

# **Scarce-skilled undergraduate students' perceptions of future employment and mobility within the South African context**

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Commerce in Human Resource Management at the North-West University

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## FOR THE READER'S ATTENTION

- The dissertation was prescribed in the American Psychological Association (APA) format. The APA publication manual (6<sup>th</sup> edition) gave guidance to the framework for the editorial and referencing style. This practice must be used in all scientific documentation when the study is enrolled at the Human Resource Management programme at the North-West University.
- This research was submitted in the form of two articles, which was of a qualitative nature. The *South African Journal for Human Resource Management* motivated the principle in which the editorial style was conducted, with the use of APA as a guideline and framework in the tables and figures.
- The study is titled “Scarce-skilled undergraduate students’ perceptions of future employment and mobility within the South African context”. The first article explored the scarce-skilled undergraduates’ perception of future employment and employment conditions in South Africa, where the second article explored the influential push and pull factors that contributed to the mobility of the scarce-skilled undergraduates in the labour market. The findings of the study were drawn from the scarce-skilled undergraduates at the North-West University. The researcher chose a specific set of scarce-skilled graduates who were available at the University, which is based in Potchefstroom. The fields included Engineering (Mechanical, Civil and Electrical); Chartered Accounting, Actuarial Sciences and Pharmacology. Therefore, not all scarce-skilled undergraduates’ perceptions and opinions in the whole of South Africa were explored, but only those of the North-West University based in Potchefstroom in these specific fields.
- The scarce-skilled undergraduates were referred to as ‘participants’, which refers to all of the undergraduates in all six of the fields.
- Each chapter forming part of the dissertation has its own reference list.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this study to my husband, Frans Nortje. It has been a tough couple of years, but you kept believing in and supporting me in every aspect. I would like to acknowledge your support, motivation, love, and patience that kept me going. I believe that you will be a wonderful father for the baby girl we have on the way. We reached and got through this chapter in our lives together, and I fully believe that we will take on the next one even stronger.

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- I would like to thank the scarce-skilled undergraduates of the North-West University who participated in the study; without them it would not have been possible to conduct and finish my research.

## **DECLARATION OF RESEARCH AUTHENTICITY**

I, Chere-Zandri Nortje, hereby declare that the research dissertation, “Scarce-skilled undergraduate students’ perceptions of future employment and mobility within the South African context”, is my own work, the views and opinions in this research are those of the author and the relevant literature authors as indicated by referencing in the reference list.

I further declare that the content of this research will not be handed in for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Nortje', is written over a horizontal dotted line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Chere-Zandri Nortje**

**March 2018**

## DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

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16 February 2018

Dear Mr / Ms

Re: Language editing of dissertation: (**Scarce-skilled undergraduate students' perceptions of future employment and mobility within the South African context**)

I hereby declare that I language edited the above-mentioned dissertation by Mrs Chere-Zandri Nortje (student number: 22316205).

Please feel free to contact me should you have any enquiries.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cecile van Zyl', with a large loop at the top and a cross-like flourish at the bottom.

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## SUMMARY

**Title:** Scarce-skilled undergraduate students' perceptions of future employment and mobility within the South African context

**Keywords:** Employment; scarce-skilled undergraduates; wages; push and pull factors; economic growth; human resource development; market segmentation; mobility

This study focused on scarce-skilled undergraduate students' perception of future employment and employment conditions within the labour market; and the push and pull factors that had a contributing influence on their opinions and perceptions when it came to mobility, be it either national or international. Little attention has been given to unemployment among graduates and even less on scarce-skilled graduates. This study focuses on the perceptions and opinions of scarce-skilled undergraduates in the fields engineering (electrical, mechanical and civil), chartered accounting, actuarial sciences and pharmacology. It was indicated that unemployment was not the issue among the participants, because as Barker (2007) indicated, those with a higher education are less likely to find themselves unemployed.

In the first article, there are countering factors such as the Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003; Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and technological advancements that they felt could threaten their employment options in the future. Disregarding unemployment, the participants also indicated that they felt there were several factors that could influence employment conditions, such as work-life balance, wages, geographical area, economic growth, human resource development, training in organisations and lastly recruitment.

In the second article, the focus was on how much the indicated push and pull factors had an influence on the perceptions and opinions of the participants and whether they would consider spending their skills in South Africa and mobilise nationally or if they would spend their skills elsewhere and mobilise overseas. The indicated push factors were corruption, politics and unemployment, whereas the pull factors were family, people, culture and loyalty.

The titles of the two articles were:

Article 1: An exploration of scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions of future employment within the South African labour market

Article 2: An exploration of the identifiable push and pull factors that could influence scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions of mobility in the labour market

A qualitative, phenomenological approach will be used in this study and it will be based on multiple case studies in the interpretive case study design, with the use of ontology. Observations and interviews will be used to derive data from the target group. The research design allowed the researcher to interpret and measure data and explore all possible answers, in a non-subjective manner, leaving room for expression from the participants' side and non-bias behaviour from the researcher. A combination of a purposive and snowball sample of 21 ( $N=21$ ) scarce-skilled undergraduate participants was used for both articles. The sample group consisted of scarce-skilled undergraduates from different fields of study on the North-West University campus based in Potchefstroom, namely engineering (electrical, mechanical and civil), chartered accounting, actuarial sciences and pharmacology. The researcher made use of semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data in a six-phase plan created by Braun and Clarke (2006).

In article 1, there were two categories in the findings, which were:

*Labour market effects:* This category included three themes, namely: Labour laws influencing possible employment; task-oriented employment conditions and geographical employment conditions. The first theme had two sub-themes, namely the B-BBEEE Act 53 of 2003 and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. The second theme had two sub-themes, namely work-life balance and technological unemployment. The third theme had two sub-themes, namely preference and compensation and development.

*Economic impacts on the labour market:* The second category had one theme, namely hypothetical systems and processes. The theme had two sub-themes, namely human resource development systems and recruitment processes and procedures.

The results confirmed numerous findings and that unemployment among graduates was not the concerning matter, but rather that of the employment conditions within the South African labour market.

In article 2, there were two categories:

*Mobility in and out of South Africa:* The first category included three themes, namely mobility in South Africa, mobilising overseas temporarily and mobilising overseas permanently. The first theme covered one sub-theme, namely contentment. The second theme had two sub-themes, namely exploring and skills enhancement. The third theme had one sub-theme, namely spending skills abroad.

*Influential push and pull factors on mobility:* The second category had two themes, namely push factors and pull factors. The first theme had three sub-themes, namely corruption, politics and unemployment. The second theme also had three sub-themes, namely family, culture and people, and loyalty.

The results indicated that there were various findings and that the push and pull factors had a major impact on the perceptions of scarce-skilled graduates when they had an opinion on mobility. If the push factors impacted them more, then they would consider mobilising overseas, and if the pull factors were more important to them, then they would rather mobilise to a different geographical area in South Africa than mobilising overseas.

Limitations were included concerning both of the research articles. Recommendations and practical implications were made for articles 1 and 2 to benefit researchers who use this study and its contents in the future.

## OPSOMMING

**Titel:** Voorgraadse studente met skaars vaardighede se opinies oor toekomstige indiensneming en mobiliteit binne die Suid Afrikaanse konteks

**Sleutelwoorde:** Indiensneming; voorgraadse studente met skaar vaardighede; lone; trek- en drukfaktore; ekonomiese groei; mensehulpbronontwikkeling; marksegmentering; mobiliteit

Die studie fokus op voorgraadse student met skaars vaardighede se persepsies en opinies ten opsigte van toekomstige indiensneming en omstandighede in die werkplek binne die arbeidsmark; die druk- en trekfaktore wat 'n bydraende effek op die studente se persepsies en opinies het wanneer dit by keuses om te mobiliseer kom, nasionaal of internasionaal. Min aandag is al geskenk aan die werkloosheid van gegradueerde studente en nog minder aandag is geskenk aan die gegradueerde studente met skaars vaardighede. Die studierigtings van belang sluit in: ingenieurswese (elektries, meganiese en siviele), geoktrooieerde rekenmeesterskap; aktuariële wetenskappe en farmakologie. Die studie het ontdek dat werkloosheid nie die algemene probleem in die arbeidsmark was onder die deelnemers nie, want Barker (2007) stel voor dat diegene met hoër onderrig en vaardighede nie maklik werkloosheid sal ondervind nie.

In die eerste artikel is daar bydraende faktore soos die Wet van Breë-gebaseerde Swart Ekonomiese Bemagtiging 53 van 2003; en die Wet op Gelyke Indiensneming 55 van 1998 asook tegnologiese vooruitgang binne die werkplek. Die deelnemers voel dat die drie aspekte as bedreigings gesien kan word vir hul indiensnemingsopsies in die toekoms. Buiten die werkloosheid in Suid Afrika word daar verskeie faktore aangedui wat die deelnemers voel die werksomstandighede negatief kan beïnvloed, soos werk-lewe-balans, lone, geografiese area, ekonomiese groei, mensehulpbronontwikkeling en -opleiding, en laastens, die werwing van nuwe werknemers.

In die tweede artikel was die fokus meestal op die druk- en trekfaktore wat 'n invloed op die persepsies en opinies van voorgraadse studente met skaars vaardighede het ten opsigte van die konsep mobiliteit. Die vraag of die drukfaktore soveel invloed het op die persepsies van die deelnemers dat hulle besluit om hul vaardighede in 'n ander land te bestee, of as die trekfaktore hulle kan beïnvloed om hul vaardighede in Suid Afrika te bestee. Die aangeduide drukfaktore is

korruptsie, politiek en werkloosheid. Die trekfaktore sluit in familie, mense en kultuur, asook lojaliteit.

Die opskrifte van die twee artikels is:

**Artikel 1:** 'n Verkenning van voorgraadse studente met skaars vaardighede se persepsies aangaande toekomstige indiensneming in die Suid Afrikaanse arbeidsmark

**Artikel 2:** 'n Verkenning van die identifiseerbare druk- en trekfaktore wat voorgraadse studente met skaars vaardighede se persepsies ten opsigte van mobiliteit in die arbeidsmark kan beïnvloed

'n Kwalitatiewe, fenomenologiese benadering sal gebruik word in dié studie en sal gebaseer wees op 'n veelvoudige gevallestudie wat 'n interpretatiewe gevallestudie benadering sal volg, met die gebruik van ontologie. Observasies en onderhoude sal gebruik word om data vanaf die teikengroep in te samel. Die navorser het op 'n nie-subjektiewe wyse die navorsing geïnterpreteer en verken; dit was egter moontlik omdat die navorsingsbenadering dit toelaat. Die benadering het dit egter moontlik gemaak vir die deelnemers om hulself te kan uitdruk en dat die navorser nie vooroordeelend optree nie. 'n Kombinasie van 'n doelgerigte- en sneeubalsteekproef van 21 ( $N=21$ ) voorgraadse studente met skaars vaardighede is gebruik vir albei artikels. Die teikengroep bevat voorgraadse studente met skaars vaardighede uit verskillende studielevelde wat studeer aan die Noordwes-Universiteit in Potchefstroom. Die velde sluit in ingenieurswese (elektries, meganiese en siviele), geotegniese rekenmeesterskap, aktuariële wetenskappe en farmakologie. Die navorser het 'n semi-gestruktureerde benadering gevolg met die hulp van aangesig-tot-aangesig-onderhoude om data in te samel. Tematiese analise is gebruik om die data om te sit vanaf rou data na bruikbare data vir die bevindinge in elke artikel. Braun en Clarke (2006) se ses fase-plan is gevolg om dit uit te voer.

