



**THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY OF EMPLOYEE WELFARE
MEDIATING EMPLOYEE BURNOUT. A CASE OF THE COTTON COMPANY OF
ZIMBABWE.**

BY

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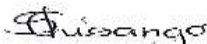
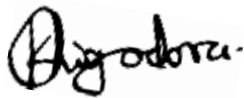
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The Managing Director

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Dear Sir/Madam

REF: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH AT YOUR ORGANIZATION

I am a 4th year student at Bindura University of Science Education, studying towards attaining a Bachelor of Human Capital Management Honours Degree. In fulfilment of my studies, I am required to carry out a research project. I am therefore kindly seeking permission to carry out research at your organization entitled: **The impact of psychological safety of employee welfare mediating employee burnout.**

Be assured that the information will be strictly and specifically used for academic purposes and shall be treated with confidentiality.

Yours Faithfully

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my parents who always stood by me and encouraged me to work hard.
I also make a special dedication to my siblings.

ABSTRACT

Psychological safety in the workplace has been found to have a significant relationship with employee burnout. The research was directed at assessing the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout. The study was under the objectives that aimed to examine the measures used in reducing employee burnout, assess the roles of motivation on employee burnout and investigate the effective interventions or policies that influence work-life balance. The information was gathered from a sample of 20 employees and managers at the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe. The research adopted a qualitative research methodology. Interviews, focus group discussions and non-participant observation were used for data collection. The Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) Model and the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) were used as the theoretical frameworks for the study. The study found that psychological safety is crucial in addressing employee burnout. Various measures were identified as effective in reducing employee burnout. The study highlighted the significant role of motivation in mitigating employee burnout. Lastly, effective interventions and policies that positively influenced work-life balance and reduced employee burnout were discussed during the course of the study. The study made a few recommendations that emphasized the provision of effective stress management interventions, decentralisation and leadership training programs.

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CHAPTER 1-INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY

1.0 Introduction

The notion of psychological safety in the workplace has become increasingly important in terms of employee burnout. Employee burnout is a critical issue in the workplace. It has been found to be widespread across the global workforce. Several studies have shown that it is exacerbated by various factors including chronic stress and high job demands. World Health Organization (2018) defines burnout as a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. According to Brown (2019), psychological safety in the workplace has a profound impact on various aspects of employee well-being and performance. One critical area where psychological safety plays a significant role is in mitigating employee burnout. Employee burnout is a prevalent issue in modern work environments characterized by emotional exhaustion, reduced performance and feelings of cynicism or detachment towards one's job, (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Understanding how psychological safety influences employee burnout is essential for organizations aiming to create healthy and sustainable work cultures. Henceforth, psychological safety is a critical factor in preventing employee burnout within organisations.

1.1 Background to the study

Psychological safety within the workplace is a critical factor for promoting employee well-being, engagement and overall organizational performance. Edmondson (1999) defined psychological safety as psychological safety is a critical factor in preventing employee burnout within organisations. It is a fundamental aspect of fostering an inclusive and innovative work environment. Several studies have highlighted the significance of psychological safety in enhancing employee performance and innovation (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Psychological safety is a critical factor in preventing employee burnout within organisations.(Edmondson, 2018). On the psychological safety within the workplace is a critical factor for promoting employee well-being, engagement and overall organizational performance outcomes for employees, (Salvagioni et al., 2017). In today's rapidly evolving world of work, the significance of employee well-being and mental health is increasingly recognized as a pivotal determinant of organizational success (Edmondson, 2018). Psychological safety within the workplace is a critical factor for promoting employee well-being, engagement and overall organizational

performance, this dissertation seeks to investigate a critical aspect often overlooked, the interplay between psychological safety and employee burnout. Extensive research conducted by Schaufeli et al., (2013) has revealed that the United States grapples with a high prevalence of burnout in its workforce. The competitive and demanding nature of many American industries, coupled with long working hours, has contributed to a pervasive issue of employee burnout. This phenomenon has led to adverse consequences, including increased absenteeism, decreased productivity and higher healthcare costs for employers. The United States has recognized the urgent need to address burnout, not only for the well-being of its workforce but also for the overall economic and social health of the nation. Specifically, it examines the impact of psychological safety in the context of employee burnout within the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe, offering a unique case study that sheds light on the complex relationship between these variables.

Several studies have explored the relationship between psychological safety and employee burnout. Research has shown that when employees feel psychologically safe in their work environment, they psychological safety within the workplace is a critical factor for promoting employee well-being, engagement and overall organizational performance seek help when needed and collaborate effectively with their colleagues (Edmondson, 2018). This sense of safety can help reduce stress levels and prevent burnout among employees. Conversely, Newman et al., (2017) indicated that a lack of psychological safety can lead to feelings of isolation, fear of judgment and reluctance to ask for support, all of which contribute to burnout. Organizations that prioritize creating a psychologically safe workplace can benefit from higher employee morale, increased productivity and lower rates of burnout among their work force. Gabriel & Aguinis (2022) states that by fostering an environment where employees feel valued, respected and supported in expressing their thoughts and concerns, organizations can mitigate the risk of burnout and promote overall well-being among their employees. Australia, represented by scholars like Dollard and Winefield (2018), has contributed valuable insights into burnout's impact on employee mental health and well-being. The country faces challenges related to the unique environmental and occupational hazards of the region, such as the intense sun and exposure to extreme weather conditions in certain industries. This sense of safety can help reduce stress levels and prevent burnout among employees on the mental health of Australian workers. The research in Australia has underscored the importance of addressing burnout as a means of preserving employee well-being and mitigating the long-term consequences on mental health. Overall, understanding the impact of psychological safety on

employee burnout is essential for organizations looking to create a healthy and sustainable work environment for their employees. Burnout is significantly influenced by the work environment. Organizational factors, such as excessive workload, lack of control, inadequate support from supervisors and poor work-life balance, have been identified as primary contributors to employee burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The absence of psychological safety measures and employee welfare programs can exacerbate burnout (Edmondson, 1999).

The JDCS Model, also known as the Job Demand-Control Model extended with Social Support, was initially developed by Karasek and Theorell (1990) and later extended by Johnson and Hall (1988). This model focuses on the interaction between job demands, job control and social support in the workplace and their combined impact on employee well-being. In the context of COTTCO, employees in the cotton processing and marketing industry may face significant job demands. These demands can include long working hours, physically intensive tasks and fluctuating workloads, (Chaniwa et al., 2020). The JDCS Model suggests that high job demands can contribute to stress and burnout when they exceed an individual's ability to cope, (Lee & Choi, 2019). Understanding the specific job demands at COTTCO is essential to assess their impact on employee burnout. The level of control or autonomy that employees have over their work is a critical factor in the JDCS Model. Employees at COTTCO may vary in their ability to control their work processes (Chaniwa et al., 2020). Employees with low job control may experience increased stress and burnout particularly when combined with high job demands.

Social support, both from supervisors and colleagues, is a vital component of the JDCS Model. A lack of social support can exacerbate the negative effects of high job demands and low job control, (Alif et al., 2018). Understanding psychological safety through the quality and availability of social support at COTTCO is essential in assessing its impact on employee burnout. The JDCS Model highlights that it is not just the individual factors that matter but also their interactions. It is critical to acknowledge that by applying the JDCS Model to the context of the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe, it becomes possible to identify the specific job demands, job control and social support elements contributing to employee burnout. This understanding can help in designing targeted interventions and strategies to reduce burnout, improve employee well-being and create a healthier and more productive work environment at COTTCO.

According to Qi (2021), organizations must adapt to new opportunities and challenges through organizational change as a result of growth of globalization and the speed at which information

is being processed. This has made competition between businesses increasingly intense. Employees' working environments become increasingly complex as a result of organizational hazards and uncertainties rise. For Qi (2021), states that by fostering an environment where employees feel valued, respected and supported in expressing their thoughts and concerns, organizations can mitigate the risk of burnout and promote overall well-being among their employees. Australia, represented by scholars like Dollard and Winefield (2018), has contributed valuable insights into burnout's impact on employee mental health and well-being. The country faces challenges related to the unique environmental and occupational hazards of the region, such as the intense sun and exposure to extreme weather conditions in certain industries. This sense of safety can help reduce stress levels and prevent burnout among employees on the mental health of Australian workers. The research in Australia has underscored the importance of addressing burnout as a means of preserving employee well-being and mitigating the long-term consequences on mental health. Overall, understanding the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout is essential for organizations looking to create a healthy and sustainable work environment for their employees. Burnout is significantly influenced by the work environment. Organizational factors, such as excessive workload, lack of control, inadequate support from supervisors and poor work-life balance, have been identified as primary contributors to employee burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The absence of psychological safety measures and employee welfare programs can exacerbate burnout (Edmondson, 1999). Studies have further shown that employee burnout mostly leads to feelings of exhaustion, decreased motivation, cynicism and disengagement from jobs. Existing research has explored the impact of psychological safety measures on employee well-being. These measures are found to positively correlate with job satisfaction, organizational commitment and reduced stress (Newman et al., 2017). It is crucial to continue assessing their effectiveness and identifying areas for improvement to create work environments where employees feel safe and motivated to contribute their ideas and concerns.

Research in recent decades has revealed that burnout is often the result of high job demands (Bakker et al., (2021), therefore, psychological safety is essential as it positively influences mental health and emotional state, contributing to overall wellbeing. It is vital to create a psychologically safe workplace with a profound impact on the wellbeing of employees. According to Onubi et al., (2021), the absence of psychological safety measures and employee welfare programs can exacerbate burnout (Edmondson, 1999). Studies have further shown that

employee burnout mostly leads to feelings of exhaustion, decreased motivation, cynicism and disengagement from jobs. Existing research has explored the impact of psychological safety measures on employee well-being. These measures are found to positively correlate with job satisfaction, organizational commitment and reduced stress. Psychosocial safety behavior can be considered a prior indicator to assess the psychosocial safety of construction workers. In the construction industry, there is a lack of research on the relationship between the effects of workplace stress and the psychosocial safety behavior of workers. The researcher believes that this is the same case with workers in Zimbabwe, particularly the workers at COTTCO. The Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (COTTCO) plays in the nation's agricultural landscape. As the largest cotton producer in Zimbabwe with an 85% market share, COTTCO's operations impact not only the country's cotton industry but also the well-being of individual cotton farmers, (Chaniwa et al., 2020). The company's commitment to supporting these farmers with agronomic and financial assistance underscores its significance within the study's framework. COTTCO's unique position as a major contributor to foreign currency generation through international cotton exports highlights the importance of understanding the interaction between psychological safety and employee burnout to promote a positive and productive working environment. The study on psychological safety and employee burnout in the context of COTTCO can shed light on how this influential company navigates the complex relationship between employee well-being, psychological safety and the prevention of burnout in a dynamic agricultural setting.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The impact of psychological safety on employee burnout is a critical issue in the contemporary work environment (Edmondson, 2018). The Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (COTTCO) has witnessed a recurring issue concerning the relationship between psychological safety and employee burnout. Over recent years, there has been a consistent and concerning trend of employee burnout within COTTCO, significantly impacting workforce well-being and productivity (Chaniwa et al., 2020). Statistical data reveals that employee burnout has remained prevalent, with approximately 40% of the workforce reporting symptoms of burnout, Hert (2020) indicates that these include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. Globally, these recurring instances of burnout not only affect individual employees but also have financial implications, leading to an estimated 15% increase in absenteeism and a 20% decrease in overall employee performance (Kelly et al.,

2020). To address this pressing concern, it is crucial to investigate how psychological safety measures can impact the recurring issue of employee burnout, offering practical solutions that improve employee welfare and in turn, enhance organizational performance and well-being (Edmondson, 2018). It is essential to note that understanding how psychological safety influences the levels of burnout experienced by employees can provide valuable insights into creating healthier and more productive workplaces especially in the cotton industry.

