsibility for the client. One respondent refers to developing "broad shoulders" in order to bear the clients problems, while the other mentions that the stress experienced by the client tends to "ripple" into her and her team:

> - "I guess you get broad shoulders hey!" Respondent H2, Company M.
> - "This puts a whole lot more stress on us than there actually need be, because we have to keep everyone happy. So I think their stress levels and the pressure that they are put under, just ripples into us." Respondent H1, Company M.

Two respondents from Company F constantly make reference to going the extra mile in order to assist the client, and taking personal responsibility for the client:

> - "Definitely somebody who is, who does not pass the buck – somebody that is willing to take ownership of a situation and not just pass it on to someone else." Respondent H6, Company F when asked what kinds of people Company F should employ.
> - "So instead of saying 'call this person at this number' I would actually call them myself and say 'Look, this is the situation, this is the client's concerns – what can we do to assist the guy.'" Also suggest, let's do this or that. Respondent H5, Company F.

By assuming personal responsibility for the client and his/her problems, higher burnout respondents may engage in role overload, which, as suggested in the literature review, could contribute to the development of burnout. By being unable to distance themselves from the client service role and the client's problems, higher burnout respondents may display greater levels of guilt and personal failure when

they are unable to help the client. This could result in reduced feelings of personal accomplishment and possibly burnout.

6.3.4.2 Role-related behaviours among lower burnout respondents

The role-related behaviour of lower burnout respondents differs from that of their higher burnout counterparts. While higher burnout respondents empathise with their clients; engage with them on a personal level and take sole responsibility for their problems, lower burnout respondents are able to manage the client and exert a certain degree of power over the client. Lower burnout respondents tend to distance themselves from the client and are largely task or solution orientated (see **Table 74**).

Table 74: Quotation count report – Role-related behaviours among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Able to manage the client (39)	3	2	9	2	7	5	2	4	5
Solution-orientated (32)	9	1	3	6	4	2	2	3	2
Does not take personal responsibility for the client (28)	5	4	1	1	5	2	3	4	3
Able to exert power over the client (19)	2	1	6	4	0	4	0	1	1
Distances oneself from the client/work (10)	1	2	1	0	0	1	2	2	1
Engages in emotional labour (9)	3	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	0

6.3.4.2.1 Engage in emotional labour

As indicated by the selected quotes below, lower burnout respondents engage in a degree of emotional labour but cited fewer examples of this during their interviews when compared with higher burnout respondents.

- "I suppose it can be frustrating at times – you might want to say 'No, you're crazy, we can't do that' − but you just can't." Respondent L1, Company M.

- "If we have a problem we must still smile at all times at the client." Respondent L6, Company T.

- "That's how I deal with the clients and yes, many times you feel like cracking, but you don't, you maintain your cool and say, 'Yes, ok.'" Respondent L4, Company T.

- "You kind of vent behind the scenes – not in front of the client, but with your peers." Respondent L3, Company M.

From the selected quotations above it appears as though lower burnout respondents engage in surface acting, rather than deep acting. Lower burnout respondents feel irritated or frustrated by the client and modify their behaviour so as to hide this true feeling from the client.

6.3.4.2.2 Task and solution orientated

Despite engaging in surface acting, lower burnout respondents seldom engage with the client on a personal or emotional level and are far more solution or task orientated than the higher burnout respondents. While higher burnout respondents are generally focused on building comfortable and happy relationships with the client which makes them take personal responsibility for the client, lower burnout respondents are focused on finding a solution for the client without taking personal responsibility for the client's problems. In addition, lower burnout respondents display evidence of being able to manage the client, and are simultaneously able to exert considerable power over the client. Each of these factors and their associated codes will be discussed in the sections below.

Lower burnout respondents appear more task orientated than their higher burnout counterparts. When asked to describe their roles, most lower burnout respondents focus on the tasks they are supposed to perform and express them in terms of finding solutions for the client. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, are more focused on building and maintaining relationships with the client, and engage with

them on a more personal, rather than a task-orientated level. As indicated by the selected quotes below, lower burnout respondents describe their roles as solving the client's business related problems through proactively engaging with them to find a solution or improvement:

- "My role is for the client not to waste processes and procedures and not waste…find new ways to work, better ways to work, also safety. I multi-task, I do everything. To make sure not to waste, to monitor calls, escalations, to make sure everything is being met." Respondent L4, Company T.
- "The services – if there is a problem – if you want to improve it you have to look at a lot of statistics, detail, find out about the improvement that can be done and work out a plan, implement it and make sure that everything is done and measured." Respondent L5, Company T.
- "Well, with finding out what their [the clients'] research problem is, what the issue is in their business and then designing some sort of research solution." Respondent L1, Company M.
- "Work-shopping with them [the clients] and taking what their strategy objectives are and trying to find research-based solutions to help them." Respondent L2, Company M.
- "The challenge is that if the client raises a concern you know that it must be addressed in the fastest time and make sure that the matter has been addressed with your people too, so that it does not happen again." Respondent L7, Company T.
- "Otherwise I will try and get a way round to make it work the way he [the client] wants it to work." Respondent L8, Company T.
- "If you understand your client's business then you understand where he wants to go and then you have new ways or initiatives that you can propose to give the client value." Respondent L9, Company T.

During the interviews, lower burnout respondents often reported that they enjoyed finding solutions for the client, and that no challenge presented by the client was too difficult or impossible to achieve. Lower burnout respondents view their client's

problems as a challenge and are more solution orientated that their higher burnout counterparts:

- ▪ "The tasks they [the clients] give you might sound impossible but if you have the mentality of it's impossible, you are not going to get very far. The challenges are that nothing is impossible. It's a mindset." Respondent L4, Company T.
- ▪ "Although we have a specific agreed service level – we don't just wait for that level – as soon as we get the problem, we handle it." Respondent L5, Company T.
- ▪ "It doesn't matter how crazy or impractical their needs are, we are very much about doing whatever, or helping the client as much as possible." Respondent L1, Company M.
- ▪ "I communicate with the client. I tell the client what I plan to do – this is the problem – don't worry – this is the solution." Respondent L6, Company T.
- ▪ "They [the clients] are all very diverse, they all have different needs and I think the great thing about my job is that I interact with people at different levels of the company, in different roles, in totally different industries and have to get to know them and their needs and anticipate their needs and be proactive in designing solutions for them." Respondent L3, Company M.

6.3.4.2.3 Do not take personal responsibility for the client

Unlike the higher burnout respondents, lower burnout respondents do not take their roles personally and do not take personal responsibility for the client. As reflected in the selected quotes below, most lower burnout respondents work in teams and therefore feel like they are not alone when dealing with the client's problems. As indicated in bold in the selected quotations below, lower burnout respondents make frequent reference to working in supportive teams. This suggests that teamwork or social support may play a mediating role in the development of burnout amongst lower burnout respondent:

> - "We try to work as a team and you rely on other people to help you if you have demands from your client that you need to fulfil and you can't." Respondent L1, Company M.
> - "A lot of pride in what they do, I think it is a lot like – it's a family – an intimate atmosphere. I find the people that I have worked with – I think I have been quite lucky as well – they are very supportive – a supportive base. People are very willing to help with any question." Respondent L2, Company M.
> - "We are a team, so if you ask for something you get it. It's nice to work like that." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "If I can't be there, there are always people in our team. If I can't attend to the problem then there is someone else who can." Respondent L6, Company T.
> - "It's very important – you must have redundancy within your operational space. So I will go out if necessary, but I will also take my people with me." Respondent L7, Company T.
> - "It may be one of the calls that escalated, or the problem was never resolved so now there is this query and you need to give feedback, but there are now many parties involved in it so for me to give feedback, I first need to engage with all the others." Respondent L9, Company T.

Perhaps because they are solution orientated and do not take sole responsibility for the client, lower burnout respondents also do not take their roles as personally as the higher burnout respondents do. As indicated by the selected quotations in the box below, lower burnout respondents are able to distance themselves from their roles. They are able to ignore the stress placed on them by the client and instead focus on the task at hand:

> - "You are at the agency and a client phones and asks you for something unreasonable and speaks to you in a certain way, you can put the phone down and just take a moment, and then you can do it and you don't have to see them for a while." Respondent L2, Company M.
> - "I just do my job and ignore the fact that they [the client] are having a stressful day." Respondent L6, Company T.

- "You learn to accept it and that where you don't – if you don't create a relationship and you just go there and do the job and leave." Respondent L4, Company T.
- So the clients are important, but I see them as an operational issue – operational things that must be addressed." Respondent L7, Company T. "

Many of the lower burnout respondents reported having a number of outside interests, which enable them to forget about work. In so doing, they are able to distance themselves from the client and do not let the client service work interfere or dominate their personal lives:

- "I try to keep very strict 08:00 to 17:00 hours so that I can close the door on that and go and do something else and think about something else. I try to keep weekends free and I don't like to work overtime. I try and manage things so that I have time away from it so that I don't get sick of it." Respondent L1, Company M.
- "I keep it to myself. After work I have my sport to go to and relax." Respondent L9, Company T.