In die eerste artikel was daar twee kategorieë, naamlik:

*Die effekte van die arbeidsmark:* Dié kategorie het drie temas gehad: Arbeidswette wat indiensneming beïnvloed, taak-georiënteerde werksomgewing en geografiese werksomgewing. Die eerste tema het twee sub-temas gehad, naamlik die B-BBEE Wet 53 van 2003 en Wet op Gelyke Indiensneming 55 van 1998. Die tweede tema het twee sub-temas gehad, naamlik werk-lewe-balans en tegnologiese werkloosheid. Die derde tema het ook twee sub-temas gehad, naamlik voorkeur asook vergoeding en opleiding.

*Impakte wat die ekonomie op die arbeidsmark het.* Die tweede kategorie het een tema gehad, naamlik hipotetiese sisteme en prosesse. Die een tema het twee sub-temas gehad, naamlik mensehulpbronontwikkelsisteme en werwingsprosesse en -prosedures.

Die resultate het aangedui dat verskeie bevindinge gemaak is, maar dat werkloosheid nie een van die kommerwekkende faktore was nie; eerder die werksomstandighede binne die Suid-Afrikaanse arbeidsmark.

In artikel twee was daar twee kategorieë:

*Die moontlike mobiliteit binne en buite Suid Afrika:* Die eerste kategorie bestaan uit drie temas: Mobiliteit binne Suid-Afrika, tydelike mobilisering na die buiteland en permanente mobilisering na die buiteland. Die eerste tema het net een sub-tema, tevredenheid. Die tweede tema het twee sub-temas, naamlik verkenning en vaardigheidsverbetering/bevordering. Die derde tema het een sub-tema, die besteding van vaardighede in die buiteland.

*Invloedryke druk- en trekfaktore teenoor mobiliteit:* Die tweede kategorie het twee temas, elk met drie sub-temas. Die eerste tema was druk faktore, met korrupsie, politiek en werkloosheid as sub-temas. Die tweede tema was trekfaktore, met familie, kultuur en mense, asook lojaliteit as sub-temas.

Die resultate het aangedui dat daar verskeie bevindinge was, en dat die druk- en trekfaktore 'n invloedryke impak gemaak het op die opinies en persepsies van die deelnemers teenoor mobiliteit. As die drukfaktore vir die deelnemers meer invloedryk was, dan sou hulle dit oorweeg om na die buiteland te mobiliseer, maar as die trekfaktor hulle meer beïnvloed, dan sal die deelnemers binne Suid-Afrika van geografiese area verander eerder as om na die buiteland te mobiliseer.

Die beperkings van die studie is vir albei artikels bespreek. Die bydraende faktore vir toekomstige studies en vir die studie is vir albei artikels genoem, asook die praktiese voorstelle vir die praktyk om toekomstige navorsing of navorsers te bevoordeel.

## CHAPTER 1



# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Problem statement

Since the economic shift in 1994, there have been major changes in the country we call home; the equilibrium was shifted from one era to the next, the unknown was staring South Africa in the face (Venter & Levy, 2011). The purpose of this study is to explore the possible factors that could influence employment rates among scarce-skilled undergraduates in South Africa – to explore the contributing factors such as economic growth, human resource development, wages, perception and attitudes that could have a possible influence on decisions made by the scarce-skilled undergraduates in South Africa. The perceptions of these undergraduates on employment and whether they consider mobility as a consequence of unemployment within the labour market will also be investigated. The employment perceptions could indicate and influence external factors such as economic growth.

Employment in South Africa can be heavily influenced by the economic growth rate and the demand for certain skills. Economic growth can be defined as the increase in production and productivity from one period to the next, which can include human resource development in South Africa (Van de Rheede, 2012). This can lead to growth in the labour market, where such growth can promote the rise in demand for employees (Van de Rheede, 2012). However the demand has not been so high or changed in a manner that it could influence the unemployment rate, because of the slow-growing economy.

Barker (2007) states that one of the main reasons for unemployment is the slow-growing economy compared to other industrialising countries. He also says: “Even though economic growth is a major determinant of expanding employment opportunities, higher growth does not invariably and automatically translate into increased employment” (p. 185). In other words, even though the economic growth increases with a percentage, it does not promise that the number of employed individuals would increase. This is called job-less growth, meaning that even though the economy is growing, the employment rate is still decreasing (Barker, 2007; Van de Rheede, 2012). The lack of skills in the economy can also have an influence on the quality of labour in the labour market.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) state that the gap between the amount of education needed to perform current jobs and the amount of skills they have obtained through education is growing by the day.

The skills level that these undergraduates bring to the table also has a noteworthy effect on the growth rate, because the more skilled they are, the better the quality of work (Barker, 2007). Graduates can be identified as those individuals who bring a positive change to an environment, as they have been ‘groomed’ and taught to do exactly that.

Van Der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) clearly identify: “Graduates are explicitly defined as individuals with a bachelor’s degrees or equivalents and higher education qualifications (honours, masters, and doctorate degrees)”. These undergraduates bring a noteworthy effect to the labour market, which can be described as attributes. Graduate attributes can be defined as the skills, qualities and knowledge an individual brings to the table – knowledge obtained through studying at a university. This institutes shapes and teaches an individual to contribute to society and to be able to have a successful future with their thinking and learning abilities; and their newly accomplished out-of-the-box thinking and creativity (Bowden, 2000) (As cited in Bridgstock, 2009).

These attributes can also be described as a certain skills set than one has obtained through study and experiences in a certain field; some skills can be seen as scarce. According to Roux (2005), a scarce-skilled can be defined as a field of study that lacks the numbers of graduates in the labour market or individuals who do not meet the expected qualification or experience, where these individuals can either not be available, or they do not meet the labour market’s expectations. This is where the term scarcity plays a big role.

Different geographic settings may require different skilled individuals, and therefore scarcity may vary from areas, for example larger settings such as Gauteng will have more demand for skilled individuals because they have more opportunities. Employment is influenced by the demand and supply in the labour market, which can be determined by the state of well-being and equilibrium within South Africa. If equilibrium is reached, then the demand and supply will be equal. This not only affects the unskilled youth in South Africa, but also the scarce-skilled youth. “The labour market is an imaginary market where labour is bought and sold” (Barker, 2007, p. 2). The labour market can be divided into different sections or areas, this is called market segmentation.

Market segmentation can therefore be defined as the process where certain groups are within a certain market, and these groups consist of individuals with similar characteristics. However, it may be that an individual is in demand in another geographic segment (Strydom, 2004). A

demographic segment consists of age, gender, family size, income, occupation, religion, race and education, whereas a geographic segment consists of the region, size of the city, density and climate (Strydom, 2004). Considering the demographic elements income, occupation and education, together with the geographic elements region and size of the city, these combined elements could have a possible influence on the chances of being employed, it all hangs in the balance of perception, experience and attitude influencing decisions made by an individual (Strydom, 2004). When an individual decides to change his/her 'area or segment', this will be seen as mobility. Career mobility may for instance be the advancement, preference related, career development or personal satisfaction changes in one's life. Scarce-skilled undergraduates may prefer to have a career related to their studies and skills set.

These preferences could be influenced by human resource development in a certain organisation or in the area they find themselves. The development systems and programmes an organisation provides will have a strong influence on skills and satisfaction for the scarce-skilled undergraduate, because the more the human resource systems in an organisation develops, the more scarce-skilled undergraduates will advance and grow (South African Government Publication, 2009). Human resource development could be referred to as the explicit task to improve and grow the capabilities of all organisations and their employees to be able to reach their full potential; this will ensure growth and prosperity in the future, because employees are the most important resource (Botha et al. 2007). Not only will this benefit the organisation, but it will also influence economic growth. Human resource development guarantees that skills, abilities and knowledge develop, thereby ensuring more skilled individuals within an organisation (Grobler & Warnich, 2006).

The human resource development plan of South Africa states that human resource development is about improving the abilities and knowledge of individuals to enhance the level of thinking and progression in areas of interest, to the extent that abilities can be used to enhance performance and improve productivity in any sector, where possible (South African Government Publication, 2009). It has become a major concern that the mismatch between supply and demand is impacted by the weak human resource development within the labour market (South African Government Publication, 2009).

The human resource development in a country will have a major influence on the push and pull factors. The push factors are those that push people out of their country of origin, such as poverty,

the wage inequality, social cohesion, the ongoing inequality in the market segment areas and the impact on the economy and the labour market (Du Plessis, 2009).

The pull factors are those that pull people towards another country, such as better job opportunities, advancement, wages, and better training provided (Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007; Du Plessis, 2009). These push factors could be the consequence of the scarce-skilled undergraduate considering other options such as mobility, whether it be national or international mobility. Therefore, it would be of great interest to determine the possible push and pull factors that would influence scarce-skilled undergraduate decisions towards international mobility.

The perception of undergraduates could possibly be influenced when undergraduates experience a feeling of improper training in their work environment and that they are being unfairly compensated for their skills set, and then only can the possibility of mobility come into play as a consequence of the non-growing labour market (South African Government Publication, 2009). Most skilled individuals strive for more than what South Africa has to offer. The problem with regard to the mobility is that we are losing our skilled South Africans, but not gaining any skilled individuals, which means that emigration cannot be eliminated by immigration anymore, because skilled workers or emigrants are not coming back to South Africa (Du Plessis, 2009).

Concluding, the study would possibly identify the scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions of future employment and what they expect and perceive as important influential factors on being employed within the right position. Furthermore, this chapter also aims to identify whether they perceive mobility as a consequence of unemployment and whether they would consider spending their skills in South Africa, and what they would identify as possible push and pull factors that could influence their decisions on mobility. It will be mainly about the exploration of perception, experience and attitudes of scarce-skilled undergraduates in South Africa.

It must be known that these undergraduates are the most important part of the study. The research problem can only be addressed through the opinions, experience and perceptions of these graduates. Without the opinions, experiences and attitudes of these graduates, the study would provide no purpose. The typical explanation for this qualitative research is that it is acted out in a natural setting, and it points out the humanity of the participants in the study. It also focuses on the perspective that evolves and can be seen as primarily interpretive.

## **1.2 Research questions**

### **Article one (1)**

- How are wages, employment, human resource development and economic growth conceptualised within literature?
- What are the perceptions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on the expected wages within the labour market?
- What are the opinions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on expected employment conditions within the labour market?
- What opinions do scarce-skilled undergraduates have about the economic growth within South Africa?
- What do scarce-skilled undergraduates perceive of the human resource development systems within South Africa?
- What contributions can be made for future research?

### **Article two (2)**

- How are push factors, pull factors and mobility conceptualised within literature?
- Which push factors influence undergraduate perception to consider mobility?
- Which pull factors influence undergraduate perception to reconsider mobility?
- What contributions can be made for future research?

## **1.3 Contributions of the study**

### **1.3.1 Individual**

The contributions that undergraduates can make according to perception and experience on the human resource development and employment within South Africa can be identified through a thorough study of the subject, and also to explore the opinions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on the expected employment conditions in their field, the intention to spend their skills in South Africa, and why they should or should not stay. The pull factors can be identified to influence decisions made by scarce-skilled undergraduates to spend their skills in South Africa. Individuals

can make a contribution towards the South African economy/human resource development as well as themselves by obtaining practical skills. The consequence that the negative factors of the labour market could have on the decision making of graduates when it comes to mobility is also considered.

### **1.3.2 Organisation**

South African organisations should employ and motivate scarce-skilled undergraduates to spend their skills in South Africa. The organisations should recognise that, by employing the undergraduates, they could have a possible influence on the skills that South Africa obtains. Organisations should recognise the positive attributes that a scarce-skilled graduate could bring to the company and that it could have a positive influence on productivity in the long run due to problem-solving and out-of-the-box thinking. According to Meyer et al. (2012), if you effectively build the policies, procedures and processes of an organisation, then the actions, behaviours and decisions will drive those in training to overall improved strategy and problem-solving execution. Therefore, training should be implemented to improve overall human resource development in an organisation.