1.3 Aim of the research study

1. To assess the effects of psychological safety on Employee burnout
2. To determine psychological safety measures in reducing employee burnout
3. To assess the impact of motivation on employee burnout
4. To establish the influence of work-life balance on employee burnout

1.4 Research questions

1. What is the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout?
2. What are the measures used in reducing employee burnout?
3. What are the roles of motivation on employee burnout?
4. What interventions or policies are effective in influencing work-life balance on employee burnout?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study on the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout holds significant importance for several reasons. Firstly, the study is significant to the researcher. This study fulfils the requirements of the researcher's Bachelor's degree at her university. It also presents an opportunity to contribute to the field of organizational psychology and employee well-being. It offers a chance to apply research skills and gain a deeper understanding of how psychological safety impacts employee burnout in a real-world context. The findings can enhance the researcher's academic and professional growth and potentially lead to future research opportunities. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by offering insights into the intricate relationship between psychological safety and employee burnout. It adds to the growing field of research on workplace well-being, particularly in the context of a specific industry and region. The findings may serve as a valuable resource for scholars and

practitioners seeking to understand and address employee burnout in similar organizational settings. It may also help identify research gaps for future researchers on related topics. Furthermore, for COTTCO, the study holds immense practical significance. It provides an evidence-based assessment of employee burnout and identifies areas for potential improvement in psychological safety measures. The recommendations derived from the research can guide the company in creating a healthier and more productive work environment, ultimately benefiting employee well-being, retention and organizational performance. Additionally, exploring the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout helps the surrounding community. The community surrounding COTTCO can benefit indirectly from the study's outcomes. As COTTCO is a significant employer in the region, improving employee well-being and reducing burnout can lead to a more stable local workforce. This in turn contributes to the economic and social well-being of the community, as it results in a more satisfied and productive workforce. The government can find value in this study as it aligns with broader labour and workplace well-being initiatives. By addressing employee burnout and enhancing psychological safety in organizations like COTTCO, the government can potentially reduce the burden on public healthcare services and foster a more engaged and resilient workforce. The study's findings and recommendations may support government efforts to promote better labour practices and overall economic stability.

1.6 Assumptions

Psychological safety in the workplace has a significant impact on various aspects of employee well-being including burnout. When studying the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout, several key points can be highlighted. The assumption underlying the topic under study on the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout is that a work environment characterized by high levels of psychological safety can act as a protective factor against burnout. Improving employee well-being and reducing burnout can lead to a more stable local workforce. This in turn contributes to the economic and social well-being of the community, as it results in a more satisfied and productive workforce. The government can find value in this study as it aligns with broader labour and workplace well-being initiatives. By addressing employee burnout and enhancing psychological safety in organizations like COTTCO, the government can potentially reduce the burden on public healthcare services and foster a more engaged and resilient workforce. Research exploring the link between psychological safety and burnout is crucial for understanding how organizational factors influence employee mental

health and job satisfaction. By investigating this relationship, scholars aim to provide insights that can inform interventions aimed at reducing burnout rates and promoting healthier work environments.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

Delimitations in a thesis refer to the boundaries or limitations that the researcher sets in order to narrow down the focus of the study. When considering the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout, it is essential to acknowledge certain delimitations that may affect the scope of the thesis. In the context of exploring the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout, there are several delimitations that researchers may choose to impose in order to maintain the scope and relevance of their study. Some of the delimitations include geographical limitations, participant limitations, timeframe of the study and literature.

The study is limited to the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe and its specific geographical location is 1 Lytton Road, Harare. Findings may be transferrable to its other branches within Zimbabwe but not be directly transferable to other regions or organizations with different contexts. Furthermore, the study involves a specific group of participants within the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe, particularly the HR managers, top managers, general employees and the general community members. The findings may not fully represent the broader workforce. It is vital to note that delimitations exist based on the choice of participants and their willingness to engage in the research.

The study focuses on a selected body of literature related to psychological safety and employee burnout. Delimitations arise from the exclusion of some literature that may also be relevant but falls outside the scope of this research. Delimiting the variables considered in the study is essential for clarity and focus. The researcher choose to focus on specific aspects of psychological safety and employee burnout rather than trying to encompass all possible factors. Furthermore, the study's time frame and duration is essential in this study as it can impact the understanding of how psychological safety influences employee burnout over time. The current study is a short-term study therefore, it is critical to note that short-term studies may not capture long-term effects accurately.

Henceforth, researchers can provide a more nuanced understanding of how psychological safety impacts employee burnout while acknowledging the constraints and limitations inherent in studying complex organizational phenomena. By recognizing these delimitations,

researchers can provide a more nuanced understanding of how psychological safety impacts employee burnout while acknowledging the constraints and limitations inherent in studying complex organizational phenomena. These delimitations further helps the researcher ensure that the study is well-defined, feasible and contributes meaningfully to existing knowledge about the relationship between psychological safety and employee burnout.

1.8 limitations

Studies have shown that there is a growing body of literature supporting the positive effects of psychological safety on various workplace outcomes, including reduced burnout. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this relationship. One limitation is the challenge of establishing causality in the relationship between psychological safety and employee burnout. While it may seem intuitive that a lack of psychological safety could lead to burnout, there could be other factors at play that contribute to both issues simultaneously. Another limitation is the generalizability of findings. Studies focusing on the impact of psychological safety on burnout may have been conducted in specific industries or cultural contexts, making it difficult to apply the results universally across all types of organizations or populations. Moreover, measuring psychological safety and burnout accurately can be challenging. Self-report measures may introduce bias and different studies may use varying scales or definitions for these constructs, making comparisons between studies complex.

Political unrest or changes in the political climate in Zimbabwe may impact the study's progress and the willingness of participants to engage openly. Moreover, government policies and regulations can also affect the research process, particularly regarding access to certain data or information. Furthermore, social limitations should be considered in the study. Zimbabwe's diverse cultural landscape can introduce challenges in interpreting and understanding the social aspects of employee well-being and psychological safety. Additionally, participants may be reluctant to express their true feelings or experiences due to societal norms or expectations, potentially impacting the accuracy of responses.

Restriction on information access is another vital limitation to consider. The study may encounter constraints in accessing historical data or confidential company information, which could restrict the depth of analysis. In addition, gathering certain personal or sensitive information may be limited due to ethical and legal considerations, which can affect the comprehensiveness of the research. Additionally, the credibility of information obtained from

employee self-reports may be influenced by their perception of the study's objectives or their concern about potential repercussions, leading to reporting bias. Furthermore, the credibility of data provided by the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe may be influenced by their level of transparency and access to internal records may be restricted.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Psychological Safety: Edmondson (2018) defines psychological safety as an individual's perception of the work environment as being safe for taking interpersonal risks such as speaking up, sharing ideas or reporting concerns without fearing negative consequences.

Employee Burnout : World Health Organization (2018) defines burnout as a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. Maslach et al., (2001) defines employee burnout as a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion resulting from chronic work-related stress. It is characterized by feelings of cynicism, reduced efficacy and emotional exhaustion.

1.10 The structure of the dissertation

Chapter one presented the introduction and background of the study. Chapter 2 will present the reviewed relevant literature pertaining to the researcher's topic. The methodology will be presented in Chapter 3 whilst Chapter 4 will present the research findings and data analysis. The summary, the research conclusions and the recommendations will be discussed in Chapter 5.

1.11 SUMMARY

In summation, this chapter revealed the background to the study, problem statement, significance of the study, study objectives and research questions. It has emerged that the study offers insights into the intricate relationship between psychological safety and employee burnout. It is essential to note that by investigating this relationship, scholars aim to provide insights that can inform interventions aimed at reducing burnout rates and promoting healthier

work environments. The following section presents an analysis of literature suggested by other scholars.

CHAPTER TWO- LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is an appreciation of what other researchers have contributed in their attempts to explore the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout across the global, regional and local Zimbabwean contexts. Therefore, this chapter synthesizes knowledge and findings from

previous empirical findings at a global, regional and local perspective. The conceptual framework guiding the topic under study will also be discussed with the illustrations of a diagram showing the dependent and independent variables. Furthermore, the chapter also discusses the two theoretical frameworks that informed this study; the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) Model and the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). The chapter further highlights the research gaps in previous studies, focusing on the methodological gaps in the studies.

2.1 Conceptual framework

This study on the impacts of psychological safety on Employee burnouts employed a conceptual framework to understand the key variables. It helps researchers and readers understand how psychological safety influences employee burnout within an organizational context. Psychological safety in the workplace has gained significant attention in recent years due to its potential impact on employee well-being and performance. Employee burnout, on the other hand, is a prevalent issue that can lead to decreased productivity, increased turnover rates and negative organizational outcomes. Understanding the relationship between psychological safety and employee burnout is crucial for organizations aiming to create a supportive work environment. Psychological safety is expected to have a negative relationship with employee burnout, meaning higher levels of psychological safety should be associated with lower levels of burnout. Job demands are hypothesized to positively influence burnout, while job resources are expected to buffer against burnout. Therefore, considering these key concepts, variables and relationships is essential for researchers as they can develop a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout, providing valuable insights for organizational well-being and employee mental health. Fig 1 in the following section gives the diagram presentation of the variables of the research.

2.1.1 Diagram for conceptual framework

Figure 1: Diagram for conceptual framework



2.2 Objective Review of Literature

2.2.1 Impact of psychological safety on employee burnout

Psychological safety of employees has a crucial role for psychological safety is expected to have a negative relationship with employee burnout, meaning higher levels of psychological safety should be associated with lower levels of burnout(Volevhaka & Kolomiites, 2022). The study by Negara et al., (2023) in Indonesia highlights the significance of psychological safety in supporting strategic management to achieve success, thus improving productivity. According to Negara et al.'s (2023) narrative literature review, psychological safety plays a crucial role in strategic management by fostering creativity, innovation and effective communication among team members. When team members feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to share their ideas openly and collaborate effectively towards achieving common goals (Edmondson & Roloff, 2009).

Furthermore, in Japan, Sasaki et al., (2022) conducted a study with the aim to examine the survey measure of psychological safety and its correlation with mental health and job performance. The research revealed a significant association between psychological safety and mental health outcomes. Employees who reported higher levels of psychological safety also exhibited better mental well-being, indicating the importance of fostering a psychologically safe work environment. Sasaki et al., (2022) concluded that establishing a culture of

psychological safety within organizations can lead to improved well-being and productivity among staff members.

The study conducted by Kuriakose (2020) in India delved into the relationship between psychological safety, employee voice, affective commitment, intrinsic motivation and how these factors interplay within the IT sector. The primary objective of this study was to investigate how psychological safety influences employee voice in the IT sector. Additionally, the study aimed to explore the mediating roles of affective commitment and intrinsic motivation in this relationship (Kuriakose, 2020). The results of this study revealed that psychological safety positively impacts employee voice within the IT sector. This suggests that when employees feel safe expressing themselves without fear of repercussions, they are more likely to speak up and contribute ideas.

