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**Quality of Work Life: A Generation Y Perspective**

by

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### **Abstract**

The main objective of this study was to explore and gain perspective on the quality of work life of Generation Y employees through investigating their experiences within the workplace, specifically focusing on the enhancing and inhibiting factors. Enhancing factors are those that are made readily available by the organisation so as to ensure a productive and satisfied Generation Y cohort. Hindering factors are those that, when absent, may impede productivity and the generation's need to reach their full potential. Consistent with the objectives of the study the data-gathering technique used was a semi-structured interview; the interviews were conducted with seven participants who were considered to have come from a knowledge environment. Thematic analysis was utilised to create abstract themes from the participants' narratives on their experiences in the workplace, and the data was interpreted through an interpretive stance. The study results indicated 12 main themes that are indicative of the factors that the participants perceive as enhancing and inhibiting within the organisation. In addition, this study aims to be of value to human resource practitioners, managers and the organisation as a whole, and to implement suitable policies and management styles that will help retain, motivate and accommodate this generation.

*Keywords:* Generation Y, enhancing factors, inhibiting factors, quality of work life, experiences, South African context

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The world is changing at a rapid and continuous pace which has resulted in changing organisations and the generational composition within the workplace (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Organisations have recently been faced with the arrival of the youngest cohort of workers, known as Generation Y. This group, like all others before them, has come with its own attitudes, perceptions and expectations about the ideal workplace (McKevitt, Redfern, La-Placa, & Wolfe, 2003). Considering Generation Y's workplace attitudes is one way to determine how they want to function within the organisation, and to further indicate what they value about work as well as give a clearer understanding of how they define their quality of work life. When considering the quality of work life an eco-systematic approach could be adopted in order to list all the possible factors, variables and influences with which someone could interact and which could contribute to their general state of mind (Rethinam & Ismail, 2008). However, before defining quality of work life, it is essential to start by defining quality of life as all facets of one's life are interdependent.

As a multidimensional construct, Felce (1997) describes three elements that are important in defining the quality of life namely, life conditions, personal values and personal satisfaction, and the interaction of these three elements. Life conditions can be understood as the objective description of individuals and their circumstances. Subjective well-being refers to personal satisfaction with such life conditions or lifestyle. Personal values and aspirations are the relative weights or importance which an individual attaches to various aspects of their objective life conditions or subjective well-being. These three elements suggest that an individual's quality of life is the sum of the objectively measurable life conditions experienced by the individual,

similar to the quality of work life which may constitute the individual's experiences in the workplace.

The World Health Organisation (1997) defines quality of life as:

an individual's perceptions of their position in life, in the context of their culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad-ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their environment (p. 1).

According to studies conducted by (Bearfield, 2003; Raines, 2002; Smith, 2010), quality of life is defined as the general feeling of happiness, a definition resonating with the beliefs held by Generation Y employees about their lives in general. Usually, individuals who are satisfied with their lives are satisfied with their work as work is an integral part of their lives (Rethinam & Ismail, 2008). These definitions of quality of life provide the necessary foundation required to enhance our understanding of what quality of work life is.

Lau, Wong, Chan and Law (2001) define quality of work life as "the favourable working environment that supports and promotes satisfaction by providing employees with rewards, job security and career growth opportunities." (p.5). This definition implies that individuals who are not satisfied with reward may be satisfied with job security and, to some extent, would enjoy the career opportunities provided by the organisation for their personal as well as professional growth. However, a definition that best exemplifies how Generation Y would define quality of work life in a contemporary work environment is explained by Serey (2006). The definition is related to meaningful and satisfying work, and can be divided into four parts namely, (1) an opportunity to exercise one's talents and capacities to face challenges and situations that require

independent initiative and self-direction; (2) an activity thought to be worthwhile by the individuals involved; (3) an activity in which one understands the role the individual plays in the achievement of some overall goals; and (4) a sense of taking pride in what one is doing and in doing it well.

The facets of work life which may include, but are not limited to, opportunities for continued growth and security, adequate rewards and compensation, mentoring, social integration into the organisation, professional and personal development (Tabassum, Rahman, & Jahan, 2012), ultimately determine the individual's quality of work life (Lau et al., 2001). It is imperative to consider the facets of work life that contribute to Generation Y's quality of work life in the South African work context. Before we can understand who Generation Y is it would be required to have an understanding of what a generation is.

A generation is considered an aggregate of all people born roughly in the same time span, who share a common location in history and common experiences, and hence a common collective persona (Howe & Strauss, 2000). According to Johnson and Johnson (2010), a generation can thus be defined as "a group of individuals born and living contemporaneously, who have common knowledge and experiences that affect their thoughts, attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours"(p. 6). Kopperschmidt (2000) had earlier defined a generation as "an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location and significant events at critical developmental stages"(p. 66). A generation can further be understood from a generational theory perspective.

### **1.1 Generational Theory**

Generational theory draws our attention to the different generational groups and their unique personas (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). The theory is based on the premise that there are

four cyclical universal formative environments that differentially influence the psychographic profile and behaviour of people (Knipe & du Plessis, 2005). The four environmental cycles rotate between cycles of growth, maturation, entropy, and destruction, and each cycle is said to be influenced by the values and experiences of previous generations (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Knipe & du Plessis, 2005). The cycles are each linked to an archetype generation that has similar outlooks on family, values and culture. The first archetype is known as the Artists; this was a generation born during great crisis and is known as the Traditionalists, born between 1922 and 1945 (Drago, 2006; Howe & Strauss, 2007).

The second archetype is referred to as the Prophets. The Prophet generation was born between 1946 and 1964 during disruptive times, wars and political struggles. The Baby Boomers are an example of a Prophet archetype and were subsequently followed by the Nomad archetype. This generation was born during a time of cultural transitions, changes in societal values and viewed by previous generations as rebels, they were referred to as Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979. Generation X was followed by Generation Y, known as the Hero archetype, born in times of major political changes and rapid technological advancements (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Generational theory strives to explain that the era in which an individual was born affects that specific generation's world view (Johnson & Johnson, 2010; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Each generation is categorised into an age group which makes it possible to identify the period that generation comes from, and the unique characteristics attributed to that specific generation (Epinsoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010). However, there are exceptions to the rule and not everyone can be confined to a specific generational box (Cordrington & Grant-Marshall, 2004).

Generational theory gives an indication of how each generation within a specific age group tends

to generally act and react in a similar manner. The theory further specifies the generation's ideals, beliefs and their view of the world at a particular period in time (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Understanding what motivates, inspires and hinders each generation should be the focus of all organisations. Recently, the need to specifically identify and understand a new generation that is entering the workplace has become prevalent as this is the generation that will soon be a driving force within the workplace (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

The older working generation, the Baby Boomers, aged between 49 and 65 years are being replaced by the recent advent of those referred to as Generation Y. There is no real consensus in literature regarding the age brackets used to define Generation Y. There are researchers such as (Broadbridge, Maxwell, & Ogden, 2007; Morton, 2002) who define Generation Y as those born between 1977 and 1994, while Chowdhury and Coulter (2006) and Reisenwitz and Iyer (2000) describe Generation Y as those born between the years 1977 and 1988. However, for the purpose of this study, Generation Y is identified as those born during the 1980s to date, as referred to by Erickson (2008), Howe and Strauss (2000) and Lancaster and Stillman (2002).

## **1.2 Who is Generation Y?**

The titles used to refer to Generation Y also differ according to the researchers' preferences; they have been referred to as Nexters (Gardner, 2006), Generation Next (Taylor & Keeter, 2008), Google Generation (Rowlands, Nicholas, Williams, Huntington, Fieldhouse, Gunter, & Tenopir, 2008), and Digital Natives (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2010). However, Millennials and Generation Y are the most utilised titles to refer to this generation (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2004; Meister & Willyerd, 2010; Thompson & Gregory, 2012; Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010). According to Shragay and Tziner (2011), the term Generation Y

was invented by the magazine Advertising Age in 1993 to refer to the generation born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Generation Y is currently the largest generation to enter the workforce since the Baby Boomers who are now set to retire. Within the next few years Generation Y will make up the largest segment of the working population (Thompson, 2012). Generation Y is the most recent group to enter the workforce, with the majority of its members currently in entry-level positions.

Characteristics that define and shape this generation are, among others, parental influences, the Internet, and an increasingly globally-connected world (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). In addition, unlike the previous generations, Generation Y has close relationships with their parents and have been characterised as having grown up with inflated self-esteems, a sense of entitlement and a belief that anything and everything is possible (Erickson, 2008). This is a generation that is believed to be highly optimistic, socially active, and have high expectations of themselves and others. As a whole, this generation is considered more educated and techno-savvy than all previous generational groups (Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi, 2012). They are concerned about the way they will work which places high importance on the quality of the workspace, the people they will work with, and their quality of life in general.

Generation Y in South Africa has been raised in times of major political transitions and turmoil. They were born during the apartheid era in the 1980s and were eventually part of one of the greatest defining moments in South African history, the abolishment of apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela as the president of the Democratic Republic of South Africa in 1994 (Lynton & April, 2011). This generation has been left with the responsibility of creating a unified society while simultaneously developing and maintaining their own cultures as well as integrating into a diverse working society (Hewitt & Ukpere, 2012).

The new millennium offers many challenges and opportunities to Generation Y and businesses alike in this increasingly complex world. Some of these challenges include the ongoing globalisation of the economy and knowledge that are intensified by radical technological advancements. Within the complex work environment diversity is also growing with four generations currently working simultaneously side by side within the organisation (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012). For organisations this means that the workplace is currently a co-existence of an age-diverse workforce where previously it was characterised by long-term, mutually loyal and employer-employee relations that produced work through command and control management (Eisner, 2005).

Organisations are currently struggling to implement a management style that is effective and flexible, and will cater for all generations within the organisation (Streeter, 2004). The influx of Generation Y into organisations requires employers to start considering how this might impact the organisation and what needs to be done to ensure the smooth transition of these young employees into the workforce. Employers are going to need new and innovative ways of managing Generation Y if they want to retain them as this generation has a different attitude towards work compared to that of preceding generations (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). They are a generation that expects to be challenged, they want to provide innovative solutions that will contribute to making significant contributions to the business and be part of the decision-making processes.

As with previous generations, organisations should aim to understand the career expectations of Generation Y and how those expectations influence how and what they think about work, and why they make the kinds of career decisions that they do. This is the generation that will be driving the organisation to success, hence the understanding that this generation is

vital for the employer who wants to create new-age strategies to retain them. To attract and engage the best of Generation Y professionals the organisation needs to place more emphasis on providing what they value the most (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). The organisation needs to establish exactly which factors enhance or inhibit performance of Generation Y. The important thing is not to assume that what motivated the previous generation will motivate this generation. If Generation Y perceives that the organisation they are in provides an environment conducive to creativity and productivity, the organisation then experiences the greatness of this generation. Their fresh perspectives and innovative ideas steer the organisation to new frontiers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010).

The studies that have been conducted on Generation Y in countries outside South Africa indicate that Generation Y is interested in those organisations that create a knowledge environment; they prefer work environments that are conducive to continued professional learning and growth (Espinoza, Ukleja, & Rusch, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2010). They are likely to perform best when their abilities are identified and matched with challenging work that motivates and drives them fully (Martin & Tulgan, 2006). Unlike previous generations that put their careers before everything, Generation Y puts life before work. Their jobs have to conform to their lives and not the other way around. They expect to have a balance between their work and their lives (Smith, 2010), but are encouraged when given responsibility. They do not see work solely as an investment in the company, but rather an investment in their development and growth as individuals (Baruch, 2004).

Understanding the characteristics of this generation may assist employers in determining how to effectively manage them. Some of Generation Y's characteristics may make it easier to manage than those of Generation X (Reisenwitz & Iyer, 2000). Generation Y has been shown to



value teamwork and fairness and is likely to be more positive than Generation X on a range of workplace issues including work-life balance, performance reviews, and availability of mentors rather than supervisors who tend to want to micro-manage them (Alsop, 2008; Johnson & Johnson, 2010). Essentially, this generation will prove to be of great importance when it comes to contributing to the success of the organisation.

### **1.3 The Importance of Generation Y in Organisations**

Why should organisations even consider trying to understand Generation Y? Firstly and most importantly, this generation is the future of the organisation (Martin & Tulgan, 2002; Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Therefore, organisations need to adapt or be prepared to face the long-term consequences of not accommodating this generation appropriately. Those organisations that are embracing this cohort of young professionals will inevitably enhance their competitive advantage. Organisations need these individuals as their ability to think differently and “out of the box” brings about ideas, concepts, and strategies that the organisations can implement for their benefit (Espinoza, Ukleja & Rusch, 2010).

This generation is technologically advanced; technology is not just a tool to do more work but an integral part of their lives. This serves the organisation well as the organisation is able to keep up with the world and its constant changes (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Generation Y is making organisations aware that if they want to stay current and keep up with global trends it is a necessity that they are up to date with technological advancements and that they understand the importance of social media and networking. Technology creates an environment where information and resources are easily accessible and work can be done at a progressive speed (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Employers who are aware of the needs and expectations as well as those factors that inhibit or limit the generation's ability to reach their full potential, already have an advantage as they are then able to strategise and come up with ways in which to effectively attract this generation (Luscombe, Lewis & Biggs, 2013). Understanding them means that the organisation can cater for their working needs accordingly while simultaneously creating an environment where these young professionals can contribute to the organisation. This is beneficial to the organisation as leaders can then capitalise on their strengths while creating a culture where this generation can thrive.

