

Sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientations of employees in a South African financial institution

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between employees' sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientations and how they differ with respect to these variables in terms of socio-demographic contextual factors such as gender, race, employment status and age. A sample of 90 employees participated in this study, and a *Sources of Job Stress Scale*, the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* and the *Career Orientations Inventory* were administered. The results indicated a significant relationship between the participants' sources of job stress, levels of work engagement and career orientations. Significant differences regarding these variables were also detected between males and females, blacks and whites, temporary and permanently employed participants and the various age groups. The findings add new knowledge that may inform organisational wellness and career development practices.

Key words: career orientations, job insecurity, job stress, permanently employed, sources of job stress, temporarily employed, work engagement

Introduction

The increasing pressure on South African organisations to improve their performance and sustain their competitiveness has led to a growth in non-permanent employment contracts and contingent work arrangements accompanied by downsizing, delayering, restructuring and re-organising to cope with the challenges of technological sophistication and global competition (Anakwe, Hall & Schor 2000; Gallagher 2002;

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Labuschagne, Bosman & Buitendach 2005). As a consequence, employees (both those permanently employed and those employed on a temporary basis) are increasingly experiencing work differently, with a new array of rules, expectations and conditions of employment predicated on uncertainty and increased job insecurity (Anakwe et al. 2000). In this regard, Burke (1998) and Labuschagne et al. (2005) also posit that the perception of increased job insecurity could be a function of unemployment and temporary contracts becoming more evenly spread across all industries and occupations. This has led to researchers emphasising the importance of re-visiting individuals' work and career experiences in the new work environment and in particular how the stress-related side effects of job insecurity and other sources of job stress and career dissatisfaction relate to people's mental health and engagement as important aspects of their overall wellbeing (Anakwe et al. 2000; Gallagher 2002; Herr, Cramer & Niles 2004; Mayrhofer, Meyer & Steyrer 2007; Rollinson 2005). Moreover, organisations are increasingly realising that the well-being and productive engagement of their employees are in the best interest of the company in order to sustain its competitive edge in the global market (Schabracq & Cooper 2000).

Implicit in the foregoing perspectives is the reality that stress-related problems concerning work and careers may negatively influence employees' sense of well-being and engagement in their work activities. These problems may be *intra-psychic*, environmental or interactive in nature (Herr et al. 2004). Work and career-related problems that are *intra-psychic* may involve individual preoccupations with self-esteem, deficits in interpersonal skills, role overload and ambiguity, or an inability to appropriately tolerate constructive supervisory relationships. Work and career-related problems that are *environmental* in origin include exposure to a management or supervisory style that is negatively experienced, a work setting that provides no opportunity for advancement or for the levels or kind of rewards to which a person aspires, or a work context that is racially or sexually biased and stifles individual mobility or security. In terms of employment status, Beard and Edwards (1995) also suggest that temporarily employed individuals may experience stress-related problems by being in highly insecure positions with little control, and feeling relatively disadvantaged compared to the permanent employees with whom they work. Problems related to an *interactive* work environment stem from a lack of person–job fit resulting from a mismatch between individuals' skills, career motives, values and interests (as expressed in their career orientations) and environmental expectations and demands (Coetzee & Schreuder 2008; Herr et al. 2004).

This study set out to add empirical research to the current conceptual base concerning sources of work and career-related stress and how these relate to employees' work engagement and career orientations. Furthermore, the aim was to investigate

whether employees' differ in terms of their sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientations with regard to socio-demographic contextual factors such as gender, race, employment status and age.

Sources of job stress

Rollinson (2005: 270) defines workplace stress as the conditions arising from the interaction of people and their jobs, which are characterised by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning. Stressors in the workplace are those conditions that have the potential to result in a person's experiencing a situation as stressful. The degree of stress experienced and the ways in which a person reacts to it can be influenced by a number of other factors such as personal characteristics, lifestyle, social support, appraisal of the stressor(s), life events and socio-demographic and occupational variables (Rollinson 2005).

Research has indicated the following as the most common sources of job stress that could be expected to have a measure of impact on organisational activity and employees' sense of wellbeing and engagement in the workplace (Cartwright & Cooper 2002; Coetzer & Rothmann 2007; De Bruin & Taylor 2006; Labuschagne et al. 2005; Martin 2005; Rollinson 2005):

- *Role ambiguity*: This aspect relates to the amount of stress experienced by an individual due to vague specifications or constant change regarding the performance expectations, duties, responsibility and constraints that define the individual's job.
- *Work relationships*: Poor or unsupportive relationships with colleagues and/or line managers, isolation (a perceived lack of adequate relationships) and unfair treatment can all be a potential source of stress.
- *Tools and equipment*: To perform their job effectively, individuals need to feel they have the appropriate training, resources and equipment.
- *Career advancement*: This aspect refers to the stress experienced by individuals as a result of a perceived lack of opportunity to further their career prospects within the organisation for which they work.
- *Job security*: Job insecurity is an overall concern of losing one's job or the discontinuation of one's job. Job insecurity also implies uncertainty about the future.
- *Lack of job autonomy*: The experience of stress is strongly linked to perceptions of decision-making authority and control. This may be due to either job constraints or workplace constraints. When there is great interdependence between the person's tasks and the tasks of others, the person is likely to experience stress.

- *Work-home interface*: The demands of work have the potential to spill over and interfere with individuals' personal and home lives. This can put a strain on relationships outside work and impact upon the level of stress, especially when the individual experiences a perceived lack of social support at home or from friends.
- *Workload*: This aspect refers to the amount of stress experienced by individuals due to the perception that they are unable to cope or be productive with the amount of work allocated to them. When people are expected to do more than the time and resources available permit them to do, they are likely to experience strain.
- *Compensation and benefits*: The financial rewards that work brings are obviously important because they determine the type of lifestyle that an individual can lead. In addition, they often influence individuals' feelings of self-worth and perceptions of their value to the organisation.
- *Lack of leader/manager support*: A supportive work setting is necessary to alleviate the effects of stress in the workplace. Employees need both tangible and emotional support, including trust and confidence, guidance, recognition, feedback and active interest from the immediate manager.
- *Aspects of the job*: The fundamental nature of the job could cause stress. This includes factors such as physical working conditions, lack of challenging and meaningful assignments, type of tasks, and amount of satisfaction derived from the job itself.