### **1.3.3 Human resources/organisational literature**

The literature can contribute towards the perceptions of individuals towards the employment of scarce-skilled undergraduates, and the importance of identifying the problems within the labour market and how to solve them, to identify the pull factors within South Africa and motivate graduates to consider mobility within South Africa, rather than migration. Furthermore, the literature can also explore the factors that could possibly influence decisions of mobility and employment within South Africa.

## **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives consist of the general objective and thereafter the specific objectives.

### **1.4.1 General objectives**

### **Article one (1)**

The general objective is to explore the perception of scarce-skilled undergraduates with regard to employment conditions.

### **Article two (2)**

The general objective of this study is to identify possible pull and push factors that could influence scarce-skilled undergraduate perceptions of mobility in the labour market

## **1.4.2 Specific objectives**

### **Article one (1)**

- To investigate how wages, human resource development and economic growth can be conceptualised within literature;
- To identify the perception of a scarce-skilled undergraduate on their expected wages in the labour market;
- To explore the opinions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on the expected employment conditions in the labour market;
- To generate what the opinions are of the scarce-skilled undergraduates on the economic growth in South Africa;
- To describe the perceptions of a scarce-skilled undergraduate on the human resource development systems within the South African labour market; and
- To determine what contributions can be made for future research.

### **Article two (2)**

- To determine how push factors, pull factors, market segmentation and mobility are conceptualised within literature;

- To identify which push factors can influence undergraduates' perception to consider mobility;
- To identify which pull factors can influence undergraduates' perception to reconsider mobility; and
- To investigate the contributions that could be made for future research.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Article one (1) and Article two (2)**

#### **1.5.1 Research approach**

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 2.) wrote: "Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, fields, and subject matters. A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround [*sic*] the term *qualitative research*".

A qualitative research design will be used, meaning that the researcher wants to understand the real-world perceptions about individuals and how they construct the senses and experiences they have in the labour market and their mobility within South Africa (Merriam & Tisdell, 2009), to retrieve the perspectives of the samples and the reality it holds. Merriam and Tisdell (2009) also explains that there are five standards on qualitative research and four types of views of a researcher who wishes to conduct research in a qualitative manner. The typical explanation for qualitative research is that it is acted out in a natural setting, and it points out the humanity of the participants in the study. It also focuses on the perspective that evolves and can be seen as primarily interpretive. The four types of views are complex, systematic, sensitive and rely on reason. This method was chosen so that all the aspects could be researched; therefore, the focus will lie on the understanding and perception of the participants and environment. A qualitative approach will be best for the research problem and questions in this dissertation and that "thick description and systematic and detailed analysis will yield valuable explanations of the process" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5) (as cited by Merriam & Tisdell, 2009).

#### **1.5.2 Research strategy**



A phenomenological approach will be used in this study, and it can be seen as the study of the insightful experience in a certain environment. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) define phenomenology as the philosophical approach of experience, that the researcher shares the particular feeling of what the human perception and experience is like, and whether these individuals see and experience the world like others, for example the unemployment and possible negative influences that the labour market can have on mobility. The phenomenological strategy can be seen as the most commonly used strategy for qualitative studies, as stated by De Vos, Strydom, Fouchê and Delport (2011); also, that the phenomenological approach seems to be used to understand and explain the lived experiences, attitudes, emotions and social opinions on a specific problem or study.

An interpretive case study paradigm will be followed, which can be defined as the theory that cannot be correct or incorrect; it only revolves around the particular interest and what the researcher finds as the most interesting. The interpretive case study design assists in deciding whether the aspects that has emerged is important and could assist in the research or if it can be seen as a less important part of the study. The dependent or independent aspect will not be identified, but the focus will be on the social findings and opinions expressed that are of interest. The theory or findings will be interpreted as the outcome of a case study; there will, however, be multiple case studies, because different groups will be used. The case study findings will be retrieved from the interviews. Observations and interviews can be seen as the main source of information in phenomenological research (Cantrell, 2001) (As cited by Thomas, 2010; De Vos et al. 2011). Ontology will be used in the interpretive case study strategy. Ontology can be described as:

- There are multiple opinions/realities that can derive different case study outcomes.
- The different realities that can be explored. The opinions and experiences can be assessed according to actions and interactions; for example, the relationship and trust that are built in an interview.
- The different social circumstances that individuals find themselves in during their daily lives and routines. The interactions they have with other people.
- The social realities that can be extracted through interviewing the participant, their knowledge, views, interpretations, opinions and experiences.

The opinions and experiences of individuals in the sample group will be tested and fixed questions generally used in quantitative studies will be avoided. The phenomenological research strategy will use an in-depth one-on-one semi-structured interview approach.

This study will be conducted among participants who are obtaining their honours degree or fourth year at a tertiary institution and planning to either further their studies or to enter the labour market. There will only be one sample group and articles 1 and 2 will be combined in a one-on-one semi-structured interview structure.

That which is said, heard and read will be analysed and interpreted into valid and reliable results. Therefore, an in-depth understanding could be retrieved through the data.

A literature review will be conducted after the themes and interviews have been identified and transcribed to relevant data that can be used in the research. Semi

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHOD**

### **1.6.1 Literature review**

Primarily, the focus would be to identify the labour-related aspects that could influence the employability of undergraduates and the aspects that would have an influence on the decisions made by undergraduates in relation to mobility, intentions, expectations, perceptions and attitude in the field of interest. The base of the study originates and can be identified here and the study/dissertation can be written based on these findings.

The work of the following authors will be reviewed and used in the newly developed study in accordance with the dissertation:

The primary and secondary sources will include articles, theses, dissertations, online articles, textbooks, journals and previous studies conducted that relate to this topic. Databases wherefrom some of the online information would be retrieved will be EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, E-books and the NWU A-Z database search engine. The keywords of importance include: employment; scarce-skilled undergraduates; wages; push and pull factors; economic growth; human resource development; market segmentation and mobility.

### **1.6.2 Research setting**

The data among the selected sample of students will be collected in the familiar environment of a boardroom or office. The students should feel stress-free and in their comfort zone, in order not to influence the validity of the answers and data recorded. The room will be quiet beforehand in order to eliminate any disruptions that could take place. Prior to the qualitative interviews, a quick overview of the research proposal will be explained to establish that the participants and the gatekeeper fully understand the purpose of the study, and that they link themselves with the “passion” and importance of the study. The overview will explain all the relevant information, but if participants feel that they want to ask questions, they will be free to do so.

### **1.6.3 Entrée and establishing researcher roles**

An overview and explanation will be done for the gatekeeper, and when access has been granted, then the overview would be presented to the participants and they could feel free to ask questions if they wish to. The gatekeeper has the choice whether he/she wishes to partake in the study. If access has been granted to enter the premises and conduct the study, then a written agreement should be signed. The results will remain anonymous as well as unbiased and no-one would discriminate or influence the current state of well-being or position. The gatekeepers can obtain the results for themselves, should they wish to understand and use this in future references or studies conducted of a similar nature. The target group should be able and ready when the researcher wants to conduct the study and obtain information; no obstacles should influence the validity or reliability of the results. The participants should fully understand what is expected of them, and should they wish to withdraw from the study at any time, they are free to do so, because they participate voluntarily.

### **1.6.4 Sampling**

#### **Article one (1) and Article two (2)**

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling will be used within the first and second articles, with the use of semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Purposive sampling can be seen as a search for the typical cases that will relate to the study. It is also known by some as judgemental sampling, which means that the judgement of the researcher is the underlying factor. Grinnell and

Unrau (2008), and Monette, Sullivan, and DeJong (2005) describe this sample as “typically composed of the elements that contain the most characteristics, representative or typical attributes of the population that serve the purpose of the study best (As cited by De Vos et al., 2011, p. 392). Snowball sampling can be explained as the collection of data until the researcher feels that saturation has been met (Struwig & Stead, 2001). In both articles, the combination of purposive and snowball sampling would fit the best because it can purposefully inform and provide understanding of the research problem in the particular study.

### **1.6.5 Research participants**

Upon starting the research process, one should first obtain access to the desired target group, which, in this case, consists of one sample group: honours/fourth-year students at the selected departments. It would be negotiated with the dean of each department under the desired scarce field including: chartered accountants, engineering professionals (electrical, civil and mechanical), pharmacology and actuarial sciences. The sampling procedure in the first and second article will include purposive sampling with semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

The motivation for the research participants is that they are the most important part of the study. Without the data, the study would be useless, and it wants to explore the attitudes and decisions that have developed through experience and perception that were influenced by external factors such as the non-growing economy or the human resource development within South Africa, but also making it different by focusing on a group of undergraduates that one does not normally focus on; making the study more interesting and different.

### **1.6.6 Data collection method**

DePoy and Gilson (2007) (as cited by De Vos et al., 2011) describe interviewing as obtaining information through the direct exchange of questions and answers between individuals or groups who possess the knowledge and experience to answer the research problems and questions within the study. The study is complex and it will definitely derive different and competing points of view, which will be an advantage because the need for different answers and opinions is important when researching a complex problem. The type of one-on-one interview that will be used is semi-structured interviews, which can be defined as the questions organised around the particular information of interest, while still leaving room for flexibility in scope and depth (Dicicco-Bloom

& Crabtree, 2006; Jarbandhan & Schutte, 2006; May & Morse, 1991) (as cited by De Vos et al, 2011). Remember, more variety in data collection could lead to greater validity (Bulsara, 2015).

## 1.7 Interview plan

1-Introductions will be made

2-The respondent will receive a copy of all the keywords and their definitions

3-Ethical conduct will be explained

4-It will be explained what the study is about and why it is important to elaborate on answers

5-Ask the respondents if they have any questions before starting the interview

### 1.7.1 Interview questions

*Table 1*

*Interview questions*

Main questions	Additional probing questions	Explanatory questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In your experience, why did you decide to study (Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Accounting, Clinical Pharmacology, Actuarial Sciences)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What/who influenced your decision to study (Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Accounting, Clinical Pharmacology, Actuarial Sciences)?</li> <li>Before making your decision, did you do research your field of study?</li> <li>Would you identify your field of study as scarce-skilled?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, how satisfied are you with the possible employment options provided in the labour market?</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, how satisfied are you with the prospective employment possibilities in the labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What would you describe as your ideal work environment or condition?</li> <li>▪ Do you think that you will receive the wage that you are expecting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, what do you find worrisome in the South African labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considering the human resource development systems?</li> <li>▪ Considering the economic growth?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly identify the relationship between economic growth and human resource development in the labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you feel that there are certain geographic settings that can provide better employment opportunities?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you feel that there are bigger demands in certain areas for your skills set?</li> <li>▪ Would you rather be employed in a smaller setting or larger setting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, do you feel that mobility will be an option for you in the future?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you intend to spend your skills in South Africa?</li> <li>▪ Explain why you would spend your skills abroad if you had the choice?</li> <li>▪ What would influence your decision to mobilise?</li> <li>▪ What would influence your decision to stay where you are?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>
Conclusion (End interview questions)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any matters or aspects that you feel we should discuss further? OR</li> </ul>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you want to add anything related to your answers given in the above-mentioned questions?</li> </ul>		
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### 1.7.2 Recording of data

It is of utmost importance that data that was set out to be retrieved is recorded accurately; written notes will be used in the observation phase as well as the interview phase. Permission will be asked to record the participants in the interview; if they agree, then permission will be asked again when the voice recorder is on in order to obtain proof of consent in the voice recorded notes, which will assist in keeping this data collection method ethical and accurate (Rubin & Rubin, 2005)

The researcher will ensure that the data recorded will not be handled by any other individual. The data collected, namely participant observation notes, interview notes and recorded interview data will be stored safely in a locked cabinet. Computerised and copied back-ups will be made to ensure that the validity of the data is not compromised and that if the data should be lost or stolen then the back-ups would assist in completing the study. The data will be stored according to dates and categories in order to avoid confusion. The categories would consist of:

- Observation notes
- Interview notes
- Voice recorder typed notes
- Voice recordings (safely stored on an external hard drive)

These steps will ensure that the data is accurate, reliable and valid, ensuring that the data is accurately recorded, safely stored and managed without compromising the quality of data.

