

# **Uncovering the unsustainable workforce puzzle**

A study on the effect of the workgroup culture on job satisfaction and job turnover intentions within a dirty work context



# **Utrecht University**

*In collaboration with*



**Master thesis – Sociology: Contemporary Social Problems**

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## Abstract

**Introduction.** This study focuses on the importance of job satisfaction and turnover intentions in preventing further labour shortages and the need to address the stigmatisation and taint associated with dirty work jobs. The study aims to explore the role of workgroup culture at the occupational and organisational level in mitigating the effects of stigmatisation and improving job satisfaction and turnover intentions in dirty work occupations. **Theoretical framework.** Ashforth & Kreiner's workgroup culture framework (1999) is extended to address the challenges faced by dirty work employees who perceive stigmatisation. The framework highlights the importance of occupational group identification in creating coping mechanisms, while also emphasising the significance of co-worker relationships, manager-employee relationships, and team cohesion at the organisational level in reducing the negative effects of stigmatisation. Hereby, the expectation is that employees that perceive more stigmatisation are in greater need of the workgroup culture. **Method.** Data is collected by setting up a survey targeted at dirty work employees. After collection, the study holds 483 respondents. Data is analysed by using multiple regression analysis. **Results.** The results show a significant effect on manager-employee relationships after controlling. Besides, co-worker relationships are found to be significant, but not after controlling. **Conclusion and discussion.** The results emphasise the importance of fostering positive relationships to enhance retention in dirty work occupations and recommend further exploration of specific relational aspects regarding co-workers and manager-employees that contribute to employee satisfaction and the creation of a conducive work environment. **Policy recommendations.** First, it's advised for HR departments of organisations with dirty work occupations to create awareness training for manager-employee relationships. Second, managers of dirty work occupations need to follow this training and invest in the manager-employee relationship. Third, these managers need to invest in team incentives to foster co-worker relationships.

## **Ethical statement**

This study was approved by the Ethical Review Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University. The approval is filed under number 23-1433 and is valid through September 26<sup>th</sup> 2023.

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## Introduction

In early 2023, strikes occurred in the Netherlands involving regional transport workers, postmen and garbage collectors (Scheres, 2023; Voogt, 2023), aiming for pay rises that reflect the inflation and workload (Olsthoorn & Roeters, 2023; Scheres, 2023). These strikes worsened the existing labour shortages and increased work pressure in society (Klein, 2022). They highlight the risk to job sustainability, which represents a healthy, productive labour market where employees work with satisfaction (Pouwels & Josten, 2022). Job dissatisfaction and an overwhelming work environment are factors contributing to job unsustainability (Averens et al., 2022; Pouwels & Josten, 2022). Therefore, job satisfaction and job turnover intentions play a crucial role in addressing labour shortages and retaining employees within organisations (Das & Baruah, 2013). Retention is essential for preserving organisational knowledge and experience, ensuring long-term health and performance for organisations (Das & Baruah, 2013). These sustainability issues are particularly critical for jobs that are essential to society's functioning (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS), n.d.). In academia, essential jobs are considered a subset of "dirty work" (Press, 2022), which tends to be overlooked both by society (Bolton, 2005) and in research (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

### 1.1 Definition of dirty work

Within the field, the definitions provided by Hughes (1962) and Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) are commonly used to discuss dirty work. Hughes (1962) defined dirty work as tasks and occupations that society perceives as disgusting or degrading. It highlights the idea that some employees must perform necessary but unpleasant jobs, while others can remain clean. Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) identified three forms of occupational taint based on the nature of work tasks. Physically tainted occupations involve direct contact with dirty social contexts, such as garbage collectors or butchers. Socially tainted occupations, like law enforcers, involve interaction with stigmatised individuals. Morally tainted occupations involve activities that challenge societal norms of virtue or civility, such as exotic dancers or tabloid reporters (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). This distinction demonstrates that stigmatised occupations encompass a wide range. Hence, dirty workers bear a dual burden: the inherent dirtiness of their work and the social stigma associated with it.

## **1.2 Earlier dirty work studies**

Within the limited research on dirty work, existing knowledge primarily focuses on how individuals cope with stigmatisation (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Some scholars have studied stigmatisation and coping strategies in specific occupations like police officers (Dick, 2005), slaughterhouse workers (McCabe & Hamilton, 2015) and animal-shelter work (Tallberg & Jordan, 2022). These studies mostly have a qualitative ethnographic approach and concentrate on individual occupations rather than examining the overall experience across different occupations. The findings indicate that despite the use of coping strategies, the working conditions in dirty work remain harsh and unsustainable (e.g., Tallberg & Jordan, 2022). Poor working conditions increase the likelihood of job dissatisfaction and turnover (Lopina et al., 2011). Given that many of these jobs are essential for society's functioning (CBS, n.d.), the risk of job dissatisfaction and turnover poses a significant concern. One of the few dirty work studies that emphasise the importance of job satisfaction and turnover intentions are the studies of Deery et al. (2019) and Lopina et al. (2011). These studies stand out from the predominantly qualitative background of dirty work research. It is crucial to expand current research on job satisfaction and turnover intentions to encompass the social context across different occupations. Examining the social context is important as it can also influence people's attitudes toward work (Kalleberg, 1977). However, the ethnographic studies consistently highlight the significance of "workgroup culture" in the development of individual coping mechanisms to overcome stigmatisation.

## **1.3 The workgroup culture**

The workgroup culture, introduced by Ashforth & Kreiner (1999), emphasises the importance of the social environment in dealing with societal stigmatisation. It refers to the shared culture, norms and values among employees who regularly interact with each other. Ashforth & Kreiner's study (1999) highlighted that the stigma associated with dirty work is best addressed collectively, rather than individually. They emphasised the significance of both the occupational and organisational levels in developing coping mechanisms against societal stigmatisation. The occupational level relates to the actual performance of the job, while the organisational level relates to the broader context in which the job is carried out.

Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) argue that the workgroup culture is important for both dirty work employees and the working class in general. Within any organisation, the occupational and organisation workgroup culture plays a role in creating relationships that increase job satisfaction and retain employees (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Ashforth & Kreiner, 2017;

Chow & Chan, 2008; Salas et al., 2005). However, for dirty work employees, there is an additional benefit. The workgroup culture serves as a buffer against societal stigmatisation and taint, which can damage the status, credibility and performance of dirty work employees (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). By joining workgroups, dirty work employees with similar experiences can develop coping strategies to overcome stigmatisation and taint (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). While a workgroup culture benefits dirty workers with both low and high levels of perceived stigmatisation, Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) also emphasise its particular importance for employees facing higher levels of societal stigmatisation. Without workgroup culture, dirty work employees don't benefit from designed coping strategies they need to overcome stigmatisation and work with the taint. This way employees do not know how to keep on working without experiencing negative feelings over the stigma and taint which lead to extremely dissatisfied employees or employees leaving (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

On the occupational level, the buffer is constructed by creating a collective culture with related behaviours and attitudes that can buffer against the taint within the job and the stigmatisation from society. To get this response, a feeling of belonging to the same occupational group is needed, a form of group identification (Barbier et al., 2012; Haslam, 2001). By identifying the same goals and beliefs as a group (ideologies), it is possible to create coping mechanisms to justify the occupation and make it attractive to insiders and outsiders and to help persuade dirty workers to identify with the work role they have (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). This makes occupational group identification an important indicator of occupational workgroup culture.