Nelson (2003) reports a survey which indicates that 41% of people cite workload issues as the biggest source of stress, with another 31% reporting people or relationship issues and 28% juggling work and personal life. Research has also indicated that experiencing high levels of stress may lead to feelings of anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritability, tension, hypersensitivity to criticism and mental blocks (Cartwright & Cooper 2002; Martin 2005). This may lead to lower job performance, resentment of supervision, boredom, low self-esteem, inability to concentrate and make decisions, apathy, short attention span, burnout and job dissatisfaction. Research has also indicated a relationship between stress and absenteeism and between stress and labour turnover (Coetzer & Rothmann 2007; Mostert, Rothmann, Mostert & Nell 2008).

Work engagement

According to Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá and Bakker (2002), engagement can be defined as a positive, fulfilling and work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication (efficacy) and absorption. *Vigour* is characterised

by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence in the face of difficulties. This energy can also relate to the level of mental effort or mental strength that individuals can put into doing something. *Dedication* is characterised by a sense of significance, efficacy, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. It refers to the emotional side of work engagement and the willingness of people to expend considerable time and effort in doing something meaningful. *Absorption* refers to the cognitive aspect where individuals are fully focused on something and experience a high level of concentration while performing a task. This includes being happily engrossed in one's work, so that time seems to pass quickly and one has difficulties in detaching oneself from work (Coetzer & Rothmann 2007). In view of the foregoing, work engagement relates to the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles in which they employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances. Engaged employees become physically involved in their tasks, cognitively alert and emotionally connected to others when performing their job. In contrast, disengaged employees become disconnected from their jobs and hide their true identity, thoughts and feelings during role performances (Olivier & Rothmann 2007). Organisational benefits gained from employee engagement have been known to include greater achievement of individual work goals or productivity (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004), customer satisfaction and profitability.

Engaged employees are typically characterised by the willingness to take initiative and self-direct their lives; they generate their own positive feedback and so encourage themselves; they are also engaged outside of their employment; their values and norms are in agreement with those of the organisation for which they work; they do become fatigued, but it is intrinsically linked to an overall sense of satisfaction; they may also become 'burnt out', but are able to extricate themselves from the situation; they are not enslaved to their job, and they tend to also pursue outside interests (Van den Berg, Manias & Burger 2008).

Work engagement is also conceptualised as the positive antithesis of burnout (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter 2001). According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), burnout is an erosion of work engagement by means of which energy turns into exhaustion, involvement into cynicism, and efficacy or dedication into ineffectiveness. Work engagement helps individuals deal effectively with the demands of stressful work (Britt, Adler & Bartone 2001) and has been shown to be positively related to organisational commitment (Demerouti, Bakker, De Jonge, Janssen, & Schaufeli 2001) and employee performance (Aktouf 1992).

Career orientations

In the context of this study, the emphasis is on the construct of career orientation as a central part of the concept of career anchors (Schein 1978). The concept of career anchor refers to a pattern of self-perceived talents and abilities, basic values, and the evolved sense of motives and needs (as they pertain to the career) that influence a person's career-related decisions (Schein 1974, 1975, 1978, 1996). The conceptual model associated with Schein's (1978) career anchor theory is best understood in terms of a person's career self-concept, which develops as a person gains life experience. As individuals are required to make choices related to their self-development, family or career, they may become more aware of the values and motives that frame the choices they make. In other words, an individual's career self-concept acts as a stabilising force such that when an important life (or career) choice needs to be made, there are certain concerns, needs or values that the individual will not give up (Schein 1975).

Research by Schein (1978, 1990, 1996) suggests that most people's career self-concepts (motives and values) are grounded in eight categories of career orientations or anchors: (1) *autonomy/independence* includes a person's need to be free of organisational constraints in order to pursue professional competence; (2) *technical functional competence* is the motivation to develop one's technical or functional knowledge and expert skill; (3) *general managerial competence* can be described as the desire to attain a position that requires the application of interpersonal, political, analytical and financial skills associated with management; (4) *entrepreneurial creativity* is the need to create or build (rather than manage) something that is entirely one's own project; (5) *lifestyle* is the need to integrate work, family and self-concerns into a coherent lifestyle; (6) *pure challenge* is the need to test one's abilities by single-mindedly focusing on winning out over or competing with extremely tough opponents and solving a variety of challenging problems; (7) *service/dedication to a cause* is the need to align work activities with personal skills and values related to helping society and improving the world in some way; and (8) *security/stability* is the need for job security (associated with benefit packages and long-term employment) in an organisation and stability in a geographical area. Research by DeLong (1982b) and Custodio (2004) found that the security/stability anchor emerged as two independent career anchors. One represents the need for organisational stability (long-term employment). The other represents individuals' concerns related to permanence of geographical location.

Although Schein (1978) argued that, by definition, an individual can maintain only one dominant career anchor, his own and other empirical evidence suggests that individuals can have more than one strong career anchor (Coetzee & Schreuder 2008; Feldman & Bolino 1996; Ramakrishna & Potosky 2003; Schein 1996). According

to DeLong (1982a, 1982b) and Butler and Waldroop (1999), one to three anchors tend to cluster together to form an individual's career and work preferences. These composites of the eight categories of career anchors explain why people stay engaged in a certain job or are committed to an organisation (Butler & Waldroop 1999). Moreover, since the career anchors model describes a highly individualised process of value development based upon a person's own experiences, the extent to which certain occupational groups come to possess certain dominant career anchors is likely to be due to self-selection into and out of those occupations by individuals (Schein 1975; Ramakrishna & Potosky 2002). Organisations and occupational groups themselves are not likely to cause individuals to maintain or abandon pre-determined anchors (Ramakrishna & Potosky 2002).

Sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientations

In terms of the relationship between sources of job stress and work engagement, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that work engagement is strongly predicted by job resources. According to Baumeister and Leary (1995), job resources fulfil the basic human needs for psychological autonomy, competence and relatedness that in turn enhance wellbeing and increase intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Frederick 1997). Coetzer and Rothmann (2007) found that job resources, namely organisational support (including relationship with superiors, role clarity, information, communication and participation), growth opportunities (including variety, opportunities to learn and autonomy), social support and advancement are positively related to work engagement, and that job demands such as work overload are negatively related to work engagement.

According to Maslach (1993), job demands such as workload drain the employee's energy and, in an attempt to cope with the resulting exhaustion, the employee withdraws mentally. When employees withdraw mentally, their work engagement levels will decrease. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that job demands lead to burnout, which in turn might impact on the work engagement of employees. The effect of high job demands may be reduced by job resources such as providing feedback, social support and leader/manager guidance and support (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004). Roberts and Davenport (2002) found that career development and a rewarding work environment also increase the work engagement level of employees. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also found that if employees are provided with variety in their jobs, learning opportunities and autonomy, they will be more likely to engage in their work. In providing employees with safety in terms of social support (including good relationships with the line manager and colleagues), employees will feel more

secure and safe in their jobs. Research by Van der Merwe, Basson and Coetzee (2009) also suggests that employees employed on a temporary contract basis regard socially supportive networks and interactions with colleagues in the workplace as important motivational aspects.

Limited information is available regarding the relationship between sources of job stress and career orientations, and work engagement and career orientations respectively. However, research has demonstrated that a conflict between the personality characteristics of employees, such as their career preferences, needs, motives and values and the attributes of their organisations, is related to individual behavioural outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, low organisational commitment and engagement, substandard job performance, job stress and turnover (Coetzee, Schreuder & Tladinyane 2007; Havran, Visser & Crous 2003; Hoffman & Woehr 2006; Judge & Ferris 1992; Peterson 2003). In terms of socio-demographic factors, Martin (2005) for example found that personality characteristics can influence how individuals interpret and respond to what happens to them, including the experience of stress. Moreover, the profile of the individual in terms of gender, age, degree of physical fitness and education level could also play a part in determining the way in which stress is dealt with by that person.

In terms of sources of job stress, findings reported by De Villiers (2009), Pienaar and Van Zyl (2008), and Van Aarde and Mostert (2008) show that blacks and whites differ significantly in terms of what they perceive as the sources of their job stress. A study by Van den Berg and Van Zyl (2008) further revealed that black career-oriented women tend to experience higher levels of stress than their white counterparts. Further, in terms of work engagement, De Villiers (2009) found that males and females differed significantly regarding their levels of work engagement. Research regarding career anchors or orientations shows that males and females tend to associate with different career anchors (Coetzee et al. 2007; De Villiers 2009; Marshall & Bonner 2003). Coetzee and Schreuder (2008) report in this regard that with the exception of the entrepreneurial career anchor, blacks and whites show similar career anchor preferences. Findings reported by Coetzee and Schreuder (2007) further indicate that people from various age groups also tend to differ in terms of their career orientations.

In view of the foregoing, the following hypotheses seem to follow:

- Hypothesis 1:** Sources of job stress relate significantly to employees' levels of work engagement.
- Hypothesis 2:** Sources of job stress are significantly related to individuals' career orientations.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals' levels of work engagement are significantly related to their career orientations.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals from various gender, race, employment status and age groups differ significantly regarding their sources of job stress, level of work engagement and career orientations.

Research design

Research approach

For this exploratory pilot study, a survey design was used to achieve the research objective (Shaughnessy & Zechmeister 2003).

Research method

Participants

The total population consisted of staff members of the Business Process Solutions division of a South African financial institution (N=250). A total of 90 useable questionnaires were returned, yielding a moderate response rate of 36%. The sample (n=90) constituted 57% whites and 43% blacks, with 56% of the sample employed as contractors and 44% as permanent employees. The sample included 68% females and 32% males. In terms of age, the participants were predominantly in their early life/career stage, with 19% being in the exploration phase of their careers (25 years and younger), 64% in the establishment phase of their careers (26–40 years) and 16% in the maintenance phase of their careers (41 years and older).

Measuring instruments

The following measuring instruments were used in this study:

The *Sources of Job Stress Scale* (SOJ) (De Villiers 2009) was used to measure participants' sources of job stress. The SOJ scale consists of ten categories that are regarded as core sources of job stress in the literature (Cartwright & Cooper 2002; De Bruin & Taylor 2006): job and role ambiguity; relationships; job tools and equipment; career advancement prospects; job security; lack of job autonomy; work/home conflict/stress; workload; compensation and benefits; and lack of leader/management support and guidance. The ten categories are rated as ten subscale items, which are scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (low source of job stress) to 5 (high

source of job stress). The scores for each question are considered as a separate category of job stress. As shown in Table 1, the alpha coefficients for the three subscales (as obtained for the sample of this study) varied between 0.75 and 0.79.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations and Cronbach alpha coefficients (n=90)

Variable	Mean	SD	α
<i>Source of Job Stress (SOJ)</i>			
Job and role ambiguity	2.78	0.96	0.78
Relationships	2.74	1.12	0.77
Job tools and equipment	2.84	1.20	0.79
Career advancement prospects	3.08	1.28	0.75
Job security	3.02	1.33	0.76
Lack of job autonomy	2.89	1.10	0.78
Work/home conflict/stress	2.81	1.17	0.78
Workload	3.12	1.21	0.78
Compensation and benefits	3.35	1.20	0.76
Lack of leader/management support & guidance	3.06	1.33	0.77
<i>Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)</i>			
Vigour	4.54	0.99	0.77
Dedication	4.46	1.18	0.88
Absorption	4.41	1.08	0.83
Total engagement	4.47	1.00	
<i>Career Orientations Inventory (COI)</i>			
	Mean total scores	SD	α
Technical/Functional	16.91	3.80	0.39
General management	12.99	4.31	0.73
Autonomy	15.68	4.23	0.76
Security/Stability	17.24	4.51	0.73
Entrepreneurial creativity	18.73	4.86	0.70
Service/Dedication to a cause	16.76	4.33	0.72
Pure challenge	16.99	3.78	0.71
Lifestyle	18.69	3.62	0.64

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES) (Schaufeli et al. 2002) was used to measure the levels of engagement. The UWES includes three dimensions: vigour, dedication and absorption, which are scored on a seven-point frequency-rating scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). As shown in Table 1, the alpha coefficients for the three subscales (as obtained for the sample of this study) varied between 0.78 and 0.88. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) determined alpha coefficients between 0.68 and 0.91, while Storm and Rothmann (2003) report alpha coefficients ranging between 0.78 and 0.89. Confirmatory factor analysis (Schaufeli et al. 2002) demonstrated the factorial validity of the UWES. Inter-item correlations obtained in this study were all highly significant ($p \leq 0.01$; $r \geq 0.30$ – medium to large practical effect size).