Generation Y is a generation that is focused on making a difference in the organisation; they thrive on challenges and changes; they are enthusiastic and motivated and do not try to solve new problems with old solutions (Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). These are all factors that organisations should take into consideration when it comes to employing Generation Y, as members of Generation Y will ultimately dominate the workplace. It is imperative to consider the future implications for organisations that do not find solutions to effectively integrate this generation in the current workplace.

#### **1.4 Integration of Generation Y into the Current Workplace**

There is a change in composition and shape of the workplace, which has placed emphasis on understanding the different generations to ensure effective integration and management of expectations (Bennett, Pitt & Price, 2012). With predominantly four generations working side by side in an organisation there is bound to be different views, perceptions, ideas and values, styles of working, and desires which may lead to clashes between the different generations. Organisations need to bridge the generational gaps. A generational gap is the difference in attitudes between people of different generations, leading to a lack of understanding (Concise

Oxford English Dictionary, 2004). Failure to provide the necessary interventions and tools required for successful integration among the different generations may lead to unfavourable outcomes for both employees and the organisation.

Considering that Baby Boomers are currently the dominating group in the workplace (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), it is of importance to identify their characteristics and how they are different from those of Generation Y, as this could ultimately dictate how to integrate the new cohort in an environment that has already for some time been dominated by Baby Boomers (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). The Baby Boomers currently hold prominent leadership positions within the workplace and it is advisable that there be a transition and transference of knowledge from the Baby Boomers to the Millennials through various mentoring programmes (Bennett et al., 2012). Mentoring programmes are developmentally oriented relationships between senior and junior colleagues or peers that may involve advising, role modelling, sharing contact, and giving guidance and general support (Appelbaum et al., 2004). Mentoring relationships between the two generational groups can increase awareness among the groups of their different behaviours, values and aspirations (Bennet et al., 2012).

As managers, Baby Boomers need to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual acceptance and create a climate where Generation Y feels valued (Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Organisations need to consider multi-generational preferences which may be accomplished by ensuring flexibility, as this is fundamental in creating an effective working environment for the different generational groups. While the Baby Boomers may prefer to communicate to HR directly, Generation Y would rather get their queries answered through an online instant-messaging system; these are the kinds of differences that need to be catered for by the organisation (Deloitte, 2012). The different generational groups can be utilised effectively through fostering

opportunities for collaboration. The different generations can contribute their unique skills, knowledge and abilities to reach organisational goals. Members of teams will be able to identify and work with one another's strengths and will learn how to work with and appreciate the different generations. The successful integration of Generation Y into a workplace culture that is mostly influenced by Baby Boomers will require commitment from both generations and the organisation as a whole.

### **1.5 Problem Statement**

A considerable amount of research has been done on Generation Y globally. These studies include, but are not limited to, studies conducted by Deal et al. (2010), Kaifi et al. (2012), Myers and Sadaghiani (2010), Thompson and Gregory (2012) in the United States of America, Cennamo and Gardner (2008) in New Zealand, Luscombe et al. (2013) in Australia, and Hays (2013) in China. However, there is insufficient empirical research available on Generation Y, specifically within the South African work context. This should be a major concern for researchers and organisations alike. Employers within South Africa will have difficulty managing a generation they know nothing about, and previous generations will struggle to work with a new generation if they do not understand how this generation perceives and experiences work. This cohort will be the dominating generation in years to come and one that will be in management positions.

From the above-mentioned it is evident that research is needed to assist organisations to understand this generation, which is complex in its own right. Employers and managers, who are the intended audience for this research, need to understand their behaviour and how to accommodate them in a way that is beneficial to both the employee and the organisation. This problem statement then leads to the research question for this study.

### **1.6 Research Question**

From a quality of work life perspective, how does Generation Y experience the enhancing and inhibiting factors within the emerging South African work context?

### **1.7 Aims of the Study**

The aim of this study is to explore and gain perspective on the quality of work life of Generation Y employees in the South African context. The research will focus on understanding where and how this generation fits into this dynamic, unpredictable, changing, and complex world of work. Furthermore, the study intends to explore how this generation perceives the quality work life and how different factors within the work environment either enhance or inhibit them from reaching their full potential within the organisation. The study intends to assist organisations, practitioners and policy makers to determine how to relate to and integrate this generation of employees into the work environment.

### **1.8 Anticipated Contribution**

This study will add to an existing perspective on Generation Y within a South African work context. Organisations, practitioners in the field, and policy makers may then use this study as a guideline in establishing what the experiences and views of some Generation Y participants are. This in turn may assist to determine how to relate to and integrate the generation in the work environment. I believe that insight into the work lives of this generation will make it possible for the organisation to implement enablers and to minimise those inhibitors that may impose a hindrance with regard to their performance.

### **1.9 Chapter Layout**

Chapter 1 has given an in-depth introduction using available research to help gain an understanding of Generation Y, leading to the problem statement and research question. The aim

of the study was then stated. Chapter 2 was dedicated to the research design of the study, directed by ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research, followed by research findings in Chapter 3, interpretation and sense-making in Chapter 4 and finally, Chapter 5 dealt with the conclusion and recommendations for the study.



## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter will unravel the empirical research design and methodology for the study. According to Mouton (1996) the research design serves to “plan, structure and execute the research to maximise the validity of the findings, it gives directions from the underlying philosophical assumptions to the research design and data collection” (p. 175). This research design aims to shed light on how the study was conducted, indicating all major parts of the research study related to the researcher’s design and methodology. The samples, measures and methods utilised within the study are critical in the attempt to address the research question. Furthermore, this chapter will be covering my underlying philosophical stance, which is a critical component in determining the approach adopted for this particular research.

#### 2.1 Qualitative Research

To answer the stated research question, I conducted the research using a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is a system of inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative description to inform the researcher’s understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. Qualitative research takes place in natural settings, employing a combination of observations, interviews and document reviews (Hammersley, 2007; Myers, 2009). This specific approach was utilised as there was a need to understand, explain and interpret Generation Y’s workplace experiences and social interactions. The qualitative paradigm is suitable for exploring new areas of inquiry and new topics and niches (Myers, 2009), and has allowed me as the researcher to draw boundaries for the topic and learn the language that people use to talk about the subject at hand.

This approach is the most suitable to use for this study as it allowed me as the researcher to accurately record information that was provided by the research participants in terms of reality as seen through their eyes (Sandelowski, 2000). The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). The qualitative method acknowledges my own biases in interpreting the information sourced from the participants. In this paradigm, post hoc conclusions emerge from the collected interview data, and a priori conclusions that are quantitative in nature are avoided (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **2.2 Research Strategy**

For the purpose of this research an interpretive case-study design was utilised. According to Payne and Payne (2004), “a case study is a detailed study of a single social unit, the social unit is usually located in one physical place, the people making up the social unit being differentiated from others who are not part of it” (p.31). According to Yin (1994), the case-study design must have five components: The research question(s), its propositions, its unit(s) of analysis, a determination of how the data are linked to the propositions, and criteria to interpret the findings. The previous chapter has already explored and identified some of the stated components. The rest of the components are clarified throughout the study.

Interpretive case studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them. Therefore, the interpretive case-study approach will provide deep insight into the dynamic and complex world of lived experience from the point of view of Generation Y (Schwandt, 2001). An interpretive explanation has been of assistance in regards to documenting the participant’s point of view as well as translating it into a form that can be clearly understood by the reader.



The purpose of the case-study research will be to use empirical evidence from real people in real knowledge environments to make an original contribution to the existing body of knowledge (Myers, 2009). A case study best suits this research as it pays close attention to the context in which the case is studied. It has assisted in compiling a description about the specific case and draws a general conclusion so that other researchers interested in this field and policy makers and organisations with a similar interest can also make use of the rich information that this study may provide.

### **2.3 Philosophical Considerations**

The research is based on underlying philosophical assumptions about what the researcher considers as valid research, and in order to conduct and evaluate any research it is imperative to know what these assumptions are as “these assumptions shape the approach to theory and the methods utilised, and they are grounded deeply in the researchers beliefs about the world” (Marsh & Furlong, 2002, p.18). The ontological and epistemological assumptions are made explicit.

**2.3.1 Ontology.** Ontology is the study of nature and is a form of reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Researchers’ basic beliefs as well as how they view the world lies behind their theoretical perspectives (Myers, 2009). I position myself as interpretivist. This implies that I believe that there is no single reality that exists, but that individuals make sense of their own subjective reality and attach meaning to it (Marsh & Furlong, 2002).

In this case, taking an interpretive stance has assisted me in providing an in-depth insight into the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of Generation Y employees. This approach is dependent upon the construction of the social world, characterised by interaction between the researcher and the participants (Mingers, 2001). The way that I as a

researcher interpreted the findings of the study played a key role in bringing about subjectivity that is supported by quality arguments as opposed to statistical exactness (Andrade, 2009).

**2.3.2 Epistemology.** Epistemology refers to “the assumptions about knowledge and how it can be obtained” (Myers, 2009, p.35). It is impossible to engage in knowledge creation without at least tacit assumptions about what knowledge is and how it is constructed (Carter & Little, 2007). The epistemological position reflects the researcher’s view of what we can know about the world and how we can know it (Crotty, 1998). The epistemological assumptions suggest that the findings within research are created as the investigation proceeds.

I will focus on Generation Y employees’ experiences of their quality of work life, and try to understand the context of the phenomenon, as it is the context that defines the situation to make it what it is (Marsh & Furlong, 2002). As a member of the Generation Y cohort myself, I had an interest in hearing the stories of other Generation Y individual employees. I believed that in hearing these stories I was able to get a better understanding of the meaning they attach to work life. This was made possible through an interactive process of talking, listening and writing that took place to acquire the stories of this generation, assuming the interpretivist position has assisted me in the deconstruction and understanding of Generation Y’s experiences in the world of work.

With my ontological and epistemological assumptions clarified, I will now continue by discussing and explaining the research methodology.

## **2.4 Research Methodology**

**2.4.1 Research settings.** The participants for this study were drawn from various organisations considered as knowledge environments. Knowledge environments are those organisations that facilitate and encourage continuous learning, knowledge building, decision-

making, creative thinking and discovery. The design of knowledge environments consists of commonplace activities and specialised expert work (Hussain, Lucas, & Ali, 2004). Knowledge organisations share some common characteristics and one of those fundamental characteristics is that they employ a high proportion of knowledge workers (Kock, McQueen, & Baker, 1996).

This generation wants to utilise organisational members' expertise and interact with those considered knowledge workers. These organisations are predominantly the type of organisations that Generation Y employees seek employment from and were regarded as the best organisations to approach.

**2.4.2 Unit of analysis.** The unit of analysis is considered the major entity that will be analysed in the study, and it concerns itself with whom and what falls under analysis (Myers, 2009). Individual human beings are considered the most typical units of analysis for social scientific research, and any individual may be the unit of analysis (Babbie, Mouton, Voster, & Prozesky, 2012). Within this study, the cases being studied are the unit of analysis and these are the actual individuals that are participating in the study. Therefore, the unit of analysis is the individual, while the cases interviewed are the actual Generation Y employees born between 1980 and 2000.

**2.4.3 Participants.** There are two main sampling methods referred to as probability and non-probability sampling (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Non-probability sampling can be divided into three primary categories namely, purposive sampling, snowballing sampling, and quota sampling (Babbie et al., 2012). For this study, purposive sampling was the technique utilised to select participants. This sampling method is best for this particular research as the individuals were chosen according to specific predetermined characteristics (Mack et al., 2005). This implies that the participants had to be part of the Generation Y employee cohort. They were required to

have two or more years' working experience in any knowledge organisation or an organisation which is part of a knowledge environment.

The participants consisted of both male and female Generation Y employees born between 1980 and 2000. Of the seven participants that took part in the study, two were male and five were female. The participants were from different racial and ethnic groups which included Black, White and Coloured Generation Y employees. The individual's race was not a predetermined characteristic, and the participants were chosen according to their availability and willingness to participate in the study.

**2.4.4 Data-collection techniques.** An interview may be regarded as a systematic way of talking and listening to people; interviews are the most widely employed methods in qualitative research (Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). There are three main types of interviews namely, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews (Niewenhuis, 2010). This research study made use of in-depth, individual semi-structured interviews as a data-collection method. A semi-structured interview was preferred because it allowed free participation and the extraction of rich, dense information (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

I chose to use semi-structured interviews as it is a method that allowed me to have some personal contact with the participants, and to gain continuous new insights into the participant's experiences. The semi-structured interviews enabled the participants to provide elaborate accounts of their particular experiences. According to Myers (2009), semi-structured interviews consist of some pre-formulated questions; there were two main formulated questions that led the interview for this research. The questions were based on the participants experiences of inhibiting and enhancing factors within the organisation. It was important that the basic research questions be sufficiently focused so as to ensure that the relatively homogenous group shared experiences

relating to the topic (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The pre-formulated questions were used as a guide. This ensured that there were no restrictions and I was free to ask other questions emerging from the dialogue. This method presented an opportunity to delve deeply into different aspects of the topic, when it was required to do so. I stopped interviewing participants as soon as there was saturation. Theoretical saturation refers to the point at which data that is collected no longer brings additional insights to the research question (Babbie et al., 2012).