The organisational level resembles the environment in which employees interact with each other daily. If the job is more central or critical to the organisation's identity and mission, the stigmatisation will affect, besides the dirty work employees, the performances of the organisation. This way the organisational level becomes too an important part of the workgroup culture to negate common stereotypes (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Prior research identified three essential mechanisms that contribute to the development of organisational workgroup cultures, leading to a buffer effect and positively impacting job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2017; Chow & Chan, 2008; Salas et al., 2005). The first mechanism to create an organisational workgroup culture focuses on the bond between the employees themselves: the co-worker relationship. This bond is created by being involved with each other, supporting each other when needed and having a good connection with each other (Chow & Chan, 2008). The bond between co-workers is needed to create the base for organisational workgroup culture because this group will be seen most often within the

organisation. Therefore, it is important to create a bond with each other to build an organisational workgroup culture. By having a lack of this social and emotional bond at work, there is no possibility to create a buffer on the organisational level. Studies have shown a negative association between the lack of a social/emotional bond regarding job satisfaction (Mulki & Jaramillo, 2011) and a positive association with job turnover intentions (Marshall et al., 2007; Huyghebaert et al., 2018). Second, manager-employee relationships are important to consider, because managers are the first spokesperson for employees when issues arise and are therefore important for maintaining a healthy organisational workgroup culture. Besides, managers play an important role in normalising the taint of their dirty work employees (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2017). Because managers are the first spokesperson, they are too a key person for employees to go to when experiencing negative stereotypes. If employees feel not comfortable enough to talk to their manager when experiencing negative stereotypes, this will influence the organisational performances negatively, because employees need support from their manager when having problems delivering effective organisational performances (O'Leary & Pulakos, 2011). In the end, this also affects the creation of a buffer on the organisational level, because this support system is missing (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Third, the overall team cohesion needs to be considered. Team cohesion is the shared bond/attraction that drives team members to stay together and to want to work together (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2009). Team cohesion is therefore needed to create a team attitude against the stigmatisation from society. By having a shared bond to stay and work together, employees have a common goal that they need to overcome on the organisational level, where working together and staying together in a group is essential (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

However, the study of Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) focused on theoretical aspects of the model and did not delve deeper into the mechanisms or measure their impact on job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Therefore, further research is necessary to gain deeper insights into the implementation of workgroup culture. Increasing this knowledge will provide a better understanding of the quantitative relationship between this culture and job satisfaction and turnover intentions across various dirty work occupations. Without a comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms, it would be challenging to gain insights into employee retention strategies for organisations, potentially leading to disruptive consequences in society. Particularly in essential jobs.

To get an understanding of the present mechanisms the following descriptive question will be answered:

*“How satisfied are employees within dirty work occupations and to what extent do they have turnover intentions?”*

By getting an understanding of the mechanisms via the theoretical framework, it is possible to hypothesise the relation between these variables. This relation will be tested by using the following explanatory question:

*“To what extent does the occupational and organisational workgroup culture explain job satisfaction and job turnover intentions within dirty work occupations?”*

After the relation is clear, it is possible to advise organisations on how the work environment can be improved to satisfy their employees. Furthermore, it is possible to find ways to deal with stigmatisation from society. This results in the following policy question of this study:

*“To what extent can organisations stimulate/foster workgroup culture to increase job satisfaction and decrease job turnover intentions within dirty work occupations?”*

### **Theoretical framework**

In this chapter, the workgroup culture framework of the scholars Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) will be used and extended in light of this study. The first paragraph will delve deeper into the creation of a buffer against stigmatisation on the occupational level, while the second paragraph will delve deeper into the buffer on the organisational level. Figure 1, will visualise the working mechanisms within this framework.

#### **2.1 How occupational group identification relates to job satisfaction and job turnover intentions**

Within the occupational level, the outcome is the creation of an occupational culture by a shared identification with an occupational group on the work floor (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). A culture is a property of a human group that has shared experiences and tries to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration that have worked well enough to be considered valid. Therefore, it is to be taught to new members of the group as the correct way to perceive,



think, and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 2012). In the context of dirty work, the forming of an occupational culture is a way to try and cope with the perceived stigmatisation from society by creating coping mechanisms (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Because, these mechanisms have been empirically proven to be the case (e.g., Eriksson, 2021; Filteau, 2014), the culture is considered to be valid and taught to new employees.

To achieve the creation of this occupational culture on the work floor, the first step is to create a shared identity (Chaney, 2001). The Social Identity Theory of Tajfel & Turner (1979) implies that individuals that experience stigmatisation are motivated to acquire, maintain and protect a positive self-image. Without positive self-images, dirty work employees experience the negative influence of stigmatisation more harshly, resulting in a negative spiral in which employees are not satisfied with their job and tend to leave the job faster (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). These self-images are created through social interaction and the internalisation of collective values, meanings and standards, whereby individuals come to see themselves through the eyes of others and construct in this way a more or less stable self-image and a sense of self-esteem. This makes social validation key for individuals to sharpen and strengthen self-definitions and self-esteem (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Stigma makes self-image more difficult to form for two reasons. First, dirty workers are, before entering their occupations, exposed to the same socialising influences as others in society (for example negative remarks about dirty workers). Thus, before even starting within their occupations, dirty workers may have internalised the same stereotypes (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). For these workers, it is hard to exercise some control over the influence they are exposed to regarding the popular culture (Cullen, 1996). Second, dirty workers are likely to import those stereotypes and act accordingly. The perceived taint of dirty work is apt to be projected onto the workers so that they are seen to personify dirt. Via demeaning questions, discrimination and avoidance, this stigma may be communicated directly to the dirty workers in the line of the field. This makes it difficult for dirty work employees to hold a positive self-view (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