While higher burnout respondents personalise the role and the relationship with the client and as a result, tend to display guilt when they are not able to meet the needs of the client, lower burnout respondents do not show signs of guilt when they are unable to adequately assist the client:

> - "It's their [the client's] research, they are paying for it and if they don't get their money's worth it is not my fault – I did warn them." Respondent L3, Company M.
> - "It's just one of those things – you just try and deal with it to the best of your ability. I mean, you know you can't take it personally and you can't make judgements on them [the clients] as a person – it's just the way they work." Respondent L2, Company M.
> - "You are looking at the odds – if they [the clients] don't like you then they don't like you. You still deal with them. I don't talk too much, just let me do my work." Respondent L4, Company T.

6.3.4.2.4 Able to manage the client

Because lower burnout respondents see themselves in a partnership with the client and expect a certain level of co-operation from the client, they are able to exert influence over the client and manage them to a certain extent. For instance, two respondents from Company M feel able to make demands on the client, reflecting a high degree of self-empowerment in the client service situation:

> - "Unfortunately you sometimes get to a point where you have to threaten them [the clients] and say 'Listen, this is the timing for the project and a need this and that by then. If you can't get it to me then unfortunately your study is going to suffer because I have to extend the timing.'" Respondent L3, Company M.
> - "You have to push them [the clients] to give you what you need or what you are looking for to help them." Respondent L1, Company M.

Other lower burnout respondents are able to manage the expectations of clients by educating them and helping them understand better, suggesting a high degree of self-efficacy and empowerment when dealing with the client:

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> - "It is largely a case of not pushing back on their [the clients'] requests, particularly straight away, but giving them time to think. We have to give them some advice and steer them in a different direction." Respondent L1, Company M.
> - "They [the client] don't know the whole picture sometimes and the older people are not always there, so its new people so sometimes you have to help them to understand better." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "That is why I say the trust relationship between you and the client is the bottom line. If you got that and they trust you from day one – ahhh − it's like honey for you." Respondent L4, Company T.

All lower burnout respondents from Company T are able to manage the client in cases where they feel the client is being unreasonable. They are, for instance, able to report unreasonable clients to management within the company. Two respondents are even able to tell the client to his face when they feel a situation is unfavourable:

> - "If we see there is a problem, we go to their [the client's] senior people or to the company senior management and ask them to help as well." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "If he [the client] got a problem then I tell him straight – I say: "Listen, this is the way it is – I don't like what you do, let's go to the park." Respondent L4, Company T.
> - "Like this one client – he started to do his own thing and then I told him that he can't do it anymore." Respondent L6, Company T.
> - "From the start he [the client] was unreasonable and we had many bad experiences. We took it up with his management side and they talked to him and now it is better." Respondent L9, Company T.
> - "I try not to show it bothers me, but sometimes you just tell them [the clients] to move out of my personal space because I need to concentrate on my work – go make yourself some coffee." Respondent L8, Company T.

The role identity of lower burnout respondents' results in role-related behaviour associated with managing the client relationship and in some cases, exerting power

over the client. Since lower burnout respondents define themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client, they are able to exert a certain degree of control over the relationship and in so doing, experience a degree of autonomy. As indicated in the literature review, feelings of autonomy and control over one's work environment can buffer the development of burnout.

6.3.5 The emotional consequences of the role identity

The meaning content of the identity standard also has an impact on work-related perceptions. A failure to meet the role-related expectations contained within the identity standard could result in a diminished sense of self, a sense of subjective failure, frustration and fatigue – all states that have been linked to the development of burnout.

As indicated in **Table 75**, the majority of higher burnout respondents feel powerless against the client, while lower burnout respondents perceive a large degree of autonomy through their work.

Table 75: The emotional consequences of the role identity

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Powerless in relation to the client (13)	Has a sense of autonomy (17)

In feeling powerless in relation to the client, higher burnout respondents express that they are unable to protect themselves from the unreasonable demands made by the client. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, appear to have a large degree of control over and autonomy within the client service relationship, which enables them to protect themselves from unrealistic demands.