The *Career Orientations Inventory* (COI) of Schein (1990) was used to measure the construct of career anchors. The inventory consists of a set of 40 items, all of which are considered to be of equal value and to which subjects respond in terms of how true the statement is (Schein 1990). The scale used is a summated rating in the form of a six-point Likert-type scale. Respondents were also asked to add an additional four points to the three statements that seemed most true to them. The COI provides a pre-tested instrument with demonstrated high internal validity and reliability (Custodio 2004). Table 1 shows that the following alpha coefficients for the eight subscales were obtained for the sample of this study: technical/functional (0.39); lifestyle (0.64); entrepreneurial creativity (0.70); pure challenge (0.71); service/dedication to a cause (0.72); general management (0.73); security/stability (0.73); autonomy (0.76).

According to Anastasi (1976), a desirable reliability coefficient would fall in the range of 0.80 to 0.90. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) use 0.70 as a directive, while Bartholomew, Antonia and Marcia (2000) argue that between 0.60 and 0.80 is acceptable. Since the purpose of this study was not to make individual predictions based on the three instruments, but rather to investigate broad trends and certain relations between constructs, the instruments were considered to be psychometrically acceptable.

Research procedure

Permission to conduct the study was sought from the management of the participating organisation. The questionnaires were administered in a controlled environment. Participation was voluntary. The objectives of the study were explained to the participants at their place of work (where the data collection also took place), and their written consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. The questionnaires were scored electronically.

Statistical analysis

The statistical procedures chosen for this research were based on their applicability to the exploratory nature of the research design. The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the SAS System (version 9.1) statistical package (SAS Institute 2003). Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the data. The analyses of the data involved three stages. The *first stage* involved determining the means and standard deviations and Cronbach alpha coefficients. During the *second stage* of data analysis, Pearson correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationship between the variables of concern to this study. In terms of statistical significance, it was decided to set the alpha value at a 95% confidence interval level ($p \leq 0.05$), with a practical effect size of $r \geq 0.30$ (medium effect, Cohen 1988).

Finally, the *third stage* entailed determining which socio-demographic groups differed significantly in terms of the means of the most significant relationships identified during stage two. Independent-samples t-tests were applied for the gender, ethnic and employment status socio-demographical variables. ANOVAs were performed to test for significant differences between the various age groups. A cut-off point of $p \leq 0.05$ was set for determining the significance of the findings.

Results

Means, standard deviations and Cronbach alpha coefficients

The descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the measuring instruments are reported in Table 1. The mean scores obtained for the sources of job stress variables ranged between 3.35 (highest mean score) and 2.74 (lowest mean score). Overall, the mean scores indicate that the participants experienced compensation and benefits ($m=3.35$; $SD=1.20$) and workload ($m=3.12$; $SD=1.21$) as their highest sources of job stress, followed by career advancement prospects ($m=3.08$; $SD=1.28$), lack of leader/management support and guidance ($m=3.06$; $SD=1.33$) and job security ($m=3.02$; $SD=1.33$). Relationships ($m=2.74$; $SD=1.12$) were indicated as the lowest source of job stress.

Overall, the mean scores obtained for the work engagement variables were relatively high, ranging between 4.54 (highest mean score) and 4.41 (lowest mean score). Participants scored the highest on vigour ($m=4.54$; $SD=0.99$), total engagement ($m=4.47$; $SD=1.00$) and dedication ($m=4.46$; $SD=1.18$) and relatively lower on absorption ($m=4.41$; $SD=1.00$).

When observing the mean total scores for the career orientations or anchors variables (shown in Table 1), it is evident that participants scored the highest on

entrepreneurial creativity ($m=18.73$; $SD=4.86$) and lifestyle ($m=18.69$; $SD=3.62$), followed by security/stability ($m=17.24$; $SD=4.51$) and pure challenge ($m=16.99$; $SD=3.78$). General management ($m=12.99$; $SD=4.31$) obtained the lowest mean scores.

Relationship between sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientations

The significant correlation coefficients between the sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientation variables are reported in Tables 2 and 3. As can be observed from both these tables, the inter-correlations range from $r \geq 0.21$ (small practical effect size) to $r \leq 0.37$ (medium practical effect size).

In terms of hypothesis 1 (sources of job stress relate significantly to employees' levels of work engagement), Table 2 indicates that job and role ambiguity and lack of job autonomy relate significantly negatively to all the work engagement variables, and job security shows a significantly negative association with the vigour variable. Statistically practical significant effect sizes ($r \geq 0.30$ – medium effect size) were obtained only for the relationship between the job and role ambiguity and the total engagement, dedication and absorption variables. Based on these results, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

With regard to hypothesis 2 (sources of job stress are significantly related to individuals' career orientations), Table 3 indicates a statistically significant positive relationship between the career orientation variables of security/stability and the sources of job stress variable of job security (medium practical effect size; $r \geq 0.30$). The entrepreneurial creativity and lifestyle variables show a significant positive relationship with lack of job autonomy (small practical effect size; $r \leq 0.30$). Table 3 further indicates that the pure challenge career orientation variable is significantly and positively related to the compensation and benefits (small practical effect size; $r \leq 0.30$) and lack of leader/management support and guidance (small practical effect size; $r \leq 0.30$) variables. Hypothesis 2 is therefore accepted.