A solution to overcome the problems surrounding social validation and the creation of a positive self-image can be derived from membership within a group. Individuals can identify themselves on various levels with the various groups they belong to. Group identification in this way refers to the level to which an individual perceives him/herself as a member of that group (Kreiner et al., 2006). The focus within this context lies within the occupational group (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; van Dick, 2004). Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) argue that individuals are drawn to the occupational group because it is one of the few groups

that recognise the importance of their work and acknowledges their unique capability to perform it. This way dirty work employees tend to become a member of an occupational group in which they share the same identity. In this group, they tend to adopt the group's values and goals as their own (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Hereby, the members are inclined to internalize group goals as intrinsically motivating and they will increase their efforts to achieve these goals (Haslam & Ellemers, 2005), which results in creating the occupational culture in which support mechanisms are provided. When the occupational group is created wherein the same goals and values are prevalent, a coherent buffer is created. The goals and values make employees see themselves as the one group that is capable of doing the dirty work and striving for the objective to get the job done together. In this way, the group members can support each other when experience negative stereotypes, because they are in this together. In this way, the support leads to sharing coping mechanisms to overcome societal stigmatisation (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

Occupational group identification is associated with job satisfaction and job turnover intentions in two ways. The first argument for this association can be found when looking at the goals that the dirty work employees try to achieve within the occupational group, namely the coping mechanisms. Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) argue that the creation of an occupational group, results in systems of beliefs that provide a means for interpreting and understanding what the occupation does and why it matters. If this is enacted, this system of beliefs will be shared among members and results in fostering confidence in its validity and will be used wide-spread. This will result in coping strategies that are created together to overcome the stigmatisation. By using coping strategies, dirty work employees are more inclined to see the positive sides of their work, which results in having more satisfaction with what they do and intend to stay within their organisation/occupation (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). The second argument is argued by Maertz & Campion (2004). The scholars argue that normative attachment represents the extent to which employees feel pressured to stay with an organisation to meet the expectations of others outside the organisation. The presence of social norms within certain groups can induce feelings of obligation that influence turnover decisions. Within the dirty work context, the expectations from society are negative and will result in pressure to leave the occupation/organisation. Being a member of an occupational group will prevent this. By adopting the group's values and goals as their own, the dirty work employees will see themselves as the only ones capable of doing the job and in this way intrinsically motivate themselves to increase their efforts to achieve the goals of the group known as the coping mechanisms. Through this motivation, employees are more satisfied in

doing their job and have lower intentions to leave the occupation (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). This results in the first two hypotheses:

*H1: For dirty work employees, occupational group identification is positively related to job satisfaction.*

*H2: For dirty work employees, occupational group identification is negatively related to job turnover intentions.*

## **2.2 The mechanisms of the organisational level**

While dirty work employees interact on the occupational level with each other to create the shared goal of an occupational culture, interactions take also place on the organisational level. Within the organisational level, the interactions take the form of an organisational workgroup culture that is key for constructing the buffer against stigmatisation. This culture is especially focused based on organisational performances and goals because these are also affected by the stigmatisation besides the dirty work employees (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Three different buffers are created on the organisational level, namely the co-worker relationship, manager-employee relationship and team cohesion.

The first buffer is created via the bond between the employees of dirty work organisations; the co-worker relationship. This bond is created by getting support, recognition and having informal interactions with each other (Bentein et al., 2016; Chow & Chan, 2008). If this bond is absent within the context of dirty work, employees do not benefit from the mechanisms developed through the relationships between dirty work employees, because there is no form of support or interaction to build the relationship. Co-workers can be seen as a collective resource that individuals need to benefit from the coping mechanisms developed through co-worker relationships. By having a bond with their co-workers via interaction on the work floor and outside of the work environment, dirty work employees feel less isolated and feel a part of the group that is the only one capable of doing the job (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Besides, this results in more possibilities to properly find your own identity which is necessary to have a well-developed self-image (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) and results in more job satisfaction and less job turnover intentions (Porter & Sterns, 1973). By having interactions with others, more support can be provided and necessary reinforcement for adjustment and attachment to the work environment. When this is the case, employees are better able to contend with the stresses and will perform better and stay within their current organisation/occupation (Porter & Sterns, 1973). Furthermore, having a high-quality

relationship with an employee characterised by feelings of trust, respect and relatedness (relates to Chow & Chan's (2008) characteristics of a bond) increases job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions (Richer et al., 2022). The above-mentioned characteristics can be seen as feelings of relatedness to each other. If this is positive, it stimulates the motivation of employees to do their work. This results in more satisfaction at work and fewer reasons to turnover (Richer et al., 2022).

While co-workers see each other daily within an organisation, co-workers have regular interactions too with their managers. The support that employees achieve from their managers is important in shaping employees' attitudes, which subsequently has a positive influence on the commitment to the organisation's identity (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010). This managerial support exists when employees get the support needed to do the job well if the manager is good at developing people and is perceived to be personally effective (Tymon Jr et al., 2011). When employees feel more support from their managers, they are more likely to gain commitment to the organisation (Tymon Jr et al., 2011). Because employees get opportunities to express themselves and receive feelings of being valued by the manager, they will be more emotionally attached to the organisation (Briscoe & Finkelstein, 2009). When employees get emotionally attached to the organisation, there is more commitment to do what is required to perform well within the job and succeed in the organisation. Achieving more managerial support thus results in higher job satisfaction and less job turnover intentions, because without the support, employees need to bear with the effects of stigmatisation on their own which impacts the likeliness to stay within an organisation and liking the job overall (Tymon Jr et al., 2011).

According to Ashforth et al. (2017), managers in dirty work contexts can focus on three areas of their level of support to create a commitment, job satisfaction and retention among employees. The first area is during the recruitment/selection process, where managers face the challenge of familiarising new employees with the nature of the work that gave rise to the taint, assessing their comfort level or potential to become comfortable with the work and leveraging personal connections (Ashforth et al., 2017). The second area involves making employees feel comfortable with tasks that are often disregarded by them, clients and society. Managers play a key role in changing newcomers' attitudes and behaviours, stripping them of incoming stereotypes and encouraging them to adopt the perspective of stigmatised clients to adjust newcomers to the reality of dirty work. Managers also help newcomers manage external relationships to mitigate stigma and facilitate adjustment to distasteful tasks (Ashforth et al., 2017). The third and last area focuses on the ongoing management role in

maintaining employees' psychological and emotional engagement in tainted tasks. Managers compensate for the lack of social validation by providing it themselves, protect employees from hazards associated with the tasks, reduce stress by creating a safe environment and offering social support (Ashforth et al., 2017). When managers successfully maintain the engagement of dirty work employees, it leads to higher job satisfaction and reduced turnover intentions (Tymon Jr et al., 2011).