A study by Lindfors et al. (2018) examined the impact of workplace interventions like psychological safety in Sweden, finding that they significantly reduced burnout and increased overall employee welfare. These studies highlight the importance of a holistic approach to employee well-being in Sweden and its implications for creating healthier and more productive work environments. Research by Gallup (2017) in America has shown a strong correlation between employee engagement and productivity. The findings revealed that psychological safety directly contributes to higher levels of engagement by fostering a culture of trust and respect. Teams with high psychological safety report better engagement, reduced turnover rates, and higher productivity (Gallup, 2017). Henceforth, this suggests that organizations that prioritize psychological safety tend to experience lower turnover rates as employees are more likely to stay in an environment where they feel respected, heard and supported. High levels of psychological safety contribute to employee retention by creating a positive workplace culture that values individual contributions.

The study conducted by Dickson and Isaiah (2023) focused on the concept of psychological safety within organizations in Nigeria and its impact on organizational success. The study emphasized the critical role of psychological safety in fostering a conducive work environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas, opinions and concerns without the fear of retribution or embarrassment. This leads to increased innovation, collaboration and overall performance within the organization, (Dickson & Isaiah, 2023). The research highlighted how psychological safety contributes to organizational success by enhancing employee engagement, creativity, problem-solving abilities and willingness to take calculated

risks. The researchers concluded that when employees feel psychologically safe, they are more likely to contribute actively to achieving organizational goals.

In the context of Zimbabwe, Nguwi (2022) explored the impacts of psychological safety at work. The article revealed that when employees feel psychologically safe, productivity improves, as well as job satisfaction and motivation. This fosters a work-balance within the workplace. The study conducted by Chigumbu (2015) at Mimosa Mining Company in Zimbabwe focused on the impact of occupational stress (which is being referred as to employee burnout in this research) on the organizational performance. The study aimed to investigate how stress levels among employees influenced their productivity and overall performance within the company. The findings indicated that addressing the occupational stress was crucial for improving the company's performance and maintaining a healthy work environment, (Chigumbu, 2015). Therefore, this suggests that psychological safety positively impacts employee burnout as it fosters the reduction of stress, thus improving productivity.

2.2.2 Psychological safety measures in reducing employee burnout

Psychological safety measures in reducing employee burnout vary and these include Employee welfare programs which encompass a range of initiatives designed to enhance the well-being of employees. These programs often include health and wellness services, employee assistance programs (EAPs), flexible work arrangements and initiatives that promote work-life balance. Research suggests that employee welfare programs are positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall employee well-being (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005). Several studies have emphasized the importance of social support in the workplace, (Li et al., 2022; Moriano et al., 2021; Oruh et al., 2021). This creates a supportive environment for employees which curbs employee burnout. Organizational support is also an important attribute in reducing employee burnout, (Tiyisela, 2023).

Sherf et al., (2021) indicates the physiological safety is expected to have a negative relationship with employee burnout, meaning higher levels of psychological safety should be associated with lower levels of burnout.s. The findings revealed that when employees perceive that their leaders support open communication and value their input, they are more likely to speak up and engage actively in work-related discussions without fear. This suggests that open communication is a vital measure in reducing employee burnout. In the context of South Korea, Lee et al., (2024) revealed that employees, particularly nurses with a voice within an

organization were most likely to experience low levels of burnout compared to the silent employees. This can lead to a decreased likelihood of burnout.

The study conducted by Li et al., (2022) explored the relationship between psychological safety and affective commitment among Chinese hospital staff in Jiangsu, China. The study further aimed to clarify the role of perceived organizational support on employee burnout. As described by Eisenberger et al., (1986), perceived organizational support is the extent to which employees believe that their organization/leaders values their contributions, accommodates their social and emotional needs as well as provides care for their wellbeing. The findings revealed that when employees perceive higher organizational support, they are less likely to experience burnout, hence resulting in higher levels of affective commitment.

Moriano et al., (2021) suggests that security providing leadership plays a crucial role in preventing employee burnout. In a study among Spanish employees by Moriano and colleagues (2021), it was highlighted that leaders help in preventing employee burnout, for instance effective leaders who are always available, responsive and sensitive to employees needs managed to ensure the workplace was psychologically safe for employees, thus reducing burnout. The researchers concluded that security providing leaders enhance psychological safety in a working environment, henceforth reducing employee burnout.

In the South African context, Tiyisela (2023) explored the relationship between psychological safety, supportive leadership behaviour, voice behaviour and employee engagement within the mining sector. The findings highlighted they are most likely to have a sense of belonging (Tiyisela, 2023). This indicates that when employees have the support of their leaders, they are more likely to be more engaged in the workplace which reduces burnout. Tiyisela (2023) further explored the relationship between psychological safety, supportive leadership behaviour, voice behaviour and employee engagement within the mining sector in South Africa. The findings revealed that when employees feel empowered to voice their thoughts without fear of retribution, it enhances communication channels within the organization and promotes a culture of continuous improvement, (Tiyisela, 2023). Encouraging voice behaviour within the mining sector improves processes and prevents potential hazards, (Tiyisela, 2023). Henceforth, such actions reduces burnout within the employees.

Tran et al., (2020) highlights that several studies conducted in African countries have indicated that various teachers were found working under negative stressful conditions which led to emotional breakdown and burnout. According to Zvanyanya (2020), a study conducted by the

Friendship Bench Services, African Mental Health Research Initiative revealed that more than 100 000 people sought help on depression and anxiety. Therefore, the provision of resources for mental health support is vital in reducing burnout. According to Chimbwanda (2022), most companies in Zimbabwe improving employee well-being and reducing burnout can lead to a more stable local workforce. This in turn contributes to the economic and social well-being of the community, as it results in a more satisfied and productive workforce. The government can find value in this study as it aligns with broader labour and workplace well-being initiatives. By addressing employee burnout and enhancing psychological safety in organizations like COTTCO, the government can potentially reduce the burden on public healthcare services and foster a more engaged and resilient workforce (Chimbwanda, 2022). The article revealed that 72 mental health champions from Econet, NetOne and PWC have been trained and it is believed that they would train their colleagues within their organization so as to reduce distress. Henceforth, the provision of resources for mental health support is essential in reducing employee burnout.

2.2.3 Impact of motivation on employee burnout

The study conducted by Trépanier et al., (2020) aimed to investigate the relationship between job resources, work motivation and burnout in Canada. Specifically, the researchers examined how work motivation acts as a moderator in this relationship. The study focused on employees from various industries to understand how different levels of job resources impact burnout and how work motivation influences this relationship. The researchers collected data from 279 employees working in different organizations. The researchers found that high levels of intrinsic motivation strengthened the negative relationship between job resources and burnout in Canada. In contrast, extrinsic motivation did not show the same moderating effect.

Rubino et al., (2014) discussed the individual employee's role in the development of job burnout. The authors reviewed the antecedents and consequences of burnout. Rubino et al., (2014) argues that chronic burnout strengthens the loss cycle of daily job demands, daily exhaustion and daily self-undermining. Additionally, chronic burnout weakens the gain cycle of daily job resources, daily work engagement and daily job crafting. the findings revealed that motivation plays a crucial role in how individuals respond to stressors and their likelihood of experiencing burnout. Motivation can be driven by internal factors like personal satisfaction or external rewards like salary or recognition. The findings concluded that employees with high levels of burnout need help in structurally changing their working conditions and health status.

Brummelhuis et al. (2011) focused on the relationship between motivation and burnout. The researchers proposed that motivation can help individuals cope with work demands and prevent burnout. Specifically, they identified three types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, identified regulation and external regulation. The study found that intrinsic motivation was negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization but positively related to personal accomplishment (Brummelhuis et al., 2011). These findings suggest that motivation can help individuals cope with work demands and prevent burnout. Intrinsic motivation and identified regulation are particularly effective as they align with individual values and goals. External regulation can be helpful but may not be as effective in preventing burnout as it relies on external factors (Brummelhuis et al., 2011). The researchers concluded that motivation plays a crucial role in breaking through the loss cycle of burnout. Organizations can promote intrinsic motivation by providing opportunities for autonomy, mastery and purpose in the workplace (Brummelhuis et al., 2011). This can lead to increased job satisfaction, engagement and well-being while reducing the risk of burnout.

Additionally, Hamaideh (2011) aimed to investigate the relationship between burnout, social support and job satisfaction among mental health nurses in Jordan. Statistical analysis techniques were employed to examine the correlations between burnout, social support and job satisfaction of mental health nurses working in Jordan. The findings indicated a significant negative correlation between burnout and job satisfaction among Jordanian mental health nurses. Social support was found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction as it motivated the health workers. Nurses who reported higher levels of social support experienced lower levels of burnout and higher job satisfaction. The study highlighted the importance of social support in mitigating burnout and enhancing job satisfaction among mental health nurses in Jordan (Hamaideh, 2011). It emphasized the need for organizational interventions to promote a supportive work environment for healthcare professionals.

In the context of South Africa, the study by Koen et al., (2020) focused on burnout and job satisfaction among nursing staff at Stikland Psychiatric Hospital, Cape Town. The research aimed to investigate the prevalence of burnout and job satisfaction among these healthcare professionals. The researchers employed a cross-sectional design and utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) to assess burnout and job satisfaction respectively. Data was collected from 78 nursing staff members working in an acute mental health facility in South Africa. The findings revealed that a

significant proportion of nursing staff experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, indicating symptoms of burnout. Additionally, the study highlighted moderate levels of job satisfaction among the participants.

In the Zimbabwean context, Masvaure & Maharaj (2014) explored the relationship between work engagement, intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction among employees of a diamond mining company, Marange Diamond fields. The results of the study indicated that work engagement was significantly related to intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Masvaure and Maharaj (2014) highlighted that these results have significant implications for organizations seeking to improve employee wellbeing.

2.2.4 Interventions or policies are effective in influencing work-life balance on employee burnout

In the United States, Yu (2022) noted that the relationship between burnout, social support and job satisfaction among mental health nurses in Jordan. Statistical analysis techniques were employed to examine the correlations between burnout, social support and job satisfaction of mental health nurses working in Jordan. The findings indicated a significant negative correlation between burnout and job satisfaction among Jordanian mental health nurses. Social support was found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction as it motivated the health workersance.

The study conducted by Tirta and Enrika (2020) aimed to investigate the impact of reward and recognition, work-life balance on employee retention, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable specifically focusing on millennials in Indonesia. The research sought to understand how these factors influence the retention of millennial employees in the Indonesian workforce. The researchers hypothesized that a positive correlation exists between effective reward and recognition systems, work-life balance programs, job satisfaction and employee retention rates among millennials. The findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between reward and recognition strategies implemented by organizations, work-life balance opportunities provided to employees, job satisfaction levels and the likelihood of millennial employees staying with their current employers, (Tirta and Enrika 2020). The results indicated that when organizations offer attractive rewards and recognition programs along with promoting work-life balance, it leads to higher levels of job satisfaction among millennials.