With regard to hypothesis 3 (individuals' levels of work engagement are significantly related to their career orientations), a statistically significant negative relationship is observed only between vigour and security/stability (small practical effect size; $r \leq 0.30$). Hypothesis 3 is therefore only partially accepted.

Table 2: Significant Pearson-product moment correlations for SOJ and COI: UWES (n=90)

	UWES Total	UWES Vigour	UWES Dedication	UWES Absorption
SOJ				
Job & role ambiguity	-0.33*** +	-0.26**	-0.37*** +	-0.30** +
Job security		-0.22*		
Lack of job autonomy	-0.27*	-0.25**	-0.26***	-0.26***
COI				
Security/stability	-0.21*	-0.29***		

***p ≤ 0.01, **p ≤ 0.02, *p ≤ 0.05

+r ≥ 0.0.30 (medium practical effect size)

++r ≥ 0.50 (large practical effect size)

Significant differences between socio-demographic variables

Table 4 and Table 5 report the findings with regard to hypothesis 4 (individuals from various gender, race, employment status and age groups differ significantly regarding their sources of job stress, level of work engagement and career orientations).

Gender

As shown in Table 4, no statistically significant differences are observed in terms of the sources of job stress variables. However, statistically significant differences are observed between the male and female participants with regard to the work engagement variables of total engagement, dedication and absorption. Table 5 shows that the female participants scored significantly higher than their male counterparts on total engagement (m=4.63; SD=0.89); dedication (m=4.67; SD=1.06) and absorption (m=4.61; SD=0.96).

Similarly, statistically significant differences are also observed with regard to the entrepreneurial creativity, service/dedication to a cause and lifestyle career orientations variables. As shown in Table 5, male participants scored significantly higher than their female counterparts on the entrepreneurial creativity (m=3.42; SD=0.96), service/dedication to a cause (m=3.54; SD=0.66) and lifestyle (m=3.81; SD=0.67) career orientation variables.

Table 3: Significant Pearson-product moment correlations for SOJ and COI (n=90)

	COI Technical/ functional	COI General management	COI Autonomy	COI Security/ stability	COI Entre- preneurial creativity	COI Service/ dedication to a cause	COI Pure challenge	COI Lifestyle
SOJ								
Job security				0.33** +				
Lack of job autonomy					0.21*			0.26**
Compensation & benefits							0.21*	
Lack of leader/ management support & guidance							0.21*	

***p ≤ 0.01, **p ≤ 0.02, *p ≤ 0.05

+r ≥ 0.0:30 (medium practical effect size)

++r ≥ 0.50 (large practical effect size)

Race

Statistically significant differences are observed between white and black participants with regard to the following sources of job stress variables: career advancement prospects, workload, compensation and benefits and lack of leader/management support and guidance. Table 5 shows that whereas the black participants scored significantly higher than their white counterparts on the career advancement prospects ($m=3.38$; $SD=1.27$), compensation and benefits ($m=3.76$; $SD=1.14$) and lack of leader/management support and guidance ($m=3.53$; $SD=1.27$) variables, the white participants scored significantly higher on the workload ($m=3.37$; $SD=1.15$) variable.

Employment status

In terms of employment status, Table 4 indicates statistically significant differences between participants who were employed as contractors and those who were employed full-time or permanently. These differences relate to the job security sources of job stress variable, the work engagement variables of total engagement and absorption and the autonomy career orientation variable. Table 5 shows that participants who were employed as contractors scored significantly higher on job security ($m=3.26$; $SD=1.23$) than those employed as permanent staff. However, participants employed as permanent staff scored statistically significantly higher on total engagement ($m=4.72$; $SD=1.00$); and absorption ($m=4.76$; $SD=0.99$) as well as the autonomy ($m=3.45$; $SD=0.75$) career orientation variable.

Age

Table 4 shows that the various age groups differ statistically significantly only with regard to the work engagement variable absorption. Table 5 indicates that participants from the age groups 26–40 years and older than 40 years scored significantly higher than those younger than 25 years on absorption, with those aged 26–40 years scoring the highest ($m=4.60$; $SD=1.00$) on this variable.

Based on the foregoing results, hypothesis 4 is accepted.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the relationship between employees' sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientations and how they differ with regard to these variables in terms of socio-demographic contextual factors such

Table 4: T-tests and ANOVA for significant differences (n=90)

	Levene's test for equality of variances		T-test for equality of means		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
GENDER					
<i>UWES</i>					
Total engagement	3.61	0.06	2.25	87	0.03*
Dedication	2.42	0.12	2.46	86	0.02**
Absorption	2.68	0.11	2.67	86	0.01***
<i>COI</i>					
Entrepreneurial creativity	1.06	0.31	2.48	86	0.02**
Service/dedication to a cause	6.41	0.01	-2.25	45	0.03*
Lifestyle	2.61	0.11	-2.67	86	0.01***
RACE					
<i>SOJ</i>					
Career advancement prospects	0.03	0.86	2.02	88	0.05
Workload	0.22	0.64	-2.30	87	0.02**
Compensation and benefits	0.01	0.95	2.79	86	0.01***
Lack of leader/management support	0.04	0.84	3.02	87	0.003***
EMPLOYMENT STATUS					
<i>SOJ</i>					
Job security	0.62	0.44	2.14	87	0.04*
<i>UWES</i>					
Total engagement	0.26	0.61	-1.92	86	0.05*
Absorption	0.004	0.95	-2.68	85	0.01***
<i>COI</i>					
Autonomy	0.77	0.38	-2.31	85	0.02**
	ANOVA				
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>			
AGE					
<i>UWES</i>					
Absorption	3.41	0.04*			

*** $p \leq 0.01$, ** $p \leq 0.02$, * $p \leq 0.05$

Table 5: Means and standard deviations: Socio-demographic variables and significant differences (n=90)