### 1.7.3 Data analysis

The qualitative data analysis will be done by means of semi-structured interviews conducted and managed by the researcher. Babbie (2010) defines qualitative analysis as an examination of the interpretations and purpose of the factors in the research to examine and discover the important contributions and perceptions in relationship patterns. The qualitative data analysis will always include a transformation from the raw to analytical processing into a precise, concise and clear



understanding that can be used within the research study (Gibbs, 2007) (as cited in De Vos et al., 2011)

The qualitative data analysis will be explored through the use of thematic analysis; a foundation is needed to perform analysis in a qualitative manner by using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis can be defined as the method that organises and sifts out unnecessary data, while conforming and building data on important information provided. Through a planned strategy, the data and themes will provide the end result that can be used in the dissertation (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The work of Braun and Clarke (2006) will be used to explain the method of thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis can be divided into phases; these phases will be described in the next table:

*Table 2*

*Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis*

	Phases	Phase description
Phase 1	How to familiarise yourself with the data obtained	Reading and rereading the study and research information obtained, to familiarise yourself with important information that could make a contribution to the research study. Paying attention to details and key concepts, to sift the ideas that could be used.
Phase 2	Coding general information	By producing codes, the information is grouped into relevant categories. When coding, the information is labelled from most important to less important. Sifting data from raw to useful data is a unique process (Boyatzis, 1998: 63) (as cited by Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Phase 3	Identifying the themes	When the data has been coded into relevant categories, the themes should be identified and data should be placed into the relevant themes.
Phase 4	Reviewing the categorical themes	The relationship between the themes and the data should be checked accordingly and reviews should be made to check whether each theme has the relevant data to compile into useful findings.
Phase 5	Defining and naming themes	The themes should be defined and clarified in order to establish the importance of the themes in the study. Through this, the dissertation will have a prospective structure, by placing data in the themes

		and analysing data into relevant categories, by telling a story.
Phase 6	Producing the final data analysis report	By refining the process, it will be easier to determine the end point in the research.

#### 1.7.4 Quality assurance of data analysis

The criteria for ensuring the credibility, reliability, validity and objectivity of data in research can be based on standardised measurement. In this study, the researcher is interested in questioning and understanding the attitudes and decisions of scarce-skilled undergraduates and the contributing factors that lead to decision-making and interpreting the results. The validity and reliability of qualitative data are harder to determine than that of a quantitative nature. Therefore, the scientific process of data collection in qualitative studies needs to be thorough and trustworthy (De Vos et al, 2011).

There are four constructs to ensure that the data retrieved is reliable and valid (De Vos et al., 2011):

- Credibility/authenticity

The answer to the internal validity is to show that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner that the theme has been identified and described accurately and thoroughly. The patterns and constants will be seen as the validity. The aim is to explore the strength of the qualitative study within the certain research setting. De Vos et al. (2011) define it as: “An in-depth description showing the complexities of variables and interactions will be so embedded with the data derived from the setting that it cannot help but to be valid”.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1999) (as cited in De Vos et al., 2011), there are various strategies to increase the credibility of qualitative research:

- Continuous engagement and observation within the field
- Triangulate different methods
- Debrief one’s peers
- Check in on members
- Formalise your qualitative methods

- Transferability

Transferability refers to establishing whether the results in the findings can be transferred from one situation to another. Transferability can be a challenge, but through the process it will be established whether the reader can transfer the data from one situation to another through the contents, context, underlying assumptions and methods.

- Dependability

Dependability will ensure that the data is reliable by ensuring that the background of the study is provided and to explain how the data will be retrieved. Some researchers make use of a pilot study to ensure the reliability of their study.

- Confirmability

If the data is challenged by further findings then the data will be able to prove that it is relevant and reliable. Readers will be able to confirm and substantiate the data and deem it as valid.

### 1.7.5 Reporting style

The research will be reported in a qualitative reporting style. Qualitative reporting can be described as the synthesis of the discoveries and findings into relevant knowledge of their analysis and interpretations so that the public can read and use the research to their advantage. A qualitative report should include the following important factors as distinguished by Rossman and Rallis (2003) and Neuman (2000) (as cited by De Vos et al, 2011):

*Table 3*

*Qualitative reporting style*

Reporting factor	Description in short
Chronology	If the passing of time will have an influence on the study report
Life history	In a phenomenological study, the link between the life story of an individual and the research done
Themes	Structuring identified themes in categories and sub-categories that have emerged from the data collection.
Composite	Almost like writing a story about one particular individual or a group that has the same characteristics in order to explain the point of view to the public

Critical events	Critical events that could have led to the research problem
Zoom lens	By narrowing or expanding the focus on a particular focus in the study
Portraits	Multiple cases, critical events or even composites could be used together to sketch a portrait of the research report. Narration and analysis mean that the writing style could change when the theories are developed with detailed analysis of the data.

## 1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to De Vos et al. (2011), “research should be based on mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation, promises and well accepted conventions and expectations between all parties involved in a research project”. In research, the research team should be ethical towards others, but it is especially the researcher’s job to establish and practise ethics upon conducting research, as any unethical behaviour could influence the reliability and validity of the study. Ethical guidelines should become part of the researcher, and they should evaluate their own behaviour, and conduct what is acceptable through the eyes of other researchers (De Vos et al., 2011). Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) define ethics as: “Study of moral issues and choices” (p. 19), and therefore ethics can be defined short and sweetly, but it definitely is not a short or sweet subject to be taken lightly.

According to Struwig and Stead (2001), the code on ethical behaviour must include:

- To have the competency and credentials to be able to conduct a study in the field of interest.
- To be trusted and have a feel of honesty about them. To respect and uphold the good name of science by being fair to the participants.
- Researchers should maintain the standards that are expected of them, and take responsibility for their actions when applicable.
- Researchers should understand that even though the individuals are being tested on, that they are not test ‘subjects’, but still human beings. Biasness and discrimination of any kind should be avoided.
- Promises made by the researcher to the participants should be kept and upheld. For instance, if an individual wishes to partake anonymously, to know they do not have the right to change the rules.

- Do not mislead, deceive or plagiarise, as this influences the validity and reliability of any study.
- And lastly, as stated by Foxcroft and Roodt (2009), the assessment measures and results should be done in a fair, professional and ethical manner to validate any study outcomes.

Therefore, the researcher deems these statements as their own, and finds it important to follow these guidelines. Furthermore, a letter of approval will be sent to the Ethics Committee of the North-West University regarding the specific research study. If the Ethics Committee approves the study, then only will the study be completed.

## **1.9 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The chapters in the dissertation are divided as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and research proposal

Chapter 2: Article 1: An exploration of scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions of future employment within the South African labour market

Chapter 3: Article 2: An exploration of the identifiable push and pull factors that could influence scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions of mobility in the labour market

Chapter 4: Limitations, recommendations and conclusion.

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **ARTICLE 1**



## **AN EXPLORATION OF SCARCE-SKILLED UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS OF FUTURE EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LABOUR MARKET**

**Orientation:** Scarce-skilled undergraduates perceive the South African labour market as an unfavourable environment, they believe that certain obstacles like Labour acts and unemployment will limit their options in the future for possible employment and growth within the labour market. The scarce-skilled undergraduates also believe that there is a gap between the human resource development systems and other developmental processes and their effective role in the labour market.

**Research purpose/objective:** The general objective of this study was to mainly explore the different set of opinion and perceptions towards the factors that could influence scarce-skilled undergraduates' employment options and conditions after they graduate in the future. This study was conducted amongst selected scarce-skilled undergraduates studying at the North-West University in Potchefstroom.

**Motivation for the study:** To address a major problem within South Africa; unemployment. However the researcher wants to explore and understand the unemployment amongst the scarce-skilled educated individuals and how the current South African economic and political situation influence their employment options and conditions after they graduate. To explore the underlying factors.

**Research approach, design and method:** A qualitative research design will be used, with an explorative approach. The research will be phenomenological with an interpretive case study and the use of ontology. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was utilised. The sample group are scarce-skilled undergraduates, they consisted out of 21 (N=21) participants. Data was collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and interpret the data and turn it into relevant findings.

**Main findings:** The results indicated that the undergraduates felt threatened by the labour laws and technological advancements within the South African labour market. Furthermore they felt that the working conditions weren't favourable, for example the work-life balance; wages and human resource development like recruitment. The findings indicated that there are a number of limitations in the study between the perceptions and personalities of the scarce-skilled undergraduates. Furthermore the study indicated that unemployment amongst scarce-skilled undergraduates would not be the problem in the future, however the employment conditions was the concerning factor. Two categories emerged; the first category had three main themes with

subsequent sub-themes. The second category had one main theme and the subsequent sub-themes were discussed and described in the findings.

**Practical implications:** Undergraduates should not idealise themselves and picture the labour market as the perfect environment. They should be driven and motivated in finding a job and not give up easily. Organisations should implement training and development to ensure that older employees make way for the next generation. Technology can be used as a positive contribution in an organisation, rather than replacing human capital with technology, combine the two to enable and promise better production and growth, which in turn could raise production and possibly influence the external environment positively.

**Contribution:** The results of this study could make a memorable contribution to not only the internal micro-environment of a community, but possibly the external environment like the market and macro environment, by indicating the role and influence a skilled graduate could have on an organisation. The findings and recommendations could indicate at what level the scarce-skilled undergraduates could be performing and what contribution they could bring to the table. The study will also indicate what limitations there were between the labour market and scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions.

**Keywords:** Employment; scarce-skilled undergraduates; wages; push and pull factors; economic growth; human resource development; market segmentation; mobility

## **Introduction**

While there are hundreds of studies out there in the academic field, each and every one of them is unique and contributes to the academic society as a whole. The scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions on the possible employment options and conditions in the South African labour market can be labelled as one of the studies that could possibly contribute to the growth of knowledge on the topic, after the extensive research that has been done.

Employment is the most important part of an individual's life; this is what we are all groomed for, to strive for a better future, to have the best jobs and to live the best life possible. As children, we go to school to be able to read, write and speak in a proper and correct manner. As we grow older, we develop a personality and sense of interest in certain subjects. This, however, does not always and inevitably decide what career we are going to pursue as adults. In South Africa, we are limited; we cannot always study what we want to or pursue what we need to. There are many factors that play a role in what we end up doing with our lives; factors such as financial stability, being informed, dependability and availability.

## **Research Objectives**

The research purpose and objectives were to indicate the opinions and perceptions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on the employment conditions and options within the South African labour market.

The objectives of article 1 were:

- To investigate how wages, human resource development and economic growth can be conceptualised within literature;
- To identify the perception of a scarce-skilled undergraduate on their expected wages in the labour market;
- To explore the opinions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on the expected employment conditions in the labour market;
- To generate what the opinions are of the scarce-skilled undergraduates on the economic growth in South Africa;
- To describe the perceptions of a scarce-skilled undergraduate on the human resource development systems within the South African labour market; and
- To determine what contributions can be made for future research.