The last buffer, team cohesion, contains two crucial aspects that are important to create the buffer on the organisational level and hold employees within the organisation. First, to be a cohesive team, there needs to be an attraction or bond between group members that is based on a shared commitment to achieving the group's goals and objectives. Second, a form of closeness and attraction within a group is needed, that is based on social relationships within the group (Salas et al., 2005). Team cohesion is especially needed within the context of dirty work, because of the negative effects of stigmatisation. Because of the negative influence of stigmatisation, it is difficult for individual dirty work employees to overcome the consequences on their own. By building positive relations and at the same time generating mutual goals and objectives, a coherent buffer is created. Within this buffer, employees see themselves as the one group that is capable of doing the dirty work and have a mutual goal and objectives to get the job done together. This way they can overcome the stigma. By creating a feeling of commitment and attraction to each other, dirty work employees will be less eager to search for another job. Employees are committed to the objectives to do the job and achieve the common goals which leads to satisfaction. (Salas et al., 2005). Besides, the attraction leads to employees wanting to stay together. Mitchell et al. (2001) argue that this is in line with the presence of on-the-job forces. Within organisations, certain forces can bind employees to stick within teams and make it harder for employees to consider leaving their jobs. The attraction to be with each other can be seen as a force within the organisation, which results in employees not wanting to leave (Jiang et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2011). Thus, by creating a bond, they can see the positive sides of sticking together and doing the job that no one else wants to do. This way the dirty work employees have no intentions of job turnover (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). If the feeling of cohesion is missing, employees are less motivated at work and are less likely to participate in "teaming" behaviour that is needed to see the positive sides of sticking together which can lead to less satisfaction at work but too can result in seeing only the negative sides of the work leading in more intentions to leave the job (Salas et al., 2015).

When looking at the three mechanisms, the following three hypotheses can be deduced:

*H3a: For dirty work employees, the presence of co-worker relationships is positively related to job satisfaction.*

*H3b: For dirty work employees, the presence of co-worker relationships is negatively related to job turnover intentions.*

*H4a: For dirty work employees, the presence of manager-employee relationships is positively related to job satisfaction.*

*H4b: For dirty work employees, the presence of manager-employee relationships is negatively related to job turnover intentions.*

*H5a: For dirty work employees, the presence of occupational team cohesion is positively related to job satisfaction.*

*H5b: For dirty work employees, the presence of occupational team cohesion is negatively related to job turnover intentions.*

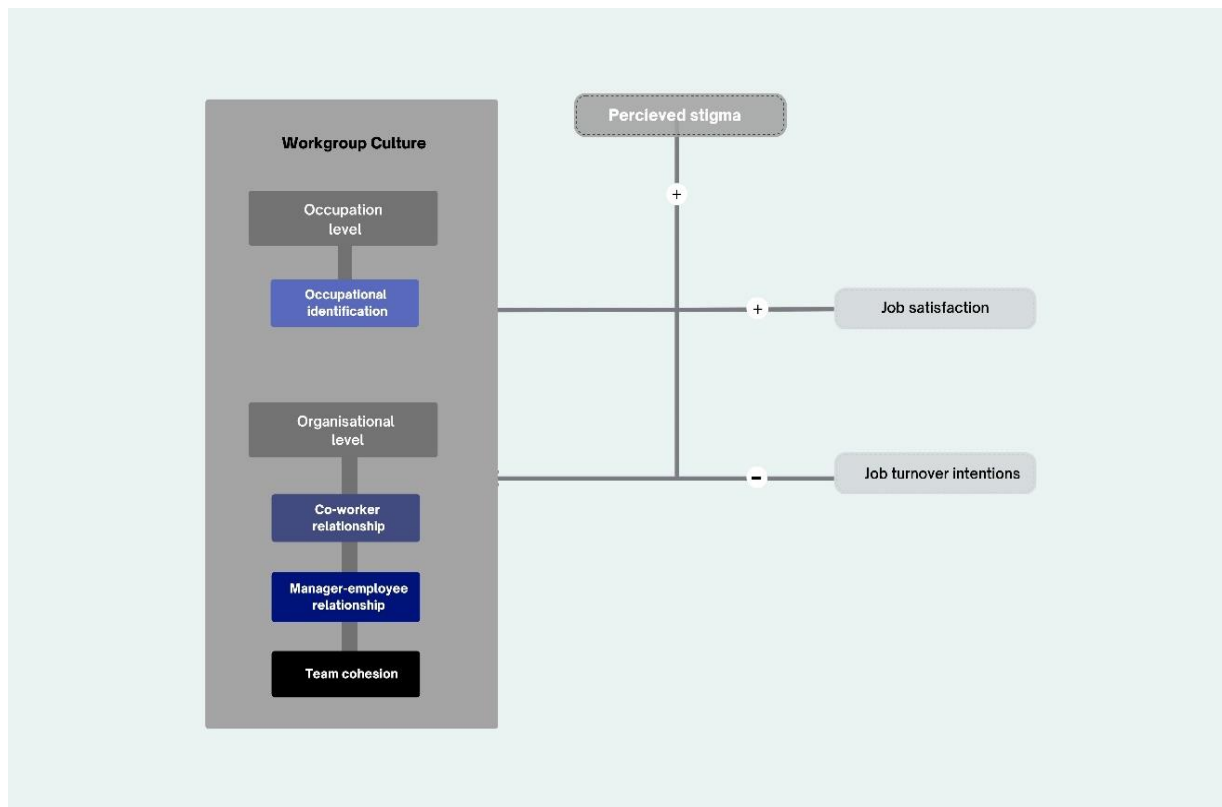
### **2.3 Workgroup culture especially for more stigmatised employees**

Although Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) argue that workgroup culture is important for every dirty work employee, it is particularly important for those who perceive higher levels of stigmatisation. Both the occupational and organisational workgroup cultures serve as buffers against societal stigmatisation and taint, providing a supportive environment where employees with similar experiences can come together, share beliefs, values and goals and develop coping strategies (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). These strategies are especially valuable for employees who face significant stigmatisation, as they are more vulnerable to negative consequences such as job dissatisfaction and turnover (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H6: All the above effects are stronger for dirty work employees that perceive more societal stigmatisation.*

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual model of the workgroup culture related to job satisfaction and job turnover conditions*



## Methodology

Data collection took place from March 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 until May 29<sup>th</sup> 2023. The data for this study is collected by making use of Qualtrics Experience Management. Within this survey tool, two different surveys were made in Dutch and English. The survey consisted of 63 questions. The surveys have been reviewed and approved by the ethical committee board of the University Utrecht. For extraction, survey links were created. Respondents were recruited in two ways. First, respondents were informally recruited by reaching out to contacts in the personal space who work in occupations labelled as dirty work. Second, respondents were recruited via board members of labour unions (FNV) of the dirty work occupations. When the organisations (supermarket, healthcare) and labour unions (railway services) announced their participation, the different links were sent to the contact persons, who distributed them among their employees/members. The surveys had seven blocks of questions. Within these blocks, questions were asked about personal demographics, occupational identification, relationships at the workplace, demands, resources and experienced stigma. The most relevant variables for this study are explained below.

