

Talent management of South Africa's Generation X: A psychological contract perspective

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The references as well as the editorial style as prescribed by the *Publication Manual* (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA) were followed in this mini-dissertation.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.

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Several times during my MBA studies, I heard the 'joke': "How do you know someone is doing their MBA? They tell you". Having reached the finish line, I can now explain the reason to all those who tell this joke with some degree of exasperation. Doing an MBA is an all-consuming occupation that requires years of dedication and grit. It involves sitting in class on Saturdays, while others are spending time with friends and family; coming to terms with subject matter far removed from your undergraduate studies; and ultimately working into the early morning hours to finish your dissertation at the end.

Completing such a journey is not a solo undertaking, as there are several people who walk with you along the way – some in spirit, others in active participation, some for only parts of the journey and others from start to finish. It is with this in mind that I would like to thank those who helped and supported me on my journey.

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SUMMARY

Title: Talent management of South Africa's Generation X: A psychological contract perspective

Key terms: Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, work-life balance, South African context, Higher Education, expectations, values, psychological contract

Generation X has been well researched globally, yet very little is known about this generation in South Africa. Whilst academia have reached a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics that define this generation in and out of the workplace, little to no effort has been made to explore the influence a multicultural Generation X workforce has on the psychological contract within an employment context.

South Africa's higher education sector has been facing a number of changes and challenges over the past fifteen years. The recent *#FeesMustFall* campaign by students, however, looks set to bring change with far-reaching impact for students, higher education institutions, and the employees who work there.

Change within an organisation or employment sector causes alterations to the existing psychological contract between employer and employee. Whilst employers would like to keep their relationship with employees stable, they first need to understand who their employees are and what they value and believe about their relationship with their employer. The majority of the higher education sector's workforce comprises Generation X employees; yet, they are poorly understood and are the clear antithesis of their Baby Boomer predecessors who are steadily moving into retirement.

The aim of this qualitative study was to ascertain what Generation X employees within a South African higher education institution value in an employment relationship, and what they believe the responsibility and obligations are of both the employer and the employee. Generation X employees ($n = 10$) were interviewed, as well as employees of the Baby Boomer ($n = 4$) and millennial ($n = 4$) generations, to compare and contrast their attitudes regarding the employment relationship.

Results indicated, contrary to what previous studies had found elsewhere, that South African Generation X employees place great emphasis on values and ideology and expect to be able to align themselves with their employer in this regard. Much of this emphasis on values and ideology is predicated in the changing social dynamics within the country and a sincere intention to change the role the higher education sector plays in a developing country such as South Africa.

Different cultural groups within Generation X do indeed value different aspects in their employment relationship, holding different expectations regarding the responsibilities and obligations between employer and employee.

Recommendations for the higher education sector and future research were made.

OPSOMMING

Titel: Talentbestuur van Suid-Afrika se Generasie X: 'n Psigologiese kontrakperspektief

Sleuteltermes: Generasie, Baby Boomers, Generasie X, Millennials, werk-leefbalans, Suid-Afrikaanse konteks, Hoër Onderwys, verwagtinge, waardes, psigologiese kontrak

Generasie X is reeds wêreldwyd bestudeer, nietemin bly hierdie generasie grootliks onbestudeer in Suid-Afrika. Terwyl navorsers 'n behoorlike insig ontwikkel het oor die globale karaktereenskappe van die generasie in die werksplek, is bykans geen poging aangewend om die invloed wat 'n multikulturele Generasie X-werksmag op die psigologiese kontrak in 'n indiensnemingskonteks kan hê, te ondersoek nie.

Suid-Afrika se hoër onderwyssektor het vele veranderinge en uitdagings oor die afgelope vyftien jaar die hoof gebied. Die onlangse *#FeesMustFall*-veldtog deur studente blyk egter die pad te gebaan het vir verrykende omwentelinge vir studente, hoër onderwysinstellings, en die werknemers wat daar werk.

Veranderinge binne 'n organisasie of werksektor bring wysigings in die psigologiese kontrak tussen werkgewers en werknemers mee. Terwyl werkgewers graag dié verhouding stabiel sal wil hou, moet hul eers verstaan wie hul werknemers is en wat hul waardes en oortuigings ten opsigte van hul verhouding met hul werknemer is. Die meerderheid van die hoër onderwyssektor se werksmag is afkomstig uit Generasie X, nietemin word hul nie werklik verstaan nie en blyk hul sterk te verskil van hul Baby Boomer-voorgangers wat tans aftree-ouderdom bereik.

Die doel van hierdie kwalitatiewe studie was om Generasie X-werknemers binne 'n Suid-Afrikaanse hoër onderwysinstelling se waardes oor hul werksverhouding vas te stel, asook die oortuigings waarmee hul die verantwoordelikhede en verpligtinge tussen werknemer en werkgewer bejeën. Onderhoude is met Generasie X-werknemers ($n = 10$) gevoer, asook werknemers vanuit die Baby Boomer- ($n = 4$) en millennial-generasies ($n = 4$) se geledere om hul houdings ten opsigte van die werksverhouding te vergelyk.

Resultate het getoon dat, inteenstelling met studies wat elders gedoen is, Generasie X werknemers waardes en ideologiese oortuigings beklemtoon en verwag om hul te kan vereenselwig met die werkgewer se waardes en ideologiese standpunt. Hierdie klem op waardes en ideologie kan grootliks toegeskryf word aan die veranderende maatskaplike dinamiek binne die land en 'n opregte voorneme om die rol wat die hoër onderwyssektor in 'n ontwikkelende land soos Suid-Afrika speel, te verander.

Die onderskeie kultuurgroepe binne Generasie X toon wel verskillende waardes oor verskeie aspekte in die werksverhouding en huldig uiteenlopende verwagtinge ten opsigte van die verantwoordelikhede en verpligtinge tussen werkgewer en werknemer.

Aanbevelings is vir die hoër onderwyssektor gemaak, asook voorstelle vir toekomstige navorsing.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is about the talent management of South African Generation X employees from a psychological contract perspective, with a particular focus on understanding how to attract and retain these employees.

Chapter 1 contains the problem statement, research objectives, research method, and division of chapters.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THE RESEARCH

Internationally, companies are viewing their talent management actions as a boundaryless operation that draws on human capital potential both locally and globally (McNulty & De Cieri, 2016), whilst coming to grips with the implications of venturing so broadly. BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) find themselves with unique needs, as they are transitional economies with different talent management needs due to a high degree of turbulence and complexity within these countries, often accompanied by skills shortages (Horwitz, 2013).

South Africa, the “rainbow nation” (Rotich, Ilieva, & Walunjwa, 2015) among the BRICS countries, is still learning how to navigate all its diversity in terms of race, culture, language, religion, and history. Only as recent as the 1990s did South Africa start to integrate the various cultures and races into one society, striving for equal treatment and opportunity. Since then people from all groupings of South African society are gradually entering all spheres of industry, making the diversity within the South African workplace an evolving context, filled with new challenges and potential. As South Africa strains to rebuild its somewhat disjointed economy (Rotich et al., 2015), the business sector needs to attract and retain managers and specialists born and educated in South Africa, who understand the context along with the complexities of its people, challenges, and possibilities.

How then should companies view the process of talent acquisition and retention? Dollansky (2014) cites three types of psychological engagement, where employees are identified as (a) *alienative*: an employee who is not psychologically involved, but rather coerced to remain with the organisation; (b) *calculative*: an employee who is involved to the extent of doing a “fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay”; and (c) *moral*: an employee who intrinsically values the company’s mission, and is personally involved in and identifies with the company. Dollansky contends that employees’ behaviour is directly related to how they are treated by their employer. According to Festing and Schäfer (2014), employers can communicate their appraisal of key talented employees’ value to the company through highly

engaged talent management practices that aim to attract, select, develop, and retain talented employees.

The interaction between employee and employer is predicated upon what researchers such as Argyris (1960); and Levinson, Price, Munden, and Solley (1972) first defined as a psychological contract, and which has more recently been perfected in the seminal work of Rousseau (Tomprou, Rousseau, & Hansen, 2015). According to Robinson and Rousseau (1994), the psychological contract is a necessary component of the employment relationship. Festing and Schäfer (2014) contend that employees are likely to perceive an organisation's long-term investment in the development of internal talent as the organisation's attempt to meet employee expectations; this is typical of a relational psychological contract.

Psychological contracts are "individual beliefs in reciprocal obligations between employees and employers" (Rousseau, 1990, p. 389). Greater satisfaction regarding the fulfilment of the psychological contract is reported in accordance with how many talent management practices the organisation employs. Greater satisfaction in terms of the psychological contract translates into greater levels of commitment, well-being, fairness, and ultimately lower turnover intention levels (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). The psychological contract is conceptually linked to Blau's (1964) Social Exchange Theory (SET), and later found expression within the realm of positive organisational theory (Dollansky, 2014) in which the emphasis is placed upon what is affirmative for the individual employee within the organisation.

South Africa is entering a phase during which the Baby Boomer generation (born 1950-1969) will retire, leaving Generation X (born 1970-1989) (Van der Walt, 2010) to advance to key positions as specialists, as well as middle and top managers. In the Global North, the Baby Boomer generation outnumbers Generation X (Strauss & Howe, 1991), and the time frames that correspond with the various generations are significantly earlier. As can be seen in Figure 1, in South Africa Generation X and the Millennial generation (born 1990-2005) (Van der Walt, 2010), comprise nearly equal proportions of the population. This is just one of the ways Generation X in South Africa is clearly different to Generation X elsewhere in the world.

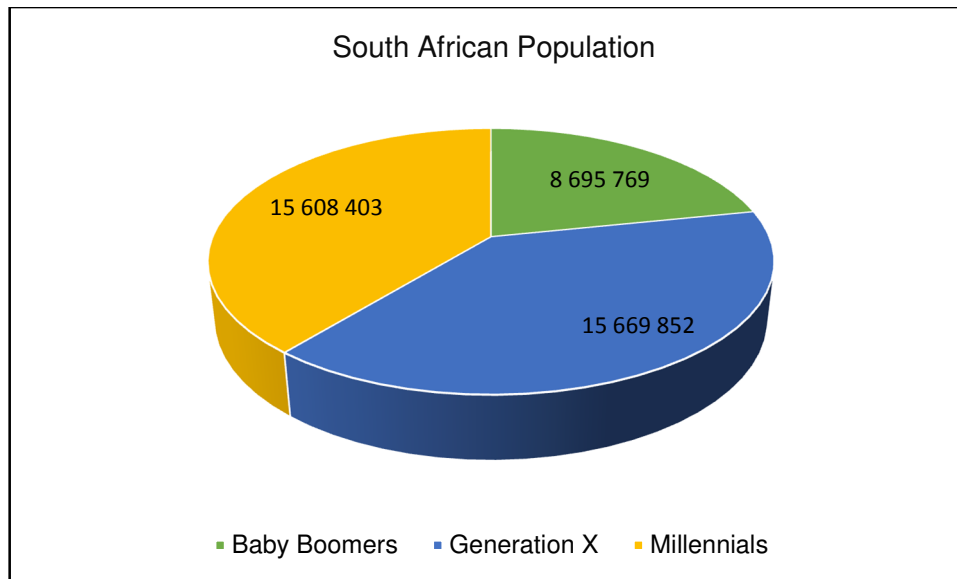


Figure 1. Mid-year population estimates of three different generations (Statistics South Africa, 2014).

Little is also known about the generations in the South African context, e.g., how their views and attitudes might affect whether companies succeed in attracting and retaining them. Most information is limited to publications such as Codrington and Grant-Marshall's *Mind the Gap* (2011), and a few other researchers' academic manuscripts; though most choose to focus on the millennial generation as consumers in the market place (Garikapati, Pendyala, Morris, Mokhtarian, & McDonald, 2016; Mangold & Smith, 2012; Rainer & Rainer, 2011).

Diversity in South African society is amplified by generational diversity that may be expressed somewhat differently among the various cultural groups. Yet, little is really known about cultural diversity within generations, as most researchers have opted to employ a "one-size-fits-all" approach to discussing the characteristics and values of different generations (Schenk & Seekings, 2010). Meanwhile, Markert (2004) indicates that matters such as race and gender are greatly influenced by a group's generational experience. Such differences are likely to result in divergent beliefs and expectations with regard to the psychological contract in the employment relationship.

Understanding Generation X within the South African context is essential to South Africa's economic future. More than twenty years after South Africa's first democratic election, the country is still battling with a persistent skills shortage (Rasool & Botha, 2011) due to Apartheid era education policies that were based on race (Schenk & Seekings, 2010). On the other end of the spectrum is a continuing brain drain of highly qualified individuals who opt to apply their highly marketable knowledge and skills outside South Africa (Coetzee, 2009).

Though it is clear from the data from Statistics South Africa (2014) in Figure 2 that the majority of Generation X's economically active individuals are African, employment statistics indicate managerial employment does not reflect this reality; meanwhile the pressure to create more equity at the top is growing (Radebe, 2013).

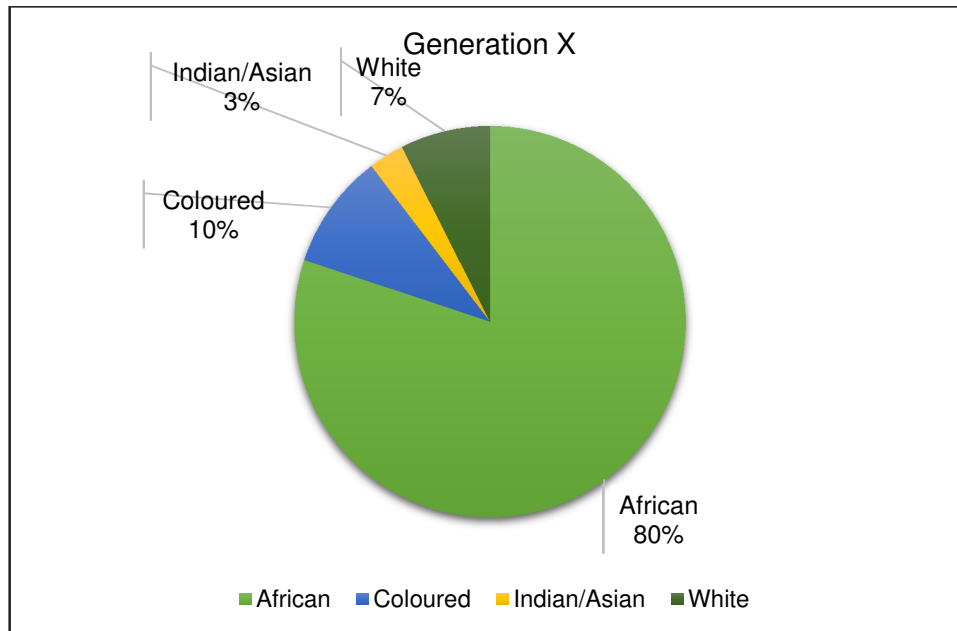


Figure 2. Mid-year population estimates of the race constitution of Generation X (Statistics South Africa, 2014).

The effects of Apartheid era education persists in the prevalence of African employees in technical level positions, and the persisting dominance of white employees in managerial and professionally qualified positions (Department: Labour: Republic of South Africa, 2015).

South Africa's reconstruction faces an additional difficulty: Not only do qualified and experienced professionals choose to work abroad, but provinces within South Africa suffer from the results of skills migration to other provinces, contributing to the difficulty of sectors that rely on highly skilled and qualified workers to these provinces (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Increased mobility, according to Lyons, Schweitzer, and Ng (2015), is a prominent feature of the modern career and according to their research appears to be amplified in successive generations. Whilst this has translated into an abundance of potential employees in the Gauteng and Western Cape Provinces, other provinces such as Limpopo and Eastern Cape had to work much harder to attract and retain the employees they want (Statistics South Africa, 2014).

As the context of this study is a university in the higher education sector - and specifically attracting and retaining Generation X employees for this sector - Figure 3 gives a presentation of the age distribution of academic staff in higher education in South Africa.

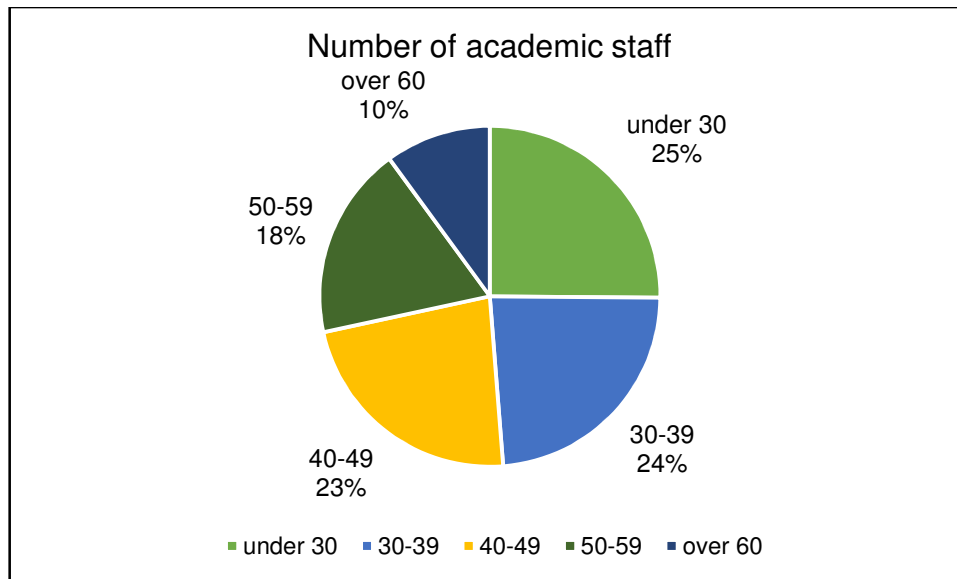


Figure 3. The age distribution of academic staff in South Africa (Council on Higher Education: South Africa, 2013).

South Africa's higher education sector has become somewhat chaotic since 2015 due to #FeesMustFall protests, but the higher education sector has an even greater challenge, namely how to attract and retain both academic and support staff employees? As is clear from Figure 3, nearly 50% of South African academics are from Generation X, with a significantly lower number from the Baby Boomer generation and even fewer from the millennial generation. Attracting and retaining employees within the higher education sector is of great importance due to the qualifications, skills, and knowledge that especially Generation X contributes towards education and research in South Africa. Academics, especially, have great career mobility as they advance in their careers and become leaders in their fields of research, affording them greater opportunities not only in South Africa, but also internationally (Jansen, 2003).