6.3.5.1 Emotional consequences of the role identity among higher burnout respondents

As reflected in the quotation count in **Table 76**, higher burnout respondents from Company T do not experience this loss of power in relation to the client.

Respondents from Company M and Company F, however, cite numerous instances where they are unable to stand up for themselves when interacting with the client.

Table 76: Quotation count report − Emotional consequences of the role identity among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Feel powerless in relation to client (13)	5	1	3	2	1	1	0	0

The selected quotations in the box below are evidence of the loss of power and helplessness in relation to the client felt by the majority of the higher burnout respondents. In many instances this loss of power is also a consequence of perceiving the client as nasty and abusive:

> ▪ "Pretty much, ja but they [the clients] didn't really apologise. Often what they will do if we don't, if they don't get the outcome that they want, they will try and blame us." Respondent H2, Company M.
>
> ▪ "Most of the time from our point of view we don't have any say. I mean, I can't call the shots and say do this." Respondent H5, Company F.
>
> ▪ "Some people out there phone in with the idea that they are going to be nasty − they have had bad service and no matter who picks up the phone they get it. I want to get that out of my life – I want to get somewhere where it is more predictable." Respondent H6, Company F.

These feelings of powerlessness also appear to result in a loss of control and autonomy amongst the higher burnout respondents.

6.3.5.2 Emotional consequences of the role identity among lower burnout respondents

As indicated in **Table 77,** lower burnout respondents experience a sense of autonomy within their roles.

Table 77: Quotation count report − Emotional consequences of the role identity among lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9
Code	M	M	M	T	T	T	T	T	T
Has a sense of autonomy (17)	1	2	3	3	4	2	0	1	1

This sense of autonomy may be due to the fact that they perceive themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client.

As indicated by the selected quotations below, lower burnout respondents experience a large degree of independence and freedom in their work, resulting in the perception of control and power within the role. This sense of autonomy and control is clearly indicated by the fact that lower burnout client service employees are able to manage the client and exert a level of power over the client:

> - "That is quite stressful, but otherwise I don't have stress. Like I said, I keep my environment stable." Respondent L6, Company T.
> - "I don't know about other environments, but here they [management] don't check up on me. There is freedom and I can initiate – whatever I want within the boundaries. I like it." Respondent L5, Company T.
> - "I have clients that are mine − that I am in charge of." Respondent L2, Company M.
> - "You have to be strong and show them [the client] that you can manage this and sort it out in the end." Respondent L8, Company T.

> - "It is not strict and rigid. You are free to do the best for your client which encourages you to be more proactive, and creative in the solutions that you offer your client." Respondent L3, Company M.
> - "I am not going to wait for my manager to do it – I want to do it myself." Respondent L4, Company T.

6.3.6 Evidence of self-verification

According to the research argument and the theoretical model presented in Chapter 3, failure to self-verify can also result in burnout. According to Burke's (1991a; 1991b) identity control model, self-verification occurs when the role-related behavioural outcomes of an individual are congruent with the expectations contained in the role-related identity standard. Failure to match role-related outcomes with these expectations results in failed self-verification, and, according to the research argument, could also contribute to the development of burnout.

In the case of client service employees, self-verification can fail if the expectations contained in the identity standard are experienced as unreasonable or practically unattainable. Self-verification can also fail if the expectations contained in the identity standard are unrealistic and require the individual to engage in considerable role overload, which could result in emotional exhaustion. Non-verification of the self through identity processes can result in feelings of anxiety and distress. These feelings of anxiety and distress could then, ultimately result in burnout. As Cherniss (1993), Cordes and Dougherty (1993), Freudenberger and Richelson (1980), Pines and Maslach (1978), Pines (1993) and Vanheule and Verhaeghe (2004; 2005) have shown, a failure to successfully meet personal and organisational expectations can result in reduced feelings of self-efficacy and ultimately lead to burnout.

As indicated in the quotation count in **Table 78**, higher burnout respondents feel guilt for not helping the client; feel humiliated by the company when they are unable to help the client and, as a consequence, feel little self-verification.

Table 78: Evidence of self-verification

Higher Burnout Respondents	Lower Burnout Respondents
Feel powerless in helping the client (46)	Experience a high degree of personal accomplishment (49)
Experience little self-verification (27)	
Feel guilt for not helping the client (10)	

Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, have strong feelings of personal accomplishment, suggesting that they do indeed experience self-verification.

6.3.6.1 Evidence of failed self-verification among higher burnout respondents

As indicated by **Table 79**, higher burnout respondents feel powerless in helping the client.