In the end, 799 respondents are included in the dataset after recruiting. When filtering out the accidental non-dirty work occupations (58) and the missing values on the variables (258), this study consisted of 483 respondents. Examples of occupations within this study are supermarket employees, mechanics, confidants and childcare workers. The whole list of occupations can be found in Appendix 1.

### **3.1 Target group definition**

For this study, the target group is defined based on three criteria. The first criterion is based using the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). The main target group in this research are dirty workers from Skill Levels 1 and 2. Skill Level 1 usually entails carrying out easy, standard physical or manual tasks. At Level 2 occupations typically involve the performance of tasks such as operating, maintaining, and repairing machinery, driving vehicles and manipulating, ordering and storage of information. The decision to incorporate only ‘dirty workers’ from Skill Levels 1 and 2 originates from the effects of the status shield, as discussed by Ashforth and Kreiner (2013; 2014). Occupations exist that could be construed as dirty work, but which come accompanied by a certain level of occupational prestige. Ashforth and Kreiner (2013; 2014) posit that this high level of occupational prestige can serve as a status shield, insulating the occupational members from stigmatisation by outsiders. This is the case for occupations within Skill Levels 3 and 4, as these occupations require the completion of at least a single form of tertiary education.

Not every occupation can be considered dirty work. For an occupation to be considered dirty work in this research, it must taint its occupational members with at least two out of the three dimensions (physical, social or moral), taint its occupational members severely from a single of these dimensions or is being perceived as stigmatised from a societal perspective.

#### ***Dependent variable 1: job satisfaction***

The first dependent variable is job satisfaction. Within the survey this variable is measured by asking the following statement: “*I’m satisfied with my job*”. This statement is measured according to a five-point satisfaction scale, ranging from *extremely dissatisfied* to *extremely satisfied*. In this case, a score of zero represents the least form of job satisfaction and four is the highest possible form of job satisfaction. This single-item scale is in line with several



studies that used the same measurement for job satisfaction (e.g., Nagy, 2002; Wamous et al., 1997).

***Dependent variable 2: job turnover intentions***

The second dependent variable of the research is job turnover intentions. The questions for this variable are based on the research of Kirschenbaum & Weisberg (1994) and Spector (1985). Existing scales were used but sometimes simplified in language. Within the survey, this variable is measured by four different questions: “*To what extent are you planning to find a new job this year?*”, “*How often do you think about changing your present job for another?*”, “*How often do you think about quitting your present job?*” and “*How often do you think about quitting your present occupation?*”. For the first question, five answer categories range from *extremely unlikely* to *extremely likely*, whereas for the last three questions the five answer categories range from *never* to *always*. To measure job turnover intentions, a pooled variable is created. Hereby, the answer categories *extremely unlikely* and *never* resemble a score of one, whereas the answer categories *extremely likely* and *always* resemble a score of five. In the end, the job turnover intentions scale ranges from one to twenty, where one resembles the lowest intentions for job turnover and twenty the highest intentions for job turnover. The internal validity is after controlling high with a Cronbach’s alpha of .885.

***Independent variable 1: occupational identification (occupational level)***

The first independent variable of the research is occupational identification. The statements for this variable are based on research by Riordan & Weatherly (1999). The scale is with one question reduced within the survey, because of the number of questions. Within the survey, this variable is measured by three different statements: “*It is important to me that others think highly of my occupation.*”, “*It is important to me that others do not criticise my occupation.*” and “*It is important to me that I have frequent contact with people with the same occupation.*”. The five answer categories range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. To measure occupational identification, a pooled variable is created. Hereby, *strongly disagree* resembles a score of one, whereas *strongly agree* resembles a score of five. The occupational identification scale ranges from one to fifteen, where one resembles the lowest form of occupational identification and fifteen is the highest form of occupational identification. The internal validity is reasonable with Cronbach’s alpha .551 after controlling.

***Independent variable 2: co-worker relationship (organisational level)***

The second independent variable of this study is the co-worker relationship. The statements for this variable are based on the study of Chow & Chan (2008). Existing scales were used but sometimes simplified in language. Within the survey, this variable is measured by three different statements: “*In general, I have a good relationship with my co-workers.*”, “*In general, I am involved with my co-workers.*” and “*In general, I know my co-workers will support me when I need it.*”. The five answer categories range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. To measure the co-worker relationship, a pooled variable is created. Hereby, strongly disagree resembles a score of one, whereas strongly agree resembles a score of five. The co-worker relationship scale ranges from one to fifteen, where one resembles the lowest form of co-worker relationship and fifteen is the highest form of co-worker relationship. The internal validity is high with Cronbach’s alpha .838 after controlling.

***Independent variable 3: manager-employee relationship (organisational level)***

The third independent variable of the research is the manager-employee relationship. The statements for this variable are based on the study of Dorenbosch et al. (2011). Existing scales were used but sometimes simplified in language. Within the survey, this variable is measured by three different statements: “*My boss thinks about my health and well-being.*”, “*My boss gives me enough attention.*” and “*My boss offers me help when I need it.*”. The five answer categories range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. To measure the manager-employee relationship, a pooled variable is created. Hereby, strongly disagree resembles a score of one, whereas strongly agree resembles a score of five. The manager-employee relationship scale ranges from one to fifteen, where one resembles the lowest form of the manager-employee relationship and fifteen is the highest form of the manager-employee relationship. Internal validity is high with Cronbach’s alpha .904 after controlling

***Independent variable 4: team cohesion (organisational level)***

The fourth independent variable is team cohesion. The statements for this variable are based on the task & social and behaviour & attitudinal measures of cohesion within the studies of Riordan & Weatherly (1999) and Salas et al. (2015). Within this survey, this variable is measured by four different statements: “*Within my team, co-workers help each other.*”, “*Within my team, co-workers are interested in each other’s work.*”, “*Within my team, co-workers see each other often outside work.*” and “*Within my team, co-workers feel part of the group.*”. The five answer categories range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Hereby,

strongly disagree resembles a score of one, whereas strongly agree resembles a score of five. The team cohesion scale ranges from one to twenty, where one resembles the lowest form of team cohesion and twenty is the highest form of team cohesion. The internal validity is acceptable with Cronbach's alpha .776 after controlling.

***Moderator: perceived stigmatisation***

For this research, a moderator is present to show differences in hypotheses between the severity of perceived stigma among dirty work employees. The statements for this variable are based on the study of Harvey (2001). Existing scales were used, but reduced in the number of statements due to the number of questions in the survey and sometimes simplified in language. The variable is measured by four different statements: "*Mainstream society looks down upon my occupation.*", "*I feel that society views people in my occupation as inferior.*" And "*When I talk to others about my occupation, it feels as if they treat me differently.*". The five answer categories range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Hereby, strongly disagree resembles a score of one, whereas strongly agree resembles a score of five. The stigmatisation scale ranges from one to twenty, where one resembles the lowest form of perceived stigma and fifteen is the highest form of perceived stigma. The internal validity is high with Cronbach's alpha .777 after controlling.