Judging from the general differences denoted by authors globally, members from Generation X are likely to have vastly different attitudes towards their careers and relationship with employers, as compared to the Baby Boomer Generation preceding them (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Festing & Schäfer, 2014). Members of Generation X are said to be individualists compared to the team-playing Baby Boomers; they embrace change and tend to have a strong dislike of almost anything characteristic of the Baby Boomer generation, which include bossiness, corporate culture, and anything fake or inauthentic (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011). Generation X also came of age during a period of economic and social instability, which impacted greatly on their attitudes towards career management and employee-employer relationships (Duh & Struwig, 2015). This is clearly illustrated by the number of job changes in a year as compared to the Baby Boomer

Generation, which on average is twice as many for Generation X (Lyons et al., 2015). Also evident is members of Generation X's preference for free agency over loyalty to an organisation, and their tendency to seek independence by being their own boss (Howe & Strauss, 2007). In the coming decade, Generation X will - as business leaders - be likely to push for efficiency and innovation more effectively than any generation before them (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Howe & Strauss, 2007). While the obvious usefulness of employing a generational perspective in the employment context is clear, the information available for a Global South and a particularly South African context is woefully inadequate. Duh and Struwig (2015) indicated that Generation X is the generation in South Africa that still suffers the most from the impact of Apartheid.

This study will seek to provide insight into Generation X within South Africa's multicultural context to facilitate a better perspective that will enable companies to attract and retain the best and brightest from this generation and, in turn, help provide the stability the South African economy desperately needs to grow. Therefore, the primary aim of the study is to explore the values and characteristics of South African Generation X employees in the workplace, as well as the expectations and obligations they associate with the psychological contract they have with their employer; contrasting these to their fellow Baby Boomer and millennial colleagues.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Collins English Dictionary (2004) defines generation as "all the people of approximately the same age, especially when considered as sharing certain attitudes, etc." (p. 645). The Generational Theory, espoused by authors such as Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2011) and Festing and Schäfer (2014), is based on two main assumptions: the first is the *socialisation hypothesis* suggesting that the values generational cohorts embrace are formed during childhood and early teenage years, and shared by those who are born around the same time. These basic values stay fairly stable throughout their lives. Though socialisation mostly happens through socialisation agents, those who have power relative to us (parents, teachers or elders) and peers of a similar age, also socialise us (Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999). The second assumption is based on the *social constructivist theory* which describes interpersonal relationships and the reality a group shares as being created and recreated during the course of social interactions between people (Sias, Pederson, Gallagher, & Kopaneva, 2012). This is augmented by Blau (1964) who postulated the Social Exchange Theory that emphasises reciprocity and negotiated agreements (Bal & Kooij, 2011; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Parzefall, 2008).

Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2011) noted that the advent of the Industrial Revolution – coupled with the faster pace of life, economy, and invention of new communication technologies such as the telephone, radio, and television – accelerated and intensified the changes that differentiate generations. This is an important aspect to note, since the three generations within the context of the South African workplace differ from generations described by authors such as Strauss and Howe (1991). South African generations occur further down the time line compared to Global North countries (Van der Walt, 2010); and South Africa's Apartheid past created a unique situation where different racial groups (therefore cultural groupings) grew up and came of age in vastly different social settings. This situation created diverging education and career options for the groups within a generation and is further amplified by contrasting cultural backgrounds and values, thereby creating a truly diverse workplace (Schenk & Seekings, 2010). Benson and Brown (2011) questioned whether there are any real discernible differences between generations in the workplace. They found clear differences between Baby Boomers' and Generation X's values and beliefs regarding matters such as job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation, and willingness to quit.

Karl Mannheim (cited by Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Festing & Schäfer, 2014), argued that there are three factors that combine to shape a particular group as a generation:

- The group's *location in history* and what Mannheim called a self-conscious awareness thereof. The location in history is defined by a generation's collective response to traumatic or catastrophic events that serve to unite it as a group.
- Historically, groups - especially groups of young people - become agents of social change within society by taking *action to change the status quo*. The activities such groups engage in during their pursuit of change often define them.
- Young people tend to *stick together in their antagonism towards the generations that precede them*.

Aboim and Vasconcelos (2013) took Mannheim's theory from a structural-constructivist to post-structuralist angle, suggesting that generations should be referred to as 'social generations'. Social generations, Aboim and Vasconcelos argue, are discursive formations; therefore, even if the shared commonalities can be translated into some form of shared subjectivity and agency, generations are predominantly shaped by discourses of difference, which individuals then organise in numerous ways, depending on the context. The authors concluded that generations are therefore more than mere historical locations; they are discursive categories used for social differentiation and conflict.

Strauss and Howe (1991), who are considered experts on generational matters, did not advocate a general theory of what a generation is, but instead advocated a cycle of four different generation types or peer personalities identified through their study of the United States of America since 1584. These peer personalities are idealist, reactive, civic, and adaptive.

Idealist (Baby Boomers) and civic (Millennials) generations are defined as dominant; while the reactive (Generation X) and adaptive generations, such as the Silent Generation (preceding the Baby Boomers), are so-called recessive generations. Idealist and civic generations generally dominate public life, whereas reactive and adaptive generations tend to check the excesses introduced by the other two generations (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Strauss and Howe (1991) and Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2011) agree that nearly all societies recognise a specific coming-of-age moment or *rite of passage* that creates a discrete generation. Duh and Struwig (2015) listed other elements that define a generation, such as mass communication prevalence, literacy, and social consequences (an event that defines a group, and has other societal consequences).

During the course of the literature review, it became evident that very little research-backed information exists about South Africa's Generation X, and very few studies internationally focused on generations within cultural groupings in a particular country. Instead, generations had simply been strung together under a country name. Generation X in the South African context is a relatively unexplored and poorly understood research area.

South Africa's added differentiating challenge is that both Generation X and the Baby Boomer generation have different racial groups that grew up in vastly different realities due to Apartheid laws and policies, having greater impact on older members of Generation X compared to their younger compatriots (Rotich et al., 2015; Schenk & Seekings, 2010). As is clear from Schenk and Seekings' (2010) exploration of Generation X, different racial groups' experiences and positions were often at odds with one another on at least two of the three factors outlined by Mannheim during this generation's critical defining moments. Naturally, there are not only overarching similarities, but also critical differences between the different groupings within this generation. What is presently unknown is how many of the Generation X characteristics the various racial groups in South Africa share?

This poses a unique challenge to employers who are seeking to understand this generation in order to attract and retain their skills, knowledge, and talents in their organisations; specifically higher education institutions during the current uncertain times the sector has experienced and continues to experience.

Generations in the South African Workplace

Van der Walt (2010) categorised the various generations in the South African context (Table 1). South Africa's generations' placement according to date range is a number of years later than most global North countries, with the overlap indicating the cusper ranges (i.e. individuals with characteristics of their own and adjacent generations).

Table 1

Generational Timeframes: South Africa Compared to Other Countries

	Other Countries	Mid-Range	South Africa		Other Countries	South Africa
Baby Boomers (BB)	1943-1965	1962	1950-1969	2nd Cuspers BB/X Range	1959-1965	1966-1973
Generation X	1960-1984	1981	1970-1989	3rd Cuspers	1978-1984	1986-1993
Generation Y (Millennials)	1979-2000	n/a	1990-2005	X/Y Range		

Source: Van der Walt (2010).

Baby Boomers are known for their love of winning and success; ostentation, and leading whatever organisation they are part of (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011). Since collaborative learning had been part of their school experience, they enjoy opportunities for interaction, networking, and teamwork. Baby Boomers tend to adhere to traditional work ethics of dedication and hard work (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011), as well as life time employment and company loyalty (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). Subsequently, many from this generation are also not buying into the traditional retirement phase they are entering; instead choosing to either change to alternative work settings or simply remain with the organisation they are working at (Byles et al., 2013; Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Members of Generation X (Gen X) are the antithesis of the Baby Boomer generation. They comparatively place less emphasis on loyalty to the company (Festing & Schäfer, 2014) and instead value work-life balance, autonomy and independence. Gen Xers also tend to dislike bossiness, corporate culture, and anything fake or inauthentic (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Lub, Bijvank, Bal, Blomme, & Schalk, 2012).

Generation X arrived at the workplace just as the economic boom was tailing off, and entered the world of work in the midst of transition where the old rules are rewritten on-the-go, and leaders are still trying to come to terms with the changing workplace dynamics and demands placed on leadership (Becton et al., 2014; Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011). Generation X is not interested in working for future rewards, since no company is guaranteed of a future in the fast changing economic and political conditions (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011).

Gen Xers embrace change, are pragmatic, sometimes arrogant, and have an appetite for risk taking. As a result, they are generally opposed to paying their dues and instead seek quick, short-term rewards for which they are prepared to embrace both the risk and hard work involved to make the venture successful (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Lyons et al., 2015). They therefore tend to side-step the system through following a non-traditional approach and establishing new employment opportunities, often doing the jobs others do not want, and choosing entrepreneurial ventures instead (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Howe & Strauss, 2007). Freedom is the only reward truly valued by Generation X, since they value having a work-life balance (Lub et al., 2012). In future, they are likely to remain employees with modest incomes, appreciating flexibility and autonomy to change jobs or directions as they please (Howe & Strauss, 2007).

Millennials tend to be tolerant, caring, honest, balanced, independent, and optimistic (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Dannar, 2013). Millennials arrived in the workplace with high expectations, only to find that there are not as many jobs as they thought there should be, and that the world of work is not everything they were hoping it would be (Howe & Strauss, 2007). They tend to emphasise corporate social responsibility, work-life balance, development opportunities and mobility during their early careers (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). According to Lyons et al. (2015), the millennial generation is also by far the generation making the most job or organisational changes, which may be attributed to the challenging dynamics of the job market they are attempting to gain entry to.

The Impact of Culture on Generations

South African society comprises four main population groups, namely Africans (Blacks), Coloureds, Indians or Asians, and Whites (Wärnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015). Within these population groups, several cultural groupings are present, adding greatly to the diversity present in the South African workplace.

Culture, according to Kassin, Fein, and Markus (2014), is defined as assumptions, beliefs, institutions, meanings, practices, and values that persist and are shared by a large group of people and conveyed to each successive generation. Hofstede (1984) referred to this as a collective programming of the mind. Kassin et al. (2014) add that although the

essence of a culture is transmitted from one generation to the next, cultures do change over time and from one generation to the next.

Hogan (2007) describes culture as being both subjective and objective: on the subjective level it is composed of a meaning system, while objectively it dictates what, how, and why people behave in certain ways. Cummings and Worley (2015) indicate that cultural differences are mostly based on five values, namely (a) context orientation: how information is conveyed and the value of time; (b) power distance: views regarding authority, status differences, and influence patterns; (c) uncertainty avoidance: degree of conservatism, and favouring familiar and predictable situations; (d) achievement orientation: value placed on acquisition of power and resources; and (e) individualism vs collectivism: focus on the individual or the group.

Many authors use the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures as a point of departure, as the difference in intrapersonal relations between cultures is more pronounced regarding this value (Kassin et al., 2014). In an individualistic culture, an employee will seek his or her own interest (Forsyth, 2010), and it is expected that the employer and employee's interests must be aligned in such a manner that they serve both (Hofstede, 1991; Kassin et al., 2014), as such cultures espouse values of independence, autonomy and self-reliance (Kassin et al., 2014).

By comparison, the employer in a collectivistic culture not only employs a single employee, but also the in-group he or she belongs to. An employee will act within the best interests of the in-group, even if it is not to the benefit of his or her own individual interest. Whereas in an individualistic culture, the relationship between the employer and employee is primarily a business transaction; a collectivistic culture is organised to more closely resemble a family relationship that includes protection in exchange for loyalty (Forsyth, 2010; Hofstede, 1991). The latter culture stresses the importance of interdependence, co-operation and social harmony. It is important to note that individualistic and collectivistic cultures are not simple polar opposites of each other; members within a cultural group display greater or lesser degrees of individualism or collectivism, as compared to other cultural groups (Kassin et al., 2014).

According to Hofstede (1991), management techniques originated almost exclusively from individualistic cultures, and may not find the same relevance in collectivistic cultures. Matić (2008) noted that cultural differences in work values can account for individual employees' performance, predicting job satisfaction. Understanding these differences can be of great help to organisations in the midst of change and negotiations.

Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains why culture will have such a significant impact on different cultural groups within Generation X. SIT analyses group processes and how these may affect intergroup relations and concludes that people tend to favour in-groups (groups

we identify with, such as country, religion, cultural groups) over outgroups (groups we do not identify with) in order to enhance their self-esteem (Forsyth, 2010; Kassin et al., 2014). SIT assumes that groups influence their members' self-concepts and self-esteem, especially if the individual identifies him or herself as being part of that group (Forsyth, 2010).

Kassin et al. (2014) explain that all individuals strive to better their self-esteem, which consists of two components: The personal identity is the 'me' component of a person's concept of self, which includes qualities such as traits, skills and beliefs; and the various social or collective identities that include all qualities associated with relationships with other people, groups and society (Forsyth, 2010). Social-identification in this context refers to the individual accepting the group as an extension of the self and as a result he or she bases his or her definition of self on the qualities of the group. As social identification increases, the individual feels more connected and interdependent on other group members. Forsyth (2010) noted that the relative size of the group one identifies with will impact on self-categorisation. Those belonging to a group with fewer members (or fewer members such as the context may be at the workplace), tend to categorise themselves as members of their group more quickly than those individuals belonging to a bigger or more dominant group. Individuals' cultural orientation therefore affects how they perceive, evaluate and present themselves in relation to others (Kassin et al., 2014).

Most of South Africa's formal sector still relies on employer-employee relationship principles founded in individualistic cultures, despite drastic changes in South Africa's labour market since the end of Apartheid. South Africa's labour market is gradually becoming more multicultural, with both individualistic and collectivistic cultures being represented. Hofstede (1991) insists that culturally a manager is the follower of his employees and ought to meet them on their cultural ground. It naturally follows then that managers and the leadership of an organisation must have more than just a surface understanding of not only the generations present amongst the employees they lead and manage, but also the intricacies of the cultural groupings present in the workforce.

Higher Education Sector of South Africa

Higher education institutions in South Africa for the first time faced collective upheaval when in 2002 the Government passed a policy to change the face of higher education (Kamsteeg, 2008; Paul & Berry, 2013). Higher education in South Africa was restructured by merging former black and white institutions in an effort to rectify Apartheid-era policies that resulted in institutions of higher education being unevenly scattered across the country. This inequity was further amplified by a great disparity in their size, student enrolment, research capacity, funding and quality of management (Kamsteeg, 2008). The policy was met with a lot of resistance from within the higher education sector itself and the outcomes achieved

through this policy often either fell short or yielded negative results entirely (Paul & Berry, 2013).

At the time, Jansen (2003) noted several areas of concern in his assessment of the South African higher education landscape. Employment equity needed to be implemented to retain black academics that otherwise might leave for high-paying positions in the public or private sector; yet, the manner in which it is done should not sacrifice good quality academic and research output from the university in favour of short term gains on an equity score card. Jansen further lamented the declining credibility of academic leadership that followed on disruptions dating back to the 1990s. Another matter of concern was the waning voice of criticism during a time in which higher education institutions in South Africa faced fundamental restructuring of the higher education landscape, new governance regimes, new institutional combinations and policies. Instead, he noted, the voice of criticism had been replaced by a voice of complaint.

In 2015, higher education in South Africa experienced a new form of upheaval from within. A lot of uncertainty has followed the #FeesMustFall campaign by students, as the protest campaign gradually not only impacts funding for students, but also funding for staff and the demographics of staff sought by universities (Naicker, 2016). Soudien (2014) noted that South African higher education institutions needed to reconsider their position in South Africa and realign with the public good and public interest. This means not only providing access to quality education, but the curriculum must also be relevant to the changing context and challenges graduates will face.

Yet, whilst diversity among staff is sought at present, authors within South Africa's higher education sector sounded the alarm bell several years ago about a nearing staffing crisis of another kind (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2011). Experienced academics from the Baby Boomer generation have started to reach the age of mandatory retirement and whilst many higher education institutions in South Africa attempt to bridge this crisis by retaining their experienced academics for longer, this provides only a temporary solution.

Great change in the higher education sector seems inevitable (Winberg, 2016), but until a stable relationship between government, students and the higher education institutions has been re-established, great uncertainty will persist in the employment relationship between staff and management at South African higher education institutions.

Talent Management

Retaining talent and minimising employee turnover remain a big focus for higher education institutions in South Africa, since they run the risk of losing talented employees to either the private sector or other higher education institutions in South Africa or abroad that can better deliver on rewards and benefits prized by employees (Erasmus, Grobler, & Van

Niekerk, 2015). Oakes and Galagan (2011) identify six components of human capital functions that can be found in most organisations today; they are recruiting, compensation and rewards, performance management, succession management, engagement and retention, and finally leadership development. These authors noted that although many organisations show logic in the way they approach talent management, most activities are driven by a need to avoid the pain they associate with breaking familiar patterns and adapting to a more relevant approach. By following old practices such as a five-year plan; planning that ignores the mobility of their potential employees; recruiting without proper consideration of other factors that may be impacted by an appointment; and development removed from the organisation's strategic direction, organisations engage in practices that no longer make sense in the fast moving and changing world of industry and the employees that work in them.

It is important to remember that no gold standard of integrated talent management exists, since each organisation needs to first consider which human resource (HR) components are relevant to its needs (Oakes & Galagan, 2011). Cappelli (in Oakes & Galagan, 2011) identified three major sub-tasks of talent management within an organisation:

- Work force planning to estimate the organisation's future talent needs.
- Hiring, internal development and promotion (often referred to in South Africa as growing your own timber).
- Bringing the planning process to an individual level through succession planning.

In recent years, organisations have globally recalibrated their operations on all levels with a sustainable mind-set (Savitz, 2013). On talent management level, this means that the organisation:

- changes its culture specifically to support sustainability and core organisational objectives and success;
- increases employees' engagement through shared values;
- measures and enhances the organisation's impact of sustainability, which includes the value generated by a more engaged workforce;
- creates organisational capabilities to meet present and future environmental, social, and economic challenges;
- embeds sustainability into the organisation's workforce lifecycle processes; and
- leverages sustainability to help achieve traditional HR objectives such as diversity, employee well-being and more productive employees.

Liversage (2015) studied talent management in South African higher education institutions from a management perspective. The author found that talent management programmes were executed in accordance with the unique approach of the individual responsible for talent management at the institution. Each individual who took part in Liversage's study had his or her own definition of talent management.

While universities strive to maintain the talented workforce they need to function and distinguish themselves in the higher education sector, universities that participated in Liversage's study (2015) failed to provide actual evidence of a comprehensive policy or procedure to drive talent management. Moreover, Liversage found that the need for active talent management was little more than a general statement in higher education institutions' institutional plans and strategies.