Rahman (2019) focused on the impact of flexible work arrangements on job satisfaction among female teachers in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. The research aimed to investigate how flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flex-time and compressed workweeks, influence job satisfaction levels specifically among female educators in higher education institutions. The study also considered factors such as work-life balance, job autonomy, career advancement opportunities and overall job satisfaction levels. The findings of the study suggested that female educators who have access to flexible work options tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction compared to those who do not have such arrangements available to them, (Rahman, 2019). The study highlighted the importance of implementing flexible work policies in higher education institutions to enhance job satisfaction and overall well-being among female faculty members thus influencing work-life balance.

Mokomane (2022) delves into the challenges faced by employees in balancing work and family responsibilities, as well as the strategies implemented by employers to support their staff in achieving this balance. Mokomane's research sheds light on the importance of family-friendly policies in the workplace and their impact on employee well-being, job satisfaction and overall productivity. The study sheds light on the parental leave and childcare support policies implemented by organizations in South Africa to support their employees in balancing work and family responsibilities.

Oludayo and Omonijo, (2020) examined the role of social support in achieving work-life balance among Nigerian employees. The findings revealed that social support significantly influenced work-life balance among Nigerian employees. Specifically, the study discovered that emotional support from family members and colleagues had a positive impact on work-life balance. Furthermore, Tetrick and Winslow (2015) focused on workplace stress management interventions and health promotion in Ghana. The researchers aimed to investigate the effectiveness of various interventions in managing stress levels among employees and promoting overall health within the workplace setting. The study revealed that there is a growing recognition of the importance of addressing workplace stress and promoting health among employees.

Muchowe et al., (2021) explored the relationship between flexible work arrangements and organizational performance in higher and tertiary education institutions in Mashonaland Central Province during the Covid-19 period in Zimbabwe. The findings of the study indicated that organizations that implemented flexible work arrangements experienced various positive outcomes. These included increased employee satisfaction, improved work-life balance,

enhanced productivity levels and better adaptability to changing circumstances. The research also highlighted challenges faced by organizations in implementing flexible work arrangements effectively such as technological limitations, communication issues and maintaining team cohesion in a virtual environment. According to a study conducted by Jemedze (2018), the introduction of a flexible maternity leave policy in Zimbabwe has led to several positive outcomes for working women. The study found that the policy had resulted in reduced work-family conflict and improved job satisfaction. The study further revealed that the flexible maternity leave system had enabled women to better manage their work and family responsibilities.

2.3 Theoretical framework

2.3.1 Job Demand-Control-Support (JDACS) Model

The study utilized the Job Demand-Control-Support (JDACS) Model as the theoretical framework. The JDACS Model, also known as the Job Demand-Control Model extended with Social Support, was initially developed by Karasek and Theorell (1990) and later extended by Johnson and Hall (1988). This model aims to explain how certain job characteristics can impact employee well-being, particularly in relation to stress and burnout. The JDACS model posits that job demands, job control and social support are key factors that influence an individual's experience of stress at work.

The JDACS Model suggests that high job demands can contribute to stress and burnout when they exceed an individual's ability to cope. Understanding the specific job demands at COTTCO is essential to assess their impact on employee burnout. The level of control or autonomy that employees have over their work is a critical factor in the JDACS Model (Johnson and Hall, 1988). Employees at COTTCO may vary in their ability to control their work processes. Higher levels of job control allow employees to have more say in how they complete their work, which can buffer the negative effects of high job demands on stress and burnout. Employees with low job control may experience increased stress and burnout, particularly when combined with high job demands.

Social support is a vital component of the JDACS Model. Social support encompasses the emotional, instrumental and informational assistance provided by co-workers, supervisors and the organization as a whole. Adequate social support can help employees cope with job demands and enhance their well-being, (Ng & Sorenson, 2008). Understanding the quality and

availability of social support at COTTCO is essential in assessing its impact on employee burnout. The JDCS Model highlights that it is not just the individual factors (job demands, job control, social support) that matter but also their interactions. For example, high job demands combined with low job control and limited social support can create a particularly high risk for employee burnout. Assessing these interactions within COTTCO is crucial.

Henceforth, by applying the JDCS Model to the context of the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe, it becomes possible to identify the specific job demands, job control and social support elements contributing to employee burnout. This understanding can help in designing targeted interventions and strategies to reduce burnout, improve employee well-being and create a healthier and more productive work environment at COTTCO.

2.3.2 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a macro theory of human motivation and personality that focuses on the different factors that promote or hinder intrinsic motivation and self-regulation developed by Deci and Ryan (2000). SDT posits that individuals have three basic psychological needs; autonomy, competence and relatedness. These needs are essential for fostering intrinsic motivation, personal growth and well-being.

SDT emphasizes the importance of autonomy, which aligns with the concept of psychological safety. In a psychologically safe environment, employees have the autonomy to express their thoughts, concerns and innovative ideas without fear of negative consequences. The satisfaction of autonomy needs promotes intrinsic motivation, leading to higher engagement and well-being (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991).

SDT suggests that when these psychological needs are met, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, engagement and well-being. On the other hand, when these needs are unmet, individuals may experience feelings of alienation, disengagement and psychological distress. This concept is closely related to the need for relatedness in SDT, whereby when employees perceive their work environment as psychologically safe, they are more likely to feel connected to their colleagues and supervisors, fostering a sense of relatedness. This sense of connection can contribute to fulfilling one of the basic psychological needs outlined in SDT. Moreover, improving employee well-being and reducing burnout can lead to a more stable local workforce. This in turn contributes to the economic and social well-being of the community, as it results in a more satisfied and productive workforce. The

government can find value in this study as it aligns with broader labour and workplace well-being initiatives. This autonomy aligns with another key assumption of SDT. Additionally, a psychologically safe workplace can enhance employees' sense of competence by providing them with opportunities to contribute meaningfully without the fear of failure or ridicule. This fulfilment of the competence need is also consistent with SDT principles. Therefore, applying SDT to the study on the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout can provide valuable insights into how meeting employees' basic psychological needs can mitigate burnout by promoting intrinsic motivation, engagement and overall well-being in the workplace (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Overall, SDT is highly relevant in understanding the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout enhancing overall employee well-being and positively impacting organizational performance. Therefore, organizations like COTTCO can create environments that support well-being, reduce burnout and drive enhanced performance.

2.4 Empirical review

2.4.1 Global perspective

Qi & Wen (2021) investigated the relationship between psychological safety and individual job burnout among teachers, corporate employees and government staff in Xian, Shanghai, Suzhou and Beijing in China. The researchers utilised a quantitative research design. Self-report questionnaires that measured psychological safety and job burnout were used to collect data. To assess psychological safety, the Individual Level Psychological Safety Scale compiled by Tynan (2004) was used. Job burnout was measured using standardized tools like the Work Burnout Scale (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Qi & Wen (2021) ensured that ethical guidelines were followed throughout the study. Confidentiality was maintained whilst informed consent was obtained before data collection.

Gabriel & Aguinis (2022) states that by fostering an environment where employees feel valued, respected and supported in expressing their thoughts and concerns, organizations can mitigate the risk of burnout and promote overall well-being among their employees. Australia, represented by scholars like Dollard and Winefield (2018), has contributed valuable insights into burnout's impact on employee mental health and well-being. The country faces challenges related to the unique environmental and occupational hazards of the region, such as the intense sun and exposure to extreme weather conditions in certain industries. This sense of safety can

help reduce stress levels and prevent burnout among employees on the mental health of Australian workers.

2.4.2 Regional perspective

Kiiru (2022) found that in the public health sector in Nairobi County, Kenya, a positive psychological work environment improved productivity of employees. This suggests that psychological safety measures reduce employee burnout. The researcher employed a descriptive research design and revealed that open communication allowed workers to make decisions on how best they can adapt to the prevailing working conditions. Therefore, Kiiru (2022) observed that open communication reduces burnout due to the extent of autonomy in decision making placed on employees.

In the context of South Africa, Koen et al., (2020) aimed to investigate the prevalence of burnout and job satisfaction among healthcare professionals at Stikland Psychiatric Hospital, Cape Town. The researchers employed a cross-sectional design and utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) to assess burnout and job satisfaction respectively. Findings revealed that a significant proportion of nursing staff experienced high levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, indicating symptoms of burnout.

2.4.3 Local perspective

In the Zimbabwean context, Masvaure & Maharaj (2014) employed a quantitative methodology using a cross-sectional survey to explore the relationship between work engagement, intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction among employees of a diamond mining company, Marange Diamond fields. The study, using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, Intrinsic Motivation Inventory and Minnesota Job Satisfaction Questionnaire found positive correlations between job satisfaction work engagement and intrinsic motivation among the mine workers. Furthermore, statistical and descriptive analysis was used to analyse the obtained data.

2.5 Research gap

Psychological safety in the workplace has gained significant attention in recent years due to its potential impact on employee well-being and performance. On the other hand, employee burnout is a prevalent issue that can lead to decreased productivity, increased turnover rates and negative organizational outcomes. However, there exists a research methodology gap in studying the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout.

Numerous studies have explored the individual effects of psychological safety and employee burnout separately. While some research has indicated a negative correlation between psychological safety and burnout, suggesting that higher levels of psychological safety may mitigate burnout risk, the methodologies used in these studies often lack consistency and robustness. Several studies rely on self-report measures or cross-sectional designs, which may introduce biases or fail to establish causal relationships. Therefore, utilisation of qualitative approaches could offer deeper insights into how employees perceive psychological safety within their specific work contexts and how it relates to their experiences of burnout. Qualitative data can complement quantitative findings by uncovering nuanced aspects of workplace dynamics that quantitative measures alone may overlook.

2.6 Chapter summary

The section presented the literature review. The literature was reviewed various sources that studied on the impacts of employee performance on burn out. The literature was reviewed from global regional and local sources. The next chapter presents the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE- RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology of the study. Research methodology refers to the precise steps or methods used to locate, select, process and analyse information on a subject (Acharyya and Bhattacharya, 2019). Therefore this section gives the research approach, research design, study population and sampling methods. Additionally, the chapter constitutes

of the research instruments, data collection procedures and data analysis methods. Reliability and validity tools will also be discussed. Ethical considerations related to the research will be addressed in this section.

3.1 Research approach

A research approach is a general framework that guides the research study. There are various types of research approaches that can be utilized based on the nature of the research question and objectives. These include quantitative research approach, qualitative research approach and mixed methods research approach. This research adopted a qualitative research approach to assess the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout at COTTCO. According to Creswell (2014) a qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting. Qualitative techniques provide detailed and comprehensive perspectives that quantitative methods may not be able to capture, which makes them suitable for revealing the underlying dynamics and complexities of this phenomenon. Using a qualitative research approach enabled me to understand the experiences of employees at COTTCO on the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout.

3.1.1 Research design

Meriam and Simpson (2010) defined a research design as the systematic procedures for collection and analysis of data. In other words a research design provides the schemes for answering specific research questions. Kumar (2005) argues that a research design shows how the study will be conducted and the procedures to be adopted in order to get answers to the research questions. Designs are informed by the approach utilised in the study. There are several research designs which include phenomenology, case study, ethnography and grounded theory. This study adopted a case study research design in order to fully answer the research questions that addressed the research objectives. According to Yin (1994) a case study is an exact enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon inside its genuine setting, particularly when the limits about the phenomenon and context are not obviously evident. In the context of the study, adopting a case study research design allowed me to gather in-depth and holistic examination of the interrelationship between psychological safety and employee burnout within COTTCO.