***Control variable 1: work engagement***

The first control variable is work engagement. Work engagement can be an important factor in whether an individual intends to leave their job. Different studies found results that work engagement is positively related to the determination to continue to work with one's organisation (Bothma & Roodt, 2013; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Within the survey, this variable is measured by using the short Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The following statements are used: "*I am enthusiastic about my job*", "*I am immersed in my work*" and "*At my work, I feel bursting with energy*". The five answer categories ranged from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Hereby, strongly disagree resembles a score of one, whereas strongly agree resembles a score of five. The statements are pooled together to form a scale. The work engagement scale ranges from one to fifteen, where one resembles the lowest form of work engagement and fifteen is the highest form of work engagement. Internal validity is high with Cronbach's alpha .832 after controlling.

***Control variable 2: gender***

The second control variable is gender. Savickas (1985) and Goossens (2001) argue that women are more committed to their career goals and have better-defined occupational identities compared to their male counterparts because women need to possess a more stable occupational identity to choose and enter a male-dominated occupation. Besides, gender can also influence job satisfaction. Hodson (1989) argues that women report greater job satisfaction than men in general: men may be more willing to verbalise dissatisfaction with work than women, because of different socialisation. This results, in possible changes in the results due to gender differences. Within the survey, respondents are asked to give up their gender. Gender is included in the analysis as three dummy variables: one for *women*, one for *men* and one for *other*.

***Control variable 3: age***

The third control variable is age. Job satisfaction may be influenced by age. The reasoning behind this is if employees are older, many obtain more satisfying jobs through experiences and seniority. This leads to a positive relation between age and job satisfaction (O'Brien, 1981). Besides age may influence job turnover intentions, because young employees have more questions about what is expected from them on the job compared to mid-career and mature workers as they start their careers. This leads to young employees having higher job turnover intentions than older employees because young employees still need a match between what they want and what they can find within a job (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Within the survey, respondents are asked to give up their age.

***Control variable 4: education***

The fourth control variable is education. Education can be seen as a form of human capital. Research shows that more human capital (increase in the amount of following education), results in higher job turnover intentions. Having more human capital is associated with the flexibility and capability to change jobs (Manchester, 2010). Thus, education may influence job turnover intentions. Besides, according to Akintayo (2011), human capital is key to increasing job satisfaction. If a person can realise their full potential by following more education, this can increase their performance which relates to more satisfaction with the job. Within the survey, respondents are asked to give up the number of years they had education after primary education.

### ***Control variable 5: income***

The fifth control variable is income. Income may influence job satisfaction effects. By receiving a high income for a job, employees are more motivated to make more effort in their job, which leads to higher levels of job satisfaction (Bakan & Buyukbese, 2013). Besides, the more a person is rewarded in actual income, the less likely the person will be to leave his organisation. This results in the possible influence of income on job turnover intentions (Farris, 2008). Within the survey, respondents are asked to indicate on a scale base what their annual earnings are.

### **3.2 Descriptive statistics**

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for this study. When taking the dependent variables into regard, the means show that dirty work employees are overall satisfied (3.74) with their job and have low job turnover intentions (8.86). This shows, that within dirty work occupations, employees overall are happy with their occupations and have low intentions to change to something else considering the conditions. The independent variables show, overall, a positive presence of the mechanisms within the workgroup culture. In the end, 385 women, 96 men and 2 other genders are included in the dataset. The annual earnings of the dirty work employees lay between 20.000 and 25.000 euros.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive statistics*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Job satisfaction	3.74	1.18	1	5
Job turnover intentions	8.86	3.65	4	20
Occupational identity	9.89	2.59	3	15
Co-worker relationship	12.91	2.26	3	15
Manager-employee relationship	9.21	3.57	3	15
Team cohesion	14.94	3.37	4	20
Stigma	9.07	3.05	3	15
Work engagement	11.22	2.83	3	15
Gender (men)	.20	-	0	1
Gender (other)	.01	-	0	1
Age	46.18	12.36	18	100

Education	7.96	3.02	2	27
Income	5.67	2.05	1	9
<hr/>				
N	483			

### 3.3 Method of analysis

For this study, there is made use of a multiple regression analysis. The analysis constitutes of two executions: one for job satisfaction and one for job turnover intentions. Each analysis constitutes of three models. Model 1 contains the main relations occupational identity (occupational level), co-worker relationship, manager-employee relationship and team cohesion (organisational level) on job satisfaction or job turnover intentions. In model 2 the control variables of work engagement, gender, age, education and income are added with stigmatisation (moderator). In model 3 the four interaction terms with stigmatisation are added.

### Results

In Table 2 the results of the multiple regression analyses for job satisfaction can be found. Model 1 shows the main effects of the workgroup culture variables on job satisfaction. When the main effects are considered, 17.1 percent ( $F(4, 478) = 24.646, p < .001$ ) of job satisfaction can be explained. In this model, positive significant effects of the co-worker relationship ( $B = .062; p < .05$ ) and manager-employee relationship ( $B = .102; p < .001$ ) are present. This shows that a positive relationship with your co-workers and with your manager is important to be satisfied with your job. In model 2, the moderator stigma and control variables, work engagement, gender, age, education and income are included. By including these variables, the explained variance has increased to 36.4 percent ( $F(11, 471) = 24.476, p < .001$ ). By adding these variables, the significant effect of the co-worker relationship has disappeared, which leads to the idea of a coincidental significant effect in the first model. However, the manager-employee relationship stays as a significant predictor for job satisfaction ( $B = .040; p < .05$ ). When looking at the control variables, only work engagement shows a positive significant effect in increasing job satisfaction ( $B = .204; p < .001$ ). In model 3, the interaction terms of stigma with the main effects are added. The explained variance of the third model has increased minimally to 37 percent ( $F(15, 467) = 18.297, p < .001$ ). Hereby, the extent of perceived stigma does not affect the necessity of one of the main variables related to job satisfaction. Furthermore, the model shows the stable

positively significant effect of work engagement in relation to job satisfaction ( $B = .204$ ;  $p = < .001$ ) and a significant positive effect of being men on job satisfaction ( $B = .304$ ;  $p = < .05$ ).

Table 3 shows the results of the multiple regression analyses for job turnover intentions. In model 1, the main effects are shown. The explained variance of this first model is higher for job turnover intentions than it was for job satisfaction with 23.2 percent ( $F(4, 478) = 36.166$ ,  $p = < .001$ ). The main effects show the same significant results with a positive outcome as for job satisfaction, namely for co-worker relationship ( $B = -.203$ ;  $p = < .01$ ) and manager-employee relationship ( $B = -.416$ ;  $p = < .001$ ). The negative regression coefficient shows that a better relationship with your co-workers and manager relates to lower job turnover intentions.