	Mean scores for gender groups			
	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>UWES</i>	4.63	0.89	4.13	1.15
Total engagement				
Dedication	4.67	1.06	4.02	1.33
Absorption	4.61	0.96	3.97	1.21
<i>COI</i>				
Entrepreneurial creativity	2.97	0.73	3.42	0.96
Service/dedication to a cause	3.38	0.66	3.54	0.95
Lifestyle	3.75	0.75	3.81	0.67
	Mean scores for race groups			
	<i>Blacks</i>		<i>Whites</i>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>SOJ</i>				
Career advancement prospects	3.38	1.27	2.84	1.25
Workload	2.79	1.23	3.37	1.15
Compensation and benefits	3.76	1.14	3.06	1.17
Lack of leader/management support	3.53	1.27	2.71	1.27
	Mean scores for employment groups			
<i>SOJ</i>	<i>Contractors</i>		<i>Permanent staff</i>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Job security	3.26	1.23	2.67	1.38
<i>UWES</i>				
Total engagement	4.34	0.87	4.72	1.00
Absorption	4.19	0.99	4.76	0.99
<i>COI</i>				
Autonomy	3.05	0.84	3.45	0.75
	Mean scores for age groups			
<i>UWES</i>	<i>25 and younger</i>	<i>26-40 years</i>		<i>Older than 40 years</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Absorption	3.83	0.78	4.60	1.00
				4.30 1.43

as gender, race, employment status and age. Overall, the findings suggest significant relationships between participants' sources of job stress, levels of work engagement and career orientations. Moreover, the findings show a number of significant differences between these three variables and participants' socio-demographic characteristics. In interpreting the results, the following socio-demographic characteristics of the sample were kept in mind: the participants were predominantly staff members of the Business Process Solutions division of the financial institution and comprised predominantly whites and females in the establishment phase of their careers (26–40 years). Furthermore, the sample was represented predominantly by participants who were employed as temporary contractors.

Sources of job stress, work engagement and differences in terms of socio-demographic variables

With regard to the participants' sources of job stress, the results indicate compensation and benefits and workload as the highest sources of job stress, followed by career advancement prospects, lack of leader/management support and guidance and job security. Moreover, significant differences regarding these sources of job stress are detected only between the black and white participants. The findings show that whereas the white participants regard workload as a significantly higher source of job stress than the black participants, the black participants regard compensation and benefits, lack of leader/management support, and guidance and career advancement prospects as their highest sources of job stress. Similar to these findings, a study by Pienaar and Van Zyl (2008) revealed that black people experience career advancement issues (including training and development opportunities, utilisation of talents promotion, and job security) as a significantly higher source of stress than whites. Pienaar and Van Zyl (2008) also found that black people appear to have a stronger need for leader/manager support and guidance than their white counterparts. In view of the foregoing, Pienaar and Van Zyl (2008) found that black people experience significantly higher job stress related to job and role ambiguity, job characteristics and relationships with superiors and clients and therefore have a stronger need for leader/manager support and guidance.

The findings further indicate that when job security is regarded as a high source of job stress, participants' levels of vigour (that is, their energy levels, resilience regarding work activities and willingness to invest effort in their work and to persist in difficult circumstances) tend to be significantly lower. Similarly, when job and role ambiguity and lack of job autonomy are regarded as high sources of job stress, participants seem to experience significantly lower levels of work engagement.

Considering the overall relatively high work engagement levels of the participants and the lower scores obtained for the foregoing two sources of job stress, the results suggest that when participants have clear guidelines regarding their jobs and roles, they apparently seem to experience higher levels of vigour, feel more inspired or dedicated and become absorbed in their work activities. This seems to be especially true for the female participants, as the findings indicate that they have significantly higher levels of overall work engagement, dedication and absorption than their male counterparts. Nabi (2003) and Whitehead and Kotze (2003) found in this regard that women generally regard a sense of job security and subjective feelings of success (such as growth and development opportunities, the intrinsic value of the job and work-home balance) as more important than males, who appear to place higher value on objective aspects of achievement and career success such as progression towards positions of authority and influence within the company.

In terms of work load as a source of job stress, Van Aarde and Mostert (2008) report that females in particular experience negative interaction between work and family life when they are exposed to high job pressure, work overload, time demands, have little or no autonomy and have little or no supervisor and instrumental support. It should be noted that the sample is predominantly represented by females. Mostert et al. (2008) further found job overload to be a major contributor to symptoms of psychological ill health, increased levels of stress and reduced commitment to the organisation, which negatively influence overall job performance and turnover intention. The presence of work overload may lead to exhaustion and cynicism, and symptoms of burnout (Rothmann 2003). Moreover, cynicism is likely to erode an individual's sense of accomplishment or effectiveness.

Van den Berg, Manias and Burger (2008) found that employees' attitudes towards the organisation and the organisation's commitment to individuals made the most significant contributions to employees' levels of vigour and absorption. High demands or stressors related to job insecurity, client-related factors, work-home interference and physical resources impacted negatively on the levels of vigour and dedication. The same demands or stressors, in conjunction with poor remuneration, also resulted in lower levels of absorption. Mostert et al. (2008) further report findings indicating that stressors such as job control (autonomy) might result in lower commitment towards the organisation.

Lee, Hourquet and MacDermid (2002) also found that employees perform better and become more engaged in their work as a result of the organisation's supporting their need for work-life balance, which ultimately results in productivity gains. According to Lee et al. (2002), reduced workload and opportunities to balance work and life lead to individuals working more effectively and creatively as a result of a

rich, external life outside of work and personal fulfilment in multiple roles. Lee et al. (2002) report findings showing that reduced-load work arrangements generally enhance employees' well-being and lead to a decrease in stress, less fatigue and fewer health problems. Those working on a reduced-load basis tend to work in a highly focused and concentrated manner and are therefore unusually efficient in getting their work done. Coetzer and Rothmann (2007) also found job demands (job overload) to be negatively related to work engagement.