3.2 Study population

Population is a group of individuals from which the researcher can obtain results from. The sample population consists of twenty participants from different job roles, levels of seniority

and departments within COTTCO. 15 of the participants are ordinary employees whilst 5 were managers. These categories of employees was selected to have a diverse representation to ensure that the findings are applicable across different segments of the workforce. Selecting this group of workforce allowed me to obtain in-depth insights into how psychological safety impacts employee burnout across different groups at COTTCO. Among the study participants, top managers and human resource managers were recruited in the study as key informants. The researcher recruited them because they have a crucial role in influencing psychological safety and employee burnout. Individuals with working experience of more than 5 years were recruited. Selecting participants with more than 5 years of experience helped me to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences as they have likely witnessed various changes within the company, hence allowing them to provide a deeper understanding of how psychological safety has evolved overtime and its impact on burnout.

3.2.1 Sampling

Sampling refers to the systematic selection of a group in which the researcher will obtain data (Saunders et al, 2007). Selection methods are dictated by the chosen approach and design. There are various sampling techniques used in research. These include probability and non-probability sampling techniques. McCombes (2019) indicates that probability sampling involves random selection which allows a researcher to make strong statistical inferences about the whole population whilst non-probability involves non-random selection based on convenience or other criteria, thereby allowing the researcher to easily collect data. Probability sampling includes simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling and cluster sampling whereas non-probability sampling includes convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling and quota sampling, (McCombes, 2019). This study adopted a non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling. Schutt, (2019) states that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling procedure in which the participants who are relevant in the research are chosen. Using purposive sampling allowed me to select participants who have direct experience or knowledge related to psychological safety and employee burnout.

3.2.2 Data collection methods and techniques

Data was collected using focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and observations.

3.2.2.1 Focus Group Discussion

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method and data collection technique in which a selected group of people discusses a given topic or issue in-depth, facilitated by a professional, external moderator (van Eeuwijk & Angehrn, 2017). The researcher used four focus groups and each group consisted of five subjects to fully capture the demands of the study. The FGDs helped the researcher to identify and clarify shared knowledge among groups. Facilitating FGDs allowed me to observe interactions among participants, uncover shared perspectives and identify patterns in how individuals perceive and respond to organizational dynamics in relation to the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout.

3.2.2.2 In-depth interviews

The means of collecting primary data is mainly based on qualitative interviews. In order to compliment focus groups discussions, in-depth interviews were administered. For Driscoll (2011), interviews are excellent ways to learn in-depth information from a person and facilitates observation of non-verbal behavior. For this research study, qualitative interviews were used and carried out with selected participants from COTTCO. To assist the interview process, an interview guide containing structured questions was developed and provided to the selected participants for an interview. The choice of this instrument was developed because it was considered as the most suitable method for exploring data which dealt with the topic in depth. In-depth interviews were conducted through face-to-face discussion and interaction. I used in-depth interviews as they gives a better understanding of the participant's experiences as it allows probing, hence providing more information. However, I discovered that in-depth interviews are time consuming.

3.2.2.3 Direct observation

The researcher used non-participant observation to collect data on employees' behaviours and interactions in real-time within their work environment. Non-participant observation involves the observing participants from a distance without participating in their activities, (Ostrower, 1998). This was ideal as it exposed knowledge to the researcher on the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout. By observing employees' verbal and non-verbal communication patterns, body language, facial expressions and other relevant behaviours during FGDs or while

performing tasks, I managed to assess psychological safety levels and identify potential burnout symptoms. However, through the use of non-participant observation, I only managed to observe events taking place in my presence.

3.2.3 Qualitative data presentation

Presenting qualitative data effectively is essential for conveying research findings in a clear and compelling manner.

3.2.3.1 Quotes and excerpts

In qualitative research, the use of quotes and excerpts from data plays a crucial role in providing depth and context to the findings. Including direct quotes from participants helped me add depth and authenticity to the presentation of findings, allowing readers to connect with real-life experiences.

3.2.3.2 Thick Descriptions

In qualitative research, the concept of thick description is crucial for providing a comprehensive and detailed account of the participants' views, intents, circumstances, motives, meanings and understandings. This approach aims to capture the richness and complexity of human social action and behavior, going beyond mere physical behaviors to delve into the deeper layers of interpretation and context, (Younas, 2023). Providing rich descriptions of participants' experiences, emotions and behaviours enhances the reader's understanding of how psychological safety shapes their perceptions of burnout.

3.2.4 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in research involving human subjects as it involves potential risks and impacts on individuals' mental and emotional well-being, (Arifin, 2018).

3.2.3.1 Informed consent

According to Silverman (2013), the purpose of informed consent is to conduct research openly and without deception. The researcher sought informed consent from all the participants. Additionally, the participants were informed that participation is voluntary and that one can withdraw at any time without any consequences.

3.2.3.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Researchers have a responsibility to minimize any potential harm that may arise from participating in the study. This includes ensuring that participants are not subjected to undue stress, discomfort or emotional distress as a result of their involvement in the study.

3.2.3.3 Non-maleficence and doing good

Researchers have a responsibility to minimize any potential harm that may arise from participating in the study. This includes ensuring that participants are not subjected to undue stress, discomfort or emotional distress as a result of their involvement in the study.

3.3 Methods of analysis

Data analysis is the methodological process of running through the data in order to get an understanding of what is emerging from the data (Babbie, 2011). It involves the researcher making meaning out of the information collected during fieldwork. Thematic data analysis was used to analyze the data collected during the data collection process. Babbie (2013) contented that thematic data analysis involves the examination of interview data and organizes the data into categories of themes and sub-themes. The researcher looked for meaning and patterns by reading the data several times. The researcher also generated initial codes from the data and coded data, sorting it into potential themes.

3.4 Reliability and validity

3.4.1 Reliability

According to Noble & Smith (2017), reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the study's results overtime and across different conditions. The researcher attained reliability by ensuring consistency in data collection methods and procedures. The researcher utilised a pilot study in order to enhance reliability. The researcher tested research procedures to identify any potential issues that can affect the reliability of the study findings. Henceforth, by implementing these strategies in the research, I ensured that the findings are consistent, replicable and trustworthy.

3.4.2 Validity

. The researcher purposively selected participants to ensure that the study captures diverse perspectives and experiences related to psychological safety and burnout. The researcher further utilised rigorous thematic analysis techniques by ensuring that the identified themes and patterns accurately reflect the experiences of participants. Therefore, I managed to ensure that the findings accurately capture the experiences of employees at COTTCO in relation to psychological safety and burnout.

3.5 Chapter summary

In conclusion, this chapter comprehensively addressed the key components of research methodology, providing valuable insights into various aspects of conducting a research study. The discussion encompassed several pivotal elements including research approach, research design, study population, sampling methods, data collection methods, data analysis methods, ethical considerations, reliability and validity. Hence the chapter provides a robust foundation for the presentation of findings in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR- DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion. It focuses on transforming raw data into meaningful insights. It involves discussing and interpreting the findings to provide insights into what the results mean in relation to the research objectives. The data was also discussed in line with the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework that informed the study showing the areas of convergent and areas of divergent.

4.1 Response rate

The response rate to my requests for interviews was fairly encouraging. Within the company, the intended number of participants was almost achieved, with the exception that the present individuals were found willing and available to be interviewed. However, from the five targeted individuals with managerial posts, I managed to interview three of them. The two who were not interviewed had other commitments. Table 4.1 below shows the summary of the actual participants against my intended samples. In total, nineteen interviews were conducted against the intended twenty. Therefore, the response rate was high, suggesting that there is improved data quality and accuracy, hence enhancing reliability of findings.

Table 4.1: Intended and Actual Response rate

Participants	Intended sample	Actual sample
General employees	15	15
Managerial	5	3
Total	20	18

4.2 Demographics

The demographics of the study participants at COTTCO varied from age, gender, employment status and years of experience. The majority of the workers fell within the age range of 35 to 60 years old, indicating a relatively mature workforce. Few participants were young workers below 35 and those above 60. Understanding the demographics beyond the majority age range provided insights into diversity within the experienced workforce. These findings imply that different age groups bring varied perspectives and experiences of psychological safety and employee burnout. Pertaining to gender, the majority were male workers whilst few were females. Gender distribution was taken into consideration as men and women experience work related stressors differently. This suggests that the workforce at COTTCO is predominantly males.

Pertaining to employment status, the majority of the workers were contract workers whilst few of them were permanently employed. This finding indicates that the majority of employees tend to experience burnout due to job insecurity problems. Regarding years of experience within COTTCO, the majority of the employees had more than 10 years of experience whilst few of them had between 5 and 9 years of experience. These findings therefore guarantees the

validity of the data the researcher acquired since it was obtained from people with full knowledge of how the company operates.

4.3 Section A: Understanding psychological safety and employee burnout

This section provides findings on how the participants understood psychological safety and employee burnout, mainly focusing on the definitions, experiences encountered and the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout.

4.3.1 Definition of psychological safety and employee burnout

The study participants provided their own understanding of the terms psychological safety and employee burnout, stating the observed and/or experienced signs and symptoms of each variable. K1 said,

“Psychological safety is when one feels mentally secured at work and feels free in the workplace. Ini hangu kana ndichishanda nevamwe muzvikwata ndinonzwa kuva nechiremerera nekuti hunyanzvi hwangu hunokosheswa zvichitoshndiswawo. (Personally, when working as a team, I feel a sense of dignity as my skills are appreciated and even utilized).”

K8 further stated that,

“Psychological safety is when one feels safe to take risks upon handling tasks without fear of criticism. Even if I make a mistake whilst working in a team, I should not feel unsettled or troubled.”

From the findings, all the respondents agreed that psychological safety is the belief among team members that asserts that one can take risks, voice questions and be innovative without any consequences be it fear of embarrassment, rejection or punishment. This indicates that the respondents understood psychological safety as the ability to take risks and speak up without fear of negative repercussions. Therefore, the views of the participants and that of Dickson and Isaiah (2023) concur as they both agree that psychological safety fosters a conducive work environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas, opinions and concerns without the fear of retribution or embarrassment.

Additionally, K12, with a managerial role said,

“Employee burnout is a state of feeling tired and exhausted due to extreme pressure due to work overload. I have seen that among the employees whereby they seem

disengaged from their daily activities, with some being absent to work for extended days despite the terms of sick leave.”

In a FGD, the female employees agreed that,

“Employee burnout is a state of extreme tiredness. Pane dzimwe nguva dzekuti unonzwa kurukutika hapana basa raunenge uchikwanisa kuita zvekanaka nekuneta, apa kumba basa rinenge rakatimirira. Vamwe vedu hatina vashandi vanotibatsira basa kumba saka tinofanira kutobalancer pressure yekubasa nekumba izvi zvinokonzera kurwadza kwemuviri uye kutemwa nemusoro kwenguva yakareba. (There are times when you feel tired to the extent that you cannot efficiently, yet house-chores will be waiting for us at home. Some of us do not have domestic workers, so there is need to balance the pressure at home and work at the same time, thus resulting in muscle pain and prolonged headaches).”