In model 2 the same moderator and control variables are added for job satisfaction. The explained variance of this model is increased to 38.7 percent ( $F(11, 471) = 27.027$ ,  $p = < .001$ ). The main effects of predicting job turnover intentions changed the same way as for job satisfaction. The main effect of the co-worker relationship disappeared, whereas the main effect of the manager-employee relationship remained present ( $B = -.258$ ;  $p = < .001$ ).

Besides, three control variables and the moderator show significant effects. When looking at the control variables being more engaged with your work results in lower job turnover intentions ( $B = -.426$ ;  $p = < .001$ ), being older results in lower job turnover intentions ( $B = -.027$ ;  $p = < .05$ ) and having received more education results in higher job turnover intentions ( $B = .103$ ;  $p = < .05$ ). At last, the variable stigma shows that more perceived stigmatisation leads to higher job turnover intentions ( $B = .218$ ;  $p = < .001$ ). In model 3 the interaction terms of stigma with the main effects are added. The explained variance of the third model has increased minimally to 39.1 percent ( $F(15, 467) = 19.989$ ,  $p = < .001$ ). Also, for job turnover intentions, the extent of perceived stigma does not affect the necessity of one of the main variables. The control variables work engagement ( $B = -.425$ ;  $p = < .001$ ), age ( $B = -.027$ ;  $p = < .05$ ) and education ( $B = .108$ ;  $p = < .05$ ) show also the same significant effects as in model 2.

#### **4.1 Sensitivity analyses**

After the main regression analyses, three sensitivity checks were done. First, taking the reasonable Cronbach's Alpha of occupational identity (.551) into consideration, the three statements, with the corresponding interaction terms, were separately reanalysed to see if the effects would change. This analysis did not alter the findings.

Second, a check has been done on whether modelling choices affected the results. To measure turnover intentions, statements in the variable were included that measured organisational turnover and occupational turnover. Within the check, one of these statements was removed to see if the effects changed. This was not the case.

Third, and last, all models were reanalysed to account for potential multicollinearity (correlation .697) for the variables team cohesion & co-worker relations. First, the models were reanalysed without team cohesion and co-worker relations. When excluding co-worker relationship when analysing turnover intentions, team cohesion has a significant effect on job turnover ( $B = -.141$ ;  $p < .05$ ) even after adding the control variables ( $B = -.102$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In the case of removing team cohesion, co-worker relationship has a stronger significant effect in model 1 then with the inclusion of team cohesion ( $B = -.251$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and remains significant in model 2 ( $B = -.129$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The same changes in significance take place too when looking at job satisfaction. When excluding co-worker relationship, team cohesion has a significant effect within model 1 ( $B = .059$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and 2 ( $B = .042$ ;  $p < .05$ ). In the case of removing team cohesion, co-worker relationship has a stronger effect in model 1 ( $B = .092$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and remains significant in model 2 ( $B = .050$ ;  $p < .05$ ).



**Table 2***Multiple regression analyses for variables predicting job satisfaction*

N = 483	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3			
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE		
Occupational identity	.003	.019	-.016	.018	.013	.046		
Co-worker relationship	.062*	.030	.017	.028	-.043	.080		
Manager-employee relationship	.102**	.015	.040*	.014	-.019	.042		
Team cohesion	.031	.021	.035	.019	.044	.058		
Stigma			.006	.016	-.088	.088		
Work engagement			.204**	.018	.204**	.018		
Gender (men)			.304	.129	.289*	.130		
Gender (other)			-.254	.693	-.465	.713		
Age			.003	.004	.003	.004		
Education			.007	.015	.006	.015		
Income			.031	.024	.033	.024		
Occupational identity*stigma					-.004	.005		
Co-worker relationship*stigma					.006	.008		
Manager-employee relationship*stigma					.006	.004		
Team cohesion*stigma					.000	.006		
Constant			1.509**	.323	.032	.416	.971	.913
R <sup>2</sup>			.171		.364		.370	
F			24.646		24.476		18.297	

*Note.* B = unstandardised regression coefficients. SE = standard error. \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$

**Table 3***Multiple regression analyses for variables predicting job turnover intentions*

	N = 483		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
			B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Occupational identity			.030	.058	-.010	.056	-.060	.138
Co-worker relationship			-.203*	.030	-.054	.083	.014	.243
Manager-employee relationship			-.416**	.015	-.258**	.043	-.091	.127
Team cohesion			-.051	.021	-.079	.056	-.072	.175
Stigma					.218**	.047	.437	.268
Work engagement					-.426**	.054	-.425**	.054
Gender (men)					-.498	.391	-.472	.394
Gender (other)					-.245	2.098	.229	2.160
Age					-.027*	.011	-.027*	.011
Education					.103*	.044	.106*	.045
Income					-.130	.073	-.135	.073
Occupational identity*stigma							.006	.015
Co-worker relationship*stigma							-.006	.023
Manager-employee relationship*stigma							-.018	.013
Team cohesion*stigma							-.002	.018
Constant			15.774**	.957	17.260**	1.259	15.108**	2.768
R <sup>2</sup>			.232		.373		.371	
F			36.166		27.027		19.989	

*Note.* B = unstandardised regression coefficients. SE = standard error. \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .001$

## Conclusion and discussion

This study has focused on empirically testing the mechanisms within the workgroup culture framework of Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) related to job satisfaction and turnover intentions. The main conclusion is that the workgroup culture exists within the dirty work context, but not as theorised by Ashforth & Kreiner (1999). The results show that direct colleagues (manager relationship and co-worker relationship to a certain extent) on the work floor are the only thing that matters to employees and not the occupational connections or organisational team-level behaviour. This shows that the two-dimensional workgroup culture idea of Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) only one-dimensional is in practice: the organisational workgroup culture. Therefore, the theoretical framework of Ashforth & Kreiner needs to be revised whereby the focus needs to lay on the organisational cultural processes.

An explanation for these results can be found in the daily working conditions of the employees. When working within a child care facility, supermarket or mentally disabled care facility, the persons that dirty work employees see daily are their co-workers or their managers. The relationship with the people you work with and report to daily make the conditions favourable to stay and to like the job. Another explanation can be the tangibility of the relationships as opposed to the team-level factors. Within the above-mentioned sectors, employees work within big teams, that change during the day or from day to day. The daily changing working environments of the team may shift the focus of the importance of tight group connections, into the everyday tasks that need to be done with the co-workers and managers around you at the moment. The employees have a lot of tasks to do and don't have the time to focus on team bonding activities or wanting to be a group member. The direct relationships are therefore more tangible at work than the occupational group membership or team cohesiveness.