**2.4.5 Recording of data.** Data was recorded by making use of a digital voice recorder and written field notes, with the permission and written consent of the participants. The recorder ensured that everything that was discussed during the interview was captured. Recordings are necessary to assist in recalling the discussion during analysis (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Field notes were taken to provide a descriptive overview and capture the unseen details and actions during the interview (Mack et al., 2005). These notes supplemented the interview which enabled me to have a full picture of what was happening and capture the emotions conveyed during the interviews. Taking notes assisted her in recreating events in the order in which they occurred, and assisted in details that might otherwise have been overlooked. The notes further helped her in establishing additional questions to be asked when necessary.

Furthermore, notes were used to capture non-verbal cues from the participants which were later expanded into rich descriptions of what was observed (Mack et al., 2005). Field notes are essential for reflecting on the information gathered. These reflective notes include more personal descriptions of what has been observed during the interviewing process.

**2.4.6 Data analysis.** Before the data was analysed the interviews were transcribed into text format. Davidson (2009) describes transcriptions as “a process that is theoretical, selective,

interpretive and representational”(p. 37). The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcription refers to “the word-for-word reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are an exact replication of the audio recorded words”(Poland, 1995, p. 292). The transcription of the interviews afforded me the opportunity to become acquainted with and make sense of the data gathered. The data was then analysed by using narrative analysis. A typology of narrative analysis is referred to as thematic analysis (Riessman, 2002). McKenna (2007) defines narratives as “ways of developing identities, representing experiences, and of giving meanings to lives in the past, present and anticipated future”(p.146).

**2.4.7 Narrative analysis.** This is a process that involves organising and presenting the obtained data in a coherent manner. The data was analysed in search-of-narrative strings such as present commonalities running through and across the text as well as narrative threads such as major emerging themes. Themes are outcomes of coding, categorisation and analytic reflection; they are particular patterns in the data relating to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes were extracted from the transcriptions and similar themes were categorised and grouped together.

## **2.5 Writing Styles and Representation**

Qualitative research tends to place emphasis on the reader. It is essential that the researcher writes persuasively so that the reader experiences “being there”. When we are writing our research it is imperative that we keep our readers in mind. There are three main types of writing styles namely, scientific, realistic, and confessional. The scientific writing style is formal, logical and, when possible, mathematical (Sparks, 2002). The scientific writing style aims to tie together objects and fact, to tie together people, and to tie together all those components in a stylistically and grammatically acceptable way (Sparks, 2002). The realist writing style attempts

to give a picture that is as accurate as possible when reporting what has happened in the field (Neergaard & Ulhri, 2007; Sparks, 2002). In realistic tales the authors distance themselves from the finished text, and the author will rarely use the first person “I” in their writing so as to try to maintain an objective stance. Lastly, in the confessional writing style, the researcher is a participant and infiltrates the text (Neergaard & Ulhri, 2007). These tales emphasize the researcher’s point of view. For the purpose of this research a scientific writing style has been adopted.

## **2.6 Strategies to Ensure Quality of Research**

There are several strategies that may be employed to ensure the quality and accuracy of research. The following strategies to ensure trustworthiness, as recommended by (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schurink, 2009; & Shenton, 2004), have been used in this study.

**2.6.1 Trustworthiness** is a fundamental element in qualitative research. The quality of the study is dependent on the trustworthiness of the study and its findings (Shenton, 2004). Designing research that would be considered trustworthy takes into account (1) the credibility of the study which is considered one of the most important aspects in establishing trustworthiness (Schurink, 2009), and (2) internal validity which ensures that the views of the participants are correctly portrayed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I used descriptions as specified by the participant so as to attain an accurate representation of the data.

**2.6.2 Credibility** is involved in establishing that the results of the research are accurately represented. Peer debriefing was used to improve the credibility of this study. The debriefer’s responsibility was to ensure that the study is of an acceptable standard and makes provision for constructive criticism. The debriefer’s role was assumed by my supervisor.

**2.6.3 Transferability** was the third criterion considered. This refers to the external validity of the study. External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure transferability, I provided detailed descriptions and sufficient information on the particular case so as to allow the reader to determine whether the data and results from this scenario may be applicable in other similar contexts.

**2.6.4 Dependability** refers to the logical process through which the research has been conducted, how well it has been documented and structured, and if there is logical process flow. Dependability in this study was addressed directly by ensuring that the process within the study is reported in detail, in so doing enabling future researchers to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results (Shenton, 2004).

**2.6.5 Confirmability** concerns the researcher's comparable concern to objectivity. The results should be based on the experiences of participants and not the preferences of the researcher (Schurink, 2009). Furthermore, regular internal audits will be conducted by my supervisor to ensure that the study is coherent and of an acceptable quality.

## **2.7 Ethical Considerations**

For qualitative researchers, ethical practice is usually defined "as a moral stance that involves respect and protection for the people actively consenting to be part of the study" (Payne & Payne, 2004, p.66). Ethical principles that were considered according to the Ethical Principles of Psychologists Code of Conduct (HPCSA, 1992) to ensure soundness of the study are as follows: There was adequate and sufficient planning put into the research project. Research procedures were strictly adhered to in order to ensure that the chances of misleading results are minimised. Participants were informed about what the research entails, why the research is being



done, and why they are being used as participants for this particular research. In essence, informed consent was obtained.

Confidentiality in this study was maintained by withholding the participants' personal details, or any information that could potentially put the participants or the organisations they currently work in at risk of being identified. Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the University which ensures that the study is within the ethical parameters required and will cause no harm to the participants involved.

The interpretation of data is one of the most crucial parts of research, therefore, particular caution and precision were taken when interpreting data. Fabricating and falsifying data was avoided at all costs. Where sections of other researchers' work or data are presented, there has been adequate acknowledgement in terms of citing and referencing sources from which the data was obtained. In essence, responsibility was taken to ensure that all ethical standards were adhered to, to ensure no harm to participants through the research process.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The research design and methodology of this study were critical in guiding the whole research process. Therefore, great care and consideration were taken in establishing and constructing this chapter and to ensure the overall quality of the study. The next chapter will focus on the research results of the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter will specifically focus on the narratives obtained through the analysis of the participants' semi-structured interviews. Each interview represents the unique experiences of the seven participants, within the South African work context. Thematic analysis was utilised to find commonalities within the data gathered as well as the major emerging themes. This involved a process of highlighting predominant words. The words were then grouped together and a suitable label was given so as to produce a primary theme. The themes have been identified within the verbatim transcriptions and the summary of each participant's themes will be indicated at the end of each individual's story. However, the main focus was on overall common themes (primary themes) identified throughout all the participants' stories. These themes are discussed at the end of the chapter.

For the purpose of this study the participants are referred to as Participants A, to G. The data will be presented in a narrative form, laying out each individual's story.

#### **3.1 Participant A**

Participant A is a 28-year-old black male who studied communication, majoring in advertising at a university of technology. A friend within the advertising industry sparked the participant's interest in his choice of study. The participant ventured into the working world after his studies, working in an advertising agency as an accounts manager. He did not enjoy what he was doing, so he veered into media planning. He started as a trainee media planner, progressed to a junior media planner and advanced to planner. The participant states that due to entering the corporate world at a young age he encountered some challenges. The first challenge was related to his lack of experience, and working with experienced individuals made him feel a sense of

inferiority. However, the participant was passionate about this field and it is his passion that got him through these challenges. He stated that the particular industry he was in did not remunerate well and the best option was “hopping “around to try to make money in the industry. He described this by saying, “Money is an important factor, if the job fits who I am and it pays well, I will take it.”

After three years he moved to another organisation where he worked as a media analyst, and it was at this organisation where he felt as though he was thrown into the “deep end”. The dynamics were completely different from the previous environment he was in. He says, “It was a stressful job and all that, but I think being in the deep end and trying to work on such a hard sell like community radio prepared me for the rest of the jobs, which were pretty much easier than that of the analyst.” He then went back into media planning at another organisation. He explains that the culture and the environment of the organisation are important. He prefers working in organisations that have a substantial number of Generation Y employees, people he can relate to on an intellectual and personal level.

He enjoys working in the media industry as it continually requires him to think “out of the box”, “this industry is innovation driven. I’m always on my toes, trying to think of something new, something different.” The media industry has become technologically advanced, and the participant is able to use technology to his advantage to get work done, wherever he is. The industry is conducive to networking and the participant expressed his need to work with people, build relationships and network with others in the same or different industries and to share ideas and continually learn.

The participant feels that the media industry is inhibiting in terms of providing opportunities for growth and he stated that “you really have to be a special case in this industry to

progress at the pace you would want to progress, it is all about who you know and what you are willing to do. "Participant A would eventually like to have his own business in the media industry. He believes that his mother has had a great influence in the type of decisions he makes as a working adult, and she is his ultimate support system.

The themes identified were as follows: Opportunity for growth, remuneration, passion, learning, culture, creativity and innovation, relationships, networking and experience.

### **3.2 Participant B**

Participant B is a 24-year-old white female who obtained a B.Com in industrial psychology at a university. This was her study of choice mainly because she was looking for a diverse field that would enable her to understand people and their motives within the working world. After obtaining her degree, she worked as a software quality assurer specifically focusing on HR software. The participant states how critical her position was, making sure that all the systems within the organisation were functioning optimally, and that the HR department could understand and utilise these systems. The participant enjoyed her job because she could interact with people and create close relationships. She said, "I like having close relationships with the people I work with. I also have a very cool boss and he makes it easy for us to go to him if we have any kind of situation whether it's personal or organisational, he literally has an open door." The position she was in gave her an opportunity to learn about IT systems while simultaneously having to work with people, making them understand the different systems. She stated that she values the exposure to both domains.

Participant B believes there is much more to learn in the environment she is in. She considered learning a critical component to success. She doesn't only want to learn from the organisation, but would like to continue with her studies. "I do want to carry on studying, it's not

like the first degree is enough. I don't want to stagnate in what I'm doing and then do this for the rest of my life. "Although the organisation is offering her an opportunity to learn and develop, she feels that the remuneration is not where she would like it to be and she believes money is an important motivating factor. "Believe it or not I feel that a good salary should represent the amount of effort you put into the organisation, I'm not getting the best pay ever, it's really not that great, but at the same time I can live on it and I guess the remuneration is covered by the learning opportunities."

Participant B thoroughly enjoys the networking opportunities the organisation provides. She believes networking provides her with a chance to see what is out there, what other organisations are doing differently, and the opportunity to meet experts in the field. "Four times a year, I attend a networking breakfast hosted by a magazine called HR future..., the people I get to meet with are extraordinary and I get to learn so much about this field, real invaluable lessons." Apart from networking, she has continuously expressed how she is able to work effectively if the organisation does not place any unnecessary demands on her. She states that the manager she reports to directly does not have unrealistic expectations of her and does not expect her to work more hours than she's supposed to. This has been one of the important contributing factors influencing her decision to stay with the organisation. The organisation provides employees with flexible working hours which the participant finds beneficial. She says that flexible hours give her the opportunity to do other things during the day, either work or non-work related.

The participant is not satisfied with the way rules are enforced within the organisation. She feels it prevents her from being creative. She describes the enforcement of rules by the organisation as treating employees like "kids". This inhibits her from "thinking out the box" as

there are certain ways in which problems need to be solved, and ideas outside the norm are usually not accepted. “I would like to have some level of free reign when it comes to idea creation and implementation. It is difficult to change things if everyone is set in their one directional thinking.” For the future, she is working towards becoming a human resource manager and to stay in the field that will allow her to have a positive impact on employees’ lives.

The themes identified were as follows: Workplace relationships, supportive manager, open-door policy, learning, opportunity for growth, technology, career advancement, remuneration, networking, flexible working hours, creativity, rules, making a difference.

### **3.3 Participant C**

Participant C was a 28-year-old black female who studied human resource management at a university. Her first place of employment after her studies was at a recruitment agency. She started off in an administrative role and within six months was promoted to the position of recruiter. She describes the environment as high-pressured. The clients she had to work with were demanding and sometimes unreasonable in their requests. At this early stage of her career the support of her manager was vital to deal with the pressures of the environment. “You learn to deal with pressure, you learn to deal with a lot of people, different characters, you sometimes feel like it’s too much but you learn all those things with the support of your manager of course.” Although it was a high-pressure environment, the participant did not struggle to get the work done as she was part of a supportive team.

She stated that teamwork was an important part of ensuring that the work was done, and the fact that members of the team thought about matters in different ways broadened the horizons of everyone. Being part of an effective team was important to her doing what she had to do in that environment, “...but I actually enjoyed more the team work and the team effort that we put

in terms of us meeting our projects and our deadlines.” The participant moved to another organisation after a year and four months. She had gained all the knowledge and experience the company had to offer, and she felt that the work was starting to become routine and that she was not learning anything new. Since it was a small company the prospects of opportunity for growth were minimal, so it was time for her to move on.