The Employment Relationship and the Psychological Contract

The psychological contract concept is directly linked to Blau's (1964) Social Exchange Theory (SET), and later found expression within the realm of positive organisational theory (Dollansky, 2014) in which the emphasis is placed upon what is affirmative for the individual employee within the organisation. The psychological contract, according to Rousseau's seminal work (1990), is an individual's beliefs regarding reciprocal obligations between him or her and an employer. Authors (Festing & Schäfer, 2014; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998) define the psychological contract structure to be either relational or transactional. Whereas relational contracts are open-ended and involve socio-emotional as well as economic terms, transactional contracts are short-term and limited to an economic focus. The hybrid or balanced psychological contract takes the most prized aspects of the transactional and relational contracts to form a third psychological contract type. The balanced contract is characterised by involvement in the organisation and long-term employment, while allowing for flexibility and changing contract requirements subject to evolving projects and changed circumstances (Chien & Lin, 2013; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004).

Several forces impact on the nature of the employment relationship and the fulfilment of obligations and responsibilities. Hoffman and Casnocha (2012) explain that forces from the economic and job market make it hard for millennial employees to enter, for Generation X and Baby Boomers to move up, and anyone over the age of sixty to exit. This uncertainty has made it more beneficial for both employer and employee to enter into a changed psychological contract that is relevant to the changing work environment. Given the pending and as yet unknown changes that seem to be bearing down on the South African higher education sector, management of universities must keep in mind that this will translate into changes in the psychological contract too.

Cawsey, Deszca, and Ingols (2012) noted that sudden, seemingly arbitrary changes to the psychological contract can potentially lead to trouble for organisations. The authors explain that change can threaten employees' sense of security and control, which can lead to a loss of trust between employee and employer, as well as fear, resentment and anger from employees. Therefore, as all employees at the various higher education institutions in South Africa know that change is looming that will affect their psychological contracts with their employers, employers should heed the warning from Cawsey et al. (2012) that employees do not react well to surprises and unilateral decisions that are devoid of employee input or that of their representatives.

Many authors (Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2008; Wörnich et al., 2015) differentiate between the 'old' and 'new' psychological contract. In the new psychological contract, the employee gives less loyalty towards the employer, since most employers cannot provide job security. This means that the relationship has moved from the parent-child relationship to an adult relationship on equal footing. To enable the organisation to be more flexible, employees are provided with more development opportunities. This means that the former loyalty for life-long employment through promotion has been replaced by employment mobility between organisations; thereby both employment parties are served in terms of growth and adding new talent and skills to feed the organisation's present needs. For older generations within the workplace, the change from life-long employment to the expectation of employee mobility represented a breach in the psychological contract, whereas younger generations, such as Generation X and the Millennials, no longer count on long-term employment and expect an employer to provide development opportunities (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Lub et al., 2012).

According to Lub et al. (2012), the obligations that form part of a psychological contract include perceived promises, which may be inferred by one party and not necessarily recognised by the other. Even in cases where these obligations are poorly defined, both parties will expect the other to honour its obligations (Van der Vaart, Linde, & Cockeran, 2013). An employee's commitment to the employer persists for as long as the fulfilment of obligations is in balance (Rodwell & Gulyas, 2013). However, a negative situation with resultant dissatisfaction and turnover may result when this exchange is no longer in balance (Van der Vaart et al., 2013). Dissatisfaction due to unequal performance on obligations can also give way to the aggrieved party adapting its performance through a reduction in organisational citizenship behaviour and in-role performance (Lub et al., 2012).

Unequal performance of obligations or simply failing to keep commitments is known as psychological contract violation. Tomprou et al. (2015) investigated what may happen after an employee had suffered psychological contract violation. Four possible outcomes are: the psychological contract between the parties may revert to its state before the violation; a

revised contract may be negotiated that gives way to a more beneficial agreement; an employee might decide to accept the revised contract that is less beneficial due to violation; or the employee might be unable to accept the changed psychological contract, resulting in the contract remaining in permanent disrepair.

Erasmus et al. (2015) recently completed a study within a South African higher education institution and concluded that a retention toolkit needs to be developed to properly enable line managers to retain high-performing employees with greater success. They suggested that such a toolkit ought to include career discussions; the setting of personal goals; aligning organisational and personal goals; mentoring and coaching; identification and facilitation of training and development needs; and finally requests for adjustment to remuneration. Festing and Schäfer (2014) stated that individuals who are aware that they have been identified as talent within the organisation were in turn more likely to exude positive behaviour such as increased performance, support of the organisation's strategic priorities, and identification with the organisation. The authors concluded that in order to have a positive impact on the psychological contract with a talented and valued employee, it is important for the organisation to ensure that the employee knows that the organisation identified him or her as such.

The delicate balancing act of retaining their most talented employees whilst answering to employment equity legislation has come into sharp focus for higher education institutions since the #FeesMustFall protests. Yet, Snyman, Ferreira, and Deas (2015) in their study at a South African higher education institution found that when selection and promotion criteria are fair, objective and known to all employees within the organisation, employment equity legislation and practices do not impact upon the employment relationship or psychological contract.

Generation X in South Africa is the embodiment of diversity: diversity in culture, critical childhood experiences, and education and career opportunities. As a result, this generation is likely to have diverse values and beliefs regarding its psychological contract, and subsequently talent management practices are most likely to ensure an organisation will successfully attract and retain this generation. Festing and Schäfer (2014, p. 265) put three major aspects together in their framework, as depicted in Figure 4. The framework shows how active and strategy-driven talent management by an organisation translates to the psychological contract with individual employees, as well as the manner in which generational differences can impact on the outcomes of both the psychological contract on individual level and talent management in the organisation as a whole.

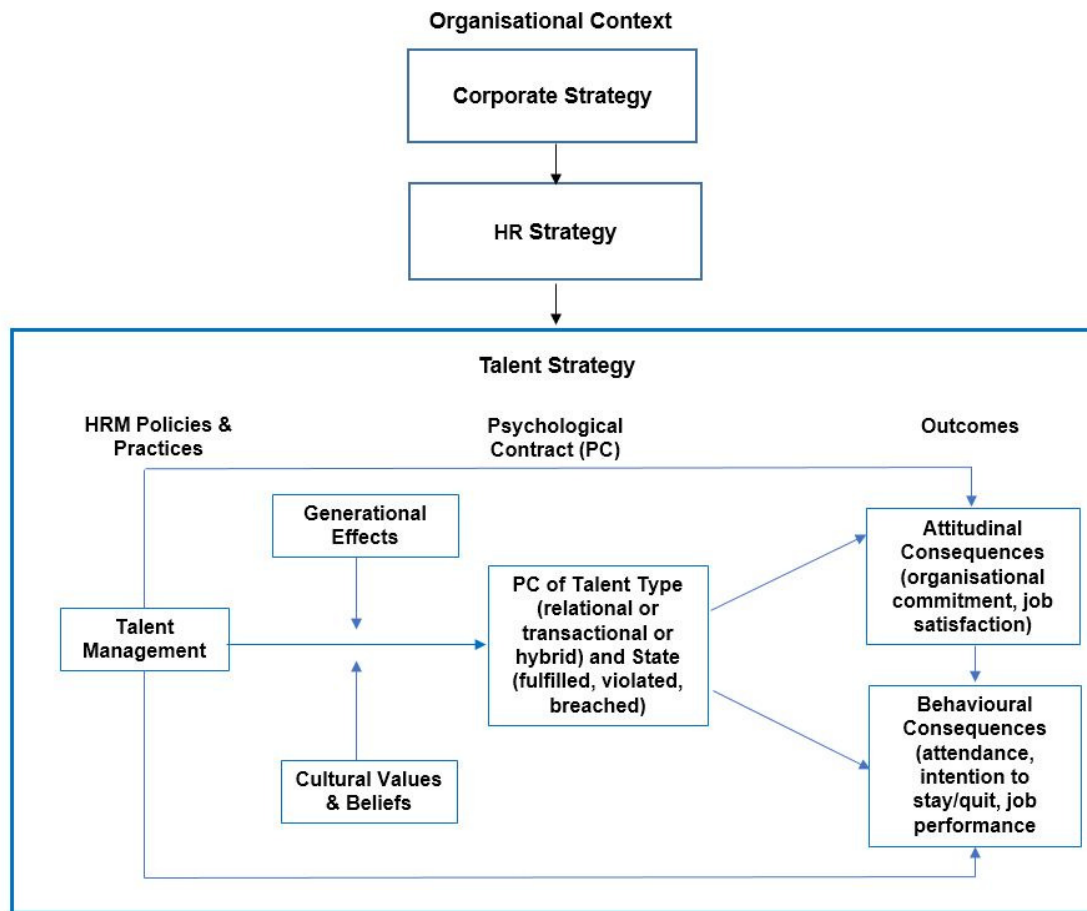


Figure 4. Talent management grid showing the impact of generational effects and cultural values and beliefs on the psychological contract (Adapted from Festing & Schäfer, 2014).

From the literature study, the following primary research question is formulated for this study, namely **“What are the workplace expectations of South African Generation X employees at a higher education institution?”**

To more fully explore this topic, the following secondary questions must be answered:

- What factors, from an employee perspective, will enable an employer to attract and retain a Generation X employee?
- What are Generation X’s beliefs regarding responsibilities and obligations of the two parties in the employment relationship, i.e. employer and employee?
- How do cultural differences impact Generation X employees’ expectations in the workplace?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study has a general objective and more specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective

The aim of this study is to explore the dynamics of the psychological contract in the talent management of Generation X employees at a higher education institution in terms of their attraction and retention.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The more specific objectives are to:

- understand which factors, from an employee perspective, will enable an employer to attract and retain a Generation X employee;
- determine Generation X's beliefs regarding the responsibilities and obligations of the two parties in the employment relationship, i.e. employer and employee; and
- establish how cultural differences impact Generation X employees' expectations in the workplace.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.4.1 Research Design

During the course of the literature review, it became evident that very little research-backed information exists about South Africa's Generation X, and very few studies internationally focused on generations within cultural groupings within a country. Instead, generations were all simply grouped together under a country name. Generation X in the South African context is a relatively unexplored and poorly understood research area, necessitating a qualitative research design to explore the terrain. This means that this study will be exploratory by nature; a design which is used when a problem has not previously been clearly defined. Exploratory research helps to develop concepts more clearly, develops operational definitions, and improves the final research design, which espouses an interpretive epistemology to clarify the process through which a relationship functions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), giving way to a more subjective, participatory role (Maree, 2007) that is linked to a qualitative inquiry (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

The qualitative inquiry (Patton & Cochran, 2002) is aimed at attaining a thorough understanding about participants' experiences and attitudes. Such understanding is achieved by asking questions that pertain to the what, how, and why of a phenomenon. According to Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009), the appropriate contexts for

qualitative research designs are those seeking to either broaden or deepen an understanding of the dynamics of the social world. This includes questions on people's experience, their views, exploring poorly understood matters, as well as sensitive topics requiring flexibility.

1.4.2 Research Participants

To aid data collection, participants were selected from among staff (both academic and support staff; the latter comprising professional and administrative staff members) within a higher education institution in South Africa who satisfy the criteria of being from the Millennial, Generation X, and Baby Boomer generations, representing the various racial groupings present on the different campuses.

This type of sampling is called criterion sampling (Maree, 2007) and refers to the typical characteristics and number of participants to be included in the study. Criteria may include age, place of residence, gender, class, profession, marital status, use of a particular teaching strategy, etc. Researchers seek people within the chosen community who fit the defined characteristics and gather data until either the required number has been interviewed or data saturation has been reached. Data saturation is when enough information has been gathered to reproduce the study and when further coding becomes unnecessary (Fusch & Ness, 2015). In this case, data saturation indicated the adequate number of participants in the study ($N = 18$; Millennial $n = 4$, Generation X $n = 10$, Baby Boomers $n = 4$).

Since this study sought to explore a poorly explored knowledge area in South Africa, the following criteria for selection were used:

- academic and support staff;
- respondents from diverse racial backgrounds;
- staff members from Generation X; and
- staff from the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations to serve as a baseline comparison.

1.4.3 Data Collection Strategies

To enable the gathering of useful information on this poorly explored topic in South Africa, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Interviewing is the predominant way of information collection in qualitative research, according to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2011). A qualitative interview endeavours to see and understand the world from the participant's perspective, exploring the meaning behind it (De Vos et al., 2011).

Interviews should start with open-ended questions that move from easy to more complex or sensitive matters (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). According to Keller and Conradin (n.d.), the advantage of conducting a semi-structured interview and using open-ended questions is that it allows for two-way communication, which enables the researcher to confirm assumptions; affording the opportunity to learn what was not known before; and for the respondent not to simply provide answers, but also the reasons and therefore the motivations.

1.4.4 Data Analysis

Woods (2011) recommends Braun and Clarke's stages of thematic analysis to make sense of the data collected during a qualitative interview. The stages are:

1. Familiarising yourself with the data: During this stage the interviews are transcribed, read, and reread to identify initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes: This stage involves systematically coding features of interest in the data across the entire data set and then gathering data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes: Codes are organised into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Evaluate whether themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1), and the entire data set (Level 2) to generate a thematic *map* of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Further analysis is done to refine the details of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report: This is the final opportunity for analysis, relating it back to the research question and literature available on the research topic.

The qualitative data will further be analysed through summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), to add a quantitative aspect to the data analysed for this study and to make it easier to draw comparisons between Generation X, the Baby Boomer generation and the Millennial generation.

Analysing data first for the purpose of exploring the usage or occurrence of particular words or themes is known as manifest content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A study that stops at this point of analysis will be deemed a quantitative study. However, a summative content analysis such as in this study, goes further than counting the number of times particular words or themes were encountered in the text – in this case the transcribed interviews. Summative content analysis also includes latent content analysis that requires the researcher to engage in a process of interpreting the content to discover the underlying meaning of words or themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The study can therefore be summarised in terms of the following themes used to attain the desired answer to the primary research question:

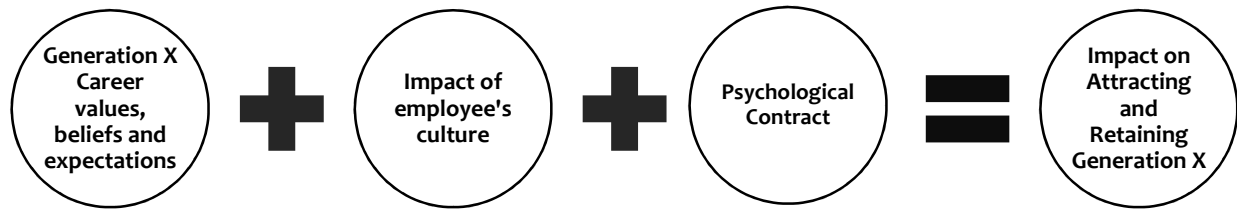


Figure 5. Conceptual framework of the study.

1.5 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

According to Maree (2007), the role of the researcher in a qualitative research design is by its definition subject to the researcher's subjectivity, and the researcher is therefore viewed as the research instrument employed to facilitate the data gathering process. However, the researcher's subjectivity is not a detracting element, since his or her involvement and immersion in the changing, real-world situation is essential to record changes within a real-world context. The researcher made use of interpretative codes, relating to the reasons, explanations and motives behind the information she had collected through qualitative interviews (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005).

The researcher has a number of ethical duties (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton & Cochran, 2002). The first of these duties relates to autonomy and the researcher's responsibility to respect the rights of the individual to voluntarily take part in the research study. The second duty of the researcher is that his or her work must be beneficial. Companion to this is the duty to do no harm during the course of research activities, which relates to protecting participants' identity, and keeping the information disclosed by them confidential.

The research proposal was put forward to the Ethics Committee of the North-West University for evaluation and approved by the committee [ethics number EMSPBS16/02/16 - 01/80]. The researcher was careful not to create expectations with participants with regard to the outcome of the research. Every participant completed a consent form that specified the objectives of the research study and the promise of ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of each participant.

1.6 POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

Though many industrial psychology and human resource management textbooks have been written for the South African context, much of what informs them is research done in the Global North, with little attention to talent management across cultures or races, and age or generational groupings. Often companies attempt to retain and keep valued professionals and managers in a fairly haphazard manner, with little understanding of what they may value.

The potential contribution this study will make is to provide real data within the South African context and give valuable insight into not only Generation X's needs and values as they relate to the workplace, but also contrasting Generation X with the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations.

An additional valuable contribution will be an understanding of the role a cultural or racial background may have within the South African context in attracting and keeping talented employees with a company for as long as possible.

1.7 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

The chapters are laid out as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction and problem statement
- Chapter 2: Manuscript.
- Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2

ARTICLE

Generation X employees' perception of their psychological contract: Talent management at a South African university

Abstract

The higher education sector in South Africa is currently in turmoil. Therefore, it is imperative to not only attract talented employees to this sector, but to retain its current talent. This study investigated the perceptions of staff members at a South African university regarding the psychological contract dynamics between themselves and their employer. This primarily qualitative study focused primarily on Generation X's perceptions ($n = 10$) in order to benchmark Gen X's views on the employment relationship; Millennial employees ($n = 4$) and Baby Boomer generation employees ($n = 4$) were included for comparison. Participants from both academic and support staff (professional and administrative) from the broad cultural groupings within South Africa were interviewed and the data transcribed. The data were coded into themes to provide a qualitative insight into Gen Xers' expectations of their relationship with their employer and then quantified through summative content analysis to allow for a comparative overview of the views amongst the various cultural groups within Generation X. From the findings, it emerged that Generation X employees in South Africa place great importance on having a reciprocal relationship with their employer regarding the exchange of resources and remuneration for loyalty, quality, and ethical work. Generation X places a high premium on ethics, autonomy, developmental opportunities, and sound leadership in the workplace.

Key terms: psychological contract, reciprocity, Gen X, Millennials, Baby Boomers, resources, talent management, autonomy, leadership, compensation, equality, fairness

Stephen R. Covey, author of “The seven habits of highly effective people” (1989) wrote: “People will begin to judge each other through those expectations. And if they feel like their basic expectations have been violated, the reserve of trust is diminished. We create many negative situations by simply assuming that our expectations are self-evident and that they are clearly understood and shared by other people” (p. 195).