## **Literature review**

### **General unemployment in the South African labour market**

Unemployment, in general, can be a daunting challenge to narrow down and explain in a simple manner; there are numerous factors to take into consideration such as the year, age, race, sex, education, searching or not searching for employment, area and expertise, which were also explained in Chapter 3. All of these factors are taken into consideration when employment is being considered, because each and every employer wants and needs specific characteristics in an employee (Robbins, Judge, Odendaal & Roodt, 2009). The characteristics are not the only things to consider, but also the loyalty, out-of-the-box thinking and strategic planning that one has play an important role.

However, in this article, the researcher is not interested in the general employment in South Africa, but rather the scarce-skilled undergraduate employability and factors influencing their

employment. Furthermore, to narrow it down, there are different views of unemployment among graduates.

### **Graduate unemployment in South Africa**

The recent studies conducted on graduate unemployment are not in abundance, but there are a few studies that can be identified and critiqued as to why and why not the study correlates with these findings (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012).

#### **1. The study by Bhorat (2004)**

Bhorat used data from the October Household Survey to identify his rising concern about unemployment among graduates, which he identified as the years following the mark of democratisation. He believed that the unemployment rate went up with 139% from 1995 to 2002, which is labelled as the largest rise in unemployment of the group ever. His main concern was the high rate of unemployment among degree- and post-graduate qualification holders, which rose from 140% to 280% in the seven-year mark (Bhorat, 2004).

#### **2. The DPRU study (2006)**

The DPRU study followed a somewhat similar approach to Bhorat (2004), but also did not identify the specific graduates that they were referring to, but rather as *post-matriculated individuals with qualifications*. The DPRU (2006) stated that unemployment among graduates has risen, but varied from race group and field of study in 2005. The DPRU (2006) also concluded that the poor education systems in South Africa could have a possible influence on employment because of the previous lack of proper education from formal schooling systems and that the graduates failed to obtain efficient work-relevant skills (DPRU, 2006).

#### **3. The study by Pauw, Oosthuizen, and Van der Westhuizen (2008)**

Pauw, Oosthuizen and Van der Westhuizen compared the 1995 OHS study to the 2005 QLFS, and they concluded that there was a 13% rise in unemployment from 1995 to 2005 in university degree holders, or post-graduate qualification holders (Pauw et al. 2006).

By focusing on the field of study, they identified that the students did not give much consideration to the need in their field of study and the demand that the labour market presented. Therefore, they argued that the lack of skills in certain demanded fields leads to a higher gap between the skills

that the graduates are obtaining and the skills that employers are demanding (Van der Berg & van Broekhuizen, 2012).

#### 4. The study by Kraak (2010)

Kraak (2010) believed that employers prefer older experienced employees over younger qualified employees. He explained that despite the relevant skills shortages, these preferences had a contributing factor to the rise in tertiary unemployment rates from 1995 to 2005. He labelled tertiary unemployment as individuals with a degree or post-graduate qualification. Robbins et al. (2009) also believed that companies are retaining their older redundant employees, and this is due to the lack of human resource development systems that must be put in place to ensure development and growth in a company.

#### **Relating to Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen's study**

According to Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012), the limited research conducted on graduate unemployment does not offer enough information to be able to answer this phenomenon, but it does, however, offer guidance to other studies that can be conducted to further the study into graduate unemployment. The aforementioned studies lack certain important aspects that enable them to make a useful contribution to this study. The reasons for this are:

- Firstly, the studies involve 'degree holders' and 'non-degree holders' in their summary of graduates, and that is not the graduates that the focus is on. The graduates should include degree holders from universities.
- Secondly, the time span of 1995 to 2005 is too short to come to a preliminary conclusion on unemployment among graduates. Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen's (2012) study on the unemployment of graduates was also concluded in 2012, and five years had passed already, which brings about an even greater gap in the subject matter.
- Thirdly, with regard to the discussion on new data after 2005, it would be irresponsible to use the data from 2005, or even 2012 to conclude what the unemployment results look like now.

In this research, the researcher agrees with Van der Berg and Van Broekhuizen (2012) and believes that unemployment does not seem to be the major problem at hand, but more so the employment conditions and the wages, as can be seen in the findings. Barker (2007) also indicates that the more education you have, the higher the chances of employment are. However, unemployment does

seem to be one of the concerning factors with some of the graduates, but this is perception and opinion, not facts.

### **Employment rates among graduates according to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey of 2015**

According to Statistics South Africa (2015), the educational attainment of the employed is higher in graduates than those with lower levels of education. Graduates are explicitly defined as “post higher diploma, bachelor’s degree, post grad diploma, honours degree or higher degree” (p. xii). In the fourth quarter of each year from 2008 up unto 2016, the employment rates of graduates were as follows:

*Table 1*

*Statistical data derived from the QLFS (2015; 2016)*

Year in the 4 <sup>th</sup> quarter	Percentage of employed graduates
2008	86.9%
2009	86,2%
2010	86,2%
2011	86,1%;
2012	84,0%
2013	84,1%
2014	84,0%
2015	84.6%
2016	88,7%

An observable fact is that the statistical data indicated that the average percentage of employed graduates was 85.6% from 2008 until 2016 (Statistics South Africa, 2015; 2016).

According to Statistics South Africa (2015), the unemployment rates by age in graduates are also very low compared to other groups in the labour force.

- Age 15-24: 23.8%
- Age 25-34: 7.7%
- Age 35-44: 3.3%
- Age 45-54: 2.5%
- Age 55-64: 2.7%

On average over 84% percent of the tertiary educated populated group is employed, and this seems to point out that education is the key to employment.

### **Employment among scarce-skilled graduates**

The employment among scarce skilled graduates has not been researched as much as it should have; therefore, there is a limited amount of literature on this specific topic. However, if one observe the employment rate among graduates, as in Statistics South Africa (2015; 2016), then one can induce that these scarce-skilled graduates are part of the overall 84% working graduate population. Unemployment does not seem to be the overall problem in the labour market for these scarce-skilled graduates, but rather the underlying factors that were expressed to be worrisome topics in the findings. These include:

- **The Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003**

This act can be defined as the empowerment of all underprivileged minority groups from rural areas, particularly of the black race, who cannot be employed in jobs with higher ranks or status because of their lack of education or privilege, by ensuring that black people are also in managerial positions to ensure equal rights and distribution in fair employment (Erasmus & Schenk, 2008), which was also discussed in Chapter 3 under the push factor *unemployment*. However, the graduates feel that their employment opportunities are threatened by this act, because it enables companies to choose someone else based on their status or race over merit and education, as seen in the findings. This topic can, however, be used as a topic for possible future research.

- **Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998**

This act supports the employment equity and employment of the minority group by making sure equal levels of all race groups are employed in equal positions (Juta's Pocket Statutes, 2012). The graduates also worry about employment because of this act because employment equity levels need to be right, and sometimes individuals are rejected only

due to this and they seem to think that this is unfair and can jeopardise their chances of possible employment. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 was indicated and explained under the push factor *unemployment*, in Chapter 3.

- **Work-life balance**

Work-life balance can be described as the balance between work and personal life, and the ability to obtain a balance between two different worlds, to not let the one overshadow the other (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). According to Robertson and Cooper (2011), the flexibility that one obtains between work and life is what brings positive well-being in a person forward. In the twenty-first century, it became acceptable for women to also become part of the labour force; these days, there are more working women than stay-at-home moms (Statistics South Africa, 2017). It is indicated in Table 3.1: *Employed by industry and sex – South Africa* in Statistics South Africa's quarterly labour force survey (2017, p. 53) that out of 7 125 000 there are only 1 010 000 of all women whom are employed in their private households. That indicates a percentage of 14.18% out of the entire population. Work-life balance was also discussed and explained under the pull factor *family*, in Chapter 3.

Work-life balance has been made part of flexible working to enable working moms to be able to tend to their work and home life; this is there to enable a positive well-being (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). In this study, the students feel that the well-being is being disrupted and that flexible working hours and work-life balance is being disturbed because companies are becoming too capital oriented and that they are task-oriented, meaning that the task at hand is more important than the person completing the task (Bergh & Theron, 2009), which indicates poor human resource strategy implementation with regard to those companies that seem to reject the work-life balance concept (Erasmus et al., 2006)

- **Technological unemployment**

Piva and Vivarelli (2017) state that Ricardo and Marx's theories on technological unemployment have been a somewhat popular topic among the capitalist over time, and while they have different opinions on technological unemployment, it seems that the research may be looked at differently in the 'new age'. In the twentieth century, new technology can be seen as a threat to the lower working class members of the labour



market, because machines are operating themselves and doing the work so much quicker than what the average person can.

Furthermore, Piva and Vivarelli (2017) also name a theory called a ‘compensation theory’, which means that the same amount of labour could be completed by machines, with less labour; meaning human labour, and that “since its very beginning, the economic theory has pointed out the existence of economic forces which can compensate for the reduction in employment due to technological progress” (p. 4).

Therefore, one can say that the more technology progresses and grows, the more it threatens the very existence of human capital in the labour market sector (Piva & Vivarelli, 2017). The undergraduates in certain fields, such as the mechanical engineers, are more aware of the negative impact that the technological advances could have on their employment options in the future; they feel that they will be competing with technology for an employment position.

Jobless growth could also be made worse by technology, because it means that even though the economy is growing, it does not inevitably mean that the demand for new workers is rising concomitantly, because machines could be assisting in higher production and the growing economic rate (Piva & Vivarelli, 2017; Barker, 2007).

- **Geographical employment conditions**

The QLFS in Statistics South Africa (2017) indicates in point 5 the overall measure of employment rates in South Africa, and with that the absorption rate, unemployment rate and labour force participation rate. Africa Check (2014) defines unemployment rate as the number of individual who are finding it hard to be employed even though they are actively seeking employment. Furthermore, the absorption rate refers to the employed individuals between the ages 15 and 64, and lastly the participation rate is the individuals who are between the ages 15 and 64, but they are employed or unemployed (Mohr, Fourie & Associates, 2008).

Through this, one can determine whether the employment rate is higher in certain geographic areas than others. Gauteng, the Free State, North West, Western Cape and Eastern Cape will be considered:

- Gauteng has a labour force participation rate of 72.5%, an absorption rate of 50.6% and an unemployment rate of 30.2%, which means that 72.5% of individuals are between the ages 15 and 64 and can be employed in the labour market, but only 50.6% have been employed and 30.2% are struggling to find employment and they are actively seeking.
- In the North West, the labour force participation rate is 52.8%, and the absorption rate is 39%, leaving the unemployment rate at 26.2%. This means that 52.8% are labour ready, but only 39% are employed and 26.2% are struggling to find employment.
- In the Free State, the participation rate is 63.8%, with an absorption rate of 43.5% and unemployment rate of 31.8%. This indicates that the Free State has 63.8% of individuals who are between the ages 15 and 64 and can be employed, but only 43.5% are able to find employment and 31.8% are unable to find employment.
- The Western Cape statistics show a labour force participation rate of 68.5% and 53.5% absorption rate, leaving the unemployment rate at 21.9%. This means that 68.5% of the population in the Western Cape can be employed, but only 53.5% are employed and 21.9% are not, even though they are actively seeking employment.
- Lastly, the Eastern Cape displays a 52.4% participation rate, 33.8% absorption rate and 35.5% unemployment rate. The labour force participation rate in the Eastern Cape lies at 52.4%, but shockingly displays that the people who are employed at 33.8% are less than those who are actively seeking employment at a staggering 35.5%.