The participant moved to a larger consulting agency. She enjoyed being in this organisation as it ensured she was kept on her toes. She enjoys the challenge that is presented in that environment which enables her to learn how to deal with different people with different needs, on a daily basis. However, the participant felt that the manager was never satisfied with her work and showed no appreciation for work well done. The culture of the organisation did not embrace diversity and this was an unnerving factor for her. She believes that the organisation needs to work on their diversity issues and learn how to accommodate individuals of different ages and cultures. After nine months at that organisation she decided to leave, mainly because she was again faced with routine work. The participant was then offered a position as a recruitment specialist at a national insurance company. The new position required her to get a new pilot project off the ground. It was the biggest project she had ever worked on and she was excited about the challenge. Shortly after the project was implemented, she was offered a generalist position within the same organisation.

The organisation gave the participant a substantial amount of responsibility which she viewed as an indication of the trust they had in her abilities. The organisation gave her the opportunity to attend various seminars and to travel and meet clients from all over South Africa. Travelling and networking with other professionals was a highlight in her job. She states the importance of having a laptop and Internet access which enable her to do her work even though

she may be out of office for weeks at a time. The organisational culture was conducive to her being productive and she explains it as a culture of “Ubuntu”, a very supportive environment, where ideas are tested before they are declined. “In this organisation employees and managers know how to work together and play together, when we have to work, we work but if there’s time to play we enjoy, we forget whose HR, we forget whose manager, we will worry about all the other things on Monday.”

This organisation would be the one organisation the participant would consider going back to, due to its environment, the culture and the development and growth opportunities. The participant left the insurance company after three years. She states that she left mainly because the salary was not matching the amount of work she put in. She then got a job in an information technology company as a HR practitioner. The transition from the previous company to an IT company was frustrating for the participant as the environment was not as fast-paced, and she feels that the responsibility and accountability she enjoyed was lacking in this organisation. “I’m used to running with things, now I need to get an okay from talent and development before I do things, you know I need to get an okay from recruitment before I do things, I need to get an okay from ER before I do things, which slows my work output down.” There appears to be no flexible hours in the organisation which hinders the participant’s ability to do other things during the day. It is difficult for her to go to an out-of-office meeting and then work at home. She needs to go back to the office and this is not ideal for her.

HR is based on process, and it is for this reason that the participant goes from one industry to another, also because the types of clients are different and the way processes are managed is different. In the future the participant sees herself as an HR executive, working towards improving the lives of those that work with her. Making a difference in the organisation



is important to the participant. She describes the importance of managers acting as mentors and not as micro-managers to employees because the relationship between the employee and the managers will ultimately determine if employees work with or against the organisation.

Eventually the participant would like to start her own sustainable business and make use of the experience which she gained working in the different industries.

The participant's mother is the one person that has supported her throughout her different career choices and she depends on her mother and the advice that she gives. The participant has a very close relationship with her mother who plays a prominent role in her life and with whom she discusses most of her life-changing decisions.

The themes identified were as follows: Manager support, team work, learning, travelling, networking, remuneration, mentorship, relationships, opportunity for growth and development, career advancement, challenging environment, flexible working hours, responsibility, organisational culture, making a difference, technology, work-life balance.

### **3.4 Participant D**

Participant D was a 25-year-old male who studied developmental studies at a university. By this time the participant had already had his own ideas of what and how the working world works. However, he states that it did not go as well as he had planned. He struggled to get a job even though he had placed his curriculum vitae on most online recruitment sites. After six months he was employed by at a communications company where he was part of the market research team. The participant was initially excited to work for the company, but started becoming dissatisfied when the older working generation did not consider his input valuable and would not consider his ideas. He indicated this by saying, "I would have so much to contribute, so many ideas, but would be given responses like, 'that won't work', 'that's too costly,' 'no one

will be able to do that', which would really discourage me." The market research position he was in required him to call clients which was uncomfortable for him as he was in an open-plan office where everyone could hear his conversations.

He stated that open-plan offices are ideal for collaborative work, but are unsuitable for that kind of environment. His expectations of what he was going to be doing and what he was required to do were not congruent. "I didn't like what I had to do in the open plan office, I would have preferred it if everyone in there was doing the same thing, cause it was quite and I was the only one being loud, it is frustrating, I think maybe it was because of my expectations, cause I got there and had a certain image in my mind of what I would be doing." The participant felt as though he was being undermined just because he was the youngest in the company. They were giving him menial work to do which he found uninspiring and demotivating.

The organisation did not make the participant feel as though he was part of the organisation. He did not even have the required materials to gain access to the company such as an employee access card, parking allocation, or a remote, and this made the participant feel as though he was not valued as an employee. The participant resigned from the company after five months. He then received another offer at an international marketing company. He googled the company and he found that there were prospects for travelling which is something he wanted from an organisation. "It was a very big company, and advertised opportunities of travelling, and that's what I look for in a company, I love travelling, I don't want to be office bound." The participant was drawn to the organisation from the beginning and he felt welcomed right from the start.

The moment he stepped through the door he was made to feel part of the organisation. The organisation trusted him with a big project and this made him want to prove himself more.

He stated that, “if you are given an opportunity to be great, then that’s exactly what you should do, I thrive on challenge, so much growth takes place.” He described how the organisation also provided him with resources that would enable him to do his work effectively, resources such as a laptop with Internet connection and a cell phone with unlimited airtime.

The organisation was really conducive to the participant’s productivity. He worked flexible hours and he could manage his time the way he saw fit, provided that his work was up to date, he could do other things with his time. The environment was competitive but there were rewards and recognition for employees who did well. The rewards were offered on a monthly basis depending on the targets met by each individual. Rewards were also offered to those who were not always on top but tried their best. The participant found this very motivating. He tried to excel from one week to the next and be rewarded for it. The rewards were not always of a monetary nature, but there were gift vouchers and other similar rewards. The participant described his manager as being phenomenal. The manager would thank the participant for a job well done and continuously acknowledged his value as an asset to the organisation. The participant left the organisation after two years as he felt he had learned all he could. He was offered a better position with increased remuneration at another organisation.

The participant moved to an international beverage manufacturing company where he worked in an open-plan office which he enjoyed because he worked in different teams. “So the offices are open plan and we worked in teams, but we collaborated a lot with the different teams, this exposed me to different ideas and working with radical solutions.” The participant felt that he was equipped to fit in at the organisation. From the outset everything was organised and he received access cards, parking, email facilities and his own passwords. He looked forward to

going to work because he knew there was always something interesting to work on something challenging that required the best from him.

The participant finds it important that the organisation offers him an opportunity to learn. He attends training courses and works with different people from different branches in Africa. Growth is essential to the participant and he states that he would not want to be in the same position for an extended period of time. He is also furthering his studies to obtain better opportunities within the industry which would potentially bring an increase in salary. The participant states that there are many opportunities in the organisation. As an employee you can work yourself up and choose which branch you want to work in.

The hours at the organisation are very flexible. The participant has an option of working from home when necessary and leaving work early if the job is done. The participant says flexible hours allow him to balance his personal life and work. His manager is more like a mentor, providing guidance and work-related advice. The participant is trusted to make his own decisions regarding his work. He would like to see himself as a marketing manager in the near future. He wants to progress and have opportunities to travel around the world. He wants the flexibility of being in charge, having the opportunity to delegate and make decisions that will have a great impact in whichever organisation he is working for. The participant is inspired by his mother and he wants to achieve and be as successful as she is. His mother is his support system. "My mom is my anchor. She guides me and keeps me grounded. I consult her on many matters including those to do with work."

The themes identified were as follows: Travelling, career advancement, technology, challenging work, flexible working hours, work-life balance, organisational access,

remuneration, adding value, responsibility, learning, collaborative teamwork, recognition, rewards.

### **3.5 Participant E**

Participant E was a 25-year-old coloured female who obtained a general BA degree at a university. Shortly after completing her degree she obtained a position at a film school in their human resources department. The participant explains that what she is doing in the organisation is somewhat different from what she initially thought she would be doing, but describes it as a learning opportunity that will benefit her in the future. She describes her work as laying a foundation for where she would like to be and what she would like to do in future. The participant finds the environment she is in very interesting and she enjoys working with artistic people who have a different way thinking.

The participant states that it was challenging to be in an environment she knew little about, but it was a challenge she was willing to attempt. She had to quickly learn what the film school was about and understand what role she would play in the organisation. She believes her manager helped her through the process, and she feels that he contributed to her becoming part of the organisation. The participant stated that she becomes bored very quickly as her day-to-day work is of a routine nature and monotonous. She feels as though her superiors do not believe she is capable of taking on more responsibilities and working independently.

The organisation enables the participant to work with various people within the industry, which tends to make her work exciting. She feels that the environment has given her some skills in terms of how to handle people with different personalities. She prefers working in teams as opposed to working alone, "...you really get to know who your colleagues are when we work in teams, to experience how people think and the creative ideas they come up with." The participant

also expressed how teamwork allows her to build relationships within the organisation. However, there is no room for advancement in the organisation. It is an educational institution and an employee would have to work for several years before being considered for promotion.

The participant feels that this hinders her motivation as she doesn't want to be in the same position, doing the same thing for a long period of time. "...as you come in that's where you stay, you stagnated in a position so I feel like that kind of demotivates me to work and I definitely don't want to be here for long." There are no flexible hours in the organisation. The participant arrives at a certain time and leaves at a certain time. She does not have time to tend to her personal life and finds it difficult to be productive continuously for eight hours. She would prefer to have flexibility at work.

The participant is on a fixed-term contract and is not satisfied with the contractual agreement with the organisation, as she has no benefits as a contract employee. Her salary is not reflective of her work input and her qualifications. She states that the organisation does not offer any rewards for employees and she is not motivated to do more than is required of her because of the lack of recognition. She believes that the organisation can do more to contribute to the well-being of employees and to ensure that the employees are positively working towards organisational goals. The participant is thinking about leaving the organisation and to go into the corporate world, ideally to an organisation that will meet all her requirements.

The themes identified were as follows: Learning, routine, support from manager, teamwork, relationships, flexible hours, remuneration, rewards, responsibility, work-life balance, advancement opportunities, benefits, recognition.

### **3.6 Participant F**

Participant F was a 25-year-old black female who studied information technology at a college, after which she completed her internship at a recruitment and placement agency where she was a training coordinator. She states that it was completely different from what she had studied, but she was willing to try something new. She looked forward to the challenges that came with the job. Every week she met different people and coordinated different courses. She describes it as a job that kept her on her toes. "...the one thing I was worried about was being bored at work, but this job really keeps me going...it keeps me on my toes." The participant enjoys the interaction between herself and the different clients. They bring their own perspectives and she has the opportunity to learn from them, just as they have the opportunity to learn from her. The majority of the organisation's employees are still young and the participant describes the environment as energetic and fast-paced.

She is able to relate to those she works with, and appreciates that the manager allows her to take initiative and solve problems the way she sees fit. The amount of responsibility she is given makes her feel that they trust her as an employee and value her contribution. The organisation was diverse, but everyone was accommodating and the participant built personal and professional relationships in that organisation. She believes that building relationships is important not only for a productive work environment but for the long term. "...you will never know when you might need to call someone you have worked with in the past, maintaining relationships is part of what needs to be done to become successful."

The environment was fast-paced but the organisation provided her with sufficient resources to do her job. She explains that things such as a laptop with Internet access made her work so much easier, and access to social networks helped her attract many potential employees. The participant had to travel quite a long distance to work, due to the fact that she was not

earning enough to get a place close to the workplace. This was a problem for her and she wanted the organisation to at least consider allowing her to come to work at a later time. The participant believes that organisations need to compromise, especially if their employees are contributing significantly to the success of the organisation. After a year and six months the participant decided to leave the organisation as she had been offered a higher position with an increased income.

The participant became a training officer at a steel and mining company where she had to ensure that employees' training needs were congruent with their development plans. She explained that the environment was different to that of the previous organisation. There were more employees of the older generation which at times made it difficult for her to implement and for them to understand her ideas. The environment was not fast-paced but there were many challenges. She always had something new to do and every day she was of service to someone, which is important to her. "...It was not fast-paced but it was like on-going, incoming, outgoing you know like a service so every day I was valuable to someone, so I enjoyed that." The organisation is very bureaucratic and everything has to go through several people before it's approved, which slowed down the whole process. The participant found this frustrating as they would wait and sometimes her ideas would be rejected, not because they were poor but because they were not understood. The participant felt that her way of thinking was very different from what the organisation was used to.

The industry was very male-dominated and they would tend to undermine her as a young professional woman. The male employees needed to be more tolerant of her and her role in the organisation. However, the organisation allowed her to be flexible with her working hours. If her work was done she could go out and do other things, and some mornings she would go in later if



there was not much to do. Unlike previous organisations where she had worked, she had time to herself and her personal life. The team she was in was supportive and they had created a good working relationship. She describes her immediate manager as someone who wanted her to succeed. He offered her many training courses that would enable her to advance her career. After a year and two months the participant moved to a training and development company and here the environment was different. The participant was given large projects to work on in this organisation. She moved from being a direct trainer to compiling and designing training material. It was a different and interesting job for her. She did not want a repetitive job, so the change was a challenge and an opportunity to grow and gain experience.