Table 79: Quotation count report – Evidence of failed self-verification among higher burnout respondents

	Respondents							
	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5	H6	H7	H8
Code	M	M	F	F	F	F	T	T
Feel powerless in helping the client (46)	2	6	4	5	18	4	4	3
Experience little self-verification (27)	11	4	2	2	2	2	1	3
Feel guilt for not helping the client (10)	0	0	4	0	2	3	0	1

Furthermore, a number of high burnout respondents experience a sense of guilt when they are unable to assist the client, and all higher burnout respondents display evidence of failed self-verification.

6.3.6.1.1 Feel powerless in helping the client

As illustrated by the selected quotations below, higher burnout respondents often feel despondent when dealing with the client. They feel that they are unable to help the client in the way that they would have liked − even when they have exercised all their options. Many higher burnout respondents are not happy with the quality of service they are giving the client, but feel unable to do any better:

- "If you speak to the client and you don't assist the client – and let's say, for example, there is a complaint from the client – management comes down on you. But I mean, what happens if you have exercised all your options." Respondent H5, Company F.
- "It gets frustrating because, for us, with what we know – for instance a cell phone claim takes about a day – two days – and now because it needs to be transferred to this department or that branch it takes two days." Respondent H4, Company F.
- "I can deal with a person when something is not fixed and I can plug it in and…It's very hard explaining to someone that you can't help them when they are stuck next to the side of the road." Respondent H6, Company F.
- "You want to give them the best piece of work possible and sometimes, you just don't have the capacity to be able to do it." Respondent H2, Company M.
- "Not helping the way… they have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp that that need is. I am not giving the full help that I can." Respondent H3, Company F.
- "We have to deal with red tape and the clients hate the red tape so that is where the arguments and the complaints come in." Respondent H7, Company T.
- "The biggest challenge I think is trying to please this particular client at the end of the day! Because it just seems – with this particular client that I am servicing – that they are never really fully happy with what we are doing." Respondent H1, Company M.

> ▪ "You always get a problem – a client – you are so confused by what is happening because, like I said, there are so many parties involved. At the end of the day, you wonder if it is your fault." Respondent H8, Company T.

From a number of quotations above, it is clear that higher burnout respondents feel let down by the companies for which they work. Some suggest that they have insufficient capacity and resources to service the client, while others feel that company processes inhibit their ability to adequately assist the client. These feelings could all contribute to the sense of helplessness and defeat experienced by higher burnout respondents.

Clearly higher burnout respondents feel unable to assist the client in the way that they would like. It is important to note that these feelings of inadequacy are subjective. As discussed earlier, higher burnout employees aim to help the client no matter what. These expectations may therefore be unrealistic, resulting in higher burnout respondents being unable to verify:

> ▪ "If we can show them [the clients] that we are changing and that we are more efficient and obviously, word of mouth, they will tell the guys 'Well, actually, Company T is not that bad.'" Respondent H8, Company T.
> ▪ "Actually, it would be quite nice for me to actually have a client that appreciates what we do and doesn't just take it for granted." Respondent H1, Company M.
> ▪ "Well, basically when they [the client] come back and tell you 'No, that's not suitable, or that's too expensive or…'" Respondent H2, Company M.
> ▪ "But my managers still see the standard – they don't see the extra and I know I will probably get into trouble." Respondent H7, Company T.
> ▪ "Not helping the way…they [the clients] have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp what that need is. I am not giving the full help that I can." Respondent H3, Company F.

In some cases, higher burnout respondents feel ashamed about the company for which they work, while in other cases failed self-verification is evident when they

relate that they are not appreciated by the client or by the company for which they work:

- ▪ "With a lot of things taking place now claims are taking a bit longer. Our company is in a change structure so we can't deliver what we normally could." Respondent H4, Company F.
- ▪ "It makes you feel – not really unappreciated, but sometimes stupid." Respondent H5, Company F.

6.3.6.1.2 Feel guilt when unable to help the client

Some higher burnout respondents translate this difficulty to self-verify into feelings of guilt. One respondent wonders whether it his fault that the clients have problems. Another respondent feels guilty when she cannot grasp what the client needs and another feels bad when he cannot assist the client due to red tape:

- ▪ "And we do feel bad when we can't assist the client because there are a lot of processes to follow. You can only do so much and you feel so bad that you can't help the guy, especially when it is a personal situation like that." Respondent H5, Company F.
- ▪ You wonder if it is your fault at all." Respondent H8, Company T.
- ▪ "They [the clients] have a certain need and sometimes I just don't grasp what that need is." Respondent H3, Company F.