In terms of employment status, and contrary to findings reported by Havran et al. (2003), the findings of the current study show that permanently employed participants apparently experience significantly higher levels of overall work engagement and absorption than those in temporary contract positions. The concept of absorption is regarded as being closely related to Csikszentmihalyi's (1992) notion of flow, which is characterised by a feeling of loss of consciousness and freedom in which all sense of time is lost. Flow is enhanced when clear goals are established, feedback is received from the task, concentration is high and control of the activity is anticipated and derived. Moreover, a feeling of flow will only occur where there is a balance between the perceived challenge of the situation and the degree to which the person feels sufficiently skilled to respond to it (Csikszentmihalyi 1992). In this regard, the findings suggest that the participants in the establishment phase of their careers and those permanently employed seem to have a greater sense of job security and efficacy in dealing with the challenges and demands posed by their work activities. These findings are also contrary to the observations of Bedeian, Kemery and Pizzolatto (1991) and Havran et al. (2003) that contractors tend to have experiences of flow more readily since they have more freedom in their work to pursue new challenges and opportunities for growth.

Sources of job stress, career orientations and differences in terms of socio-demographic variables

The findings show that compensation and benefits and lack of leader/management support and guidance as sources of job stress relate significantly positively to the pure challenge career orientation. This suggests that those participants that prefer to be involved in jobs where they can face and solve tough and challenging problems (as opportunities to test their own abilities) also have a strong desire for feedback and guidance from their superiors, as well as for being remunerated appropriately. In this regard, a study conducted by Coetzee et al. (2007) shows that black people have a high preference for the pure challenge career anchor, implying a need for ongoing

training and development opportunities through guided on-the-job experience that provides challenging growth opportunities.

Martins and Coetzee (2007) further found that black people as well as those in the exploration and establishment phases of their careers regard compensation and benefits as a significantly higher source of dissatisfaction than white people and those in the maintenance phase of their careers. In this regard, Van den Berg and Van Zyl (2008) found that white women have a significantly higher dissatisfaction than black people with their compensation and fringe-benefits packages due to the negative impact of gender and racial discrimination and affirmative action, leading to a lack of opportunities for advancement and higher-level remuneration packages. Black women generally tend to experience higher stress levels than their white counterparts because of the added pressure on them to make progress in their careers and to provide a stable home environment compounded by a lack of resources such as adequate salaries and benefits, stable home environments, affluent living conditions, training and development opportunities, supportive work environments (Msimang 2001) as well as gender equity in terms of remuneration and benefits (Frieze, Olson, Murrell & Selvan 2006), which hamper their ability to master work-related demands.

Work engagement, career orientations and differences in terms of socio-demographic variables

The statistically significant negative relationship observed between vigour and the security/stability career orientation suggests that those participants who experience a high need for job security, as represented by jobs that offer benefit packages and long-term employment, appear to have lower levels of energy and seem to be less willing to invest effort in their work due to their overriding need for employment security. In this regard, the findings show that participants employed as temporary contractors appear to place a significantly higher value on job security, which may explain their significantly lower levels of work engagement than those permanently employed. The results further show that job security as a source of job stress relates significantly positively to the security/stability career orientation and negatively to vigour. This observation suggests that fulfilling one's need for security and stability may be regarded as more important than the task itself, and should job security be a source of job stress, one's overall engagement may be impacted or lowered until one's basic need for security or psychological safety has been satisfied (Maslow 1987; Olivier & Rothmann 2007).

Considering that the sample was mostly represented by female participants, the findings are in line with a study by Coetzee and Schreuder (2008), which revealed

that females in the establishment phase of their careers tend to have a high need for employment security and stability. Job security is also related to the notion of psychological safety, which refers to feeling able to show and employ oneself without fear of negative consequences with respect to self-image, status or career. Olivier and Rothmann (2007) also report findings revealing that psychological safety leads to engagement because it reflects one's belief that a person can employ himself/herself without fear of negative consequences. Supporting supervisory and co-worker relations as well as flexibility in behavioural norms have also been reported to lead to feelings of psychological safety (May, Gilson & Harter 2004).

In terms of the significantly higher need for job security shown by the temporarily employed participants', Gallagher (2002) found that contingent workers tend to have significantly stronger experiences of psychological insecurity due to their being in insecure positions with little control and feeling relatively disadvantaged compared to their permanently employed counterparts. However, temporary employees who are 'voluntarily' employed as temporaries tend to have significantly higher levels of both intrinsic and overall job satisfaction compared with individuals who were 'involuntarily' working as temporaries due to the lack of more permanent options. Gallagher (2002) also posits that the high pressure on temporarily employed employees to sustain their employability without receiving the company benefits of training and development opportunities creates experiences of psychological insecurity. However, irrespective of the temporarily employed participants' need for job security, it is interesting to observe that overall they seem to have relatively high levels of work engagement. In this regard, Lee et al. (2002) found that employees who are working part-time report that they are doing interesting, challenging work, come to work less exhausted and are able to bring more positive and creative energy to problem-solving.

The permanently employed participants showed a significantly higher preference for the autonomy career orientation than those employed as contractors. This suggests a need for clearly delineated, time-bound kinds of work within an area of expertise without close supervision and compensation related to one's performance (Schein 1992). The findings also indicate lack of job autonomy as a source of stress that relates negatively to the engagement levels of participants. Arnolds and Venter (2007) found in this regard that permanently employed employees tend to have a high need for their jobs to be enriched with more freedom of decision-making, space for creativity, skill variety and task significance, as these generally increase the meaningfulness of their jobs and result in higher internal motivation, high-quality work performance, higher job satisfaction, and a decrease in absenteeism and staff turnover.

The findings further indicate entrepreneurial creativity, lifestyle and security/stability as the participants' dominant career orientations. These preferences may be linked to the nature of the job task in which the participants are engaged. The findings also show that the lifestyle and entrepreneurial creativity career orientations relate significantly positively to a lack of job autonomy as a source of job stress. This generally suggests that the participants may have a strong desire to express their talents in creating new products or services or searching for constant new challenges that provide them with a sense of freedom and power, while being able to balance their work and home activities and having the assurance of steady employment and benefit packages (Schein 1992). Feldman and Bolino (2000) also found that individuals with a strong creativity anchor are generally motivated to become self-employed for the chance to use their skills and be creative as well as to capitalise on a good business idea. Moreover, the core overlapping themes for the entrepreneurial creativity and lifestyle career anchors appear to be the option to negotiate one's freedom so that work fits one's lifestyle and habits. Suutari and Taka (2004) found that people with a lifestyle career anchor also prefer to have the freedom and autonomy to balance family matters with their career and work demands (Suutari & Taka 2004).