The participant states that the world is full of opportunities. She feels that should she feel that a particular organisation does not provide her with the learning and growth she needs, she will move on. The organisation caters to the needs of the employees, they are very flexible, and requests are taken seriously. The participant describes her work team as highly diverse and a team that has many different innovative ideas. In order to stay relevant within the industry the organisation has to continuously advance and do things differently. Technology has improved how things are done, and the participant wants to be on the forefront of technological advancements. "...can you imagine doing my job without the Internet, it would be a nightmare, technology just makes me more efficient, and as technology evolves so do I." The participant feels that the organisation remunerates her well and offers benefits and rewards when goals are met. Remuneration is important to maintain her standard of living. In the future the participant would like to run her own training company as having her own company would give her the flexibility she wants. She would like to study further and travel. The participant regards her mom

as her best friend and ultimate support structure. “My mom is my best friend, we are just so close and she supports everything I want to do. She just knows exactly what to say and when to say it.”

The themes identified were as follows: Challenging work, adding value, relationships, opportunity for advancement, remuneration, flexible hours, technology, learning, supportive manager, training, travelling.

### **3.7 Participant G**

Participant G was a 24-year-old black female who obtained a B.Com in marketing at a university. Initially she had wanted to do a course in photography but her mother advised against it as it would not bring in the required income. She then thought marketing would be the next best thing. After obtaining her degree she worked for a large branding and marketing company. The company was looking for someone young and innovative and the participant met their criteria. The participant was put on a large marketing campaign and she felt that she was thrown right into the “deep end” with no experience, straight out of university. She was willing to put in the work and learn as much as she could. She was able to come up with excellent ideas for the project which the organisation implemented, and was rewarded for her efforts. The sales of a certain product increased significantly because of the ideas she had come up with, which was a great achievement for the participant. She felt confident that the organisation took her and her ideas seriously and that they valued her input which in turn increased her motivation to perform. However, the participant felt that the organisation could have provided her with a mentor, someone to guide her and help her become familiar with the working environment.

The environment was creative and very competitive. She was required to think differently and come up with new ideas. The environment was flexible, the work needed to be done, but it didn't matter where the work was done, there were no recommended working hours. The

environment was very conducive to productivity. There were highly effective teams and the participant was placed in many of those teams. She describes her experience in the organisation as a great starting point to her career. She worked there for two years and then decided she had gained as much knowledge and experience as she could from the organisation. She then became a marketing coordinator at an international branding company. The participant didn't enjoy being in that organisation because the culture was too stringent. It was bureaucratic and she had no say in many decisions. This was a complete change from the environment she was previously in. The employees worked independently and there was no collaboration or sharing of ideas. The participant didn't feel as if she were adding any value to the organisation.

Her manager didn't understand the way she wanted to do things and this created a barrier between them. "My manager was very old and it is very hard to work with old people. I would think of things such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate, and they would want you to rather call the client and irritate them." The relationship between the participant and the manager was not ideal and the participant could not express her ideas freely. She describes the manager as someone who was too involved in every facet of the business; he was too controlling. She states that although her remuneration was sufficient she was unhappy in the organisation and decided to leave after ten months.

The participant accepted a position as a marketing and events coordinator at a reinsurance company. She went to the organisation knowing exactly what they required of her. From the outset she was able to negotiate exactly what she wanted from the organisation, from her remuneration to making decisions regarding her role in the company. The participant wanted flexible working hours so that she could travel from home to work at a time that was convenient for her. The organisation agreed to meet her demands. The participant knew that if you make

demands you need to be able to deliver. You have to be worth the organisation's time and money. As the coordinator she had an opportunity to deal with various individuals in various professions and this made her work interesting and exciting. She feels that there is never a dull moment in her job. The organisation also rotates her among the different departments so that she can learn what each division is all about. The participant is always willing to learn as she knows that this increases her chances of advancing within the organisation.

The participant is in charge of making decisions on her projects and finds that the responsibility is exhilarating. "...when the organisation trusts in your abilities as an individual you have a lot more reign, you can make decisions that you think are appropriate and implement your own ideas, it is so refreshing." The participant has worked with different teams within the organisation and her input is always valued. This makes her feel confident that her contributions are making a difference and that she is adding value. The culture of the organisation is one of the factors that will determine whether the participant will thrive in the organisation. The culture has to be conducive to the participant's productivity. The organisation provides the necessary resources for her to get the job done. "...taking home the laptop, enables me to do so much at home, which allows me to be more creative in my own environment...car hire, so I don't even need a car because I get a car to get to events."

The participant is very happy at this current organisation and would in time like to become the brand manager in the same organisation. She believes she can do so much better than the current brand manager. As a young individual she knows exactly what is happening in the global market and would like to use her expertise in the organisation. The participant's mother has assisted her to keep things in focus, to do what she has to do, and to encourage her to get

where she needs to be. She describes her mother as her support mechanism and someone who wants to see her succeed.

The themes identified were as follows: Learning, creativity, innovation, culture, challenging work, remuneration, rewards, flexible hours, technology, support from manager, adding value, teamwork, relationships.

### **3.8 Brief Summary of Interviews**

It is evident that the participants all have their unique experiences within the workplace. They have expressed those factors that may enhance or inhibit their performance. Many distinct themes were drawn from participants' accounts. I have identified 12 main themes, and similar individual themes have been grouped together under a single broad theme.

The main themes that have been identified are as follows: Opportunity for growth and development, teamwork and collaboration, flexibility, relationships, technology, remuneration and rewards, mentorship, adding value, inclusion, role models, challenges, and quality of work life. These themes are discussed individually in further detail.

### **3.9 Themes**

**3.9.1 Opportunity for learning and development.** The Generation Y employees that were interviewed stipulated that whichever organisation they may end up in needs to provide opportunities for growth and development. From my interpretation derived from the participant's stories, opportunities for growth and development are those that organisations provide in the form of training, job rotation, networking, transferring of knowledge and skills from mentors and other experienced colleagues. These opportunities enable the participants to be competent in their areas of interest through creating development programmes that identify individuals' strengths and areas of development. The participants place a high value on a broad spectrum of

continuous learning that takes place within the organisation and on the opportunities provided for further academic studies. The only way to progress within the working world is through continuous learning and development. The opportunities provided by the organisation for growth and development is one of the determining factors associated with the participants' decision to remain with or leave the organisation.

**3.9.2 Teamwork and collaboration.** The accounts of participants indicate that teamwork and collaboration are a preferred form of working and sharing of ideas within the organisation. I have interpreted teamwork as a process that allows individuals to be innovative, in this way contributing to idea formulation for workplace projects. Teamwork provides a sense of inclusion for decision-making and is a natural way of fostering learning and open communication between employees. The participants regard collaborative teamwork as critical for showing what they are capable of and what they can contribute towards achieving work goals. Collaboration is one of the many, but critical ways which are considered to enhance the performance of the participants. They want to collaborate with employees in different departments as this broadens their scope of learning and their understanding of the industries they are in. Work spaces have to be conducive to collaborative teamwork. These can be in the form of open-plan offices and sharing of work spaces. I believe these themes address the working style preference of the participants who prefer to work in a collaborative manner and in functioning work teams.

**3.9.3 Flexibility.** Flexibility relates not only to flexible working hours but to the flexibility which would enable the participants to balance their work and life domains. Flexible working hours are necessary to maintain the balance between the participant's work and personal life. To work in the office for a fixed period of eight to nine hours is not an ideal situation and participants would prefer to leave the office when their work for the day is done, come in late

when necessary, and work from home on occasion. The participants value any time they may receive to focus on other tasks outside work, and are thus more likely to schedule their work in a way that balances their daily routines.

The participants do not want to feel as though their lives are being consumed or compromised by work as their social lives and family time are equally important. Flexibility enables employees to allocate or divide their time in a practical way, for example, when participants have out-of-office meetings it is quite reasonable to go home and work from there for the rest of the day. A balance between work and social and family time is crucial as work alone should not be a dominating factor in their lives. This theme demonstrates the importance of overall flexibility essential for a balanced work life.

**3.9.4 Relationships.** The participants' accounts have indicated building and maintaining relationships as an integral part of their working experiences. Not all relationships have been experienced as positive; they have had to learn to deal with the realisation that not everyone within the organisation is willing to build working relationships. Relationships built within the organisation are not taken for granted by the participants as these relationships with colleagues, managers and supervisors can dictate if the individual ultimately feels part of the organisation.

The relationships built within the organisation enables those working with employees to better understand how they prefer to work, when they prefer to work, and how they prefer to work. They are then able to understand their ideas and perspectives when it comes to dealing with work. The participants consider having and maintaining relationships with colleagues a crucial part of developing their careers. Relationships are an important aspect not only in the work place but outside work as well. Relationships with family and friends are essential to

maintain the balance between work and life. This theme addresses the importance of building and maintaining relationships in the organisation.

**3.9.5 Technology.** The resources mentioned by the participants that contribute to their completion of work tasks successfully and efficiently are all related to technology. When in doubt, google, and that is a common motto among the participants. To be connected to the world through a laptop is all that they need to monitor changing trends in their particular industries. Social networking is another gateway to communicate with the world. Technology provides the participants with the freedom to work at a time and place convenient to them. The participants prefer making use of cell phones to communicate with other employees and clients as they are then not forced to be in the office to use a land line to get their work done. Technology has increased the pace and rate in which organisations operate, and these participants are at the forefront of technological advancements. The theme conveys the contribution made by technology to enhance performance and reach organisational goals.

**3.9.6 Remuneration and rewards.** The participants felt that their salaries should be representative of the work they put in. There has been a definite dissonance between what the individual would like to earn and what they are actually earning. Salary has been specified as a resource for maintaining the participants' lifestyles and as a reward for the work that they do. Rewards are a necessity for acknowledging effort and work well done. Rewards do not only have to come in a monetary form. There is any number of ways that organisations can utilise to develop and recognise employees' efforts. Although not the only motivator, remuneration and rewards are critical in motivating the participants. This theme specifically acknowledges remuneration and rewards as a motivating factor.



**3.9.7 Mentorship.** The participants' desire a mentor, someone who has sufficient experience that can help mould them into the successful individuals they are longing to become. Mentors provide guidance and support as opposed to micro-managing employees; they help with the development of career plans and the implementation of action towards achieving goals. The relationship between the mentor and the participants is a special one. Mentors provide the individuals with the necessary tools to survive within the workplace, and they allow the individual to make their own decisions and express their ideas. Mentorship is believed to be of great importance to the participants as it is considered another avenue that contributes to individual growth and development. This theme expresses the need for mentorship as a guiding structure as opposed to being micromanaged.

**3.9.8 Adding value.** The individuals' value-add is considered to be all the unique contributions the participants make towards the organisation. The participants want to be in environments where they are making a difference not just internally but externally towards the greater society. Adding value relates to the participants' creative and innovative ideas being utilised to make a difference in the organisation. The participants want to feel that they have a purpose within the organisation and their skills, education and knowledge are being utilised optimally. This theme relates to the participants wanting to add value in whichever environment they find themselves working in.

**3.9.9 Inclusion.** The participants made it clear that working for a good organisation is not enough; they need to be included and feel that they are part of that organisation. Inclusion has been interpreted as the need for a sense of belonging, and as a valued employee to be informed and kept up to date with the functioning of the organisation. It is about receiving organisational information first and not last and to be involved in important aspects affecting the organisation.

This needs to be included and linked to their ability to work well in teams. This theme describes the need for individuals to feel that they belong and are included in the organisations' core functions.

**3.9.10 Role models.** Role models are considered those individuals that other individuals look up to. They have a positive impact and influence on the lives of others. The stories from the participants revealed that they are inspired by their mothers and that the relationships with their mothers are regarded as sacred. The participants do not make any major decisions if it's not discussed with their mothers. The mother is the ultimate role model, being a friend, a parent, a model of inspiration, and a coach. The interpretation of this theme relates to participants having someone they admire and consider as a resource that contributes to their success, and this role has been filled by the participants' mothers. This theme addresses the role of the role model.

**3.9.11 Challenges.** Challenges refer to keeping employees engaged. The work needs to be challenging enough to keep them interested in what they are doing. Repetitive work is usually one of the main causes that contribute to participants leaving the organisation; the participants prefer to work in competitive, innovative and idea-driven organisations. The organisation needs to match employees' skills with the work. Giving them work that is monotonous restricts their need to be creative. This theme specifies the need that participants have to be challenged and given work that tests their knowledge, abilities and skills.

**3.9.12 Quality of work life.** All the themes that have been specified above have a direct impact on the participants' experience and their quality of work life. The participants' quality of work life is impacted by the organisation's willingness to accommodate their needs. There are certain things on which individuals are not willing to compromise and these are the very things

that hinder their quality of work life. This theme examines the overall quality of work life of the individual, and what facets may hinder or enhance the individual's quality of work life.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the main themes extracted from the transcriptions. The themes have provided an understanding of the participants and their expectations and needs within organisations. The themes have further provided a description of the factors that the participants may find enhancing when present, and inhibiting when absent. The overall experiences of the participants in the organisation will determine whether they decide to stay or leave the organisation to find other work that will suit their needs. The next chapter will focus on making sense of the themes.