Furthermore, K4 who was part of the participants said,

“Hanzvadzi, pano pabasa panofiwa, kunyanya pamwaka wekurima donje. Pane njodzi dzakasina dzinosanganwa nadzo kunyanya panguva yekugadzirwa kwedonje. Dust racho rakanyanya rinotorwarisa, kunyanya kuvatinoshandidzana navo vane asthma. Pakadaro basa racho rinenge richitorwadza kuita nekuti panoshandwa. (Sister, this place can be hectic especially during the cotton farming season. There are several risks encountered during cotton processing within the company. These risks are associated with cotton dust exposure. In such instances, the job will be straining.)”

Of the few participants who highlighted that burnout is associated with cynicism, K9 noted that,

“I believe burn out is not only measured by physical exhaustion or stress levels, but when employees experience cynicism, they tend to exhibit behaviours such as negativity towards their colleagues and responsibilities. Such behaviours negatively affect the company as they create a toxic work environment resulting in feelings of burnout among fellow work colleagues.”

From these findings, most of the respondents agreed that burnout is associated with exhaustion, overworking and increased occupational stress. However, few participants believed that burnout is greatly associated with cynicism. This suggests that employee burnout is experienced differently among the employees within the company. Henceforth, the opinions of the participants align with that of Naczenski and colleagues (2017) as they postulate that,

“burnout is a form of severe and persistent fatigue resulting from prolonged work-stress.” To add on, there is strong relationship between the participants views and that of the theory guiding this study in that, the JDCS model posits that job demands is a key factor that influence an individual’s experience of stress at work (Johnson and Hall, 1988).

4.3.2 Impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout

4.3.2.1 Reduced stress levels

Many participants emphasized that psychological safety fosters an atmosphere where individuals feel comfortable discussing challenges and seeking assistance without fear of judgement. This open dialogue helps in addressing issues before they escalate into significant stress triggers that can lead to burnout. One of the employees, K3 stated that,

“Tikapihwawo mukana wekuita nhaurirano pachena nevakuru vedu pasina kutya moyo inonyevenukawo nekuti tinoona kukosha kwedu pabasa. Kuwana chance yekutaura zvinhu pasina kutya kunonyevenudza pfungwa, hatizofunge zvakawanda. (If we are given the chance to openly communicate with our bosses without being discriminated, it gives us peace of mind and it indicates our importance at the workplace)”

Furthermore, one of the managers K16 emphasized how open communication reduces stress among employees stating that,

“Communication and collaboration between employees helps to increase harmony as employees are able to come out and openly express their problems. This helps in the event that there are difficult issues which can be discussed and resolved, hence resulting in the elimination of hatred and worry as people are able to work freely.”

During a FGD, it was narrated,

“Sevashandi kana tikanzwa kuchengeteka kuti titaure pfungwa dzedu nezvinotinetsa kashoma kuti tinetseke nekufunga zvizhinji. Kana tiri free pabasa hatizoshushikane nezvakawanda. Pamusoro pezvo, kutaurirana nekubatana pakati pevashandi kunobatsira kuwedzera kuwirirana sezvo vashandi vanokwanisa kubudirana pachena vachitaura zvinonetsa pakushandidzana kwavo. (As employees, we are less inclined to stress and overthinking if we feel comfortable sharing our ideas and worries. We will not be wary of many things at work if we are free. Additionally, open communication

and co-operation among co-workers foster harmony since it allows us to voice issues concerning how we relate and co-operate at work) ”.

It emerged from the study that open communication plays a crucial role in stress reduction among employees. This indicates that when employees are given a platform to voice their concerns, they are more likely to experience lower levels of stress. Therefore, the views of the participants converge with those of Kuriakose (2020) as they both agree that when employees feel heard, they are more likely to feel psychologically safe, thus reducing burnout. However, it is vital to note that these findings diverge with that of Rahman (2019) who asserts that, “rewards and recognition is essential in reducing stress among employees.” Therefore, psychological safety in the workplace has a significant impact on employee burnout. In regard to the theoretical framework guiding this study, there is a strong relationship with Self-Determination Theory which postulates that autonomy is crucial as it allows employees to express their thoughts, concerns and innovative ideas without fear of negative consequences (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

4.3.2.2. Enhanced job satisfaction

The study findings revealed that a psychologically safe environment enhances job satisfaction, hence reducing burnout. In a FGD, it was pointed out that,

“In most cases, as workers, we feel psychologically safe when our ideas are taken into consideration. Personally, I am willing to actively participate in team discussions, share ideas and contribute to projects which involve farmers from rural Zimbabwe without fear of criticism because my thoughts are always taken into consideration in meetings.”

Another manager, K5 agreed that psychological safety has a positive outcome on job satisfaction. The manager highlighted that,

“As managers, we have the role of establishing a work environment where workers feel safe psychologically through implementing several initiatives. Creating a culture of psychological safety has been effective in our company as we have seen how it increases workers’ satisfaction and engagement, hence positively contributing to the company’s success.”

One of the employees, K18 highlighted that,

“Pfungwa dzinomboda kuzorodzwawo tichiwana nguva nemhuri dzedu. Izvi zvinongokwanisika kana kubasa tapihwawo mukana. Kana imi sisi munozviziva kuti sababa ndikashaya nguva nemudzimai wangu nevana kumba hakugarike uku unenge wangova nemastress. (The brain needs to be refreshed while spending time with our families. This is only possible when we are given the opportunity at work. As a father, if I do not spend time with my wife and children, the environment will be tense and I will always have stress)”.

One of the managers, K2 agreed with the assertion that psychological safety is a critical factor in improving the work-life balance of workers. She further stated that,

“In the past 12 years I have worked here I have noticed the importance of work-life balance among our employees. When workers have time to refuel and tend to their personal needs they become motivated and more focused. This has led to improved productivity as the workers will be happy and less likely to experience stress. In this case burnout is reduced and absenteeism rates decline.”

Findings in the study revealed that enhanced well-being encompass a state of overall health and happiness where employees experience a sense of belonging, fulfilment and satisfaction in their lives. This indicates that when employees are satisfied with their job, burnout is less likely to occur. There is a strong relationship between the views of the participants and that of Nguwi (2022) as they both agree that when employees feel psychologically safe, productivity improves, as well as job satisfaction. Furthermore, these findings align with views of the theory informing this study in that the JDCS Model suggests that high job demands can contribute to stress and burnout when they exceed an individual's ability to cope, (Johnson & Hall, 1988). This means that when the job demands are favourable, employees are less likely to experience burnout.

4.4 Section B: Understanding current psychological safety measures

4.4.1 Provision of support

It emerged from the study that the provision of support to employees can reduce burnout by creating a positive work environment that fosters well-being and resilience. K10 narrated that,

“Chimwe chinhu chandinonyanyofarira pacompany ino rutsigiro rwatinopihwa sevashandi. Kana umwe watinoshandizana naye akaomerwa kungave nezvepabasa or matambudziko kumba anokonzera kuti pfungwa dzisagadzikane pabasa pane mukana wekukurukura nezvazvo. Ndakaona futi kuti rutsigiro urwu harungopihwi nesu

vashandi asi vakuru vedu vakatoona zviitiko zvakadaro kana kuti zvikasvika kwavari vanotopindirawo. Izvi ndinozvitenda zvikuru nekuti zvinoratidza kukosha kwedu pabasa. (One of the things I appreciate in this company is the organizational support. When one of us is facing challenging situations, there is room to discuss about it, offering emotional support to the victim. I have realised that this support is not only offered by us the workers, but our bosses also chip in when they notice such incidences. That alone is really appreciated because no one will feel like they are less important in the workplace)''.

Another participant, K13 said that,

“Emotional support within the company is important, especially if it is provided through mental health resources. Access to free counselling services and therapy within the company helps in reducing burnout.”

During a FGD, K15 emphasized the importance of support provision to workers and the company stating that,

“Supporting workers wellbeing is not only beneficial to the individual but also for the overall productivity and success of the team. So we try by all means to ensure that are workers are well by providing support in different aspects like mental health and the development of our employees aligned with the company’s mission and goals.”

Overall, it emerged from the findings that the provision of support plays a crucial role in fostering psychological safety among employees. This means that supportive actions from colleagues and supervisors helps build trust and rapport within teams. These views converge with that of Li et al., (2022) who postulates that, “when employees perceive higher organizational support, they are less likely to experience burnout.” Therefore, a supportive environment for employees curbs employee burnout. The views of the participants align with that of Johnson and Hall, (1988) who states that social support is a vital component of the JDCS Model. Social support encompasses the emotional, instrumental and informational assistance provided by co-workers, supervisors and the organization as a whole.

4.4.2 Open communication

Research participants revealed that creating a culture where employees feel comfortable sharing their ideas, concerns and feedback without fear of judgement can enhance psychological safety and reduce burnout. K3 stated that,

“Nhaurirano nevakuru vedu uye pachedu yakakosha zvikuru pabasa. Kana tiine mukana wekupawo pfungwa dzedu maererano nemashandiro atinoita zvinotipawo chiremerera pabasa. (Discussion with our employers and amongst us as workers is very important at work. If given the opportunity to share our thoughts openly, it gives us dignity at work)”.

It emerged from the findings that open communication fosters provision of feedback which is essential in reducing burnout. In one of the FGDs, the majority of the participants agreed that feedback is crucial. Participants K2, K7 and K16 agreed that,

“Feedback fosters a sense of empowerment, belonging and recognition among us as employees, hence resulting in productivity and satisfaction.”

Participant K14 said,

“Psychological safety measure effectiveness vary with an individual. Some people do not cope well with negative feedback, instead if someone gets negative feedback they tend to act negatively, hence affecting the company’s productivity.”

Another interviewed employee, K5 said,

“Supportive work environments encourage open communication within the company. Within the 6 years I have been an employee here, I have seen that when we are given the opportunity to voice ideas, it leads to innovation and collaboration. However, I will not lie that open communication reduces burnout, in some cases it fosters stress within the company especially when rivals voice out different opinions, haaaa panenge pakaipa (its bad).”

The findings revealed that open communication has a crucial role in establishing and maintaining psychological safety within a team at a company. This indicates that open communication allows workers to share their thoughts, perspectives and opinions without fear of judgement. These views align with that of Clarke et al., (2024) who asserts that, “leaders can create an environment where employees feel safe to voice their opinions, concerns and ideas without fear of negative consequences.” Additionally, the views of the participants diverge from that of Walsh et al., (2019) who highlights that providing education on stress

management techniques, resilience building and selfcare can equip medical trainees with the skills needed to cope with burnout. In regard to the theoretical framework guiding this study, there is a strong relationship with Self-Determination Theory which postulates that autonomy is crucial as it allows employees to express their thoughts, concerns and innovative ideas without fear of negative consequences (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

4.5 Section C: Role of motivation on employee burnout

The participants revealed that motivation can help individuals cope with work demands and prevent burnout. K6 said,

“Motivation is seen in different ways within the workplace. For me, recognition and bonuses pushes me to work without worrying about anything. I feel more engaged when my salary comes on time without delays.”