Now it is clear how the workgroup culture is shaped with empirical evidence, the results give more insight into possible practical implications regarding the retention of dirty work employees and thus the sustainability of jobs in general. To guarantee employee retention within dirty work occupations, the focus needs to be paid on the construction of co-worker relationships and manager-employee relationships on the work floor. How this can and needs to be done, will be discussed in the policy recommendation. When the increase in retention is visible, this will lead to fewer labour shortages among lots of crucial occupations, which will result in securing human knowledge, because employees will stay within the organisations. Besides, by decreasing labour shortages, there is less necessity for short-term

solutions such as uncertified teaching which will have a positive influence on the educational standards and thus the sustainability of jobs (Olsthoorn & Roeters, 2013).

The major contribution of this study is to be the first one to examine dirty work employees across different sectors. Earlier studies within this context were only focussed on one single group of dirty work employees, whereas this study contains ten different occupations. A second contribution of this study is to build on the current knowledge of the workgroup culture framework and be one among few to get insight into the sociological aspect within this context, whereas other studies were most of the time individual-level focused. The last contribution of this study is the quantitative background. Where most of the studies within the dirty work context have an ethnographic background, only a few studies are present that study dirty work with quantitative research methods.

However, this study has also four limitations. The first limitation is the effect of co-worker relationships. As it came forward in the analysis, the effect of co-worker relationships disappeared after controlling and is influenced by the presence of the main variable team cohesion. This may be caused by multicollinearity because the deletion of co-worker relationships results in a significant effect on team cohesion and vice versa. Therefore, the effect of co-worker relationships is with a lot of precaution taken into consideration, because the first models of Tables 2 and 3 show that there are prevalent effects of this variable. The second limitation is the difference in measuring job turnover intentions and actual turnover. This study looked at the intentions of employees to turnover and linked them to the actual labour shortages. Measuring turnover intentions doesn't necessarily lead to actual turnover. Hereby, a discussion point arises if the workgroup culture as in this study leads to leaving the organisation or occupation. The third limitation is the overrepresentation of females (385 opposed to 96 men) in this study. This is due to the big response rate of pedagogic staff from childcare facilities that is member of the labour union FNV. This occupation is most often dominated by women, which resulted in this overrepresentation. The results may thus be biased in this way. The fourth limitation is the possible incorrect measurements of some variables. Due to the length of the survey, because of the number of questions, some statements for measuring some variables such as occupational identification were deleted. This may have resulted in incomplete measurements of certain variables that influenced the internal validity and the results.

To build on this study, future research should focus on the aspects that dirty work employees deem important within the co-worker and manager-employee relationships. For now, it is unknown which relational aspects are important in the eyes of dirty work employees

to be satisfied and retained. Having more insight into these relational aspects makes it clearer for managers on which points they need to focus on when constructing a relationship with an employee and how organisations can create a constructive environment for co-worker relationships.

### **Policy advice**

Now that the emphasis is on the importance of co-worker and manager-employee relationships to increase job satisfaction and retain dirty work employees, concrete measures need to be taken within the organisations to foster these workgroup culture mechanisms. It is important to note that relationships cannot be forced, as tensions may arise if there is no natural connection between individuals. While the recommendations mentioned below may not work for every employee, they are expected to have a positive impact on the majority (Dur & Sol, 2009).

#### **6.1 Recommendation 1: creation of awareness training manager-employee relationship**

The first recommendation is focussed on HR departments of dirty work organisations. For managers, awareness needs to be raised of the importance of investing in manager-employee relationships. Studies have consistently shown that investing in employees is crucial for strengthening these relationships (e.g., Uhl-Bien et al., 2007; Brite et al., 2015; Moore et al., 2020). Various independent characteristics, such as trust, diversity, mindfulness, interrelatedness, respect, varied interaction and effective communication, are successful in improving work relationships (e.g., Tallia et al., 2006). To enhance manager-employee relationships, a training program should be developed based on these proven characteristics. An example of a model that includes most of these characteristics directly (such as trust, respect, varied interaction and effective communication) and can be used to base a training on is the Leadership Making Model (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This model is focused on the development of different characteristics within manager-employee interactions over time and is empirically tested. The emphasis within the training program needs to lay on which essential points managers need to focus on to establish relationships with their employees to keep them satisfied. It should be designed for both current and new managers who have direct supervision over employees in dirty work occupations.

### **6.2 Recommendation 2: following the awareness training and investing in the manager-employee relationship**

The second recommendation is for managers to actively follow the training and invest time in getting to know their employees, gradually building a mutual foundation as demonstrated by the Leadership Making Model shows (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). To ensure that managers prioritise relationship-building, they should maintain a digital diary and report progress or struggles to HR weekly for the first year after the training. If there are significant struggles, HR can provide support by arranging a meeting to discuss the issues and offer advice. This approach allows the organisation to invest in building a relationship with the manager based on important characteristics such as trust, interrelatedness, respect and effective communication (Tallia et al., 2006), ultimately fostering a healthier working environment. By supporting the manager this way, this person can reflect on how to improve the manager-employee relationships on the work floor. If feedback from employees is positive and there are no complaints, the manager is granted autonomy to invest in the relationship in their own way based on the training, as job autonomy contributes to achieving set goals (Khoshnaw & Alavi, 2020).

### **6.3 Recommendation 3: invest in team incentives to foster co-worker relationships**

The third and last recommendation focuses on co-worker relationships. While co-workers should have the freedom to develop relationships as they see fit, managers can play a role in fostering these relationships through varied interactions (Tallia et al., 2006). Social relationships outside of work activities are often successful in building connections among co-workers. Encouraging informal get-together activities such as bowling trips or barbeques at least once a year can facilitate social interaction and strengthen relationships among co-workers. Research supports the importance of these team incentives in retaining employees (Tallia et al., 2006; Dur & Sol, 2009). Adequate budget allocation by higher management is necessary for these events to promote a healthy work environment. Managers are responsible for planning these activities and selecting a date that suits most employees. Participation in these activities is voluntary to avoid the negative consequences of forced relationship formation (Dur & Sol, 2009). Additionally, the presence of a manager during these events facilitates social interaction between the manager and employees, potentially strengthening the manager-employee relationship (Tallia et al., 2006).

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## **Appendix A**

### ***List of occupations + number of respondents within the dataset***

- Train drivers → 45 respondents
- Conductors → 55 respondents
- Customer service employees → 20 respondents
- Community service officers → 5 respondents
- Mechanics → 4 respondents
- Child care personnel → 321 respondents
- Supermarket employees → 16 respondents
- Personal companion within mentally disabled care facilities → 12 respondents
- Nurse within mentally disabled care facilities → 5 respondents

Total of 483 respondents