## CHAPTER 4

### INTERPRETATION AND SENSE-MAKING

This chapter makes use of relevant literature and focuses on interpreting and making sense of the themes identified in this study. The literature aims to consolidate the findings of the main themes while trying to establish a clear picture of this generation' work needs. Chenail and Maione (1997) described sense-making as a valuable lens through which researchers endeavour to make sense of their own experiences and those of others, making sense of the current data collected and making sense of literature.

#### 4.1 Themes

**4.1.1 Opportunity for learning and development.** Generation Y is a cohort that is attracted to organisations that aim to provide ample learning and development opportunities and organisations that may be considered learning organisations. According to Senge (2001) a learning organisation is one in which “people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together”(p.3). The definition gives a clear indication of the type of environment this generation would prefer, an environment that would be conducive to their development. Development is considered the result of a process of learning and being exposed to different workplace facets (Ng, 2004). The workplace needs to provide a range of opportunities for this generation to build their skills, to help them perform within their current jobs, and to prepare them for future positions. Therefore, the organisation should match workplace opportunities with the educational background of the individual. Generation Y is the most educated generation, when compared to their predecessors, and postgraduate degrees are pursued at a younger age to ensure progress

within the world of work (Islam, Cheong, Hasliza, & Desa, 2011). The results indicated that if the participants were not already in the process of continuing with their studies, they had substantial interests to do so. Therefore, the support of the organisation is required to accommodate their study needs. According to the participants the need to study further is sparked by the need to increase their knowledge and to keep abreast of changing trends in whichever industry they are in. Similar to the yearly progress that takes place in educational institutions and which entails progressing from one level to the next, this generation expects progress within the organisation (Ng et al., 2010). The participants expect managers to talk to them about their personal development, to take an interest in their knowledge and skills, and how they can apply them in the organisation. Their managers are also expected to discuss opportunities they can pursue as well as help them prepare to meet future opportunities that may be presented. According to Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen (2003), managers who consider their employees' individual needs offer a personalised approach and are development orientated, will do well with Generation Y.

Development and learning take place when participants are offered various training opportunities. Training opportunities allow individuals to hone their skills as well as learn new skills relevant to their fields. The participants value and expect training to stay marketable and to make their transitions from one level to the next effortless (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). Training opportunities prepare the participants to undertake challenging work. Luscombe et al. (2013) state that organisations that respond to the training needs of Generation Y with well-targeted training programmes will most likely go a long way towards retaining their services. Thompson and Gregory (2012) further state that the growing need for training may suggest that organisations need to update their training and professional development offerings. The

participants do not want to find themselves in organisations that do not make their learning and development a priority. It is a critical component that will ensure that they progress in the fields they have an interest in.

The participants had high expectations of themselves and the organisations they work for. They were willing to go the extra mile in reaching organisational targets if in turn the organisation supports their needs to learn. The findings of Lim (2012) are congruent with those of the participants. His findings stipulate that when organisations offer professional training and are open to exposing individuals to new skills they are more likely to be motivated to use those skills in achieving organisational goals. The participants feel that they are more likely to achieve their life goals when the organisation is committed to investing in their career development. This generation will not stay in organisations that do not see the need to invest in their personal growth and development. Therefore, organisations that do not provide new and engaging learning experiences will be at risk of losing their young employees (Gioia-Herman, 2009).

The participants do not take personal development for granted. They furthered their education by obtaining tertiary qualifications and taking an interest in their fields of study in order to pursue their chosen careers. They are interested in continuous personal development which would enable them to participate in any activity which will improve their effectiveness and efficiency when operating in various parts of the organisation (Martin, 2005). Participants were aware that continuous development occurs across a spectrum of activities, from formal and structured to the informal and unstructured, both within and outside the organisation, and they are eager to utilise all opportunities to ensure personal development.

The prospect of personal development is critical as this would suggest that individuals would have an opportunity to progress and advance within the organisation. The participants had

high expectations regarding promotions in the organisations they work for. They would not stay in an organisation that was not willing to promote them within a time period they considered to be reasonable. Ng, Schweitzer, and Lyons (2010) describe Generation Y as a generation that appears to have high expectations in regards to being promoted within a short period of time. Pooley (2006) indicated that Generation Y wants to learn as much as they can in one organisation, and will move to another organisation if promotions are not forthcoming within a reasonable period.

**4.1.2 Teamwork and collaboration.** The participants reported that they have always been involved in team work. While at school they were required to work with others on projects and assignments. They were involved in team sports and always wanted to be part of a group. Educational institutions have increased the integration of group- and team-related projects into the academic curricula to accommodate the younger generations who prefer working with others (Beigi & Melika, 2012). This generation has been described as being the most team oriented when compared to the other generations (Sayers, 2006). Scarnati (2001, p. 5) defines teamwork as “a cooperative process that allows ordinary people to achieve extraordinary results.” Teamwork is a process that involves individuals working together in a cooperative environment, and to work towards achieving common team goals through sharing knowledge and skills (Tarricone & Luca, 2002). When the participants enter the organisation they expect to be working in teams for various projects. They stated that when they are in highly functioning teams they are able to demonstrate their skills while simultaneously learning from more experienced colleagues.

Members of this generation are described as preferring collective action as they enjoy the diverse and dynamic nature of being placed in a team (Kaifi et. al., 2012). Teams are conducive

to sharing creative ideas and coming up with innovative solutions. The participants are always looking for new ways to do things and teamwork allows different individuals to share their unique ideas. They do not only want to be in teams, but want to be given an opportunity to contribute towards team goals. They enjoy the diversity in terms of the expertise provided, the levels of responsibility, and the opportunity to express their ideas. Anantmula and Shrivastav (2012) corroborate this as their findings show that Generation Y can be more productive when put in teams consisting of diverse people, representing various disciplines and functions.

Collaboration with different employees from different departments in the organisation is an exciting prospect for the participants. Fuelled by their need to learn they want to be fully involved in discussions and idea creation sessions. Participant E stated that although she can work independently, she prefers working in a team and having to collaborate with different teams in and outside the organisation. The participants consider teamwork as an opportunity to participate in dialogue and they appreciate the way in which these team settings have the capacity to see other members of the group review their assumptions about them as a younger generation, in the process allowing an open free-flowing environment.

When members of Generation Y are placed in dynamic teams they have the capabilities of producing extraordinary results, because as team members they bring with them different talents and expertise that ultimately enrich the discussions (Ng, 2004). Teamwork is not only preferred for idea creation and sharing, but because it also helps employees understand the work style of colleagues and their way of thinking and processing information into action. It becomes difficult for employees to create effective teams if members of the team do not understand how fellow members think or prefer to work (Myers & Sadaghini, 2010; Ng, 2004).



The way offices are structured may promote teamwork and open-plan spaces are more conducive to teamwork than closed-off work spaces. Participants prefer being in spaces that allow them to communicate freely with colleagues in the office, and these open spaces do not make them feel as though they are infringing upon the space of others but rather working collaboratively towards goals. It is imperative that the environment be conducive for this generation to learn as much as they can from the different departments and individuals within the organisation. The participants stated that being in a team allowed them to feel comfortable to reach deadlines and work constantly on challenging tasks as there would always be someone who they could ask for help and support. It was evident that the participants had a general preference for teamwork although they were able to work successfully as individuals when necessary. Organisations need to be cognisant of this preference so as to ensure that their Generation Y cohorts are able to thrive in their different work environments.

**4.1.3 Flexibility.** Flexibility is a broad theme that encapsulates the need for participants to not only have the freedom related to flexible working hours but a balance between their work and personal lives. Researchers have reiterated the importance of work life balance for Generation Y (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Lancaster & Stillman, 2010; Thompson & Gregory, 2010) and this generation expects to have a balance between their work and non-work life (Broadbridge et al., 2007). They tend to seek out employment opportunities that will enable them to have a “life”, to do other activities that are not work related (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008). This generation wants the luxury of scheduling their work around their lives, and not the other way round (Erickson, 2008). The participants stated that flexible working hours contributed significantly to their ability to structure their work in a way that allows them to have more time to concentrate on other activities that were not work related. Participant C stated that when the

organisation failed to provide flexible working hours it hindered her ability to maintain the necessary balance between her work and her personal needs.

Work-life balance is not a new phenomenon, but how this generation strives to maintain the balance may differ from the previous generations (Broadbridge et al., 2007). Work-life balance means that the participants have enough energy and time to devote to other roles they have to fulfil. They do not want to have conflict between roles as they have described this as an unnecessary stress factor. Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea, and Walter (2002) define work-life balance as “the ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to find rhythm that will allow them to combine their work with their non-work responsibilities, activities and aspirations”(p. 56).

According to Fisher-McAuley, Stanton, Jolton and Gavin (2003), someone’s life can be considered unbalanced when the amount of time that the individual works causes stress or conflict in other areas of their lives. The participants expect that the organisations they work in should consider providing them the freedom to structure their time in the organisation according to their specific needs. They do not see the need to be office bound every day of their working lives. The stipulated nine-to-five working day is not ideal as they feel that they cannot be optimally productive for that extended period of time, and believe that if they have structured hours they can work in the time periods where they feel they are most productive and utilise the time remaining to concentrate on other things. The fact that they do not embrace the nine-to-five work week does not imply that they are lazy. It indicates that they carry out their work best when they can set their own hours (Espinoza et al., 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

Generation Y is more likely to make their career choices based on their needs and to choose organisations that will provide a balance between security, stability and a healthy work-

life balance (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). This is corroborated by the results from the participants, stating that they seek out opportunities in organisations that are willing to provide for their needs of a balanced lifestyle, organisations that understand that work is not the be-all and end-all of their lives and make provision for this. Organisations can offer programmes specifically targeted for work-life balance, allowing employees the flexibility to create their own work weeks, and making provision for time off for educational and family matters (De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott & Pettit, 2005).

It is evident that employers who allow flexibility and give employees an opportunity to balance their personal and professional lives will gain from this generation in terms of full commitment from them as employees (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Dunne and Teg (2007) state that employees that feel that their organisations are in touch with their needs in and outside the work environment become more responsive, productive and committed to their organisations. Work-life balance can ultimately be viewed as one of the strategies aimed at improving recruitment and retention of this generation.

**4.1.4 Relationships.** Building and maintaining relationships have been an integral part of the participants' lives. Relationship building begins at home. The participants described the close relationships they have with their families and friends as well as the importance of those relationships. Their families and friends provide them with the support they need throughout their careers. This inclination to build relationships has spilled over into other areas of their lives. When at school they built relationships with their teachers, and in university relationships were fostered with lectures and supervisors. When the participants left their universities to start new jobs they expected the transition to be natural. However, this was not the case. The expectation

of getting to know their colleagues and forming relationships within a short period of time was not regarded as a viable option.

They quickly realised that not all individuals within the workplace were willing to form positive working relationships. According to Trefalt (2013, p. 1803), workplace relationships are defined as “the on-going connections between people in the workplace, shaped by individuals’ organisational lives, it generally refers to all interpersonal relationships in which individuals engage as they perform their jobs.” These relationships are described as a source of influence (Sparrowe & Liden, 2005), seen as a tool for social support (McGuire, 2010), and may contribute to the individual’s relational identification.

The participants had different experiences in regard to having their expectations met when it came to establishing workplace relationships. Some of the participants were disappointed by the lack of enthusiasm their colleagues or managers displayed in trying to get to know them better. They realised that establishing professional work relationships would not come as naturally as they anticipated, which created discomfort for the participants. They were just starting out in the world of work, and the uncertainty was exacerbated by colleagues’ and managers’ reluctance to being open. This could have potentially hindered the participants’ shift into their new roles. For some of the participants the initial contact with their managers was natural and easily progressed into a positive working relationship. Although the experiences of the participants differed they all initially expected a positive and easy relationship build-up with their respective employers.

The participants expressed the importance of developing positive working relationships with their managers. Participant G stated that her manager has an open-door policy which encourages her to go to the manager at any time regardless of whether the problem is work

related or not. Developing positive relationships with the manager or superiors is important as these are the individuals who are considered workplace parents (Aslop, 2008; Islam et al., 2011). The participants want the manager to take an interest in them and their progress in the workplace, and to continuously motivate and praise them for work well done. It is not only relationships with managers that are important but also maintaining relationships with other colleagues as these are the people they work with on a daily basis. The participants viewed the lack of relationship development with colleagues as inhibiting when it comes to having to work together.

According to Participant C, “it is so much easier to work with people you have built a relationship with because you already trust them and they trust you.” Positive workplace relationships foster the necessary trust between employees essential for group cohesion (Trefalt, 2013). These relationships may manifest themselves as social exchange relationships which entail one party having to bestow some benefit upon another, whether in the form of sharing experiences, knowledge or ideas. If the beneficiary reciprocates a series of benefit exchanges may occur which then creates feelings of mutual obligation between the parties involved. Over time the relationship can be characterised as one where the exchange partners trust each other to reciprocate the benefits received (Coyle-Shapiro & Shore, 2007).