The South African workplace has always been a complicated one with employers and employees often having very different ideas about each other’s needs, and the rights and responsibilities that form part of their relationship. Employment at higher education institutions in South Africa for the first time faced upheaval when in 2002 the Government passed a policy to change the face of higher education (Kamsteeg, 2008; Paul & Berry, 2013). Higher education in South Africa was restructured by merging former black and white institutions in an effort to rectify Apartheid-era policies that resulted in institutions of higher education being unevenly scattered across the country, as well as great disparity in their size, student enrolment, research capacity, funding, and quality of management (Kamsteeg, 2008). The policy was met with a lot of resistance from within the higher education sector itself, and the outcomes achieved through this policy often either fell short of or yielded negative results entirely (Paul & Berry, 2013).

In 2015, higher education in South Africa experienced a new form of upheaval from within. A lot of uncertainty has followed the #FeesMustFall campaign by students, as the protest campaign gradually not only impacted funding for students, but also funding for staff and the demographics of staff sought by universities (Naicker, 2016). Great change in this sector seems inevitable (Winberg, 2016), but until a stable relationship between government, students, and the higher education institutions has been re-established, great uncertainty will persist in the employment relationship between staff and management at South African higher education institutions.

Aon Hewitt (2014) indicates that globally the Baby Boomer generation is likely to stay longer in the workplace, and the available talent for leadership from among Generation X will be limited, since globally this generation tends to be much smaller in numbers. South Africa’s statistics prove a different state of affairs (Statistics South Africa, 2014); population statistics comprising of the Millennia (born 1990-2005), Generation X (born 1970-1989) and Baby Boomer (born 1950-1959) generations show that Baby Boomers comprise 21.77% of the population, compared to Generation X (39.2%) and the Millennial generation (39.04%).

Part of South Africa’s employment landscape of highly qualified labour comprises academics and support staff at higher education institutions. Apartheid-era education and labour practices left South Africa with a persistent skills shortage (Rasool & Botha, 2011;

Schenk & Seekings, 2010) and a brain drain (Coetzee, 2009) of highly qualified individuals leaving South Africa for employment opportunities elsewhere (Aon Hewitt, 2014). Statistics by the Council on Higher Education: South Africa (2013) show that academic staff from amongst Generation X (born 1970-1989) accounts for nearly fifty percent of the total academic staff. Keeping these highly qualified employees in South Africa and working within the tertiary education sector is of critical importance to support the country's bid to enhance its number of skilled and educated employees.

Little research has been done about Generation X in South Africa (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011) or about their beliefs and attitudes as pertaining to their psychological contract with their employer. In the past, academics and support staff could expect to have a particular employment relationship at a university or technikon, as this used to be a very stable employment sector. The uncertain times within higher education imply that the once reliable psychological contract can no longer be viewed as a clearly understood relationship – the changed workplace and education sector dynamics mean that employees may for the first time be re-evaluating their position in higher education (Tomprou, Rousseau, & Hansen, 2015; Van der Smissen, Schalk, & Freese, 2013). Unless employers in this sector understand which aspects of their psychological contract Gen X employees attach value to and actively maintain them, they will risk great damage to employment relationship that can result employee in disengagement and negative organisational citizenship behaviour towards the higher education institution (Conway, Kiefer, Hartley, & Briner, 2014; Tomprou, Rousseau, & Hansen, 2015).

In this article the researcher will establish which features of the psychological contract Generation X employees within South Africa's higher education sector value, comparing and contrasting these with their colleagues from the Millennial and Baby Boomer generations. In addition, the views and attitudes of the broad cultural groupings present in Generation X will be compared to determine which attitudes generally attributed to Generation X are shared amongst them and which cultural groupings diverge from the accepted norms and in what way.

The Psychological Contract in the South African Higher Education Context

The psychological contract has its origins in the Social Exchange Theory (SET) of Peter Blau (1964). All relationships develop over a period of time, which lead to their being characterised by trust, loyalty, and mutual connection (Smith & Diedericks, 2016). The quality of resources such as autonomy, trust, and support will often dictate the quality of the relationship between two parties.

Following on SET, positive psychology scholars set out to define positive employment relations and positive organisational behaviour by focusing on what works (McShane & Von Glinow, 2010). Gaur and Ebrahimi (2013) noted that in a positive employment relationship the employer/manager will be mindful of individual differences between employees that cause them to experience and react differently to the same aspects of the employment relationship. By seeking to understand employees on an individual level, the employer can avoid misunderstandings that can cause dissatisfaction and turnover intent. South Africa's employment sector is filled with a lot of diversity among its workforce of which cultural and generational differences are probably the least known, understood, and accommodated by employers.

As Fielding and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) point out, culture is defined by a group's shared values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and symbols. Hofstede (1991) further explains that by age 10 most of a culture's values have been learned by a child. A shared worldview is at the core of all cultures and defines the group's philosophical views on matters such as the universe, humanity, nature, and life. Various types of values (Ritzer, 2012) serve as a fairly stable common ground that provides direction during interactions between individuals.

Cultural norms provide the rules for behaviour (Fielding & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Norms can be broadly differentiated in terms of individualism versus collectivism, which differentiates between whether a culture puts the individual or the group first; high context versus low context cultures, which juxtaposes whether certain background information is assumed to be understood or expected to be verbally communicated; and finally masculinity versus femininity, which differentiates cultures that are more assertive and materialistic from those more nurturing and supportive (Fielding & Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014; Hofstede, 1991).

The challenge found in a multicultural society such as South Africa's, lies in what Hofstede (1991) identified as cultural relativism, which simply stated means that no standards exist by which one culture can be considered superior or of greater importance to another. As the average person not only belongs to one particular group, but to several layers of groupings at once, the challenge in navigating the particular norms and values within each context will differ. Hofstede (1991) defined six such groupings:

1. On national level to a country;
2. Regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation;
3. On gender level;
4. On generational level;
5. On social class level, including educational opportunities and occupation; and

6. On organisational or corporate level.

Aspects of diversity such as language and values are what Durkheim defined as social facts (Ritzer, 2012), and include every manner of acting, whether fixed or not. Social facts – especially nonmaterial social facts which relate to those social facts concerning social interaction between people – exercise an external constraint on the individual. Social facts exist in their own right and independent of the individual. Each of the six groupings defined by Hofstede (1991) function with a particular set of values, or nonmaterial social facts, applicable to its context-linked elements such as function, time, or location.

Inglehart in 1977 put forward the Generational Cohort Theory (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014; Dou, Wang, & Zhou, 2006; Favero & Heath, 2012), which holds that the socio-economic resources or conditions present during a group of individuals' (a generation) youth, account for their differing values and attitudes in the workplace and elsewhere, as compared to those who precede or follow them.

Currently, South Africa's workplace contains three generations (Van der Walt, 2010). The Baby Boomer generation (born 1950-1969) value loyalty to the organisation, idealism, ambition, and recognition of hard work. This generation is said to be focused on consensus building, mentoring and autonomy, and is sensitive to status (Bal & Kooij, 2011; Snelgar, Renard, & Venter, 2013). The Millennial generation (born 1990-2005) is, like the Baby Boomers, optimistic and driven, but even more goal-oriented and demanding of their work environment as compared to Generation Xers, and seek learning and development opportunities. They are less committed to an organisation, seek immediate performance feedback, and are likely to leave if they are dissatisfied (Bal & Kooij., 2011; Snelgar et al., 2013).

Generation X (Gen X; born 1970-1989) employees are individualistic and will change jobs in favour of a more challenging environment and higher pay that includes tangible rewards. Gen Xers tend to value flexible work arrangements and are often opposed to paying their dues. They seek quick, short-term results, and they do not shy away from risks or hard work to get where they want to be. Generation X is known for having less respect for authority and seeking a work-life balance to counteract the disappearing boundaries between their work and private lives (Bal & Kooij., 2011; Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Snelgar et al., 2013). The majority of Gen Xers in South Africa experienced the impact of Apartheid laws and policies during their childhood to varying degrees of intensity – whether it was to be advantaged or disadvantaged by such laws and policies. These experiences whilst growing up would have had a unique impact on this generation, setting them apart from Gen Xers elsewhere in the world (Schenk & Seekings, 2010). According to Howe and

Strauss (2007), this generation can in future be expected to continue excelling at innovation and entrepreneurship, as well as seeking out opportunities of free agency.

Vastly different socioeconomic conditions, cultures, and experiences created the ideal conditions for a workforce consisting of employees valuing and believing very different things about their relationship with their employer, as defined by their psychological contract. It is this psychological contract between the employer and the Gen X employee in South Africa's embattled higher education that is being explored to understand how universities and technikons can keep their most valued employees despite the change and ongoing uncertainty. The psychological contract between employer and employee sets out the beliefs each party has about what responsibilities and obligations they have, and what the other party will perform or provide in response to the fulfilment of said responsibilities and obligations (Tomprou, Rousseau, & Hansen, 2015). Beliefs about the psychological contract are influenced by elements such as pre-employment factors (the motivation of the employee to accept the position or the employer to offer it), on-the-job experiences, and broader societal contexts (including norms and values espoused by a cultural or generational grouping; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004).

In line with SET, psychological contract theory posits a negotiated reality based on reciprocity (Bal & Kooij, 2011; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Parzefall, 2008). Lub, Bijvank, Bal, Blomme, and Schalk (2011) stated that the obligations that form part of the psychological contract include perceived promises, which may be inferred by one party and not necessarily be recognised by the other. Even in cases where these obligations are poorly defined, both parties will expect the other to honour its obligations (De Meuse, Bergmann, & Lester, 2001). Changing organisational circumstances will have an impact on the psychological contract between employer and employee (Van der Smissen, Schalk, & Freese, 2013). Van der Smissen et al. (2013) found that attitudes towards such change are influenced by the type of change, the impact it has, and the party's former experience with organisational change. In terms of an organisation in the midst of change, these authors found that matters such as the frequency of change, former experiences with organisational change, and the individual attitude towards change in general had an impact on the fulfilment of the psychological contract.

Three major psychological contract types are ascribed to by most authors (Chien & Lin, 2013; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004):

1. The *transactional psychological contract* involves short-term employment situations that are easy to exit, characterised by high turnover. Employees' involvement and integration in the organisation are limited and the employer

offers little to no training or other career developments. It is an economic exchange clearly defined by performance outcomes and financial compensation. Employees of such contracts focus mostly on the economic terms and conditions.

2. The *relational psychological contract* is linked to more open-ended employment relationships with performance outcomes that are not rigidly demarcated. This employment relationship is defined by employee commitment to and involvement in the organisation, the organisation in turn providing support for the well-being and interests of employees and their families. Obligations include mutual loyalty and long-term stability, which are often defined in terms of job security and commitment to the organisation. Employees with this type of psychological contract focus on both the socio-emotional and economic terms and conditions of their relationship with their employer.
3. The *hybrid or balanced psychological contract* takes the most prized aspects of the transactional and relational contracts to form a third psychological contract type. It is characterised by involvement in the organisation and long-term employment, while allowing for flexibility and changing contract requirements subject to evolving projects and changed circumstances. The hybrid psychological contract makes room for dynamic performance requirements and includes career development. Since there is room for internal advancement, the employee is obligated to acquire skills valued by the employer and to pursue new and more demanding goals to help the organisation either become or remain competitive.

Fulfilment of the psychological contract can be analysed in terms of fulfilment levels that correlate with the psychological contract types. These levels of fulfilment are not mutually exclusive or opposites, but instead complement each other (Bal, De Lange, Zacher, & Van der Heijden, 2013). These levels are defined as follows:

1. Economic fulfilment includes obligations that relate to monetary resources such as fair pay compared to others, and benefits.
2. Socio-emotional fulfilment relates to the extent to which resources are aimed at developing the employee; building a strong relationship with him or her has been provided by the employer. This includes participation in decision making, support for development, and socio-emotional concern of the organisation for the employee's well-being.

Scheel and Mohr (2013) identified a third type of psychological contract fulfilment, which they call the value-oriented exchange or ideological currency:

3. The fulfilment on this level is aimed not only at individual needs, but includes a belief that the employee's contribution to the organisation serves a valuable and greater goal. This means that a commitment is made to pursue a valued cause or principle, which includes the organisation's vision, mission, and values, but also respect for values the employee personally subscribes to.

Employers who either knowingly or unknowingly violate a psychological contract with an employee can expect four possible outcomes, according to Tomprou et al. (2015):

- i. *Psychological contract reactivation*: the psychological contract is returned to its original state as before the violation, thereby letting the employee rely on the psychological contract as a guide for his perceptions and behaviours.
- ii. *Psychological contract thriving*: this outcome is facilitated by negotiating a revised contract that is more beneficial to the employee than the contract that existed before the violation.
- iii. *Psychological contract impairment*: occurs when the employee comes to accept a revised contract that is less beneficial than the contract that existed before the violation.
- iv. *Psychological contract dissolution*: ensues when the employee is unable to accept the changed circumstances as a basis for a new psychological contract, choosing to remain instead in a chronic and dysfunctional state of felt violation.

As is clear from the possible outcomes identified by Tomprou et al. (2015), active engagement with an employee regarding the violation of either expectations or obligations is assumed. Whilst these outcomes suggest that the employee may very well remain with the employer, it is also clear that the damage suffered to the employment relationship can lead to the employee becoming either disengaged or leaving the organisation's employ.

Thus, the primary research question this study aims to answer is: **“What are the workplace expectations of South African Generation X employees at a higher education institution?”**

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study relied on an exploratory qualitative approach to enable the researcher to investigate a theme poorly explored within the South African context, that of Generation X's views on the psychological contract, as well as the possible impact of cultural differences on how Generation X employees view the employment relationship within a higher education institution. The qualitative design enabled the researcher to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the entire landscape of contextual themes impacting the topic (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The insights gained from interviews were further augmented by summative content analysis to present the qualitative data by means of graphs, quantified data and tables in order to gain a broader understanding of the qualitative data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). The first step of the summative content analysis is to perform a manifest content analysis, which explores the number of times particular themes were encountered in transcriptions of interviews done with participants amongst Generation X, as well as the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations. This is followed by latent content analysis during which the content is interpreted for its underlying meaning within the context of South Africa and its multicultural workplace (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Patton and Cochran (2002) differentiate between the appropriate research methods by explaining that qualitative methods aim at gaining understanding about participants' experiences and attitudes by asking questions that pertain to the what, how, and why of a phenomenon; whereas quantitative methods seek to answer questions such as 'how many' or 'how much'?

According to Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009), the appropriate contexts for qualitative research designs are those seeking to either broaden or deepen an understanding of the dynamics of the social world. This includes questions on people's experience, their views, exploring poorly understood matters, as well as sensitive topics requiring flexibility.

Participants

To aid data collection, participants were selected among university staff (both academic and support staff) within a South African university who satisfied the criteria of being from the Millennial, Generation X, or Baby Boomer generations, and representing the racial demographics on campuses.

This type of sampling is called criterion sampling (Maree, 2007) and refers to the typical characteristics and number of participants to be included in the study. Criteria may include age, place of residence, gender, class, profession, marital status, use of a particular teaching strategy, etc. Researchers seek people within the chosen community who fit the defined characteristics and gather data until either the required number has been interviewed or data saturation has been reached. In this case, data saturation indicated the adequate number of participants in the study ($N = 18$; Millennial $n = 4$, Generation X $n = 10$, Baby Boomers $n = 4$).

Since this study sought to explore a poorly chartered knowledge area in South Africa, the following criteria were used:

1. Academic and support staff (professional and administrative staff) from a university in South Africa.
2. Participants from diverse racial backgrounds.
3. Staff members from Generation X.
4. Also staff from the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations to serve as a baseline comparison.

In Tables 1 to 3, the characteristics of the participants are analysed. Participants are grouped according to the generation they belong to and information regarding participants' gender, age, home language, race, number of years at their current organisation, the type of position they have (academic or support), and their marital status are analysed.

Table 1*Characteristics of Generation X Participants (n = 10)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	7	70.0
	Male	3	30.0
Age	27-31	4	40.0
	32-36	2	20.0
	37-41	3	30.0
	42-46	1	10.0
Language	isiZulu	1	10.0
	Setswana	2	20.0
	Afrikaans	6	60.0
	English	1	10.0
Race	White	4	40.0
	Black	3	30.0
	Coloured	2	20.0
	Indian	1	10.0
Years at Current Organisation	1-3 years	3	30.0
	3-6 years	4	40.0
	6-9 years	2	20.0
	>9 years	1	10.0
Type of Position	Academic	2	20.0
	Administrative	4	40.0
	Professional	4	40.0
Marital Status	Married	6	60.0
	Single	2	20.0
	Divorced	1	10.0
	Not Disclosed	1	10.0

The majority (70%) of the Generation X participants who were interviewed were female. The ages for Generation X ranged between 27 and 46 years of age. From this group of participants, the majority fell into the first age level of 27-31 years of age (40%), and another large percentage (30%) from the age group 37 to 41.

Most participants' home language was Afrikaans, with Setswana, English, and isiZulu also being represented. The majority of participants were either Black or White, with representation from both Coloured and Indian racial groupings too. Seventy percent of participants have been with their current organisation between 1 and 6 years, with only 20% having tenure of 6 to 9 years; 10% had been with the organisation for more than 9 years.

The majority of participants were in support positions of various kinds, and most participants were married.

Table 2

Characteristics of Baby Boomer Participants (n = 4)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	2	50.0
	Male	2	50.0
Age	47-51	1	25.0
	52-56	1	25.0
	57-61	2	50.0
	62-66	0	0.0
Language	Setswana	1	25.0
	Afrikaans	3	75.0
Race	White	2	50.0
	Black	1	25.0
	Coloured	1	25.0
	Indian	0	0.0
Years at Current Organisation	1-3 years	0	0.0
	3-6 years	0	0.0
	6-9 years	1	25.0
	9-12 years	2	50.0
	>12 years	1	25.0
Type of Position	Academic	3	75.0
	Administrative	0	0.0
	Professional	1	25.0
Marital Status	Married	4	100.0
	Single	0	0.0
	Divorced	0	0.0
	Not Disclosed	0	0.0

The participants from the Baby Boomer generation were evenly represented according to their gender and all were married. Two of the participants were White, one Coloured, and one Black.

The majority of participants in this group were academic staff members. Ages within this generation ranged from 47 to 66 years of age, with 50% falling within the 57-61 years age range. Seventy-five percent of the participants' home language is Afrikaans and the remaining 25% Setswana.

The overwhelming majority had more than 9 years of service at their current employer.

Table 3*Characteristics of Millennial Generation Participants (n = 4)*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	3	75.0
	Male	1	25.0
Age	18-20	0	0.0
	21-23	0	0.0
	24-26	4	100.0
Language	Setswana	1	25.0
	Afrikaans	2	50.0
	English	1	25.0
Race	White	1	25.0
	Black	2	50.0
	Coloured	1	25.0
	Indian	0	0.0
Years at Current Organisation	1-2 years	3	75.0
	3-4 years	1	25.0
	5-6 years	0	0.0
Type of Position	Academic	0	0.0
	Administrative	2	50.0
	Professional	2	50.0
Marital Status	Married	0	0.0
	Single	4	100.0

The majority of participants within the millennial participant group were female. The age range for this generation is 11 to 26, but given that at least half of this generation is still busy with basic or tertiary education, all participants in this study ranged between 24 and 26 years of age.