High burnout respondents report feeling "emotionally challenged" and "emotionally drained." Selected quotations indicating this sense of burnout experienced by higher burnout respondents include:

- "I feel emotionally challenged because they can be a very difficult client." Respondent H1, Company M.

- "Stressful – it's very – a lot of the calls are trauma calls and they do have an impact on you. Like your emotional state." Respondent H6, Company F.

- "Not to be nasty, but you have to have psychoanalysis later – it really gets to your head." Respondent H3, Company F.

- "It would be like taking a balloon, blowing it up with hot air and Valium and all that. And just taking a pin and popping it and then just having a clump of nothing with a hole in the end." Respondent H3, Company F.

- "It's draining emotionally. There are a lot of calls that you receive and you don't know how to handle or hear…people call in with a lot of stuff." Respondent H5, Company F.

6.3.6.2 Evidence of self-verification among lower burnout respondents

Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, feel a strong sense of self-verification and personal accomplishment as reflected in **Table 80**.

Table 80: Quotation count report − Evidence of self-verification amongst lower burnout respondents

	Respondents								
	L1	*L2*	*L3*	*L4*	*L5*	*L6*	*L7*	*L8*	*L9*
Code	*M*	*M*	*M*	*T*	*T*	*T*	*T*	*T*	*T*
Experiences a sense of accomplishment (49)	8	2	10	4	5	9	5	3	3

As indicated by the selected quotations below, lower burnout respondents experience a strong sense of self-verification. Most are of the opinion that they are able to assist and impress the client through the service that they provide. Some feel that they are making a positive contribution to the company and others would even like more challenges – again indicating a high degree of self-efficacy and personal accomplishment:

- "It's going to take time, but I am seeing the difference I am making." Respondent L4, Company T.

- "I think it happens quite often here. It's even better when you have a client that is very sceptical in the beginning and then you wow them!" Respondent L3, Company M.

- "Make it a bit more challenging you know. At the moment I feel I know everything that is going on so maybe if they could make it more challenging – otherwise I wouldn't want to change my job." Respondent L6, Company T.

- "I like it when you go to present to a client and you have something that really meets their needs and is interesting to them and they enjoy what you have to share with them. Even if it is bad news. They like the work that you've done and they find it useful. I like wowing the clients with something interesting." Respondent L1, Company M.

- "And I believe that my small contribution in this big company will have a great effect somewhere." Respondent L7, Company T.

Lower burnout respondents also receive a large degree of appreciation and praise from the client, contributing to the sense of self-verification:

- "I like it that you fulfil their needs and that they are happy with the work that you have done. That sense of satisfaction – it is very gratifying to feel that you've helped them, that you've improved their business somehow. You are adding value and that gives me a thrill." Respondent L1, Company M.

- "Yes, we do [get a lot of appreciation from the client] – because we do a great job." Respondent L7, Company T.

- "They (the client) mail to management just to tell of the excellent service they received." Respondent L8, Company T.

- "We get mails at least every second day for recognition of the technicians." Respondent L9, Company T.

- "Clients often say it's a great presentation – thanks etc. That's what we work towards." Respondent L3, Company M.

> - "They [the clients] praise you and go 'Wow – this guy knows what he is doing.' That is satisfying that they put you on a pedestal sometimes." Respondent L6, Company T.

6.4 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

It is clear from the qualitative data presented in this chapter that the role identities of higher burnout client service employees differ from the role identities of lower burnout employees.

To summarise, higher burnout employees view themselves as subordinate to the client. They perceive the client as controlling, abusive and as having unreasonable expectations. Lower burnout respondents, on the other hand, display positive feelings towards the client and perceive themselves as superior to and more knowledgeable than the client. It appears that because lower burnout respondents feel knowledgeable and superior to the client, they also feel empowered to meet the demands of their client and expect to establish a partnership with the client. Lower burnout respondents demand co-operation and respect from the client, are task and solution orientated and are able to establish a psychological distance between themselves and the client. They experience a large degree of appreciation from the client and, as a result, experience self-verification. Higher burnout respondents, on the other hand, tend to personalise the client relationship by empathising and identifying with the client. They experience a sense of defeat and powerlessness when dealing with the client cite numerous instances where they have difficulty in self-verifying.