It appears that the unemployment rate in the Western Cape is the lowest with 21.9% and thereafter the North West at 26.2%. Following them are Gauteng and the Free State with 30.2% and 31.8%, leaving the highest unemployment rate at 35.5% in the Eastern Cape. Unfortunately, it does not indicate what the percentages are of the graduates contribution to these numbers; however, it does state in Figure 13 (Statistics South Africa, 2017) that the graduate unemployment rate is low and lies beneath 10% from 2008 up unto 2017, disregarding the province.

By looking at Table 6 in the QLFS of Statistics South Africa (2017), it indicated that between July and September, the tertiary educated who were employed had a number of 3 465 000 out of 16 192 000; it shows a percentage of 21.40% of all the employed individuals were graduates.

Furthermore, the unemployed tertiary educated lay at 513 000 out of 6 210 000, leading to 8.26%, which is very low. Lastly, the tertiary educated not economically active between July and September 2017, were 586 000 out of 14 971 000. This is 3.9%, also a very low number.

With these numbers, it can be seen that, between the provinces, employed and unemployed graduate percentages of the numbers indicate that the unemployment in each province is somewhat equal and there are no outliers.

- **Human resource development systems**

Human resource development is a widely researched topic that cannot be defined in one sentence; however, if one had to define the concept, it is meant to develop and build all internal ‘resources’ to their full capacity to be able to reap the most production and success out of it (Business Dictionary, 2018). The most important resources are the employees in a company, but not all companies realise this (Botha et al., 2007). Despite the fact that training and development ensure human resource development in a company, there are companies that have not paid attention to this matter at all; in fact, they have spent less than 5% of funds towards training in the last few decades (Erasmus et al., 2006). Erasmus et al., (2006) also indicate that organisations do not realise the negative effect that the lack of training has on the internal operating systems, such as “the fruits we reap from not investing in human resources are low productivity, redundancy of older staff members, a high staff turnover, fear of technological advancement and an illiterate workforce” (p. 1). The lack of human resources is a real challenge to the training and development systems in the labour market; this seldom leads to a dead-end job and unsatisfied employees (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). According to Robertson and Cooper (2011), the well-being of an individual often relies on the relationship he/she maintains and has in his/her work and personal life; the relationships they have with their colleges and managers can have an influence on their well-being and motivation at work. Quite often, one identifies the success of your work-life with personal achievements, and if you are not stimulated or satisfied, you will start to lose interest in your work, and then it might become another thing you do just to reach payday, just to do it over again, because you feel you have to (Robertson & Cooper, 2011, p. 79). Furthermore, Robertson and Cooper (2011) also say: “To be psychologically healthy we need to feel that what we are doing is worthwhile and serves a useful purpose” (p. 89). The purpose that an individual may have as a motive to obtain a healthy well-being may differ from others, but in the end it helps to obtain and gain what you have worked for, for instance the South African scarce-skilled graduates and the desirable job that they wish to obtain. *Desirable* not necessarily means wages and growth, but an overall positive sense of purpose

through a good work environment and positive employment conditions (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). Compton (2005) says that people are quite good at doing things, but if they do it positively they might even excel in it.

- **Recruitment**

Policies can be described as the general set of guidelines that are set out by managers to determine what to do in a certain situation; however, procedures are the direct course of action one takes when that situation arises (Botha et al., 2007). However, sometimes the recruitment procedures do not match up with the policies, because sometimes management falls through with their selection plans and this mostly leads to poor performance and unsatisfied employees (Robbins et al., 2009). As indicated in Chapter 3, the poor or lack of proper recruitment can also be a minor push factor. Recruitment can be the most important procedure one can follow, because, after all, employees are your number one resource; it is sometimes difficult to figure out who is the right person for the job, because even though they have the right ability and experience that match up with the requirements of the job, it does not always ensure the employer that this person is a hard worker or out-of-the-box thinker. To be able to establish who a person really is, unfortunately requires hiring (Robbins et al., 2009).

According to Robbins et al., (2009), there are a few steps to follow to ensure proper recruitment:

- *Application forms:* These sift out the first candidates according to skills and education
- *Background and reference checks:* A very important part is to check an individual's background and where they worked and why they left, or were they fired due to misconduct or another serious offense? This is important because you do not want to recruit someone who committed fraud at their previous job. Or to find out by a previous employer what kind of worker they were.
- *Written test:* For example, the psychological testing that can be done before one recruits or hires an individual to determine whether he/she fits the job or how he/she 'thinks'.
- *Performance simulation tests:* This includes having the applicant physically do a task to identify whether they can do it and how they complete their task; with success or struggle?

- *Interviews*: The most widely used method of recruitment is interviews, where the employer/human resource manager interviews the participant and asks a number of questions; and if they are satisfied with the answers, then the candidate could be taken into consideration for the job position. However, interviews do not always display the true sense of character, because people will tell you what they think you want to hear just to get the job. Furthermore, recruiters can sometimes be superficial based on looks.

Therefore, it can be seen in the aforementioned research that recruitment can be a daunting task to uphold; managers often do not follow procedure, and sometimes procedure cannot help to determine whether a worker is suitable for the work or not, and also “a narrow national skills base that is not only skewed by race and gender but also under threat by a significant brain drain of highly skilled labour” (Robbins et al., 2009).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Research strategy**

This study analysed and explored scarce-skilled undergraduates’ perceptions and opinions of future employment and mobility within the labour market in South Africa. A multiple case study was utilised to be able to explore the opinions and perceptions in-depth regarding the phenomena.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research setting**

The one-on-one interviews took place on the North-West University grounds. A room was booked and prepared in the library. The curtains were opened to let in natural light; this made the boardroom feel less uptight and more serene. The participants were deliberately placed to face away from the window to avoid any distractions that may hinder their attention away from the interview. The interviews took place behind closed doors, in a private and relaxed manner. Introductions were made and all of the participants were greeted in a warm and friendly manner. After introductions were made, the participant was gestured to take a seat and then the interview process began; the process and contents of the research was explained. Before interviews began,

the participants' rights were explained; if they felt uncomfortable or unwilling to proceed with the interview at any stage, they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

### **Entrée and establishing researcher role**

Meetings were arranged and scheduled with all of the selected scarce-skilled faculty heads. The date and time were scheduled in a professional manner through email. The head of each faculty was as the gatekeeper in the meeting. Permission was asked to interview the students in their field, and permission was granted. The gatekeepers signed approval letters, explaining what the study was about and how the interviews will take place. The gatekeepers assisted by randomly selecting students in their roster and providing their email addresses. With the emails, the interview invitations could be sent out and the interviews could be scheduled.

The students were e-mailed regarding the interviews and all the necessary information on the study was attached. Those who were interested did not mind part-taking in the study and therefore a date and time could be scheduled for them to be interviewed. The interviews took place in a boardroom in the library. Data was collected through observation notes and digital voice recordings. Prior to the interview, the process was explained and they were asked if they would mind that the interview was recorded on tape. None of the participants refused the request and obliged. Upon starting the interview, the participants were asked again if they minded to be recorded, and they responded with either a "no" or "not at all" answer. This was caught on the tape as well, to ensure absolute ethical rules and protocol were followed.

The researcher's role was to be professional and open at all times; she remained calm and relaxed. She wanted to let the participants feel safe and comfortable in their surroundings. By explaining and breaking down the in-depth information on the study, she explained the important aspects in basic format to the participant on a level that they would understand. She feels that the participants should understand what they are contributing to and why it is important to partake in the study. She also feels that ethical and professional behaviour is important not only in research, but also in everyday life. Therefore, she remained ethical and professional through every aspect of the research process.

## Sampling

Purposive sampling will be utilised, with the use of snowball sampling. Yin (2016) refers to purposive sampling as the sampling method that enables the researcher to identify and focus on a specific group of individuals to retrieve data from. The target group has the specific characteristics that the study needs to be able to reach purposeful data saturation.

Although these groups tend to be smaller than the average data collecting group, they are rich with information and data; therefore, data saturation can be met through this small sample group (Yin, 2016). Snowball sampling can be defined as a non-probability sampling method, which means that the information obtained to be able to answer a research problem will be collected through referral of a rare population or -group of participants (Struwig & Stead, 2001). Snowball sampling can be seen as the data that wishes to be saturated through the constant referral of participants in one particular group that is seen as the “rare” group where the research information can only be obtained through and from them (Yin, 2016). In this study, the rare population would be the scarce-skilled undergraduate students. The scarce-skilled undergraduates are engineering (electrical, mechanical and civil), actuarial sciences, chartered accounting and pharmacology field groups. The research sample consisted of 21 students ( $N=21$ ) from different fields, but all labelled as scarce-skilled undergraduates. The table below specifies the important biographic and demographic characteristics of the selected group of participants.

*Table 2*

*Characteristics of the research participants ( $N=21$ )*

Characteristic	Category	Frequency
<b>Gender</b>	Male	12
	Female	9
<b>Age</b>	21-23	21
<b>Race</b>	White	16
	Black	4
	Indian	1
<b>Language</b>	Afrikaans	16
	English	5
<b>Academic year</b>	Final year	21
<b>Field of study</b>	Electrical engineering	3
	Mechanical engineering	5
	Civil engineering	3

	Chartered accounting	3
	Actuarial sciences	4
	Pharmacology	3
<b>Employment status</b>	Employed/Bursary	2
	Unemployed/actively searching	17
	Not interested	2
<b>Work experience</b>	Yes	14
	No	7

In table 2, it shows that the majority of participants were male (57%) and the rest were female (43%). 100% of the participants fell into the age range of 21 to 23, because they were more or less in the same (100%) academic year of their studies. It also seems that the white participants were in the majority with a 76% participation rate and the rest were the Africans with a 19% participation rate and only a 5% from the Indian race. It is obvious that the language corresponds with the race. Afrikaans is at 76% and English at 24%. The scarce-skilled graduates fall into different field groups where electrical engineering was at 14.25%; the civil engineering, actuarial sciences and pharmacology all have a frequency percentage of 14.25%. The mechanical engineering group had a participation rate of 24% and the chartered accountants a 19% participation rate.

The prospective employment possibilities were that 80% of the students have not yet found a job for the following year after their studies. Thereafter, the remaining 20% can be divided into two groups, namely: The group who has been promised employment based on a bursary is 10% and the remaining 10% is the group who has not yet started to search for a job. Lastly, it can be seen that 67% of the students have employment experience as they worked holiday jobs during their studies and the remaining 33% did not have any employment experience as they only studied and did not work during their holidays.

### **Data collection method**

A semi-structured interview data collection method was followed, with the use of an interpretive case study paradigm, which can be described as the theory that cannot be labelled as correct or incorrect, therefore the researcher has the power to decide whether a subject is important or not. This can be achieved through common sense and judging based on the knowledge that has been



obtained throughout the study. The researcher will determine what she deems as important in the study; the theory will not be labelled under independent or dependent variables, but will rather be sifted for the most important data that will be deemed as important and valuable (De Vos et al., 2011).

Ontology will be used in the interpretive case study paradigm, which can be described as the ability to be able to extract multiple realities and outcomes from the data because there are different case study outcomes, by exploring the different realities and experiences. Each individual differs from another and therefore one cannot expect to gain only one direct outcome/answer. It has to be explored and thrown into multiple categories to be able to retrieve the best and most important parts of the data (De Vos et al., 2010). The researcher has the power to indicate and choose which concepts can be labelled as important. The interviews will be guided in a relaxed and comfortable environment. The interview process will be explained beforehand to the participants and after all the formalities are taken care of, then only will the interview process commence. The interview questions were developed to be able to answer the main research problem and questions that were developed in the beginning of the study. The first interview question can be described as an 'ice breaker'. Each question has a probing and explanatory question that can help to extract and gain all the necessary information needed to be able to reach data saturation.