Half of the participants' home language was Afrikaans with the other being English and Setswana. All participants were single, support staff members, which is to be expected due to their ages. Two participants were Black, one Coloured, and one White.

Data Collection

To enable the gathering of useful information on this poorly explored topic in South Africa, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants. Interviewing is the predominant way of information collection in qualitative research, according to De Vos,

Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2011). A qualitative interview endeavours to see and understand the world from the participant's perspective, exploring the meaning behind it (De Vos et al., 2011).

Interviews should start with open-ended questions that move from easy to more complex or sensitive matters (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). According to Keller and Conradin (n.d.), the advantage of conducting a semi-structured interview and using open-ended questions is that it allows for two-way communication, which enables the researcher to confirm assumptions, the opportunity to learn what was not known before, and for the participant not to simply provide answers, but also reasons (therefore, motivations).

The questions in Table 4 were used to explore participants' views of the employment relationship within the framework of the psychological contract.

Table 4

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Question
1a) How many times have you changed jobs/organisations in your working career?
1b) What was your longest stay at an organisation?
1c) What motivated you to move from one organisation to another?
2) What would be attractive to motivate you to apply for a position at a particular company?
3a) As an employee, do you think you have any responsibility or obligation towards your employer?
3b) What are they? / Explain.
4) What does the employer owe you in return?
5) You have moved (x) number of times – what do you think SA employers can do to retain their employees?
6) What must your employer do for/or offer you to keep you here and ensure you are happy in the workplace?

Data Analysis

Woods (2011) recommends Braun and Clarke's stages of thematic analysis to make sense of the data collected during a qualitative interview. The stages are 1) familiarising yourself with your data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) writing the report.

No software programme was employed during the analysis. The researcher familiarised herself with the content of the data she collected by transcribing the audio recordings of the interviews, coding and identifying themes herself. The themes were identified by the researcher and compared with those identified by an independent coder with a thorough HR and higher education understanding in the South African context and experience in excess of 30 years. Following this, the researcher defined and named the identified themes and wrote a report on the insights gleaned from the themes.

Trustworthiness

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) trustworthiness of a qualitative study relates to the degree of neutrality inherent in a study's findings and can be checked against four measures. They are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility of a study is about whether the constructed realities found in the study rings true (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In this study credibility was achieved by conducting interviews with participants from the relevant group until data saturation was reached. Referential adequacy was achieved through the use of audio recordings and note taking during interviews, followed by careful transcription of the audio recordings.

Transferability denotes the extent to which findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This study was focused very specifically on a higher education institution in South Africa; therefore the higher education context within South Africa was discussed in detail, along with the multicultural context present in the workplace and historical events that influence the target group, Generation X. In addition, purposive sampling was used to record the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of respondents corresponding to diverse job descriptions within the higher education institution, as well of race, gender, education level and age.

The repeatability, also known as dependability is a test to gauge the degree that findings will be similar if the study was to be repeated with both the same or similar participants and context (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). According to Babbie and Mouton, a study that passes the checkpoints for credibility automatically also proves its dependability.

Finally, confirmability confirms whether the findings are the result of study and not the researcher's biases (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). This is achieved through a confirmability audit

trail that will enable an auditor to follow the trail of the researcher and determine whether the recommendations, interpretations and conclusions attributed to the study can be linked to the sources and supported by the inquiry. In this study audio recordings were made of the interviews, followed by transcripts.

A directed approach was followed during analysis by using relevant research findings as a guide for initial coding (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To ensure a balanced and impartial interpretation, both the researcher and an independent party coded the data in the interview transcripts, and each coder's interpretation of the themes was compared and contrasted with the other's interpretation, before being accepted.

RESULTS

Themes that emerged during the interviews with the participants relate to their views on responsibilities and obligations (of both employer and employee), elements that would attract them to a position, as well as retention strategies that employers need to employ to keep their employees. The results to follow will show which aspects of the employment relationship are valued more or less by Generation X as compared to their colleagues from the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations. Secondly the differences and similarities among the broad cultural groupings present amongst the Generation X participants will be discussed to compare and contrast them with each other and with Generation Xers elsewhere.

Table 5 indicates that Generation X participants emphasised theme 2, economic fulfilment and theme 4, value or ideological fulfilment much more than their Baby Boomer and Millennial colleagues. Even though the Baby Boomer participants placed slightly more emphasis on theme 3, socio-emotional fulfilment than did their Generation X and Millennial colleagues; Generation X placed greater emphasis on taking the initiative build their competence by planning ahead, going for training or furthering their studies and purposefully looking for the next position to help them get progress in their careers. This is evident in sub-theme 3.1, competence need.

Table 5*Number of Times Theme was Raised by Employees from the Three Generational Groupings*

Theme	Subthemes	M		Gen X		BB		Total
		a	b	a	b	a	b	
1. Reciprocity	1.1 Appropriate Resources	1	0.25	9	0.9	7	1.75	0.97
	1.2 Deliver What Paid to Do / Perform KPAs	2	0.5	6	0.6	4	1.0	0.7
	Average	0.37		0.75		1.375		0.83
2. Economic Fulfilment	2.1 Fair Pay	4	1.0	21	2.1	6	1.5	1.53
	2.2 Benefits	1	0.25	4	0.4	4	1.0	0.55
	2.3 Extra Incentives / Reward	2	0.5	7	0.7	2	0.5	0.57
	Average	0.58		1.07		1.0		0.88
3. Socio-emotional Fulfilment	3.1 Competence Need	5	1.25	20	2.0	5	1.25	1.5
	3.2 Autonomy Need	7	1.75	15	1.5	3	0.75	1.3
	3.3 Relatedness	4	1.0	7	0.7	5	1.25	0.98
	3.4 Supportive Leadership/Organisation	3	0.75	20	2.0	15	3.75	2.17
	3.5 Appropriate Leadership/Management	6	1.5	9	0.9	1	0.25	0.61
	3.6 Talent Management	12	3.0	25	2.5	12	3.0	2.83
	3.7 Positive Work Environment	1	0.25	6	0.6	3	0.75	0.53
	(Average)	1.36		1.46		1.57		1.44
4. Value / Ideology Fulfilment	4.1 Organisation's Vision, Mission, Values	1	0.25	6	0.6	2	0.5	0.45
	4.2 Individual Norms and Values	4	1.0	33	3.3	13	3.25	2.52
	(Average)	0.63		1.95		1.87		1.48

M =Millennial generation; Gen X = Generation X; BB = Baby Boomer Generation | a = number of mentions; b = number of mentions/n

Table 6*Generation X According to Gender, Age and Race*

Theme	Subthemes	Gender		Age				Race			
		F	M	1	2	3	4	B	W	C	I
1. Reciprocity	1.1 Appropriate Resources	4	5	5	2	2	0	5	2	0	2
	1.2 Deliver What Paid to Do / Perform KPAs	3	3	1	1	4	0	2	3	1	0
	Average	0.5	1.3	1.5	1.5	2.0	0.0	2.3	1.25	0.5	2.0
2. Economic Fulfilment	2.1 Fair Pay	11	10	11	3	5	2	8	8	3	2
	2.2 Benefits	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
	2.3 Extra Incentives / Reward	5	2	3	3	1	0	0	4	1	2
	Average	2.7	4.3	4.5	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.7	4.0	2.0	4.0
3. Socio-emotional Fulfilment	3.1 Competence Need	17	8	8	2	5	5	6	7	7	0
	3.2 Autonomy Need	11	4	5	0	9	1	4	10	1	0
	3.3 Relatedness	2	5	6	1	0	0	1	5	0	1
	3.4 Supportive Leadership/ Organisation	14	6	9	2	8	1	8	9	1	2
	3.5 Appropriate Leadership	7	2	2	3	3	1	2	3	4	0
	3.6 Talent Management	18	7	6	7	11	1	8	9	7	1
	3.7 Positive Work Environment	1	5	2	0	4	0	5	1	0	0
Average	10.0	12.3	9.5	7.5	13.3	9.0	11.3	11.0	10.0	4.0	
4. Value / Ideology Fulfilment	4.1 Organisation's Vision, Mission, Values	6	0	0	2	2	2	0	2	4	0
	4.2 Individual Norms and Values	26	7	13	5	11	4	8	16	6	3
	Average	4.6	2.3	3.25	3.5	4.3	6.0	2.7	4.5	5.0	3.0

F=Female; M=Male; 1=Ages 27-31; 2= Ages 32-36; 3= Ages 37-41; 4= Ages 42-46; B=Black; W=White; C=Coloured; I=Indian

Table 6 shows that male participants amongst Generation X place far greater emphasis on reciprocity and economic fulfilment, and only little more emphasis on socio-emotional fulfilment; whereas female participants placed more importance on value and ideological fulfilment than did their male colleagues.

Amongst the four age segments identified within Generation X economic fulfilment becomes progressively less important with each successive age segment. The opposite trend is evident in the value or ideological fulfilment theme, which becomes progressively more important with each successive age segment.

Amongst the cultural groupings black participants placed the most emphasis on reciprocity, whereas white participants cited the importance of economic fulfilment the most. Coloured participants place the most importance on value or ideological fulfilment amongst Generation X.

A more detailed analysis of the identified themes will focus mainly on Generation X employees' perspective. It is important to note that participants' comments are placed verbatim and have not been subjected to language editing.

Theme 1: Reciprocity

According to Dabos and Rousseau (2004), reciprocity within the psychological contract is based on the shared understandings and reciprocal contributions by both employer and employee that is to mutual benefit and based on the precepts of the social exchange theory of Blau (1964).

1.1 Appropriate Resources

Most participants who cited this sub-theme felt that the employer should not simply provide resources, but the resources should be an appropriate quantity and quality for the results the employer expects the employee to deliver. Kiazad, Seibert, and Kraimer (2014) refer to reciprocity - as postulated in the Social Exchange Theory - on the negative end of the scale that includes either non-performance by an employee or performance only to the degree the employee felt the employer delivered on his obligations. All participants acknowledged that a reciprocal relationship exists in terms of resources and their performance; however, Gen X particularly expressed sentiments of negative reciprocity during the interviews. The negative reciprocity principle of the social exchange theory contends that employees will respond to negative treatment from the employer with matching actions of their own (Kiazad et al., 2014). *"I think I'm obliged to deliver, you know,*

what I'm hired to do and I think the obligation only stands if I am well-resourced to execute my obligations. So if you don't give me tools, then don't expect too much from me. Or if you don't give me sufficient tools, don't expect efficiency, ja" (X5, male, Black).

Baby Boomer participants mentioned appropriate resources in a more matter of fact manner: *"And yes of course the resources like offices, computers and all these stuff"* (BB2, male, White).

1.2 Deliver what he or she is paid to do

According to Van der Vaart, Linde, and Cockeran (2013), employees will maintain their employment relationship with the employer as long as they perceive the relationship to be mutually beneficial. Most participants acknowledged that their first responsibility or obligation toward the employer is to deliver on what they are paid to do. Baby Boomer participants mentioned this aspect more frequently than their Generation X counterparts. *"And I have a duty to fulfil everything that is expected of me, or was expected of me in the previous year when we had a job conversation. I take that as a huge responsibility from my side"* (BB1, female, White), *"The first thing is I must do a good job, that's what they pay me for"* (BB3, female, Coloured), and *"If I want this marriage to continue, I believe we are as employees mandated to deliver on what we've been given as the key performance area and activities that we must bring along within our scope"* (BB4, male, Black).

Theme 2: Economic Fulfilment

2.1 Fair Pay

Antoni and Syrek (2012) define fair pay in terms of receiving remuneration that is on par with employees doing similar work. Wallace, Lings, Cameron, and Sheldon (2014) cite *fair pay for a fair day's work* as being a motivating factor that attracts potential employees to an organisation. Generation X cited this theme more than twice as much compared to the Millennials and Baby Boomer generation participants. *"The money, I won't lie to you. Financially I'm in a situation where I need to look for a better option..."* (X3, female, Indian), *"Of course something like a salary is also important, but we're glorified teachers anyways, we get paid crap. I want to emphasise that, crap"* (X10, female, White), *"We want to get people who actually have the proper training, have the proper knowledge, but we can't afford them. Whenever we open applications for lecture or senior lecture positions, they request hundreds of thousands of rands a year, and we simply can't afford to pay what they want"* (X7, male, White), and *"The only thing that will actually attract me is the package; and when I*

say package, I'm not only talking about the money. I'm talking about what is it that is demanded of me" (BB4, male, Black).

2.2 Benefits

Benefits are most often cited by authors as part of the assumed monetary package (Bal, Kooij, & De Jong, 2013). However, Bal, De Lange, Jansen, and Van der Velde (2013) cited the socio-emotional selectivity theory to explain the different foci of employees at different ages. While younger employees prepare for the unknown future, older employees are more aware of matters relating to the nearing end of life. Though Baby Boomer participants regarded benefits as important, their primary focus tended to be on their pension. Younger employees cited benefits, but focused more on medical aid benefits. *"They should pay good salaries, they should give people leave, they should also like, good pensions for when you retire, you want to feel safe then too"* (BB3, female, Coloured), and *"And then also medical aid. When I came here we were subsidised, I remember, and then it went away; they say it's still somewhere there, I can't see where, but they say it's included there. And maybe a housing allowance..."* (BB3, female, Coloured).

2.3 Extra Incentives / Reward

This theme included additional acknowledgement for work in the form of either verbal or symbolic recognition, additional rewards for great performance or formal incentives for reaching performance targets. Katou and Budhwar (2012) noted incentives to be one of the aspects that had the highest influence on the psychological contract and organisational performance. In this study, Generation X employees cited this aspect more often than their counterparts. *"...probably offering like incentives when you perform well. Whether it be, specifically over this weekend I heard somebody speaking about he got a certificate for being an 'Innovation Guru'... uhm, just something that recognises the person. I think feeling recognised is one of the things in the workplace that gets neglected... uhm, because it's nice"* (X7, male, White).

Theme 3: Socio-emotional Fulfilment

3.1 Competence Need

Competence relates to a need for a sense of mastery over one's environment, to develop new skills and the search for optimal challenges (Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016). While this topic was brought up repeatedly by all participants, Generation X participants cited matters relating to competence far more than their counterparts. *"And then I realised the growth was very slow, I opted to go out and take advantage of other*

opportunities that were offered. Same thing, you want to grow. I think one thing that a lot of organisations are getting wrong, is you know that they don't put in place a career path and development" (X8, male, Black), "Well, the first things I would look at would obviously be career potential, because, ja, as a young person you don't want to stagnate, and I think that's my mind set at least" (M4, female, Black), and "I believe most people want development opportunities, uhm, I believe most people want a challenging job, I believe most people want a meaningful job that use your strengths" (BB2, male, White).

3.2 Autonomy Need

Van den Broeck et al. (2016) refer to the need for autonomy as a motivating factor in the workplace relating to an individual employee's sense of being psychologically free; being the originator of his actions instead of being coerced by outside forces. Both Generation X and the millennial generation employees expressed a relatively great need for autonomy compared to the Baby Boomer employees. "You don't want to study one, you don't want to be passionate, creative, ambitious person and if the organisation does not give you that space, you're going to move" (X8, male, Black), *"I think what for me personally will make a difference for me, if they would tell me: 'X, Y and Z is what we want from you and that's when we want it from you'. How I get to that and when I get to that... they shouldn't be bothered about whether I'm eight o'clock at work, whether I only take lunch between one and two, and they must give me the freedom to manage my time" (X3, female, White), and "Yes, I think also the employer's responsibility is also allow the employee to have a, to let their own voice be heard through the job, like you know their own identity" (M4, female, Black).*

3.3 Relatedness Need

Relatedness is defined by the individual's sense of being connected to others in terms of love and being cared for. This need is satisfied by a person feeling part of a group and developing close relationships with members of the group (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). Through the analysis of the interviews, it became clear that Baby Boomer participants had the greatest need for relatedness; this need is progressively less from one generation to the next. The need for relatedness by participants was not only confined to the workplace, but also to a work situation that enables them to be close to family. *"I believe you must think of your organisation as your own; so I believe in ownership. Uhm, of the position and the organisation" (BB2, male, White), "So I mean, I think from the organisation's perspective, things that get their employees talking, motivated... uhm, courses – whether it be courses, whether it be wellness days, whether it be a team-building exercise... uhm, things like that to get people interactive" (X7, male, White), and "Uhm, ja, so I think of career potential and as well as how far it is from my family, because I'm very people-oriented and family is very important to me, so, that has an influence" (M4, female, Black).*

3.4 Supportive Organisation / Leadership

Servant leadership theory emphasises service to others and recognises that the role of organisations is to produce people who can build a better tomorrow and was conceptualised by Robert K. Greenleaf in the 1970s (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Servant leadership puts serving others first before control and making sure their – employees, customers, the community – highest priority needs are served first (Greenleaf.org, n.d.). In this context, it means that either the manager or organisation at large ensures that employees' needs and well-being are supported, and that these needs are met by first actively and openly engaging with employees to find out what their needs are. Parris and Peachey's (2013) study showed that servant leadership is a tenable leadership theory that is accepted across cultures, though different aspects are deemed important from one culture to the next.

Though Generation X called it servant leadership by name and found the aspects grouped under this sub-theme quite important, Baby Boomer participants cited this sub-theme far more frequently. *"It's to also be human in terms of the personal needs. You know if you have somebody who has the brother, like what happened with me – I lost my brother this year. I got the best support from this university, in terms of Ubuntu, in terms of empathising with a person. That is what you're expecting from the employer; same in the marriage..."* (BB4, male, Black), and *"Because I believe the moment you start spending time with your team, with development, you're going to know what's important to them, you're going to know, you're going to address it, you're going to retain them. I believe the biggest issue in terms of retention is people don't know what their people want – so, I assume, uh, that if I want recognition every day that everyone will want recognition. So I think time spent with people is the most, because then you will know. I very much believe in one-size-does-not-fit-all..."* (BB2, male, White).