Workplace relationships have been shown to be an effective tool when it comes to socialising among employees, enhancing career paths, and building networks for the different generations (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Positive co-worker relationships have been described as having a direct impact on the productivity of organisations and their employees. These workplace relationships are vital for both the organisation and the effective functioning of Generation Y employees (Coyle-Shapiro, et al., 2007).

**4.1.5 Technology.** This generation has been at the forefront of developing technology and they have been socialised in a digital and technologically advanced world (Islam, Cheong, Yusuf & Desa, 2011). This generation is known to be technologically savvy; they are a generation that have grown up surrounded by computers and digital media. Generation Y is considered the most interconnected and technologically friendly generation in the current workforce (Deal, et al., 2010). The participants have always been digitally connected. From a young age they were given cell phones to keep in contact with family and friends, they were exposed to social media and the effectiveness of on-the-go messaging and emailing. This need for immediate interaction and response has spilled over into their work lives.

Technology facilitates the balance that Generation Y wants between work and non-work life as it gives them the ability to do work at a time and place convenient to them (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Technology is defined by the Oxford Dictionary (2012) as “making modification, usage, and knowledge of tools, machines, techniques, crafts, systems and methods of organisation, in order to solve problems or improve a pre-existing solution.” The participants stated that with technology-related tools, doing their work does not mean having to be behind a desk in an office. They are able to meet deadlines and produce quality work wherever they are. They enjoy the flexibility that technology provides them with when it comes to doing their work, and doing it within what they consider a reasonable amount of time.

Participant C described her discomfort when she had to change organisations, and she realised that the new organisation was not as technologically advanced as she wanted it to be. This resulted in a slow-paced environment which she had difficulty adapting to. This generation seeks fast-paced environments that are technologically driven as technologies enable them to be productive and allow them to continuously connect with others and share ideas (Bennett, 2012).

The participants were expecting to continuously network and collaborate through constant connection to social networks and the internet, within and beyond the organisation's boundaries. Technological devices contribute to a work culture that frees itself from the boundaries of time and space, and this is the type of workplace culture that this generation is looking for. Worklife is changing rapidly and the organisations' work space has to react to this by offering exactly what a workforce on the move needs (Bennett et al., 2012; Martin, 2005).

This ease with new media technologies suggests that they bring to the workplace potentially beneficial characteristics related to the use of communication and information technology (Lancaster & Stillman, 2005). This generation has an interest in organisations that are technologically advanced and can cater for their technological interests as their level of technological emersion increasingly distorts the link between their work and personal lives (Andrade, 2009). Technology not only influences the work of Generation Y, but also their workplace attitudes. A participant said, "Can you imagine doing my job without the Internet? It would be a nightmare, technology just makes me more efficient, and as technology evolves, so do I." This gives an indication of the importance of technology in the work environment, and the participants are open to change because as technology evolves, so do they. They have a need to stay current with what the world has to offer, and take advantage of changing trends in their respective industries.

Generation Y has brought a fresh perspective and a new urgency when dealing with process management and integration. In addition, technological advancements have given this generation abilities and expectations that may not be congruent with the organisations' standard practices. However, these changes will enrich the workplace and provide the organisation with positive outcomes (Dwyer, 2008). Organisations need not only provide computer systems but

could allow employees to install their own software which may be more efficient than that provided by the organisation (Martin, 2005). The participants' advanced capability of working with technology curbs the need for them to try to fit into the agile, flat organisational structures the older generations are striving to design. They are able to just do what they need to do. According to Islam et al. (2011), because of technological advancements this generation finds it easy to communicate, share, buy, sell, exchange, create, meet, coordinate, learn, evolve, explore, and even use new digital methods to do everyday tasks.

The use of technology to simplify, modify, and diversify how work is done while ensuring that the balance between work and home life is maintained is important for the participants. Organisations that do not make provision for this generation in terms of providing the necessary technologically based tools will struggle to retain them.

**4.1.6 Remuneration and rewards.** From a young age Generation Y was praised and rewarded if they won a sporting event, if they did their homework, or performed well in various aspects of their lives. Through the feedback provided by teachers, parents and coaches they were always aware if they were providing good or substandard work (Espinoza et al., 2010). Generation Y does not only value remuneration in monetary terms, but welcomes rewards and recognition provided for a job well done. Remuneration is defined as "the compensation which an employee receives from an organisation for his or her services"(Jiang, Xiao, Qi, 2009, p. 178). While rewards do not necessarily have a monetary value, they may include other forms of incentives such as recognition, a comfortable office, involvement in decision-making and various growth opportunities (Jiang et al., 2009; Snelgar, Renard, & Venter, 2013). The participants stated that salaries and rewards were factors they considered among the top priorities when considering which organisation to work for.



The participants stated that they expected salaries to match the efforts they put into their work. They were aware that their lack of experience would be a reason they may not be earning as much as they would want to, but expected that to change within a year of working. They felt strongly about organisations providing rewards. They wanted to be recognised for their ideas and contribution towards organisational goals. The rewards did not have to be monetary related but could be any creative way in which they could be recognised for their efforts. The participants stated that they are motivated by how much they actually want something, so if the reward is reflective of what they want they would work towards obtaining it. This perception towards rewards can be described through expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964). This theory can be explained through the following three components. Firstly, expectancy, this is the belief that if the individual invests a particular level of effort, it will lead to a particular level of performance. The second component is referred to as instrumentality which is the expectation that when an individual successfully completes a task the result will be a desired outcome. The last component is valence which refers to the value which the individual assigns to a specific reward, whether that reward is worth the individual's effort or not. In essence, the participants are more willing to complete tasks if they have a positive perception regarding the rewards on offer.

When organisations structure their rewards systems to suit the needs of Generation Y, rewards that they value, the employees are more likely to perform well to achieve organisational goals. According to Milkovich, Newman and Gerhart (2010) rewards can play an important role when it comes to influencing employees' attitudes and perceptions about their work. Generation Y needs to be rewarded for the right things in the right way. The three key recommendations to incentivising employees are: Firstly, to create incentives that they will value; secondly, to clearly and thoroughly state desired outcomes and expectations; and thirdly, to provide fair and timely

assessment of their performance (Espinoza et al., 2010). Participant E stated that her salary is not reflective of her work input and her qualifications, and as a result she finds it difficult to do more than she is required to do. The organisation they work for does not see the need to provide rewards to employees, and this is demotivating for the participant.

The participants plan to further their studies because of the prospects of advancement and an increase in remuneration. This is a critical component in ensuring that they can maintain a lifestyle they are comfortable with. The right salary allows the participants to pay for their expenses, including student loans, and the rising cost of living. When the salary does not meet the participants' expectations they are willing to leave that organisation to find one that will provide the remuneration they will be satisfied with. A good salary also means that the participants can fulfil their needs to travel for work- or non-work related activities. However, Participant B stated that although she is not receiving the salary she wants, the learning opportunities provided by the organisation are an acceptable substitute for a higher salary. This indicates that if the organisation meets the participants other needs they are willing to negotiate and stay.

Remuneration and rewards ultimately play an important role when it comes to motivating the participants. They want to do well and be rewarded or acknowledged for their efforts. Therefore, the organisation needs to consider alternative ways to reward this generation for their contributions and ideas.

**4.1.7 Mentorship.** The styles of leadership have evolved, and throughout the years managers in organisations have adopted a leadership style they believe best suited to the organisation and its workforce (Dannar, 2013). It has become a necessity that the leadership styles employed by managers change to accommodate the new cohort. The participants regard

their relationship with their managers as crucial. They want their managers to be able to guide them and contribute to their learning and development. They stated that they would prefer it if their managers or supervisors adopted the role of mentor. Donaldson, Ensher and Grant-Vallone (2000) described a mentor as an individual in a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. Mentoring fosters the participant's professional, academic, or personal development. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. Mentoring is described as a method that can be utilised to support the individuals career development initiatives, provide employees with a sense of belonging as well as providing them with an opportunity to expand networks and facilitate the process of knowledge transfer (Bennett et al., 2012).

The participants find it easier to communicate and engage with their managers if they are in a mentorship relationship, as compared to when the manager wants to micromanage them. The manager as a mentor is then able to give advice about the new working environment the employees finds themselves in. This is an effective way to ensure that from the outset the employee knows about the organisation's values, and gains insightful knowledge of the operations of the organisation as a whole (Meier, Crocker, & Stephen, 2010). The participants described a good mentor as someone who is willing to share his or her knowledge and expertise, to provide support, guidance and encouragement when necessary. The participants who have been in different organisations have experienced the different managerial and leadership styles. The results indicated that when they had a mentor they were able to express themselves freely and feel comfortable enough to make their own decisions about their work. Participants stated

that their mentors had an interest in their career goals and plans and were willing to provide them with the guidance they needed to progress.

Generations Y's need for mentorship in the workplace is said to stem from their unique characteristics and the type of parenting style they have been exposed to. This has manifested in a desire for clear direction and managerial support, and simultaneously a desire for freedom and flexibility within the work environment (Bennett et al., 2012). Establishing mentoring relationships in the organisation may assist in lowering generational tension and improving the way that older and younger generations interact and work together (Meier et al., 2010). An environment that provides space for mentoring will encourage Generation Y to seek the guidance they require that will enable them to work efficiently (Islam et al., 2011; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). These studies affirm the importance of mentorship as indicated by the participants.

The manager in a mentor role is able to effectively provide the participants with feedback. Feedback has been a norm for the participants throughout their lives as it was a manner in which they were able to keep track of their progress. The need for feedback did not change when they entered the world of work, they always want to improve and better their performance. Feedback provided the guidance that the participants needed in terms of giving a holistic picture of what they were doing and how they were doing it. They were able to clearly see where they needed to base their attention in order to perform better. Generation Y is continuously looking for feedback. They seek ample feedback because it provides assurance that they are continuing to move along a linear, progressive path. They want to know their progress every step of the way (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).

This need of feedback may be attributed to the fact that Generation Y has been taught that the outcome matters more than the process by which those outcomes are achieved (Thompson &

Gregory, 2012). Mentors may use feedback as a reinforcement mechanism as well as a measure for correcting behaviour (Suleman & Nelson, 2011). In a job situation this generation expects frequent direction from managers regarding their performance. Feedback is an essential component in times of change. It allows individuals to adapt promptly. This generation believes that yesterday's feedback may no longer be relevant today because change is so constant. The only way they can adapt to this change is through feedback (Suleman & Nelson, 2011).

Research has indicated that individuals do not leave their jobs, they rather leave their managers (Dannar, 2013; Meier et al., 2010; Suleman & Nelson, 2011). They recognise the role knowledge plays in career advancement and they look for opportunities to learn from their supervisors and older generations. Generation Y views failure as a motivator and not a deterrent. Thus, they view failure as an opportunity to improve job performance (Blain, 2008). Essentially, managers need to be aware of how they manage this generation as this may have negative implications for their productivity. The manager has to be open and willing to mentor the employees, guide them and provide them with career developmental strategies.

**4.1.8 Adding value.** This generation approach to work cannot be considered selfish, and although they are ambitious and want to do well in the organisation they are equally determined to make a contribution in and outside the organisation. It is not just about getting the work done, but how the work is done. It is ultimately about adding value and being of value to the organisation, community and environment as a whole. The participants emphasised the importance of contributing to their organisations. They feel that they add value when they are able to use their skills, knowledge and technology know-how to improve how the organisation operates. The participants each added value to their organisations in their own unique way, depending on what their work meant to them. The participants consider the probability of value-

add before they take an offer at an organisation. They consider whether they can add value to the organisation and if the organisation is likely to add value to the community.

Being innovative is one way that this generation can add value to the organisation. They are able to challenge out-dated ideas and bring new creative and futuristic ideas to the fore, in the process making existing business models obsolete. Rogers (2003) defined innovation as “an idea, a product or process, system or device that is perceived to be new to an individual, a group of people or firms, an industrial sector or a society as a whole”(p.45). The participants described themselves as always wanting to come up with new ways of doing things. If one way doesn't work, they are able to use their imagination and creative initiative to find a suitable solution. Generation Y is constantly looking for ways to improve and fast-track how work is done. They want to be given an opportunity to find smart creative solutions to solve problems, and they are not fazed by change but are rather excited by it (Lancaster & Stillman, 2010). Their creative thinking brings in a new dynamic into the organisation, they are able to think of different solutions to solve one problem.

Contributing and adding value in the organisation is made easier if the participants can identify with the type of work they are doing. If they feel that the organisation is contributing towards the greater good of society or the communities in which they function, this may be one of the reasons that the participants were involved, they wanted to be part of corporate social responsibility initiatives within the organisations as this made them feel that they are not only adding value to the organisation but making a contribution to their various communities. Generation Y is willing to volunteer their time to worthy causes (Shen, Chanda, D'Netto, & Monga, 2009); they want to feel that they are making a positive contribution to society and the environment (Hershatler & Epstein, 2010). Organisations that are serious about corporate social

responsibility will most likely attract this generation (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Generation Y wants their work and life to be meaningful and fulfilling (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012). They are not just concerned about getting a paycheck, they are interested in more than that, they are analysing the company's vision and its mission to ensure that those company values are congruent with their own (Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010).