The researcher fulfilled the role of a professional yet relaxed interviewer, by making small talk before the interview and this made the participants more comfortable and at ease. The interview took place in a boardroom where the natural light improved the relaxed ambience of the room. The participants were gestured towards their seats. The feeling that was radiated is to feel at ease and safe in this environment by acting in a casual and open manner. However, the interview remained professional and ethical.

The researcher made sure that there was at least an hour between each interview; this method made it possible for her to be able to transcribe the raw data of the voice recordings. This was important to her as she wanted to do the transcription as early as possible while it was still fresh in her mind.

The following interview questions were used:

*Table 3*

*Interview questions*

<b>Main questions</b>	<b>Additional probing questions</b>	<b>Explanatory questions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your experience, why did you decide to study (Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Accounting, Clinical Pharmacology, Actuarial Sciences)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What/who influenced your decision to study (Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Accounting, Clinical Pharmacology, Actuarial Sciences)</li> <li>▪ Before making your decision, did you do research on your field of study?</li> <li>▪ Would you identify your field of study as scarce-skilled?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, how satisfied are you with the possible employment options provided in the labour market?</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, how satisfied are you with the prospective employment possibilities in the labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What would you describe as your ideal work environment or condition?</li> <li>▪ Do you think that you will receive the wage that you are expecting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, what do you find worrisome in the South African labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considering the human resource development systems?</li> <li>▪ Considering the economic growth?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly identify the relationship between economic growth and human resource</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

	development in the labour market?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you feel that there are certain geographic settings that can provide better employment opportunities?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you feel that there are bigger demands in certain areas for your skills set?</li> <li>▪ Would you rather be employed in a smaller setting or larger setting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, do you feel that mobility will be an option for you in the future?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you intend to spend your skills in South Africa?</li> <li>▪ Explain why you would spend your skills abroad if you had the choice?</li> <li>▪ What would influence your decision to mobilise?</li> <li>▪ What would influence your decision to stay where you are?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>
Conclusion( End interview questions)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any matters or aspects that you feel we should discuss further?</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you want to add anything related to your answers given in the abovementioned questions?</li> </ul>		

## Recording of data

The interview was recorded by a voice recorder. Permission was asked and granted before the interview began. The approval of each participant was caught on tape. It was made clear that their identity is kept safe and private at all times and that if they felt uncomfortable at any time during the interview, they are not obligated to answer a question or continue with the study if they did not wish to. They were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

## Data analysis

The semi-structured interviews conducted were going to be transcribed and analysed through a six-phase plan; thematic analysis will be the best approach to be able to answer and sift all the unnecessary data from raw to relevant. Data saturation was reached and that the raw data could be sifted through this thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis can be defined as the method that gets rid of unnecessary data by sifting and organising raw data into relevant data that can be used in the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this study, the research findings will identify scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions of future employment, employment conditions and wages in the South African labour market in an exploratory and explanatory manner.

Patterns that arise can be built and confirmed through the information that was provided in the interviews. Through data saturation the patterns can be seen clearly and findings can be established through this thematic analysis phase approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) took on this approach towards thematic analysis:

*Table 4*

*Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis*

	Phases	Phase description
Phase 1	Familiarising oneself with the raw data	It is the duty of the researcher to transcribe any raw data onto black and white to be able to notice any patterns that could be

		the same. She read and re-read the transcribed data and familiarised herself with the data; then she identified the key concepts through the patterns in the answers given.
Phase 2	Coding general information	Each and every pattern that was in the transcribed data was labelled under a certain familiar key concept; thereafter, the amount of times each pattern repeated itself was counted to ensure whether this could be used as a theme. The quantity of each pattern number made it obvious which concept was important and which was not. For example, if an answer coincided with another then the quantity will be more and it would be deemed as important, but if only one participant gave an answer and no-one else did it was deemed as unimportant.
Phase 3	Identifying the themes	Themes were identified through the concepts that she deemed as important and that emerged a great deal more than others. Answers that coincided with each other more were labelled as important. The researcher knew what the study is about and where it began and where she needed it to go. Therefore, the themes were developed through the general information coded to answer the research questions.
Phase 4	Reviewing the categorical themes	The themes and data merged together well and the research findings will be explained through the answers of the interviews. The

		data was enough and can be seen as saturated.
Phase 5	Defining and naming themes	The themes collaborated with the research problem at hand; the themes merged with the data and the structure was developed based on the findings.
Phase 6	Producing the final data analysis report	With the relevant data placed into themes, the structure of the study is precise and explanatory. All of the important information was explained in the findings and the data could be seen as valid and reliable. The findings, limitations and recommendations will be discussed to refine and report.

### **Quality assurance of data analysis**

According to De Vos et al. (2011), there is a criterion that helps researchers to be able to ensure that their data maintains a quality that is up to standard with the standardised measurement. The scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions about future employment, employment conditions and wages within the South African labour market will be measured and assessed according to the themes that were derived through the thematic analysis approach. This exploratory approach is of a qualitative nature and can be described as a more in-depth analysis than that of the quantitative method.

De Vos et al., (2011) therefore identifies the four constructs that could assist researchers to make sure that their research is up to standard:

#### **1. Credibility/authenticity**

The themes will be described in such an in-depth manner that the data and themes will be so in-sync that the data cannot help but be valid and authentic. Authenticity means that ethical and precise steps were followed to find data through interviews and by using the thematic analysis



phases the data can be labelled as authentic. The researcher guarantees that the data gathered reflects truthfully and accurately in the findings.

## 2. Transferability

Transferability can be described as the process to be able to transfer the findings from one situation to another. The themes and their findings were derived from an in-depth phase plan and therefore it can be applied to different situations, if need be.

## 3. Dependability

The reliability of the study will be ensured through the use of literature and explaining the data in-depth. The data was retrieved through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and the raw data was transcribed into relevant data that was used in the findings.

## 4. Confirmability

All of the important data that was used in the findings of this study was stored and saved. This will deem as proof if any other researcher challenges or questions the research in this study. The data collected is correct by following ethical rules and procedures to gather and transcribe data.

## **Data recording**

The interviews were captured by a voice recorder. Voice recorded tapes were transcribed onto a Word-format sheet. There are formal and informal manners to analyse data, and in the modern research world, there are multiple resources to help one do exactly that. The researcher did not make use of any technical programs or data sifting technology, but followed her own plan to process, minimise and sift the important data, through the guidance of the thematic data analysis procedure (De Vos et al., 2011). Through observation and field notes, the data was processed and sifted into relevant themes through the use of thematic analysis.

Each participant was labelled with a code, from “participant 1” to “participant 21”. The age was known of each participant through the information provided by the gatekeepers. The race and other characteristics about the participants were observed and noted within the interview. That is why observation notes were written down during the interview and data transcribing was done directly after each interview.

The data was stored safely and securely, the office where the research is done and stored is a private room where no one else has access to. The data includes the voice recorded tapes, field notes, written down observations and hard-copy documents. All of the data was printed out each time progress was made. The hard copies were safely stored. Back-ups were made of all the data on an external hard drive. The following data was either stored on a hard drive or hard copy:

- Permission letters signed by the gatekeepers to interview their students
- Interview arrangements and scheduling saved and stored on email
- Any and all data collected and written down was stored in a safe and secure location
- Back-ups of the interview voice recorded tapes where all the participants gave their permission to partake in the study

### **Ethical considerations**

The guidance of all ethical processes and procedures was followed, and ethical behaviour was displayed throughout the whole interview and research process. It is of utmost importance that the research is deemed as ethically sound. The interviews were conducted in an ethical manner, by following rules and regulation as any self-respecting researcher should do.

The researcher remained transparent, which means to remain unbiased. The answers given in the interviews were understood as if it were her own answers. A neutral environment was developed and could not be influenced to change anyone's point of view on a matter, because qualitative research, after all, is about the differences and complex answers that are given in research, and also by remaining unbiased and open to any answer and opinion.

The participants knew that their identity remained and will continue to be kept private. The participants were also aware that if they felt uncomfortable in the interview at any time that they were free to withdraw from the study as it was voluntary. Ethical rules and regulations were followed by keeping research data safe and private from anyone other than the researcher. It is of utmost importance that intentions remained honest and open at all times; as well as showing integrity, non-biased behaviour, respect, accuracy, care, hope, non-discrimination and last but not the least to follow rules and procedures according to ethical guidelines. The permission and consent were given by each and every participant in the interview process, and it was recorded onto the voice recorded tapes.

## **Findings**

The findings in this study were divided into themes, each with their sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes were drafted into tables. Each sub-theme has the direct quotes of some of the participants that correspond with the theme and sub-theme.

### **Category 1: The labour market effects**

The labour market effects can be explained through the themes that were derived through close analysis of the data that relates to the sub-themes. In this category, the labour market effects can be explained as the effects that all of the different labour-related matters have on the employment possibilities, conditions and preferences that each participant expressed in their answers. These answers were true and personal; each individual gave their opinion on a matter either through experience or personal opinion. These effects are labour laws that influence possible employment; the task-oriented work environment where they find themselves in, and the geographical employment conditions. Each effect in category 1 will be explained in detail below.

The first theme covers several sub-themes, where participants stated that there are numerous factors that make them feel uneasy about their future in South Africa. The participants were asked about their opinion on the possible employment options in the near future, and to explain how satisfied they were with the options. The participants also had to think and provide true, real feelings and opinions on what worried them about their future in the labour market. Participants also compared their opinions on their past work experiences in the labour market, be it negative or positive. Regardless of their past experiences, the participants still seemed worried about employment options and conditions. Several themes were discovered, but the themes that projected more in the data were labelled as important and presented in the findings.

Table 5 displays the themes and sub-themes of category one, which was derived from the data transcribed in the interviews.

Table 5

*The labour market effects*

Theme	Sub-theme	Direct quote
1- Labour laws influencing possible employment	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, 53 of 2003	<p>“I think the thing that would worry me is the difficulty to get into a company, because there are about 200 candidates and they only keep about 20percent of them after 3 years, and if that isn’t enough BBBEE also plays a role in employment”</p> <p>“ I honestly feel that BBBEE is making things difficult and it makes it that even though you are more qualified it does not mean you will get the job”</p>
	Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998	<p>“The current problem in the labour market like the employment equity and like BBBEE makes it difficult for me because I have been for interviews where they gave me feedback that they have to fix their equity that’s why they don’t appoint me”</p>

		<p>“ I see how slowly it’s going for the engineers and then stuff like BBBEEE, and they can’t find a job because they choose the unprivileged before us”</p>
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### ***Theme 1: Labour laws influencing possible employment***

The first theme covers the worry and fear that the participants express when it comes to employment. These acts disrupt and influence their chance in a fair and definitive employment position. The participants feel that the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act and Employment Equity Act negatively influence their chance to be employed, and not only to be employed, but also to stay employed. Even though they are employed, they could lose their job to someone else after a while, who did or did not perform as well as them because employment equity will advantage the other person because the Act rights the wrong.

The undergraduate students display a sense of fear when they expressed their opinion on employment; they are scared that they will not be able to find a job or keep it. The level of satisfaction on the matter of employment differed as some displayed a sense of distaste and other a sense of neutral feelings; however, the fear of unemployment was in the majority. Further elaboration on opinions and perceptions can be seen in the sub-themes below.

#### ***Sub-theme 1: Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003***

The code of good practice inherently referring to the B-BBEE Act 53/2003 was established to aid those in need, namely the African race who struggles to be employed in positions with higher wages and rank (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). These educated individuals, however, are worried that they will not be employed because of the Act. They feel that their studies and education will not help them to be employed, because companies want to uphold their B-BBEE status and therefore they find it difficult to be employed.