Another participant, K11 added,

“ Haaaa sisi inini pay yangu ikauya nenguva pasina tunyaya nyaya ndinonatsonzwa kushanda. Kumba hakugarike uku ukasaenda nemari. Sababa ndinofanira kuitawo chiremereraka kuti baba vakarongeka kwete kuti ndoenda kubasa mwedzi wese pay yononoka kupinda haaaa mazuvano hazvidi kudaro. (My sister, if my salary comes on time without any problems, I feel satisfied with my work. As a father, dignity is important, imagine working for the whole month only to go home and tell my wife that my pay is delayed, it does not sound right. Especially these days things have to be in order financially).”

Motivation further leads to increased job satisfaction, engagement and well-being while reducing the risk of burnout. K13 stated that,

“Salaries, bonuses and recognition have proved to be the main motivating factors among our employees. As long as their salary is billed on time, they are more likely to be engaged with their work. Therefore, we do our best to make sure that all workers get their salary on time. As I mentioned about recognition, if an employee does well at work, it is important to recognize and reward them”.

K17 added,

“Motivated employees are more engaged, productive and committed to achieving their goals. I have observed that when workers are motivated, they are likely to perform

better, leading to increased overall productivity and job satisfaction. We always ensure that practical steps are taken to maintain and enhance motivation levels.”

One of the study participant highlighted the importance of motivation in job satisfaction. During a FGD, K18 stated that,

“Motivation is important as it shapes how us as employees engage and perform at work. Personally, it drives me to achieve my goals”.

Overall, it emerged from the study that motivation has a significant role in employee burnout. This indicates that when motivation decreases, employees tend to experience decreased engagement, productivity and job satisfaction which contributes to burnout. These views align with that of Trépanier et al., (2020) who postulates that high levels of intrinsic motivation strengthens the negative relationship between job resources and burnout. Therefore, providing employees with opportunities for autonomy and competence can help prevent burnout by enhancing their sense of control over their work. Additionally, there is a strong relationship between the views of the participants and that of Self-Determination Theory that is governing this study stating that autonomy, competence and relatedness are highly associated with intrinsic motivation, engagement and well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

4.6 Section D: Impact of work-life balance on employee burnout

4.6.1 Flexible working arrangements

It emerged from the study that flexible working arrangements are effective in influencing work-life balance on employee burnout. In a FGD, K 18, highlighted the importance of flexible working arrangements stating that,

“As a woman, my husband prefers eating the meals I cook for dinner despite having a domestic helper. So at least if I get favourable working hours, I can balance between work and my family”.

Additionally, another participant K7 agreed saying that,

“Flexible working hours highly fosters work-life balance and it allows one to attend to family needs, personal appointments and other obligations without compromising their work performance”.

K2 added,

“The implementation of flexible work arrangements has been effective in the company as it is greatly associated with employee burnout as well as enhanced productivity”.

It emerged from the study that women are the ones who mostly regarded flexible work arrangements as effective especially in cases of maternity and nursing a newly born child. This indicates that flexibility reduces burnout by allowing employees to manage their schedules effectively. These finding concur with that of Rahman (2019) who asserts that flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting, flex-time and compressed workweeks, influence job satisfaction levels specifically among female educators. Henceforth, flexible work arrangements allows employees achieve a better balance between work and personal life, leading to overall well-being. Additionally, there is a strong relationship between the views of the participants and that of Deci and Ryan (2000) who suggests that autonomy, competence and relatedness are very crucial in the concept of psychological safety. SDT suggests that when these psychological needs are met, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, engagement and well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

4.6.2 Legal policies

It emerged from the study that work-life balance is a crucial aspect in the fast-paced work environment as individuals strive to manage their professional responsibilities alongside personal and family commitments. K6 stated that,

“As much as I got maternity leave when I was pregnant for all my 3 girls, I have seen changes within the company and the conditions attached to the leave. These changes have highlighted to me that the company has relaxed some terms which is highly beneficial to my fellow women colleagues.”

Additionally, K11 stated that,

“Sick leave and bereavement leave has been useful to me. However, the terms of the leave only applies to immediate relatives which is a bit of a disadvantage in some cases.”

The findings revealed that legal policies play a crucial role as interventions that can significantly influence work-life balance by establishing frameworks that protect employees' rights, promote flexibility in the company and address the diverse needs of today's workforce. This means that women are more likely to benefit more from such policies, hence creating favourable work-life balance. These findings are similar to that of Nayak and Pandey (2022) who discovered that family-friendly policies are crucial in achieving work-life balance among women employees.

4.6.3 Incentivising

A new theme not stated in the literature review rose from this study. Some of the study participants revealed that non-monetary incentives are crucial, especially promotions. A senior employee expressed the desire for a promotion despite the limited opportunities available. Additionally, K8 said,

“Incentives are extremely important for me as I earn very little. Catering for my family is hard, hence I have resorted to a side business which is difficult to manage properly as I spend most of my time in the company.”

Additionally, K13 pointed out that,

“Monetary and non-monetary incentives are essential in increasing productivity and fostering job performance among workers.”

The findings highlighted that employee incentives serve as interventions that influence work-life balance by enhancing job satisfaction, motivation, recognition, professional development opportunities, stress reduction and health initiatives. This means that incentives are crucial in fostering a work-life balance. There is a strong relationship between the views of the participants and Self-Determination Theory that is governing this study as it suggests that when these psychological needs are met, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, engagement and well-being (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

4.7 Section E: Recommendations for future interventions

It emerged from the study participants that there are several strategies the company can implement in order to ensure the psychological safety of employees. K18 noted that,

“In order to motivate workers, the company should promote long serving workers who have vibrantly contributed to its success.”

To add on, K4 narrated,

“The company should provide multiple channels for communication such as team meetings, one-on-one sessions, suggestion boxes, anonymous feedback systems and digital communication tools. These ensures that employees can choose the method that best suits their comfort level.”

Furthermore, K11 said,

“Offer training programs that focus on developing emotional intelligence skills such as empathy, active listening and conflict resolution can help us as employees. I believe such offers will help us to understand and support our colleagues, contributing to a psychologically safe workplace.”

In a FGD, participants agreed with what K15 said regarding active listening. K15 SAID,

“Ndineshuviro yekuti vakuru vedu vaterere zvichemo zvedu votorawo matanho akakodzera kugadzirisa zvinenge zvichitishungurudza pabasa nekukurumidza. (I hope that our employers will listen to our grievances on time and take appropriate measures to resolve some of the issues that will be affecting us within the company.)”

K7 asserts that,

“Decentralization is a crucial strategy important in fostering a psychologically safe workplace without burnout.”

K1 who was also part of the participants agreed with K7 stating that,

“As employees I believe we should be given an opportunity to make decisions on issues concerning our tasks.”

K9 said,

“Inini hangu ndinoona sekuti pay inofanira kuwedzerwawo kunyanya kana tichishanda overtime.”

K 3 emphasized the importance of incentives highlighting that,

“Employees should have access to employee assistance programs that offer counselling services as well as paid leave.”

The findings revealed that there are several strategies effective in ensuring psychological safety as well as curbing employee burnout. The findings highlighted that decentralisation and motivation plays a crucial role. This means that employees should be given the opportunity to make decisions regarding their tasks. Similar to Tirta and Enrika (2020). The studies align in that beneficial interventions motivate workers as they feel motivated to be productive within the company. Additionally, there is a strong relationship between the views of the participants and those of Deci and Ryan (2000) who postulates that autonomy, competence and relatedness are very crucial in the concept of psychological safety. SDT suggests that when these

psychological needs are met, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, engagement and well-being. This aligns with the findings stated above.

4.8 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the research findings, analysing and interpreting them. The data was presented in form of themes and sub-themes that emerged when the participants addressed the research objectives. The chapter further discusses the findings, aligning them with published literature and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER FIVE – SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to come to final conclusions and recommendations on the findings which were discussed in the previous chapter. The researcher gives summary of the research findings, overall conclusion of the study and recommendations on the areas for further research. The thrust of the study was to investigate the impact of psychological safety on

employee burnout: A case of the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe. The findings of the study provided answers to the research objectives which were to assess the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout, to determine psychological safety measures in reducing employee burnout, to assess the impact of motivation on employee burnout and lastly to establish the influence of work-life balance on employee burnout. The chapter will provide a chapter summary.

5.1 Summary of findings

The study focused on the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout: A case of the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe; and the findings are discussed as shown below.

5.1.1 Assessing the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout

The study found that psychological safety fosters an atmosphere where individuals feel comfortable discussing challenges and seeking assistance without fear of judgement. This finding revealed that open dialogue helps in addressing issues before they escalate into significant stress triggers that can lead to burnout. Open communication plays a crucial role in stress reduction among employees. Additionally, the study found that communication and collaboration between employees helps to increase harmony as employees are able to come out and openly express their problems. The study further exposed that a psychologically safe environment enhances job satisfaction, hence reducing burnout. Enhanced well-being encompass a state of overall health and happiness where employees experience a sense of belonging, fulfilment and satisfaction in their lives. This uncovered that when employees are satisfied with their job, burnout is less likely to occur.

5.1.2 Determining psychological safety measures in reducing employee burnout

The study discovered that the provision of support plays a crucial role in fostering psychological safety among employees. It was exposed that the provision of support to employees can reduce burnout by creating a positive work environment that fosters well-being and resilience. The findings revealed that open communication has a crucial role in establishing and maintaining psychological safety within a team at a company. This exposed that open communication allows workers to share their thoughts, perspectives and opinions without fear of judgement. The study further emphasized that open communication fosters provision of feedback which is essential in reducing burnout as it creates a culture where employees feel comfortable sharing their thoughts without fear of judgement. The findings found that autonomy is crucial in fostering psychological safety among employees as it allows employees

to freely and independently express their thoughts, concerns and innovative ideas without fear of negative consequences.

5.1.3 Assessing the impact of motivation on employee burnout

The study found that motivation has a significant role in employee burnout. It was revealed that motivation helps individuals cope with work demands, thus minimising burnout. It was highlighted that motivation is seen in different ways within the workplace. Recognition and bonuses made employees feel more engaged within the workplace. Motivation further leads to increased job satisfaction, engagement and well-being while reducing the risk of burnout. The study discovered that motivated employees are more engaged, productive and committed to achieving personal and company goals as they are likely to perform better when they are motivated, hence, leading to increased overall productivity and job satisfaction. However, the study found that when motivation decreases, employees tend to experience decreased engagement, productivity and job satisfaction which contributes to burnout. Therefore, it was exposed that the leaders always ensure that practical steps are taken to maintain and enhance motivation levels.

5.1.4 Establishing the influence of work-life balance on employee burnout

The study discovered that work-life balance has a significant influence on employee burnout. Flexible working arrangements were identified as effective in influencing work-life balance on employee burnout. It emerged from the study that flexibility reduces burnout by allowing employees to manage their schedules effectively, thus . It allows employees achieve a better balance between work and personal life without compromising their work performance, leading to overall well-being. It was further found that when these psychological needs are met, individuals are more likely to experience intrinsic motivation, engagement and well-being. The findings exposed that legal policies significantly influence work-life balance by establishing frameworks that protect employees' rights, promoting flexibility in the company and addressing the diverse needs of today's workforce. The study highlighted that employee incentives also influence work-life balance by enhancing job satisfaction, motivation, recognition, professional development opportunities, stress reduction and health initiatives. This revealed that incentives are crucial in fostering a work-life balance.