**4.1.9 Inclusion.** The concept of inclusion was discovered to be two-fold within this context. It is the desire of participants that they feel included in the organisation despite their race, age and gender. An inclusive organisation would be an organisation where unnecessary hierarchies and occupational segregation are limited, and where groups of employees who congregate in certain areas are discouraged (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010). Generation Y is more accepting and open to other cultures; it is the most culturally and ethnically diverse generation (Brown & Czerniewicz, 2010). This generation has been part of multicultural families and alternative lifestyles (Perruci, 2011). Cole, Smith and Lucas (2002) argue that this generation is more willing and open to work with other individuals from different cultures, religions and races as well as those with different sexual orientations and those from different generations who were not so tolerant. This willingness to accept individual differences is one of the reasons that the participants expect all members of the organisation to accept them despite their unique differences. According to one of the participants, the ideal organisation would be one that is culturally sensitive and tolerant of individual differences.

Inclusion also relates to the participants' need to be involved in the day-to-day functioning of the organisation, to feel that they are included in the work process, and that their contributions are valued. The participants have always been able to give input and contribute to decision-making at home and in school, and this need for inclusion has spilled over into their

work lives. The participants stated that they do not want to feel as if they are just a means to an end. They want to be proactive and involved in different projects within the organisation. When the organisation is changing or new developments are made, they do not want to be the last to be informed but rather at the forefront of these developments. This need for inclusion may explain their preference for working in different teams within the organisation. Essentially, how the participants perceive and experience their role in the organisations influences their decision to stay or leave.

**4.1.10 Role models.** The participants stated that they consider their mothers as their role models. They described their mothers as individuals they look up to, as the individuals that guide their behaviour. The participants' considered the positive relationships with their mothers essential for their well-being. They stated that any major life decision made was made after consultation with their mothers who seemed to be a prominent feature in their lives. Even those participants that have both parents in their lives consider their mothers to be their role models. According to Martin and Bush (2000), a role model can be defined as "anyone the individual comes into contact with, either directly or indirectly, who potentially influences the individual's decisions and behaviours" (p.25). Role models are described as a powerful influence on the individual's behavioural patterns, attitudes and values through the process of socialisation and modelling (Martin & Bush, 2000).

The Robert Half International study (2008) indicates that Generation Y is likely to be accustomed to close and constant parental involvement in their lives. This generation has grown up with "helicopter parents". These are parents who pay close attention to and are involved in their children's lives (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). The participants expected their mothers to be available when they needed them, to give advice or intervene when it comes to difficulties



related to their lives or jobs. Participant C states that, “My mom is only a text message away, I never find myself feeling that I have no one to turn to when I need help, or confirmation that the decision I am making is in fact a good one, she is never too busy for me, which is great.”

Role models are an important aspect in the lives of this generation, hence they also value mentors as they can learn and adopt behaviours from these individuals that they consider critical for their success.

**4.1.11 Challenges.** Challenges within this context are a positive aspect. It refers to the need for participants to be fully engaged by being expected to complete challenging tasks within their skills and knowledge set. The participants expressed the need to be engaged in the work that they do. They want the organisation to use their skills and use them efficiently and effectively through providing tasks that match their abilities. The study conducted by Islam et.al. (2011) Is indicative of this notion as the findings state that Generation Y does perform well when the organisation is able to identify their skills, knowledge and abilities and then pair that with relevant tasks that keep them engaged to extract their full potential.

The participants stated their need to be in a creative and innovative environment which would ensure that their work is not monotonous, thereby restricting their creativity. Participant E stated that she does not want to be in the same position, doing the same thing for extended periods of time. She considers challenging work as a motivation to come up with interesting ways to get problems solved. Participant F described her concerns of not being challenged in her organisation, “...the one thing I was worried about was being bored at work, but this job really keeps me going...it keeps me on my toes.”

The participants indicated that they were willing to leave organisations that did not provide some stimulation in terms of the work that they had to do. This generation places value

on professional growth and development as this is one of the reasons they want to take on high-impact tasks (Ng et al., 2010). They have a low tolerance for non-challenging work, and as a result may perform poorly when required to deal with high volumes of work that is not at all stimulating (Corporate Leadership Council, 2005). I came to the conclusion that the presence of challenging work may be conducive to the full engagement of this generation, and contribute to their willingness to contribute to organisational goals.

**4.1.12 Quality of worklife.** Quality of worklife is an overarching theme. Participants would have a high quality of worklife if all the above themes are considered, established and provided within the organisation. Conversely, this may also be true if the organisation fails to consider, establish and provide these different facets, and that would have a negative impact on the participants' quality of worklife. The participants' quality of worklife may be hindered by the absence of the above-mentioned themes as the themes are all-encompassing of what the ideal organisation would provide for the participants to have a positive experience within the organisation, while simultaneously contributing to the organisation's overall success. Quality of worklife refers to the degree to which the organisational members are able to satisfy those needs that they perceive as important through their experiences in the organisation (Chib, 2012). The participants may recognise the quality when they feel that the basic expectations of their work and organisation have been met sufficiently.

Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel and Lee (2001) proposed that for an individual to achieve quality of worklife, four levels of needs would have to be considered: Firstly, individuals' need to be satisfied with their work environment; secondly, the need to be satisfied by the job requirements; thirdly, the need for satisfaction from supervisory behaviour; and lastly, the need for satisfaction from ancillary programmes. If these four levels of needs are satisfied there may be a direct and

positive impact on the individual's quality of worklife. Rethinam' (2008) explanation of quality of worklife links well with some of the participants' perceptions of what a meaningful and satisfying work environment would entail. Rethinam (2008) explained quality of work life as,“(i) an opportunity to exercise one's talents and capacities, to face challenges and situations that require independent initiative and self-direction, (ii) an activity thought to be worthwhile by the individuals involved, (iii) an activity in which one understands the role the individual plays in the achievement of some overall goals, and (iv) a sense of taking pride in what one is doing and in doing it well” as cited in Swamy (2013).

In this study the participants felt that their work needs were met in some cases but not in all. They felt that some aspects required to enhance their quality of work life were efficient, but that the organisations they were working for fell short of providing all the necessary facets they deemed essential for an enhanced quality of work life. A high quality worklife was essential for the participants. They continuously reiterated how important it was that the organisations they wanted to work for should meet their needs associated with job satisfaction, job involvement, motivation, productivity and their overall well-being, by considering the different facets mentioned in this chapter. If the organisation provided favourable working conditions for the participants they would be more likely to be productive and prove to be a valuable asset to the organisation.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

I have interpreted and understood the themes as those factors that may enhance or inhibit the performance of the participants. When the organisation ensures that they meet the participants' work needs, the participants then become easily entrenched in the organisation's culture, provided that the culture is conducive to their growth. The participants were open to

working in different kinds of environments and with different types of people at different stages of their lives as they consider their openness to experiences an opportunity to learn, grow and develop. I interpreted the themes as essential elements that the organisation needs to consider if they want to motivate and retain the participants. In essence the absence of these stated themes will hinder the quality of worklife of this generation, while the availability of these stated themes will enhance the quality of worklife of Generation Y employees.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of the Generation Y cohort herself, I am already thinking about where I would like to work at the end of this year. My full-time university life is coming to an end and I will be stepping out into the “real world”, the world of work. This is an exciting prospect and it will be the first time in five years that I will be exposed to the world of work. This is a daunting thought because I want to make sure that I choose the right organisation that will allow me to reach my full potential as an intern. Choosing the right organisation is as important to me as when I had to choose which university to go to and which career path I should follow.

I would prefer to work in an organisation that will understand me as a young university graduate wanting to make a difference, an organisation that will cater to my working needs, that is a perfect fit with my personality and allows for growth and development. These are only a few factors that I have thought about when considering which organisation I should choose, and this has evoked my interest in other Generation Y cohort. I found myself wondering how they perceive the working environments they find themselves in, what their experiences are and how they think their organisations should improve to enhance their performance and their overall working experience.

This concluding chapter will aim to consolidate the fundamental findings of this study, taking into account the implications for organisations, limitations, recommendations and suggestions for future research. The chapter will then end with a concise conclusion.

### **5.1 Implications for Organisations**

It can be concluded that the South African workplace is evolving rapidly in order to compete on a global scale. With evolution come transformation and various perspectives of how individuals view and experience the current workplace (Allcorn, 2003-Mtebule). The study has indicated how some of the Generation Y individuals experience the workplace, what their work needs are, and what may enhance or hinder their performance in the organisation. The participants of this study have given an indication of all the factors they consider to contribute to their overall work experience and quality of worklife. Just like all other preceding generations the organisation needs to be cognisant of this generation's workplace needs. The retention of this generation depends on what the organisation has to offer in terms of learning and developmental opportunities, flexibility, appropriate benefits and rewards, to name but a few.

The organisation needs to be able to relate and value this generation. The reality is that this generation will comprise the majority of the workforce within the next few years, and if organisations want to take full advantage of this they need to reconsider traditional management methods and adopt a leadership and management style that complements this generations work style. The participants stated that and consequently, an organisation that does not consider their needs may struggle to keep them motivated which will essentially lead to the individual leaving the organisation. The organisation may face a potential loss when this young, innovative, idea-generating individual leaves the organisation to join one that they consider to be more suitable for their work needs. Organisations need to understand this generation if they intend to successfully integrate them into their workforce.

## 5.2 Recommendations

When considering the results and outcomes of the study it is recommended that organisations consider a number of guidelines to help with the development of an approach towards Generation Y management that makes sense in the context of each unique organisation.

The organisation can conduct a strategic review of how best to adapt the organisation for a multigenerational and multicultural workforce. This understanding of the diverse composition in the workplace will ensure that the newest cohort is successfully integrated into the organisation. The key lies in the organisation successfully implementing programmes that are meant to encourage and reflect understanding among Generation Y and preceding generations.

The organisation needs to offer ample opportunities for professional growth and development and there needs to be sufficient workplace training programmes, job rotation, various work teams, and projects that the Generation Y employees can be involved in. This generation has a need to be challenged and fully engaged in the work that they are doing.

Mentoring is a crucial part of ensuring that Generation Y is well integrated into the workplace. This generation understands the importance of building and sustaining good mentor/mentee relationships. However, organisations need to get the experienced, older generation “on board” in terms of providing mentorship, guidance and support to Generation Y employees. Mentoring is important to this generation as it is a means to gain feedback and valuable insight into their progress and development.

Given the rapid advancements in technology, it is essential that organisations keep up with current technological trends as Generation Y strives to work in a fast-paced, technology-driven environment. Technology enables this generation to work efficiently, providing them with the flexibility to work anywhere, at anytime.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of a study are those matters and occurrences that may arise during the study and which are out of the researcher's control, due to various reasons. The following were identified as limitations for this specific study:

The findings of the study are specific to a small number of seven participants, which makes it difficult to demonstrate that the findings will indeed be applicable to the greater population. However, although each case may be unique it may also be considered an example within a broader group. Therefore, the prospect of transferability should not be immediately rejected.

Academic literature on Generation Y in general, and specifically within South Africa, is limited. Consequently, non-academic literature was used to try to establish their characteristics as a cohort. In addition, the birth parameters used in this study may differ from other research studies and literature.

The limitations of the study were based on the fact that the sample of Generation Y employees was drawn from private sector organisations only. Therefore, there are likely to be different narratives in the expectations and experiences amongst employees in the public sector. However, literature does indicate that Generation Y shares some common work characteristics, regardless of the sector (Broadbridge et al., 2007; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Glass, 2007; Martin, 2005; Oliver, 2006; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Wong et al., 2008).

### **5.4 Areas for Future Research**

During integration of available literature on this study, it was evident that there is a lack of academic research on this particular topic within the South African context. Therefore, more research is required to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Generation Y employees in the



South African work context. Future research should consider what values, talents and unique challenges Generation Y employees bring to the organisation, and what managerial approaches should be considered to accommodate their needs.

Research can further consider the effects and other variables that may enhance or impact the work experiences of Generation Y over an extended period of time, and that suggests longitudinal research. To get a true reflection of the factors impacting Generation Y's quality of worklife, longitudinal research is required. Furthermore, research should investigate the possible long-term effects that Generation Y employees may have on the organisation, and to consider which qualities and values have translated into favourable changes in the workplace. Research could further identify how Generation Y employees may be affected by the interaction with their supervisors, mentors and co-workers, and if those relationships have an impact on their productivity and engagement.

Lastly, research can be done to establish what works and what does not in regards to attracting and retaining Generation Y employees in the South African context.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The main objective of this study was to provide much-needed insight into the quality of worklife of Generation Y employees within the South African work context and to uncover the factors that may enhance or hinder this generation's performance in the organisation. Through in-depth interviews the enhancing and inhibiting factors for Generation Y employees were uncovered. Furthermore, the research was aimed at providing an understanding of what drives Generation Y, what are some of their workplace needs and expectations, and what informs their decisions to be part of an organisation.

By understanding Generation Y's work needs, human resource practitioners, psychologists and management can develop policies which can aid various factors such as communication, commitment, improving satisfaction, increasing productivity, and overall satisfaction with one's work and quality of worklife. Understanding Generation Y is a useful step in meeting their work needs.

Overall, the findings of this study support the notion that Generation Y employees have great expectations when it comes to the kind of organisation they prefer working for, and their future career aspirations.



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