Moreover, with regard to age, the participants in the establishment phase of their careers (26–40 years) seem to experience significantly higher absorption in their work activities than those in the exploration phase of their careers (25 years and younger) and those in the maintenance phase of their careers (older than 40 years). Coetzee and Bergh (2009) found that young adults in the exploration phase of their careers tend to have lower life satisfaction and job/career satisfaction than their older counterparts. This is due to a stronger need to be exposed to a variety of challenging assignments and development and growth opportunities in order to gain the skills and experience they need. As individuals in the exploration phase become more oriented to the importance of work in their lives and learn how to balance job demands with their own needs, they generally start finding the work role to be increasingly salient in the establishment phase of their careers (Savickas 2007). Furthermore, being exposed to a variety of job tasks and challenges that provide for the expression of one's creative abilities and allow one to develop the necessary skills may lead to higher job/career satisfaction and engagement for people in the exploration and establishment phases of their careers (Coetzee & Bergh 2009).

Similar to findings reported by Coetzee and Schreuder (2008), the male participants show a significantly higher preference for the entrepreneurial creativity career orientation than their female counterparts. However, contrary to the studies by Coetzee and Schreuder (2008) and Coetzee et al. (2007), which show that males and females do not differ regarding their preferences for the lifestyle career orientation,

the findings of this study show that males have a significantly higher preference for the lifestyle career orientation than their female counterparts. Another interesting observation is that contrary to the findings reported by Coetzee and Schreuder (2008), male participants show a significantly higher preference for the service/dedication to a cause career orientation than females. Coetzee and Schreuder (2009) found in this regard that having a strong sense of career purpose or viewing one's career as a calling (and not merely as a job or career) and developing one's self-management and relationship skills positively predict the service/dedication to a cause career anchor. Moreover, having the ability to form positive and supportive social networks and being driven by a need for personal growth and development were also shown to positively predict this career anchor.

Conclusions, implications and recommendations

The overall findings of the study add to the career and wellness literature by showing that employees' perceived sources of job stress relate significantly to their levels of work engagement and career orientations. The findings further indicate that socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, race, employment status and age play an important role in understanding the relationship between employees' sources of job stress, work engagement and career orientations.

Since there is a paucity of empirical work on the relationship between the wellness constructs (sources of job stress and work engagement) and career orientation constructs relevant to this research (particularly with regard to the temporarily employed individuals), it would seem sensible not to over-interpret the present findings with reference to practical implications without further corroborative research. Nevertheless, two preliminary implications may be suggested. The first implication is that the findings illustrate that people's dominant career orientations and levels of work engagement appear to be significantly related to their sources of job stress. This suggests that favourable organisational conditions and career development support practices that address, firstly, the psychological needs underlying individuals' dominant career orientation motives and values and, secondly, that address reducing employees' sources of job stress by providing the required job resources, may invoke higher levels of work engagement. The second implication is that managers, industrial psychologists and human resources practitioners should pay particular attention to the temporarily employed employee's need for job security by considering a joint relationship between the company and the contract worker in providing further skills development opportunities for future employability purposes (Gallagher 2002). Havran et al. (2003) also regard continuous skills development

as essential for the contract worker to avoid skills stagnation or obsolescence and to maintain marketability.

In terms of the needs of permanently employed employees, consideration should be given to employees' needs for autonomy and flexibility in balancing their personal lifestyle needs with their need for freedom in expressing their creativity in a variety of challenging assignments that provide further growth. Moreover, the company should address the level of organisational support that employees receive in terms of role clarity, reduced-load work arrangements, leader and management support and guidance in terms of career prospects and task accomplishment, further growth and development opportunities and the degree of participation experienced by employees in decision-making procedures (Coetzer & Rothmann 2007). These company practices might help to alleviate the negative effects of the perceived sources of job stress and the psychological experiences of job insecurity that may potentially result in disengagement.

Finally, the practical value of the findings also lies in the new knowledge gained regarding the differences between the socio-demographic variables and the constructs relevant to this research. Considering the growth of non-permanent employment contracts and contingent work arrangements resulting in a more diversified workforce, increased job insecurity and a need for sustained future employability, the findings may be used to inform organisational wellness and career development support practices. Moreover, organisations must take cognisance of how the particular socio-demographic context in which individuals pursue their careers may influence their sense of being employable and feeling psychologically safe as precursors to their work engagement and their subsequent long-term commitment, performance and motivation.

Since the present study has been limited to participants predominantly employed in a single division of a financial institution, the findings cannot be generalised to other occupational contexts. Furthermore, given the exploratory nature of the research design, this study can yield no statements about causation. Associations between the socio-demographic variables and participants' sources of job stress, levels of work engagement and career orientations have therefore been interpreted rather than established. These findings therefore need to be replicated with broader samples across various occupational groups and economic sectors before broader conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between the constructs measured in this study.

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An empirical analysis of a private company's corporate social investment in SMME development in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has a very high unemployment rate, low economic growth and dismal Total (early-stage) Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) performance. Both government and private businesses are attempting to address this problem. A private company, the South African Breweries (SAB), as part of their corporate social investment, runs the SAB KickStart Programme to establish and grow entrepreneurial small businesses among young South Africans. The programme applies four interventions: General Enterprising Tendency test; two-week live-in business management training; funding and mentoring; and a national competition for prize money. Taking into consideration the cost of funding and operating the programme, its effectiveness required investigation. The population for the study comprised all the participants of the SAB KickStart Programme, from 2001 to 2006. From an analysis of variance (ANOVA) applied to the turnover and percentage profit figures of respondents, it was deduced that funding and mentoring, after training, add value to the programme. The programme contributes to enterprise sustainability, as 80 per cent of the respondents were still operating their initial businesses, while a further six percent have started another business – hence, a ‘failure’ rate of only 14 per cent. In conclusion, it can be said that the SAB KickStart Programme adds value, advances entrepreneurship, and can be replicated by other large institutions in South Africa.

Key words: entrepreneurship, SME development, SMME development, corporate social investment, training, funding, mentoring, SAB KickStart Programme, youth development

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