5.2 Overall conclusion of the study

A comprehensive study was conducted to investigate the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout. Psychological safety in the workplace has been found to have a significant relationship with employee burnout. Understanding the relationship between psychological

safety and employee burnout is crucial for organizations aiming to create a supportive healthy work environment. Despite a few individuals with managerial posts being absent during the time of data collection, the population adequately covered the problem. The study acknowledged that to ensure that employees are psychologically safe, companies should encourage open communication and feedback, celebrate success and reward employees. To add on, the study identified that employee burnout is relatively high when employees lack motivation and proper work-life balance. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how psychological safety influences the levels of burnout experienced by employees, thus providing valuable insights into creating healthier and more productive workplaces particularly in the cotton industry. Employees should be directly and indirectly motivated in order to improve work-life balance and minimize burnout. Companies should have a culture of recognising and rewarding employees in order to reduce burnout.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Assessing the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout

Promoting open communication

It is essential to promote open communication channels within a company. Employees should feel free to express their concerns, share feedback and voice their opinions without fear of judgement. Fostering a culture of open communication helps in understanding the factors contributing to employee burnout and take proactive measures to address them.

Prioritizing psychological safety training

The implementation of training programs focused on building psychological safety within a company is effective in minimizing burnout. Providing employees with the necessary skills and knowledge in creating a safe and supportive work environment can foster improvements in employee well-being overtime.

Creating supportive networks

The creation of supportive networks is essential in preventing burnout within a company. The leaders should advocate for burnout prevention within their organizations through offering support to overwhelmed employees. The supportive networks that can be created include peer support groups, mentorship programs and access to counseling services which provides employees with additional resources to cope with stress and prevent burnout. Building strong

support systems helps companies enhance psychological safety and promote employee well-being.

5.3.2 Determining psychological safety measures in reducing employee burnout

Decentralization

Based on the research findings, including employees in decision making is very important. Giving employees a voice in decision making processes can help build psychological safety by making them feel valued and invested in the company's goals. This can lead to better outcomes through improved engagement and problem-solving abilities.

Provision of resources for stress management

Based on the research findings, offering resources such as mental health support, counseling services and stress management programs is essential in helping employees cope with work-related stress and reduce burnout. Therefore, providing resources for stress management equips employees with the tools and support they need to effectively manage work-related stress.

Promoting a healthy work-life balance

A healthy work-life balance involves managing the balance between work and personal life. This can be implemented by setting manageable goals, promoting efficient time management and offering flexibility within the company. This helps employees maintain control over their workload, maximize productivity and reduce overtime working, hence improving well-being of employees.

Promoting regular check-ins and feedback

In regard to the findings, regular check-ins and feedback are important as they encourage open communication. Such initiatives offers guidance, support and feedback which helps employees improve their performance without being worn out by work.

5.3.3 Assessing the impact of motivation on employee burnout

Open communication channels

Open communication channels are crucial in motivating employees. Therefore, the company should provide multiple channels for communication such as team meetings, one-on-one sessions, suggestion boxes, anonymous feedback systems and digital communication tools. These ensures that employees can choose the method that best suits their comfort level. These initiatives can help minimise burnout and facilitate motivation.

Acknowledging and appreciating employee efforts

Rewarding employees is essential in showing that employee efforts are being acknowledged and appreciated. This can be done through promoting long serving employees who have vibrantly contributed to the company's success, offering bonuses, salary increment as well as offering opportunities for growth and development.

Promoting a sense of ownership

Empowering employees to take control of their work and decisions promotes a sense of ownership. Promoting a sense of ownership among employees results in increased engagement, productivity and enhanced responsibility. When employees feel they have a sense of ownership they feel motivated to perform well on their tasks.

5.3.4 Establishing the influence of work-life balance on employee burnout

Offering flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements are essential in promoting work-life balance. Flexible work arrangements allows employees to adjust their working hours to accommodate personal responsibilities. These flexible working arrangements minimizes employee burnout as they are able to balance between work and personal lives.

Providing adequate time off

Companies should ensure that employees have access to paid time off including sick leave. Despite paid time off, adequate unpaid leave can provide longer periods of rest and relaxation which reduces employee burnout.

Strengthen legal policies guiding work-life balance

Implementing and enforcing policies that protects rights of employees is crucial in ensuring they have a healthy work-life balance. The company should offer paid parental leave thus creating fair and supportive working environments.

5.4 Areas of future study

5.4.1 Assessing the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout

Evidence from the study has shown that psychological safety is important in reducing employee burnout. Therefore, there is need to conduct a longitudinal study investigating how changes in psychological safety impact employee burnout over time. This can help in identifying trends and patterns associated with psychological safety.

5.4.2 Determining psychological safety measures in reducing employee burnout

There is need to conduct an intervention-based research aimed at focusing on evaluating the effectiveness of certain interventions designed to enhance psychological safety and reduce employee burnout. This can be done by implementing and assessing outcomes of targeted interventions, hence helping researchers identify the best practices for fostering psychological safety.

5.4.3 Assessing the impact of motivation on employee burnout

Another area of future study can be on investigating the mediating and moderating factors that influence the relationship between motivation and burnout. This can be done by exploring variables such as job satisfaction, organizational support and workload in relation to motivation and burnout.

5.4.4 Establishing the influence of work-life balance on employee burnout

In order to better understand and address the complex issues surrounding the influence of work-life balance on employee burnout, a study focusing on organisational policies and practices is essential. The study can focus on analysing the effectiveness of various organizational policies and practices in promoting work-life balance and preventing burnout.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the summary of findings, final conclusions and recommendations as well as areas of future research. Every section in this chapter was presented in relation to the study objectives.

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FGD guide

My name is Kimberley T. Chigodora, studying for Honours Degree In Human Capital Management at Bindura University of Science Education. I am carrying out a research on the impact of psychological safety on employee burnout at The Cotton Company of Zimbabwe.

May you kindly participate in this interview as your contribution will be greatly appreciated. Taking part in this interview will promote the completion and satisfaction of the study. The information you provide will only be used in secrecy for academic purposes and as such your honesty is valued. Participation in this research is voluntary and your confidentiality guaranteed.

Consent given

Yes	
No	

SECTION A – Understanding psychological safety and employee burnout

How would you define psychological safety in the workplace?

Can you please share your personal experiences related to feeling psychologically safe or unsafe in their work environment?

How does psychological safety influence employee burnout?

How does psychological safety influence individual and team performance?

How would you define burnout?

What are the signs of burnout that you have observed or experienced?

What factors within the work environment exacerbate employee burnout?

In what ways does organizational culture influence psychological safety?

SECTION B –Understanding current psychological safety measures

What strategies do individuals use to cope with or prevent burnout?

What factors contribute to creating a psychologically safe work environment?

How does effective feedback contribute to building psychological safety within teams?

What role does feedback play in maintaining a psychologically safe work environment?

Can you share an example of a time when constructive feedback positively impacted your sense of psychological safety at work?

Do you feel supported by your organization in achieving work-life balance?

Do you think there are any potential challenges or barriers to implementing effective psychological safety measures? If so, what are they?

SECTION C – Role of motivation on employee burnout

How does motivation impact employee burnout?

What are the different types of motivation that can influence burnout?

What is the role of leadership in fostering a psychologically safe environment and preventing burnout among employees?

How does organizational culture support or hinder efforts to promote psychological safety and reduce burnout?

How important is organizational support in mitigating employee burnout?

In what ways do you believe recognition and rewards influence employee motivation and job satisfaction?

SECTION D – Impact of work-life balance on employee burnout

What does work-life balance mean to you?

How do you currently balance your work responsibilities and personal life?

How does your organization support work-life balance?

What challenges do you face in maintaining a healthy work-life balance?

How does a lack of work-life balance affect your overall well-being?

In what ways can work-life balance contribute to preventing burnout?

How does work-life balance impact your job satisfaction and performance?

Can achieving a better work-life balance reduce stress and improve mental health?

SECTION E – Recommendations for future interventions

What are the potential strategies or initiatives that your company can implement to enhance psychological safety in the workplace?

What proactive measures can be taken to prevent or mitigate employee burnout within an organization?

What strategies can organizations implement to promote a healthier work-life balance for employees?

What role should employers play in preventing employee burnout through policies and practices?

THANK YOU .

Interview guide for employees

My name is Kimberley T. Chigodora, studying for Honours Degree In Human Capital Management at Bindura University of Science Education. I am carrying out a research on the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout at The Cotton Company of Zimbabwe. May you kindly participate in this interview as your contribution will be greatly appreciated. Taking part in this interview will promote the completion and satisfaction of the study. The information you provide will only be used in secrecy for academic purposes and as such your honesty is valued. Participation in this research is voluntary and your confidentiality guaranteed.

Consent given

Yes	
No	

What is your current position within the organization?

How long have you been in this position?

How comfortable do you feel sharing your opinions and ideas at work?

Have you ever experienced burnout in your current role?

Do you feel supported by your colleagues and superiors in expressing your thoughts and concerns?

Have you ever felt judged or criticized for speaking up about work-related issues?

How would you describe the overall atmosphere in your workplace regarding open communication and feedback?

Have you experienced feelings of exhaustion or fatigue due to work-related stress?

Have there been instances where you felt overwhelmed by the demands of your job?

Have there been situations where feeling psychologically unsafe has led to increased levels of stress or burnout for you?

What motivates you to perform well at work ?

How do you feel when you accomplish a challenging task at work?

Do you think motivation plays a role in preventing burnout? If yes, how?

In your opinion, what strategies can your company implement to enhance employee motivation and reduce burnout?

How satisfied are you with your current work-life balance?

What factors contribute most to your work-life balance?

Are you aware of any interventions or policies implemented by your organization to support work-life balance?

Have these interventions or policies helped in reducing your feelings of burnout?

Overall, how important do you think psychological safety is in preventing employee burnout?

What additional interventions or policies do you think would be effective in improving work-life balance and reducing burnout?

What changes or improvements would you suggest to enhance psychological safety in the workplace?

Do you have any additional comments or insights on this topic that were not covered in the questionnaire?

THANK YOU

Interview guide for managers

My name is Kimberley T. Chigodora, studying for Honours Degree in Human Capital Management at Bindura University of Science Education. I am carrying out a research on the impacts of psychological safety on employee burnout at The Cotton Company of Zimbabwe. May you kindly participate in this interview as your contribution will be greatly appreciated. Taking part in this interview will promote the completion and satisfaction of the study. The information you provide will only be used in secrecy for academic purposes and as such your honesty is valued. Participation in this research is voluntary and your confidentiality guaranteed.

Consent given

Yes

No

What is your current position within the organization?

How long have you been in a managerial role?

How many employees do you directly oversee?

In your opinion, what factors contribute to employee burnout?

How do you recognize signs of burnout in your team members?

Have you observed any correlation between psychological safety and employee burnout in your team?

Do you believe that a psychologically safe work environment can help prevent employee burnout?

To what extent do you seek feedback from employees regarding their well-being and workload?

What measures or strategies does your organization currently have in place to prevent or reduce employee burnout?

How frequently are these measures reviewed and updated?

In your experience, which of the implemented measures have been most effective in reducing employee burnout?

In your experience, how have interventions or policies targeting work-life balance influenced employee burnout levels?

Is there anything else you would like to share about how your organization addresses employee burnout?

Do you have any additional comments or insights on this topic that were not covered in the questionnaire?

THANK YOU

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