3.5 Appropriate Leadership

McDermott, Conway, Rousseau, and Flood (2013) contend that leadership – especially the leadership of the line-manager – has direct consequences on the psychological contract with an employee and the organisation's ability to achieve its strategic goals. Participants from all three generations expressed the need for leadership that must adapt to changed needs or contexts; leadership skills must be developed from amongst employees within the organisation. *"And leadership is for me EXTREMELY important, especially for me personally, I feel we've got such a vision and diverse and fragmented society and I have a great need for vision and leadership in that sense"* (X10, female, White), and *"Well, I think the first thing that I've realised is that... uhm, employers need to invest more on leadership development. Most of the time when people leave, not all the time, but*

some time when they leave, they leave a person. And that person most of the time is the manager” (X8, male, Black). Participants’ opinions on leadership is in line with Kouzes and Posner (2012) who emphasises that leadership development is an ongoing process that managers and leaders should focus on in focused manner.

3.6 Performance Management

Performance management involves the various human resource activities that significantly affect an organisation’s success. Managers and employees set expectations together, review results and reward performance (Wärnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015). Kehoe and Wright (2013) found that employees’ collective perceptions of the organisation’s human resource practices are positively related to their affective commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, and employees’ intent to stay with the organisation. Though participants from all three of the generational groups mentioned performance management practices of their employer; Generation X mentioned it more frequently and expect a more purposeful approach by the employer. *“What’s important to know exactly where I’m going, to know what I’m supposed to do”* (X9, female, Coloured), and *“The good thing is that we have performance agreement system in place, so that makes life easy. But you know that you’ll sit with your line manager in January, identify key performance areas and outcomes, and then agree on those things. So that process make it easy on what is expected of you and what is obligation”* (X8, male, Black).

3.7 Work Environment

This theme was included here as it is the manager or leader’s responsibility to create an environment that enables the employee to perform his or her duties. Naharuddin and Sadegi (2013) mention the physical work environment and how it is equipped as factors that influence employees’ performance and motivation on the job. Leblebici (2012) confirmed that employees, especially those in jobs that keep them mostly office bound and working on a computer, place much emphasis on their work environment. The quality of the work environment not only affect employees’ commitment, but also their productivity. Though mentioned by participants from all groups, the importance of the work environment seems to grow with each successive generation, with Baby Boomers attaching a lot of importance to it. *“And it’s the little things... in your office you spend about seventy percent of your waking time – if you do a decent job and you do a fulltime job, you spend seventy percent, seven zero percent of your time in that office. You have to feel nice; you have to feel happy. It’s one thing for you to put a picture against the wall, but the space must fit the job that you’re doing”* (BB1, female, White), and *“I think I do, but it depends on how the employer creates, like the working environment. So if the working environment is not as conducive... uhm, even if I’m compelled to do it, I wouldn’t because of the environment created”* (X5, male, Black).

Theme 4: Value / Ideology Fulfilment

4.1 Organisational Mission, Vision and Values

An organisation's mission, vision, and values represent a promised obligation of the organisation's behaviour and form part of the value-oriented or ideological fulfilment, as identified by Scheel and Mohr (2013). The authors contend that the employment relationship may be especially stable if value-oriented content is significant, as employee obligations transcend the immediate employment relationship itself.

Generation X participants most often mentioned their responsibility towards upholding the vision and mission, as well as the organisation's values – either through their own actions or holding their employer accountable to live up to the mission, vision, and values of the organisation. *“The values and principles of the organisation, to me also – I didn't mention that in the earlier question – is very important. If they have values of... uhm, I'm just thinking broadly now, respect, courtesy, I must align myself with the values of the organisation”* (X9, female, Coloured), and *“So, I think, in that philosophical sense, I have a huge responsibility in the way I conduct myself, in and out of class; that I have to fulfil the vision, the mission of this university...”* (X10, female, White).

4.2 Individual Values

How an employee is treated by others and the values they espouse as important in their own conduct form part of the value-oriented / ideological fulfilment (O'Donohue & Nelson, 2009; Scheel & Mohr, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003). An employee who feels that his or her values and the employer's values or ethical behaviour are not in alignment may perceive it as a psychological contract breach. While Baby Boomers or Millennials hardly mention this aspect, Generation X participants stressed this aspect repeatedly during interviews. *“And also the organisation has to have some kind of vision and impact in society, that's very important to me. Uhm... I'm struggling a bit with it at the moment to be honest... with my current employer, because I don't feel my vision is aligned with theirs. So, it is very important for me to have an organisation that shares my kind of 'what is my place and role in society' – at this stage to be brutally honest and anonymous – I don't feel like my vision and what we SHOULD do as a university is aligned with... yeah it's not aligned...”* (X10, female, White), and *“I think one of the basic and most important things for me is trust. If the employer show me that he can be trusted, that is one of the things that will make me to bend backwards for whatever that they always need”* (X9, female, Coloured).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to investigate what Generation X employees' perceptions are of the employment relationship in the context of the psychological contract at a South African university.

Figure 1 provides a comparative overview of Generation X's values next to their Baby Boomer and Millennial colleagues, as well as the overall average across the three generations. The four primary values identified during the study are reciprocity, economic fulfilment, socio-emotional fulfilment and value/ideological fulfilment.

Generation X compared to the Baby Boomer and Millennial Generations

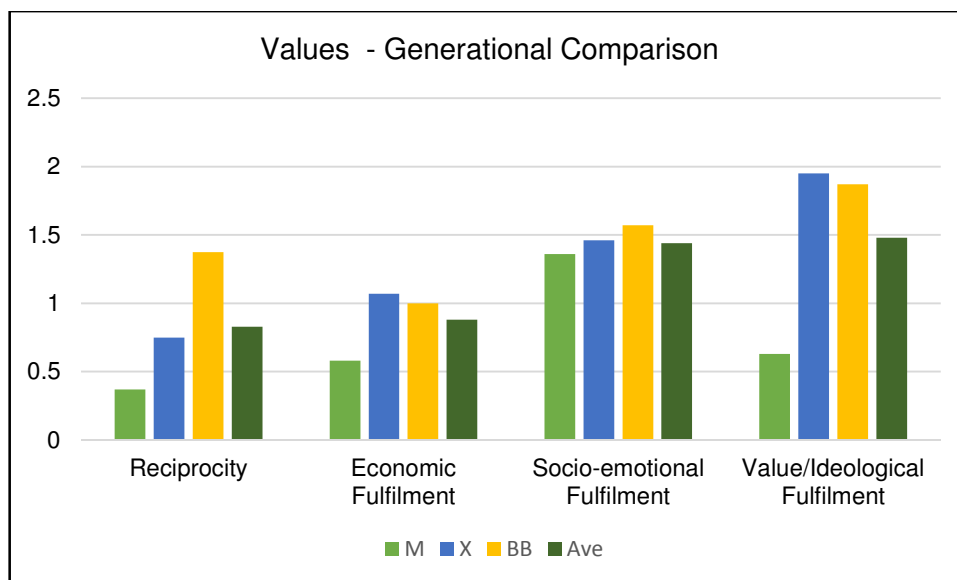


Figure 1. Generational comparison across the four themes

Theme 1, Reciprocity, was more often cited by Baby Boomer participants as being important to them; whereas the Millennial Generation were least concerned about this element of their relationships with their employer. Generation X participants scored just below the average in the mentions of reciprocity. The insistence on reciprocity, or lack of same, may be attributable to the level of seniority Baby Boomer participants have reached in their respective departments or schools. Lub (2013) found that Baby Boomers in the Netherlands held the belief that work and loyalty result in more opportunities. Baby Boomer participants in this study also placed value on work and loyalty without the expectation of reward, with a few exceptions. Generation X stated reciprocity in their employment relationship as a trade-off that is directly linked to the level or quality of work they deliver.

This is in line with Lub's (2013) findings that Generation X tends to monitor their employment relationship to make sure each party performs in equal measure.

Theme 2, Economic Fulfilment, sees Generation X participants citing this theme slightly more than their Baby Boomer colleagues. The Millennial participants are surprisingly lagging far behind their senior colleagues, despite being in positions where they are likely to be paid the least. Several overall factors that relate to age and life stage may be playing a significant role. Baby Boomer participants are generally also in senior positions with greater remuneration packages accompanied by declining family expenses. Generation X are moving up in more senior positions but are also adding more expenses due to growing family responsibilities. The Millennial participants by comparison place greater emphasis on growth opportunities since getting into and staying the South African job market takes have greater priority compared to economic fulfilment.

In Theme 3, Socio-emotional Fulfilment, Baby Boomer participants overall mention the sub-themes associated with Theme 3 slightly more often due to the great emphasis they place on having a supportive leadership and organisation. This indicates that Generation X has a far greater need for competence, which translates into choices they make to either grow in skills, position or their careers in general or seeking more satisfying positions. This means that Generation X prefers to be in the driver's seat when it comes to shaping their careers and are unlikely to wait for an employer to recognise and promote them up the ranks. They will look for opportunities to satisfy their growth needs, whether it be inside or outside the organisation. Smart organisations can retain Generation X talent better by having open discussions about the employee's future ambitions and how the organisation can aid the employee in fulfilling these whilst attaining organisational goals. Figure 2 provides a more detailed comparison on the sub-themes within Theme 3.

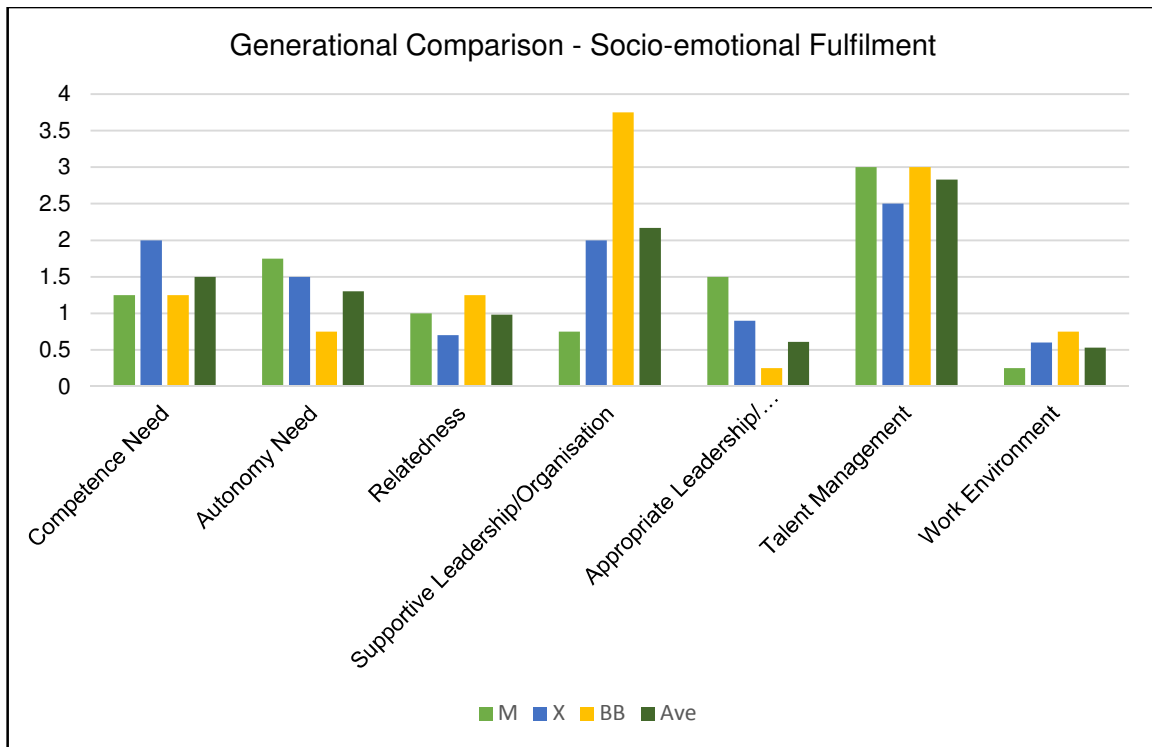


Figure 2. Generational comparison on theme 3 – socio-emotional fulfilment

The Millennial Generation expressed the greatest need for autonomy, especially in the workplace. They are followed by Generation X participants, with Baby Boomers lagging far behind their junior colleagues. This is in contrast with the findings of Lub et al. (2012), which indicated that Generation X has a greater need for autonomy than their millennial generation colleagues. The need to have a say or control in the work context remains significantly more important to both Generation X and the Millennial generation, as both generations entered the job market with great difficulty during economically trying times that required some creative job changes to get where they want to be (Lub et al., 2012). Both these generations require an employer to consult and listen to them more, whilst giving them more freedom in how they arrive at the end result. Employers who actively provide such working conditions are more likely to retain happy and engaged employees.

Baby Boomer and Millennial participants expressed a far greater need for relatedness than did Generation X participants. This may be due to Generation X's continuing dedication to work-life balance and a subsequently diminished role their professional life has in fulfilling their need for relatedness. Employers who provide opportunity for fulfilling relatedness needs in the workplace but balance it with enabling Generation X employees to attain balance between work and family may have more success at keeping these employees happy and engaged, though it is difficult to confirm due the limited number of other studies focusing on Generation X and the aspect of relatedness in the workplace.

Baby Boomer participants seemed to be little concerned about leadership, whereas appropriate leadership or management was cited most often by Millennials, who expressed a need for a more flat structure at work that allows them to participate more in decisions instead of simply receiving instructions. This was confirmed by Bursch and Kelly (2014) who reported similar sentiments in the United States of America. Generation X also cited this subtheme, but their focus related more to leadership that is appropriate for South Africa's changing social dynamics, both in and outside the workplace. No other sources could be found with similar findings regarding Generation X and their opinion about organisational leadership. However, South Africa's rather unique social trajectory over several decades may account for South African Generation X's differing opinion from Gen Xers elsewhere. Many of Gen Xers in South Africa remember South Africa both under Apartheid and during democracy, which, coupled with their ability to embrace change may account for their opinion about organisational leadership today. Generation X's recognition for change in leadership style and demographics that are appropriate for South African organisations should be embraced by organisations seeking to gain an advantage in the marketplace.

Talent management, which in the context of this study related to aspects of performance management, succession management, engagement and retention, as well as leadership development, was often cited by all generations. Active talent management by an organisation communicates to employees that they are valued by their employer. It is interesting to note that while the Baby Boomer and Millennial generation participants mentioned talent management equally, Generation X lagged behind their colleagues. This should not be surprising, as Gen X cited their active choices and moves in careers (competence need) more often than their colleagues, which means that they do not wait around for an employer to give them the opportunities they want, but instead seek them out elsewhere if necessary. Festing and Schäfer (2014) confirmed that Generation X take responsibility for their own career development and trajectory.

The fourth theme related to values of ideology - those of the organisation and the employee. Values and ideology, which often translated to impact on a social level, placed Generation X ahead of the older Baby Boomer colleagues and sees the Millennials lagging far behind. Results attained by Lub (2013) indicate that ideological currency provides an additional opportunity to strengthen the employment relationship across generations, and will lead to more positive work attitudes and behaviours. He found no significant relationship between ideological employer obligations and in-role employee obligations, which seems to support the concept of espousing to a cause in the sense that it does not lead to a changed perception of tasks in the job description. Instead, it translates to extra-role obligations that

are generally subject to personal interpretation and that implies an intention to perform above and beyond the set job description or agreed upon key performance areas (KPA's).

While all authors (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Festing & Schäfer, 2014) on generations agree that Generation X does not believe in loyalty, interviews during this study proved the opposite. Gen Xers, however, do not define their loyalty in terms of lifelong employment at one employer. Instead they believe in being loyal, fully engaged, and committed to an employer while they are employed there. Aligning with or working for an employer whose values and ideology they can align themselves with, is also of great importance to Gen Xers. Festing and Schäfer (2014) confirmed that work-related values and attitudes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, company loyalty, and work-life balance, are influenced more by generational experiences than by career stages, maturity, or age of individual employees. Perhaps Generation X redefined concept of loyalty to the job instead of the organisation is more in line with the fact that this generation does not expect to work for one organisation throughout their careers (Tokar, 2013).

Generation X Values

As is clear from Figure 3, Generation X, across gender, age and race, place the highest value on socio-emotional aspects identified in this study. In summary, it can be noted that women placed greater emphasis on value or ideological fulfilment, while men placed greater emphasis on economic fulfilment. Enache, Sallan, Simo, and Fernandez (2011) confirmed that the fit of people's values to the values of their employing organisation predicts individual satisfaction, commitment, turnover, and performance. No studies could be found that differentiated between values of women and men as it relates to ideological fulfilment.

The older Generation X participants, the more emphasis they seem to place on values and ideology as relating to their work life and their employer. The younger members of this generation place greater emphasis on economic fulfilment, which may relate to their fairly junior positions and remuneration, given the minimum requirements set by higher education institutions when recruiting new employees. Cohen's study (2012) show that there is an important correlation between individual values and the type of psychological contract employees perceive they have with their employer. Organisations interested in short-term, transactional relationships with high turnover rates need not consider individual values, but the reverse was true for those organisations seeking to retain employees for as long as possible.

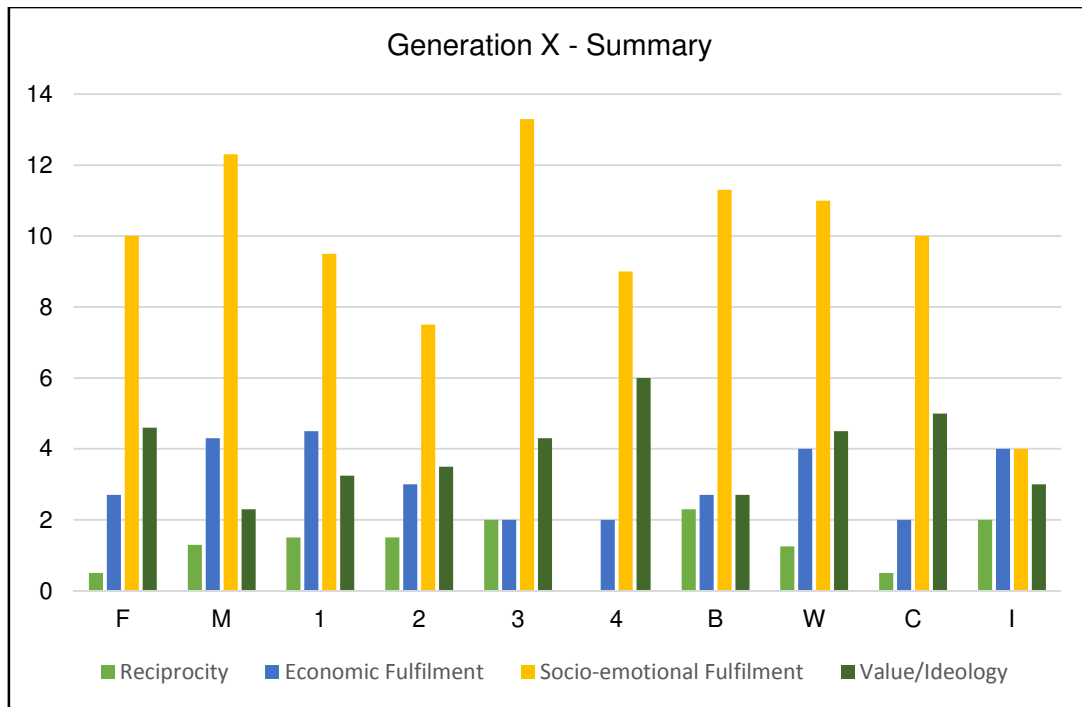


Figure 3. Comparative impression of Generation X across gender, age segments, and race

Black respondents valued reciprocity in their employment relationship far more than their colleagues, with Coloured respondents valuing reciprocity least. This may relate to collectivistic cultural values that emphasise the group and relationship aspects, as well as the notion of fairness due to South Africa’s historical background. Coloured respondents, closely followed by White respondents, placed the most emphasis on values and ideology during interviews. White respondents, closely followed by the single Indian respondent, cited economic fulfilment most often. Culturally, whites in South Africa come from individualistic cultures that value self-sufficiency and self-reliance, which may account for the emphasis on economic fulfilment (Giliomee, 2003; McFarlin, Coster, & Mogale-Pretorius, 1999). While each group found all four themes important, each emphasises a particular aspect more, which is more indicative of the aspects prospective employer should take note of to attract a particular candidate, and subsequently the aspect the manager should take care to address during discussions with the employee.

Figure 4 shows in greater detail how Generation X participants compared on the number of times particular sub-themes were mentioned, as outlined in Table 6.

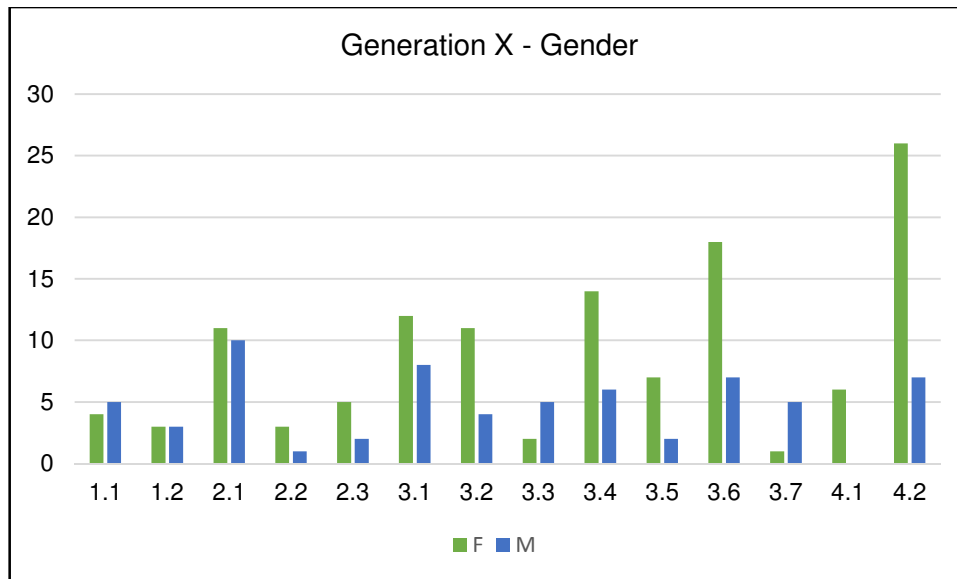


Figure 4. Generation X's views per sub-theme according to gender

In general, female participants cited the various sub-themes more often than their male counterparts, except for three instances. Males participants placed greater emphasis on being properly resourced by their employer (Theme 1: Reciprocity), on their need for relatedness, and a conducive work environment (Theme 3: Socio-emotional fulfilment).

Female participants placed far more emphasis on Theme 4: Values and Ideological Fulfilment, compared to their male counterparts. While female participants cited it as important to take note and to personally align with the values of the organisation; male participants did not mention the organisation's values at all. Female participants placed a great deal of emphasis on their personal values and ideology as it relates to employment relationship.

The degree of emphasis placed on personal values and ideology is closely linked to the importance they place on talent management. Historically, female employees had a hard time in the workplace regarding their treatment, as well as development and promotion in their careers. Understandably, female participants place great emphasis on these matters, since they don't take them for granted.

Next, it is important to consider the impact that a participant's age in Generation X's age range of 27 to 46 (born 1970 – 1989) has. Figure 5 provides a summary of the primary differences within Generation X.

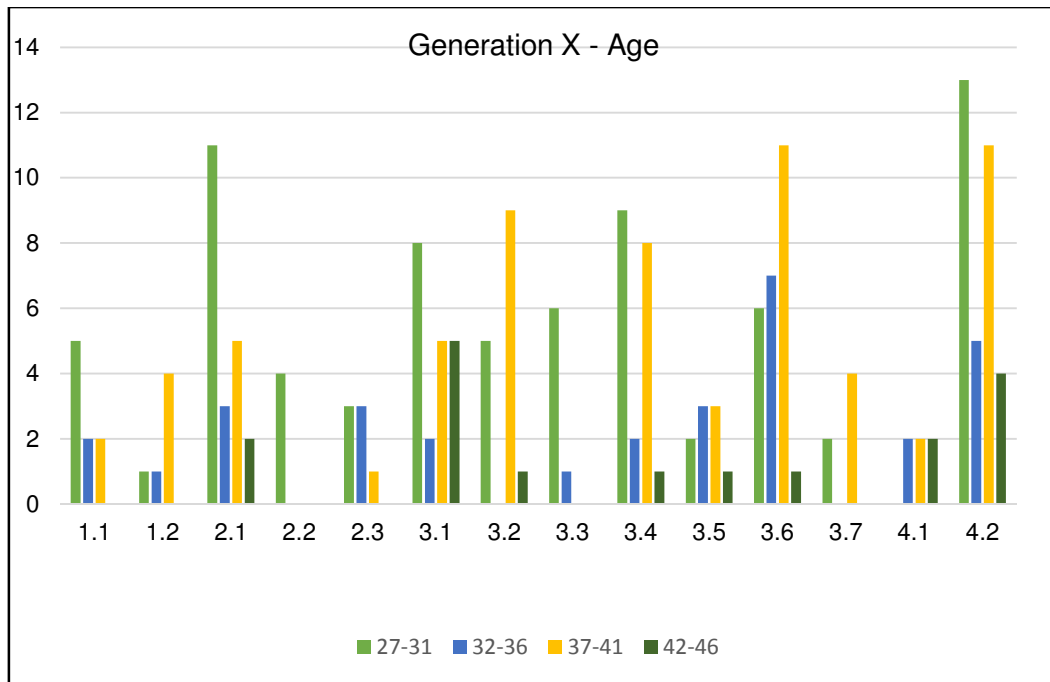


Figure 5. Generation X's responses according to age and the sub-themes of this study

The age group 27 to 31 placed far more emphasis than the other age groups on being properly resourced, fair pay or financial security, competence, relatedness, a supportive leadership or organisation, as well as personal values or ideology fulfilment. Job resources are the physical, psychological, social, or organisational features of a position that help reduce the demands and associated psychological costs of a job (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Feelings of psychological contract breach reveal employee perceptions of the failure by the employer to deliver either promised or expected resources. Rayton and Yalabik (2014) make use of the Social Exchange Theory and the Jobs Demands-Resources model to make the argument that failure to deliver on expectations results in feelings of resource loss due to both the initial failure to deliver and the unmet expectations that lead to a shift in employee expectations about the delivery of other resources based on the exchange relationship.

According to the Social Exchange Theory, the relationship between the employer and employee progress over time as they act in an agreed framework of rules and exchange relationships. As long as the exchanging parties feel indebted to each other, the exchange relationship continues, and the parties are willing to make sacrifices for each other (Blau 1964). But when employees sense that the balance of their psychological contract has changed, the exchange relationship between employees and their organisation changes.

According to the Job Demands-Resources model, every job can be viewed of as a set of job demands and job resources that interact to produce employee engagement (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). For this reason, Bal et al. (2013) view psychological contract fulfilment as a job resource that drives the work engagement of employees. According to the JD-R model,

job resources are not only necessary to handle job demands but they also contribute to employee motivation.

The older members of this generation entered the job market during South Africa's transition from Apartheid to democracy, which were accompanied by a lot of uncertainty and opportunity for some, whilst the younger members of this generation entered the job market during a worldwide economic downturn and youth unemployment rates shot up (Rotich, Ilieva, & Walunywa, 2015). Stability has been hard to find for this generation, which may account for their insistence on fair pay, ethical behaviour by both the employer and employee, and the need to take charge of their own career development.

Their emphasis on relatedness is due to their being cuspers (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011), which means they will have some characteristics of their own generation while also sharing values with the Millennial generation that also places great emphasis on relatedness. It is important to note that the relatedness sought by these participants is not only relatedness at work, but also an employer whose location enables them to protect their need for relatedness with family and friends.

Relatedness denotes a feeling of connectedness and association, and involves a sense of being significant to others. The need for relatedness is satisfied when people experience a sense of communion and develop close and intimate relationships with others (Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, Soenens, & Lens, 2010). Past research has shown that the satisfaction of the psychological need for relatedness is linked to a wide range of positive outcomes such as performance, self-esteem, and organisational commitment (Kovjanic, Schuh, Jonas, Van Quaquebeke, & Van Dick, 2012). Van den Broeck et al. (2010) found that social support was strongly related to relatedness satisfaction. Social support is not only derived from relationships at work and from family and friends outside of the work context, which explains why authors like Codrington and Grant-Marshall (2011), Festing and Schäfer (2014) reported that Generation X is less likely to be loyal to the company, seek work-life balance and demonstrate a mistrust of the corporate world. Generation X does not rely as strongly on people within the work context for social support and relatedness satisfaction; instead they find this in the relationships they value more, namely with family and friends.

The age group 37 to 41 placed the most emphasis, as compared to their other colleagues, on their need for autonomy and talent management. This makes sense, since these participants are well established in their careers and have developed their expertise to such a degree that they can ensure more freedom in the career choices they make, but also the conditions related to their work. The emphasis this age group within Generation X places on autonomy relates not only to self-initiate, but also freedom from the traditionally set work

day. This does not only relate to a distaste for the one-size-fits all approach still used as it relates to professional and administrative staff members, but also a need for more flexibility in their lives outside of work.

Next, it is important to determine what impact, if any, cultural differences have on how Generation X participants view their employment relationship. Figure 6 explores this according to a broad race differentiation, which is closely linked to general cultural differences in South Africa. Culture includes concepts of race, ethnicity, religion, language, national origin, and other factors. According to Bullock (2011), race and ethnicity are interchangeable as a variable used to identify culture. The cultural world view of a particular group of people determines how they make sense of life and knowledge and awareness of cultural values, attitudes, and behaviours can assist employers in avoiding stereotypes and biases, while creating positive relationships with employees from diverse cultural backgrounds.

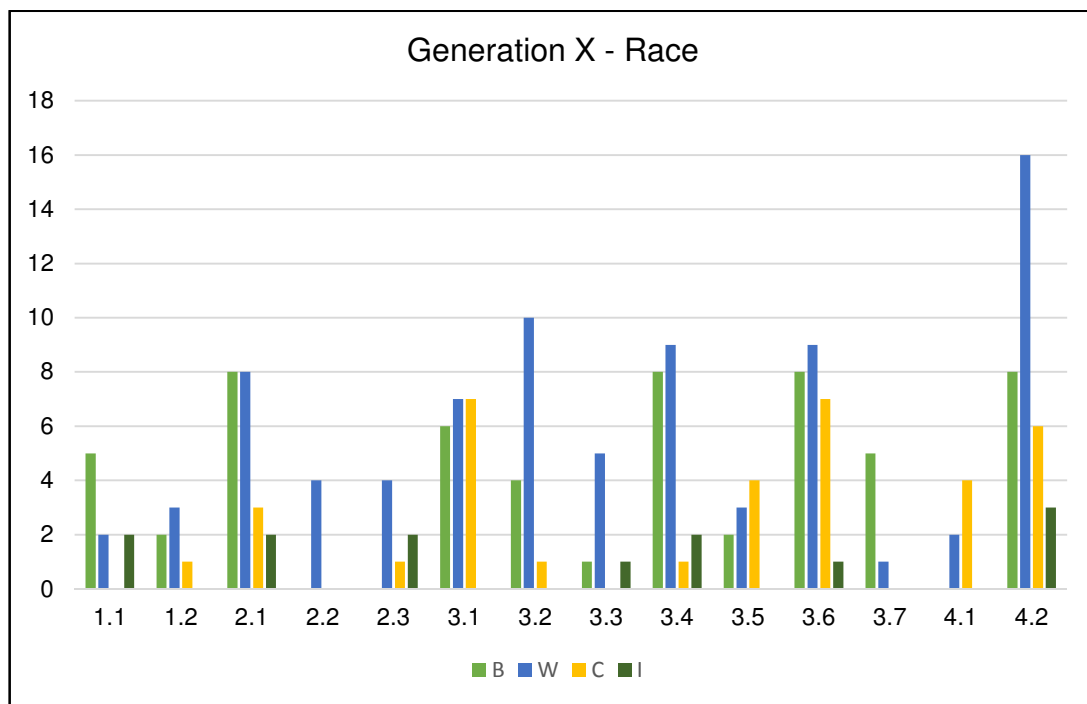


Figure 6. Generation X according to race and cultural differences

Figure 6 provides an analysis of Generation X participants' views along the sub-themes identified for this study. As can be seen, Black participants placed the most emphasis on being properly resourced by their employer and factors relating to talent management such as performance management and leadership development. While it is unclear why participants in this category cited resources so often, it is reasonable to conclude that the emphasis on talent management is closely linked to the impact that

Apartheid-era policies still have more than twenty years after democracy. Redress for past discriminative policies and lack of access to education opportunities causes employees to scramble to expand their knowledge base and experience to be able to compete in the South African labour market as its economy is in transition (Horwitz, 2013) and battling one of the highest unemployment rates in the world (Burger & Von Fintel, 2014).

White participants placed the greatest emphasis on autonomy, as well as personal values and ideology. This is in line with the individualistic cultural values prevalent in South Africa's White population group (Adams, Van de Vijver, & De Bruin, 2012). White participants were also the only participants to mention benefits, which may relate to historical access to such benefits and therefore emphasis on their importance; though no other studies seem to have investigated this aspect according racial groups' preferences regarding fringe benefits.

The Coloured participants placed far more emphasis on organisational values and ideology than did the other participants, while Black and Indian participants did not mention this aspect at all. It is also interesting to note that the Coloured participants did not mention matters relating to talent management, relatedness or resources, though these participants in contrast also took responsibility for managing their own professional and career development which may account for them not putting emphasis on talent management by their employer.

LIMITATIONS

Limitations to this study include the small sample size; only ten participants from Generation X were interviewed, yet the researcher established data saturation.

Another possible limitation could be the fact that the researcher only made use of semi-structured interviews. Yet, given the lack of information available before the study and the explorative nature of the study, the use of interviews in this manner seems justified.

The possibility of the interviewer being biased could also be considered a limitation, since the researcher is employed at the university where the study was conducted. Any bias this could have caused were avoided by asking open-ended questions and limiting the number of follow-up questions posed to participants to refrain from leading their responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A recommendation pertaining to employers of all generations is a general need expressed by all participants for an employer or manager that seeks a sincere dialogue with them and listens with the intention to understand and act upon their needs. Participants repeatedly expressed the wish to not be treated in a one-size-fits-all manner by employers and have their unique needs acknowledged and acted upon. Simple but sincere dialogue can go a long way to prevent employers from jeopardising the psychological contract with employees and to retain employees from all generations, especially Generation X, since members of this generation tend to act individualistic in their careers and will move to an employer who will satisfy their needs (Becton et al., 2014).

It is Scheel and Mohr's (2013) contention that organisational mission and values have become an aspect of great importance in psychological contracts and are especially relevant to organisations such as universities that serve society's need to grow and develop in order to thrive. Since Generation X places emphasis on especially personal values and ideology, relating this to both their personal and professional lives, it has become important for South African employers to pay more than lip service to values and ideology. Generation X's focus on values, ideology and impact may very well be a factor that can be managed to great and positive effect or if neglected become a motivation for staff turnover from this generation. The #FeesMustFall campaign during 2015 and 2016 has, especially for employees in the higher education sector, caused a great awareness of the need for social change. This need for change relates not only to the treatment and education of students, but also to the impact that higher education institutions should have in South Africa and how employees within these institutions are managed and treated.

Other recommendations pertaining to Generation X are for organisations to invest more in training and growth opportunities, especially leadership development opportunities. Many participants expressed frustration with leadership styles and methods within higher education that seem to be ignorant of changing social conditions in the sector and in South Africa in general. Generation X wants leadership they can identify with and respect, and whilst this aspect might not cause them to leave the organisation, it can lead to disengagement by a much needed section of the higher education workforce with tremendous capacity to contribute.

A number of participants cited that no clear growth or promotional opportunities were available to them or mapped out by the organisation they are employed at. Generation X employees, who have no clear promotion path or opportunity to advance, will use their innovation and individualistic tendencies to create a career plan of their own, most probably

seeking external employability. Employers can often retain these employees simply by periodically having active talent management discussions with them to not only assess the true value they add to the organisation, but also to ascertain what the employee's ambitions are for the future and whether such opportunities exist or can be created in future at the organisation.

Recommendations for future research in South Africa include aspects relating to Theme 4 regarding the mission, impact and values of both the organisation and its employees. Whilst South Africa is a country with great diversity in its people, that diversity extends also to long-standing social and economic inequality due to the lasting impact of Apartheid policies. Generation X seems intent on addressing these and finding better ways of achieving this must be sought.

Whilst no one-size-fits-all recommendations can be applied without consideration for individual and contextual factors, employers need to take cognisance of the impact cultural differences have on what employees view as important in their employment relationship. The results of this study showed that black employees place emphasis on fairness on an interpersonal level. For example black participants expressed that the employer should be fair in his expectations of the employee in context to providing proper resources to enable the employee to meet the expectations. Also fairness in receiving a fair salary compared to other employees in the organisation. White participants in contrast viewed a fair salary from an employment sector perspective in wanting to receive a salary that is market related.

Values and ideological fulfilment is an important aspect highlighted by Gen Xers, specifically amongst coloured and white participants, which relate to commitment to the company and to positive change that can and should be used. Employees from amongst Generation X want to know what the values and mission of the organisation is in terms of its core business and in the broader social context. Organisations can keep these employees committed to the organisation beyond their personal interest by involving these employees in the strategy of the organisation.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth conclusions from the manuscript according to the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1. Limitations of the study will be explained after which recommendations for higher education institutions in South Africa and employers in general will be discussed in this chapter. Recommendations for further research on this topic will also be presented.

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to investigate how Generation X (born 1970–1989) employees in a South African university view their employment relationship with their employer. Since very little research on generations in the South African context has been done (Van der Walt, 2010), participants from the Baby Boomer (born 1950–1969) and Millennial (born 1990-2005) generations were included to compare and contrast the data collected from Generation X participants during qualitative semi-structured interviews. This study was conducted at a tertiary institution and authors (Erasmus, Grobler, & Van Niekerk, 2011; Oakes & Galagan, 2011) observed that employers often shy away from leaving old and familiar patterns of talent management, failing to adopt new practices that are more appropriate to the organisational context and changing market conditions.

The psychological contract may be changed or transformed by either changes in the organisation; in the case of higher education institutions in South Africa this currently includes the whole sector (Winberg, 2016), and change in the individual employee. In the case of this study, it includes employees from a particular generation - Generation X. Van der Smissen, Schalk, and Freese (2013) noted that most studies attempting to find evidence of the new contract have relied on a content approach towards analysing the psychological contract. The authors suggested that a combination approach be followed, relying on both an analysis of the content and an evaluation-oriented approach which assesses the degree to which the psychological contract has been fulfilled. They also suggested that research into the new psychological contract must take cognisance of the specific impact a particular business sector, country, and individual may have on whether or not the nature of the psychological contract has changed.

This approach was followed in this study to obtain an understanding of what employees in a higher education institution believed to be the obligations and responsibilities of both themselves and their employer, but in addition also to get a sense of how well their current employer is doing in fulfilling the psychological contract amidst changing circumstances.

Objective 1: Understand which factors, from an employee perspective, will enable an employer to attract and retain a Generation X employee.

From the interviews, it is evident that members from Generation X strongly believe their psychological contract should satisfy both the content of the old psychological contract – job security, continuity, loyalty, and fairness – and the new psychological contract – employability and flexibility (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Torrington, Hall, & Taylor, 2008; Van der Smissen et al., 2013; Wörnich, Carrell, Elbert, & Hatfield, 2015).

Participants have not only responded to changes in the South African higher education sector, but also to the changing social dynamics both inside the workplace and society at large. This can best be perceived through participants' drive for values and ideological matters that relate to an alignment between employer and employee as to what the organisational mission should be and how they should work towards it. This not only speaks towards concepts inherent to the *old* psychological contract, such as continuity, loyalty, and fairness; it also relates to a new dimension of values and ideological fulfilment identified by authors such as Scheel and Mohr (2013).

Leadership is another aspect that came to the forefront during the interviews. Generation X participants viewed leadership and management within higher education to be divorced from the changing realities within both the higher education sector and South Africa as a whole. Leadership and management are in need of change and this is evident in several participants expressing their dislike for the one-size-fits-all approach, which consists of treating staff as if they are a homogenous group – an approach favoured by the mostly Baby Boomer leadership and disliked by Gen Xers the world over (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011).

Hofstede (1991) suggested that from a cultural perspective, a leader must follow the employee; in South Africa a new leadership training perspective is needed to accommodate both the cultural and generational diversity in the workplace. Participants expressed their keen awareness of the diversity present in the workplace in terms of race, gender, religious beliefs, generation, as well as the different management needs of individuals and within departmental contexts, and that a servant leadership approach is the most appropriate response to such diversity. This awareness of diversity and a readiness to embrace necessary change, coupled with a dislike of the Baby Boomer notion that we all have to agree and be the same, are hallmarks of Generation X elsewhere in the world too (Becton, Walker, & Jones-Farmer, 2014; Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Festing & Schäfer, 2014).

Van der Walt (2010), in her study of South Africa's higher education sector, found that the reasons most Generation X employees cited as motivating them to leave their employer, included:

- insufficient career development opportunities;
- to facilitate a career change;

- better career prospects elsewhere; and
- a lack of recognition or credit for work done.

This was confirmed during this study and rang true especially amongst professional staff members, who perceive a clear career path available for their academic colleagues, but not for them. Participants made it clear that the university can go a long way towards retaining its staff by having proper conversations between manager and employee about what the employee's future ambitions are and the way in which the employer may be able to provide opportunities towards realising those ambitions. Administrative staff also related the differential treatment they received from the university's human resource department, relating to a theme running through the participants' discussions about their current employment relationship – the presence and sometimes absence of equality and fairness.

Möller (2014) reported a lack of understanding by managers regarding the aspects employees on the bottom of the organisational ladder value in the employment relationship and to what degree, which may account for an equally unsatisfactory treatment by departments in the organisation that must serve and aid employees. Coetzee, Mitonga-Monga, and Swart's (2014) research in an engineering organisational context showed that employees' perceptions of the organisation's human resource practices were a positive indicator of their level of commitment towards the organisation. This suggests that if the administrative staff members at the university perceive their treatment by the human resource department not to be equal and fair compared to the treatment received by other employees, their level of commitment is likely to wane.

This links to matters such as remuneration amongst staff members with similar key performance areas (KPAs) and position level, but also to whether the remuneration offered by the university is market-related and remains fair during the changing economic conditions in South Africa. The research by Coetzee et al. (2014) indicated that market-related remuneration, benefits and non-monetary recognition incentives are important in order to enhance employees' affective commitment towards the organisation. Given the uncertain reality the higher education sector in South Africa is faced with, enhancing the commitment of employees is of even greater importance than before to ensure stability within individual higher education institutions.

Objective 2: Determine Generation X's beliefs regarding the responsibilities and obligations of the two parties in the employment relationship, i.e. employer and employee.

Generation X participants placed great emphasis on loyalty to their employer, which seems to be in contradiction with most authors who contend that Gen X does not put any stock in loyalty to the employer (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Festing & Schäfer, 2014). It is important to note that participants do not define loyalty to their employer in the same way Baby

Boomers and Traditionalists tend to (Van der Walt, 2010). Loyalty to Generation X does not mean that you remain with the same employer throughout your career. It does mean that while you are with an employer, you fully commit and invest yourself in the work you do, ascribing to the mission and values of the employer, while conducting yourself with integrity when you represent the university to students, colleagues, and the public outside. While this could not be confirmed during the study, it does seem plausible that South African society's mix of individualistic and collectivistic cultures has some role to play in this belief of the employee's obligation towards the employer. Jonas (1996) confirmed that the mix of individualistic and collectivistic cultural values in a society such as South Africa is poorly understood. However, the notion of putting others first and conforming to the group is evident within the collectivistic black cultures and may over time have become enmeshed with the collective values of Generation X.

The next aspect relates to leadership. Generation X participants highlighted that leadership development within the university and the opportunity to move into a leadership position are opportunities they believe their employer should provide. Participants in the study expressed frustration that the university does not seem to invest in the development of leaders from within the ranks of university employees, but instead recruits from outside. This links to two secondary results; the first is that participants, especially from amongst the professional staff members, expressed their willingness and active search for opportunities outside the university to obtain leadership positions or promotion opportunities. Becton, Walker, and Jones-Farmer's research (2014) postulated that Generation X changed jobs more frequently than their Baby Boomer colleagues and the Millennial generation employees changed jobs more frequently than Generation X employees. Such job changes were made to facilitate greater opportunities both in terms of career development and other work context factors.

The other secondary result is that participants get the message that little to no talent management takes place at the university in terms of career path and planning, and that professional and administrative staff are not as valued by management as their academic peers. This is in line with research conducted by Liversage (2015) at a number of South African universities. Liversage found that although higher education institutions claimed that talent management was a priority, few could provide evidence of a comprehensive policy or procedure that could facilitate proper talent management and that the need for active talent management was little more than a general statement found in higher education institutions' institutional plans and strategies.

The participants expressed the belief that they owed it to their employer to do what they are paid to do and what was agreed upon in their KPAs. Generation X expressed the belief that they should go beyond what was agreed upon when necessary, but that the KPAs must receive first priority. Lub (2013) confirmed this in his study that for Generation X employees the

employee obligations in their psychological contract with the employer mediated the relationship between relational obligations, as well as affective commitment and extra work effort. This also strongly relates to Generation X's expectation of a work environment that is both pleasant and aids them in delivering on their KPAs, as confirmed by Hansen and Leuty in their study of work values across generations (2012). In turn, participants felt the employer should properly resource them in accordance with the performance that is expected and pay them fair and market-related salaries. This is something a number of participants felt their current employer is falling short on. Several participants expressed that the remuneration packages offered by the university have always been subpar compared to other higher education institutions in South Africa. Since the #FeesMustFall campaign and the resulting limited budget, it has become a real problem for many of the participants, since this coincides with greater living expenses due to South Africa's declining economic situation. Muteswa and Ortlepp's study (2011) of managerial level employees in South Africa confirmed that employees, who did not receive a competitive remuneration package, cited this as a factor with relatively strong influence on their intention to leave their current employer.

Though members from Generation X expressed the expectation of a caring manager and organisation that look after their well-being, they place far less emphasis on this aspect compared to their Baby Boomer colleagues. What they do place emphasis on are wellness activities and management that is authentic and shows genuine caring, not window dressing, which is consistent with Generation X's dislike for anything fake (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011).

Objective 3: Establish how cultural differences impact Generation X employees' expectations in the workplace.

Locally, no study could be found that differentiated amongst employees' beliefs beyond gender or generational (or age) differences. International studies seem to follow a one-size-fits-all approach that assumes that all employees conform to the employer's culture that is strictly individualistic or collectivistic. Studies that do consider the consequences of more than one broad cultural alignment do so from a cross-border employment perspective where an employee accepts employment at an international organisation in a country of which the culture is contrary to that of the employee's (Ravlin, Liao, Morrell, Au, & Thomas, 2012).

One of the first differences detected among the various groups identified (Black, White, Coloured, Indian) in this study for the purposes of differentiating between broad cultural differences, is the aspect of values and ideological fulfilment, as well as alignment between the employee and the employer. Whereas personal values and ideology were cited by all participants as being important to them, only Coloured and White participants linked these to the organisation's values, mission, and ideology, expressing the need for these to be aligned to

their own values and ideology. Black participants did not mention ideological fulfilment or the need for alignment between personal and organisational values; yet, it does not necessarily mean they do not expect this too.

As stated previously in this Chapter, Jonas (1996) elucidated the potential impact of individualistic and collectivistic cultures in a South African context. While Black participants do not specifically mention ideological fulfilment, agreement and compliance with the group are inherent to collectivistic cultures, while caring for those within your group before yourself is considered to be self-evident. As for Coloured and White participants, who have varying levels of collectivism and individualism in their respective cultures, the influence of assimilation of cultural values due to living more closely can be seen. The values of Ubuntu are seen as humaneness, a pervasive spirit of caring and community, harmony and hospitality, respect and responsiveness that individuals and groups display for one another, and have become part of the management and organisational philosophy in South Africa since the end of Apartheid (Theletsane, 2012).

Black participants placed much more emphasis on reciprocity in their relationship with their employer as compared to White and Indian participants, while Coloured participants did not mention it at all. Black employees also cited a need for a pleasant work environment, whereas White employees hardly mentioned it and participants from the other racial groupings did not mention it at all. Yet, it is hardly surprising that reciprocity is so highly valued by Black participants – it is very much part of Ubuntu values (Theletsane, 2012) and collectivistic cultures (Jonas, 1996), while the individualistic culture of both White participants and many organisations historically too, is not so intent on reciprocity on equal footing.

White employees were the only Generation X participants to mention benefits such as medical aid, pension plan, as well as study benefits, specific to the higher education sector. No mention was made of it by other participants. White employees also mentioned the need for autonomy more than twice as much compared to their Black colleagues, and ten times as much compared to Coloured employees, while it was not mentioned by the Indian participant at all. This seems to indicate a broad individualistic cultural belief that you need to be able to take care of your needs such as medical, retirement, and further studies; also to be able to act in a self-directed manner.

According to Bussin and Smit (2014), Generation X and Baby Boomers in South Africa place equal value on general benefits, while Millennials put half as much emphasis on it. Millennials and Generation X put four times more into pension funds compared to their Baby Boomer colleagues. Millennials valued health and welfare 2.5 times more, compared to Generation X and Baby Boomer employees. The significant lack of emphasis on these matters among the other groupings within Generation X can be ascribed to two possible reasons. The first relates to Apartheid-era policies that denied non-white employees access or adequate

access to benefits, restricting their movements. These groups naturally compensated for this differential treatment through cultural practices such as Ubuntu whereby the group takes care of each other as needed (Theletsane, 2012). The second reason relates to a more collectivistic cultural alignment, which means that you help take care of the group and the group helps take care of you (Forsyth, 2010; Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2014).

Matters that related to active talent management and the employee's need for competence were nearly equally important for Black, White, and Coloured participants. It is important to note that in this study talent management was linked to actions participants believed the employer should take to manage their performance, provide succession planning (linked to career paths), retention strategies such as skills development opportunities, and leadership development. The need for competence (Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016) relates to actions such as additional training and development, as well as job changes participants have taken in the past and are willing to take in future in order to facilitate a challenging job, promotion, and change in career or escaping frustration pertaining to limited growth and promotional prospects at their current employer. This seems to be a matter of importance to all employees, irrespective of race and cultural beliefs. In all of this, Generation X employees in this study clearly conformed to their generation's reputation for taking control of their careers and actively seeking opportunities to advance and grow, enhancing their skills to remain competitive in the employment sector (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2011; Festing & Schäfer, 2014).

3.2 LIMITATIONS

Limitations to this study include the small sample size; only ten participants from Generation X were interviewed; yet the researcher established data saturation despite the difficulty created by #FeesMustFall protests on campuses in South Africa during this period.

The possibility of the interviewer being biased could also be considered a limitation, since the researcher is employed at the university where the study had been conducted. Any bias this could have caused was avoided by asking open-ended questions and limiting the number of follow-up questions posed to participants to refrain from leading their responses.

The researcher specifically made use of an audio voice recorder to enable accurate capturing of participants' views and to avoid any interference that might serve as a distraction during the interviews. These recordings were saved both on computer and a backup external hard drive and safely stored by the researcher.

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Employers within the South African higher education sector are at risk of high employee turnover of Generation X employees who represent the majority of especially their academic

staff (Council on Higher Education: South Africa, 2013). Employers within this sector and in South Africa at large must take note and act upon this employee group's different values and beliefs, especially as they relate to the content and fulfilment of the psychological contract.

The new insight that this study provides employers about a highly valued group of employees' values and opinion requires that higher education institutions in South Africa make talent management a high priority in order to ensure they not only retain their talent during the uncertain times currently being experienced in the higher education sector, but also retain local talent and expertise within South Africa.

3.3.1 Recommendations for the Organisation

Table 1 provides the South African higher education sector with recommendations regarding changes that are required in terms of their talent management practices to better attract and retain Generation X employees in its cultural diversity.

Table 1*Talent Management Recommendations to the Organisation*

Future Recruitment Considerations	Desired Employment Situation	<i>Versus</i>	Current Employment Reality	Future Retention Strategies
Discuss possible career paths during job interview with potential employee.	A clear career path for all employment levels.		Only academic staff members have a clear career path at the university.	Purposeful discussions between manager and employee about the current and future fit between the organisation and the employee's career ambitions.
	Organisation that aligns itself to react to South Africa's changing social and educational landscape.		Slow acknowledgement of diversity within the organisation and little focus on the changed demands put on higher education in South Africa.	Active dialogue between management and employees about the university's changed reality and the role the university should play in the future.
Realign focus during recruitment to consider or give preference to applicants from within the university for leadership positions.	Chance to apply for leadership positions within the university and opportunity to be developed as a potential manager.		University appoints leaders from outside the university and offers no leadership development opportunity.	Identify employees with leadership ambitions during periodic discussions between manager and employees. Institute a leadership development programme specifically aimed at employees who are presently not in management positions, but have been identified as having career ambitions for management positions.

Much greater care must be taken by organisations in South Africa to safeguard and develop the psychological contract they have with their individual employees. The general state of employer-employee relations in South Africa is a testimony to organisations not taking cognisance of relationship parameters inherent in the psychological contract. By overhauling their entire talent management policy, organisations can begin to reconceptualise how they construct the psychological contract they have with an employee from the moment they advertise a position until the day that employee leaves the organisation. By taking care to understand what is valued by Generation X employees and the aspects that are valued differently among the various racial groups due to culture, employers can start to build a much more stable, constructive and long-term employment relationship that is beneficial to both employer and employee.

This means that organisations must retrain managers to build relationships with employees they are responsible for. Such relationships mean that managers must take the time to have regular discussions with employees individually, to understand who this person is, what his or her current situation is outside the workplace, what his or her cultural and generational background is, and what his or her career ambitions are. Once a relationship has been built based on trust, the manager and employee can endeavour to build a career path for the employee that takes into consideration what the employer requires according to the organisation's goals and what the employee requires to fulfil his or her career ambitions.

Once employers move away from the one-size-fits-all approach that assumes all employees want and need the same thing from their employer once they have been appointed, making it a priority to really understand and take care of their employees as individuals, much improvement will be seen in the retention rates, especially among Generation X employees.

3.3.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research in South Africa include aspects relating to Theme 4 regarding the mission, impact, and values of both the organisation and employees. Whilst South Africa is a country with great diversity in its people, that diversity extends also to long-standing social and economic inequality due to the lasting impact of Apartheid policies. Generation X seems intent on addressing these and finding better ways of marrying this focus that is about both good business and the greater societal good that must be sought through further research and intervention programmes.

A longitudinal study of the psychological contract within the South African context and specifically to provide better insight into employees - from different generations and cultural backgrounds - beliefs and attitudes relating to the employment relationship, can prove

invaluable. Currently, most studies seem to assume that employees must adapt to cultural beliefs espoused by the organisation, instead of a servant leadership/organisational perspective that would serve the employee instead of the employee adapting to organisational management.

Related to this is the necessity to study and develop leadership models and leadership theory that are relevant to a multicultural context and workforce. Currently, literature seems to assume leadership should be based solely on individualistic or collectivistic notions; neither of the approaches seems to be appropriate for a diverse society such as South Africa.

3.4 PERSONAL REFLECTION

This study challenged my belief in the importance of this research theme to the very end. Since little information and literature were available to guide me regarding generational studies in South Africa, it was a constant struggle that was often filled with frustration.

Testing my perseverance from start to finish, I have a new found respect for all who endeavour postgraduate studies and an academic career, as the journey from conceptualising a research topic to writing a complete and academically sound dissertation is so much more difficult and arduous than I could ever have imagined.

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