The participants displayed a sense of worry because they stated that B-BBEE could influence their future employment options; some stated that they could be employed but could later lose their job through the B-BBEE protocol that should be followed when they move from intern to permanent employment. Other participants felt that even though they have the skills and education that does not necessarily mean that they will get the job. The participants feel that the Act gets more power and right than what they have to bring to the table, which is education and theoretical skills.

*Sub-theme 2: Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998*

The Employment Equity Act 55/1998, however, also supports the employment of the minority group (Juta Pocket Statutes, 2012). The undergraduates are experiencing that companies cannot employ them, because they have to uphold their employment equity status. The students also feel that even when they are employed, there is a sifting process later on that will eventually cut them out of the equation because of the employment equity level that needs to be right. The scarce-skilled graduates feel that the other disadvantaged groups that are not labelled as ‘privileged’ are being employed in positions that they did not deserve or work for. Privilege can be defined as a special right that a person has to be able to do a task or be allowed to do something because they are seen as powerful and on a higher class or standard than the average person (Soanes, 2002).

The students do not label themselves as privileged, but rather as educated and they feel that they worked for what they want, and that: “not everything can be served on a silver platter”, because you are labelled as disadvantaged.

*Table 5*

2- Task-oriented employment conditions	Work-life balance	“I think companies are becoming too capital orientated, they are finding more and more reasons to keep you at work, and away from others, other family time and time with friends. And they are making the place feel more and more like home”
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	Technological unemployment	<p>“...speaking for others working on a more full time basis I wouldn’t say it was the best job to have. It was long hours and they weren’t too happy”</p> <p>“...the politics I’m talking about could be that the people are selling the companies to the Chinese and then the labour would be operated with machinery and this takes opportunities away from South Africans. The money they spend on the machinery will not be worth more than giving a graduate like me a salary, and the time I spent studying will not be worth the salary I will get here”</p> <p>“...they are more focused on the micro components and the machinery is replacing them in the work place. So I feel I would rather go overseas because then I could maybe make the machines that they use here”</p>
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## **Theme 2: Task-oriented employment conditions**

Task-oriented can be defined as the controlling and structured environment, where the sense of the task at hand is more active and important than that of needs and wants of the person doing the task. A relationship-oriented environment is more permissive, passive and considerate (Bergh & Theron, 2009). The sub-themes work-life balance and technological unemployment explain how the labour market can be labelled as task-oriented in the opinions and experience of the scarce-skilled graduates.

According to the students, there are numerous factors that they deem as important when it comes to employment conditions. Employment in itself is important, but when you have studied for a few years it may be that certain things can be expected, on a higher level than average. The students feel that they deserve to have good employment conditions because they have worked for it. It is disappointing when you have studied for a certain job and then the employment conditions are not up to standard or what was expected.

The most important employment conditions according to the scarce-skilled graduates can be described in the sub-themes.

### *Sub-theme 1: Work-life balance*

Work-life balance can be defined as the balance between your home, personal, family and work life – to be able to balance your work and personal life in such a manner that the one does not over-power the other, and that all aspects are fair and just and they are in equilibrium with one another (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). Some of the participants feel that the balance between work and home has been disrupted, because companies are becoming capital related, which means to only worry about the turnover they are generating rather than the human resource development or systems in place to keep the employees happy.

The undergraduates experience the labour market more as a task-oriented environment, with longer hours, fewer privileges and lower wages. They seem to think that the labour market is more capital-oriented and the personal wants and needs are becoming fewer and fewer each day.

The students feel that they studied for a reason, that with all the hard work and dedication to get an education that they should have some benefits such as more wages and personal time.



Companies forget these days that the most important resources are the employees in the company or organisation, because the higher an individual's personal well-being, the better they will perform in their everyday work-life (Robertson & Cooper, 2011).

### *Sub-theme 2: Technological unemployment*

Technological unemployment can be described as the employment possibilities that are being lost to machines or technology. This can be a major influence on the employment possibilities in the labour market, because our skilled graduates are losing their jobs to machines. People are replacing skilled individuals with machines in order for mass production or to not pay wages on a monthly basis (Wisner, Tan & Leong, 2016). The students also state that the machines that are replacing them are being imported by other races such as the Chinese, and they are operating these machines. This inevitably means more and more jobs being lost to machines and other races being used to operate these machines.

The participants also express that if they could contribute to the development and building of these machines then they would, but most of the machines are imported from other countries.

*Table 5*

3- Geographical employment conditions	Preference	<p>“If I had a choice to go anywhere in SA I would go to Johannesburg because it's busy and city life, I like that”</p> <p>“ I don't like cities so I would go for a smaller place like Bloemfontein”</p> <p>“I would live in Potchefstroom, I love this place. My career is going to</p>
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	<p>Compensation development</p> <p>and</p>	<p>take me to Jo'burg but I would rather prefer Pretoria"</p> <p>"You wouldn't believe me but I would work for the NWU because I can do research and I could teach others what I know"</p> <p>"...it depends on the place and the opportunity if I do get an opportunity in a town then I would take it but if there is a better opportunity in Durban or some city I would go there. I feel that in bigger companies in cities I will get a better chance to be promoted and grow"</p> <p>"I would go to cape town, it's a global city and the opportunities are vast in terms of employment"</p> <p>"The salary here is good, but I come from Bloemfontein and their salaries are way lower than other bigger places"</p>
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		<p>“ I would work in Cape Town because it’s the mother city and there are more opportunities”</p> <p>“ I would go to Jo’burg because I think there are many, many financial institutions and industries that can hire me, Cape Town would be my second opportunity”</p>
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### **Theme 3: Geographical employment conditions**

Geographic segmentation is when business can be divided into sections, depending on the geography, which means the physical attributes an area holds (Business Dictionary, 2018). The market or area can be divided into a city, country, town or state etc. A market segment can also be labelled as a rural or suburban area. The population and climate can also play a role in determining the market segment. In this theme, the focus was on the size and population of each market segment. The larger places such as Johannesburg, Pretoria or Cape Town compared to the smaller places such as Potchefstroom or Vereeniging.

#### *Sub-theme 1: Preference*

Preference is what one prefers over another aspect (Soanes, 2002). Approximately half of the participants had a preference on where they wanted to be employed; regardless of the fact that employment options may be thin and wages may be less. These preferences were widely dispersed, but they all had the common interest in going where they wanted to and not where they needed. The participants said they would either go to cities such as Johannesburg because they like the busy city life or that they preferred the smaller places such as Potchefstroom because they grew

up in a place like that, without haste or rush. Half of the students stated that they would work in their home town or where their families are and the other half said they would go where the job takes them.

### *Sub-theme 2: Compensation and development*

Compensation and development seem to be identified as the most important aspects when it comes to employment, according to the participants in this study. They deem wages and ‘moving up the ladder’ as the aspects that they strive for. The wages that these scarce-skilled undergraduates expect can be more than the average market-related wage, and with their skills and field expertise one can expect that it should be matched. However, the participants feel that the wages are more in larger regions than in the smaller regions. Development in the labour market can be described as the growth one undergoes through hard work and dedication through time, by either being promoted or to be given a raise in your monthly wages (Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda & Nel, 2006). The students believe that they have a better chance to be promoted and to grow in a company in the larger regions such as Johannesburg, Cape Town or Pretoria. Despite the promotion and growth, the participants feel that they have an opportunity to learn more than that of an average company in the smaller regions, where challenges are more and they can learn and develop their problem solving skills to a much higher level.

### **Category 2: Economic impacts on the labour market**

It can be seen that the acts, geographic areas and scarcity of work are not the only reasons for unemployment among scarce-skilled undergraduates, but that the bigger factors such as the human resource development systems and economic growth also come into play and that these larger external factors influence the smaller internal factors in the labour market such as in category one. The undergraduates also consider these larger economic factors as a threat to their possible employment conditions and options in the future. They feel that this cycle of poor human resource development and non-growing economy also has a contributing factor to their chances of employment and the wages they will receive in the future. Human resource development and economic growth are interdependent factors, which can be defined as two factors that cannot exist alone; they are linked and the one cannot exist without the other (Dictionary.com, 2018).

### *Economic impacts on the labour market*

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		<p>workplaces in South Africa and I think that is why it is so difficult for us to be employed. And they think that if you are overqualified it means a higher salary, then they would rather employ someone with less education”</p> <p>“ I am worried about my future with the fact of affirmative action and people getting and being employed in positions that they aren’t even qualified for and they want everything served on a silver platter and it does not work like that”</p>
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#### **Theme 4: Hypothetical systems and processes**

Hypothetical can be defined as an imagined or hypothesis that was based on something that could happen, the statements or questions that are hypothetical are not necessarily true or real (Dictionary.com, 2018). The theme describes the human resource development system and recruitment processes as hypothetical because there are numerous systems and processes that have been developed throughout the years and that have been set to be achieved in a certain year, for example the Human Resource Development South Africa strategy that was established in 2010 and set out to be achieved in 2030 (South African Government Publication, 2009).

*Sub-theme: Human resource development systems*

There are a number of processes and procedures that have been developed to better the human resource development systems in the labour market, for example the human resource development strategy, which was developed in 2010 and is appraised to run until 2030. The wish of the HRDSA was that certain objectives should be reached within a certain number of years and that in the first five years there should be eight areas of commitment, which include (Human Resource Development Council of South Africa, 2017):

- Increase the number of scarce skills to achieve economic growth
- Increase skilled individuals to achieve economic and social development in South Africa
- Increase universal access to basic education, focusing on the improvement of educational outcomes for poor learners with the ability to achieve high standards
- Achieve post-school education, training and employment

However, the unemployment rate has gone from 25. 2% to 27. 7% from 2010 until the second quarter of 2017 (Stats SA, 2017). The matric pass rate from 2010 did go up each year starting with 67.8% in 2010 up to 78.2% in 2013, but then dropped to 70.7% in 2015 (News 24, 2018). It seems that the human resource development strategy has not as yet been successful in the first objectives they have set for South Africa. The participants feel that the resource development strategies ensured to better the future of South Africa are only hypothetical and do not seem to reach a realistic goal or end.

However, these systems and processes do not inevitably mean that they are going to become a reality. The participants feel that the various human resource systems that have been developed do not benefit or contribute to the overall human resource development in the South African labour market. They also feel that even though the processes and procedures are put in place, there is always someone who finds a loophole, to ignore or not mind the rules that have been set out to follow.

A high number of the students displayed a sense of anger and distaste towards the fact that people with no skills or few skills and education are placed in high positions without partial or any explanation as to why they are granted such a position. They feel that unqualified people are placed

in high positions above them without prior education or training. The participants feel that these individuals do not deserve to be in positions higher than them without the proper training, because they are hesitant and resistant to the fact that they will be working under one of these individuals. The pharmacological students displayed a sense of fear and unfairness towards their ability to be able to control and handle their jobs; they feel that the government and labour market limit them; they will not be able to administer and distribute the right medicine to the people because the government limits their distribution and administration abilities.

Some of the participants were obligated to gain practical experience at an internship during their last year of studying for an exam mark; their feedback on the experience, however, was that the individuals in higher positions who had had an education were friendly and trained them to the best of their abilities. The individuals who were not educated were ill mannered and they seemed to think of them as a threat. Note: these are only opinions and perceptions of the participants in this study.

#### *Sub-theme 2: Recruitment processes and procedures*

Recruitment can be defined as choosing a candidate from a pool of people who seem to be qualified for a specific job (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). The participants feel that recruitment may be influenced by the human resources in a labour market; if the human resource processes and procedures are not run or monitored correctly, then this will influence systems within the bigger system. Recruitment should be based on the skills one has obtained and what someone can bring to the table. However, the participants feel that the recruitment in the South African labour market is unfair, because you are given a job based on your race and gender.

They feel that this is unfair and they would approve if someone had been recruited based on their qualifications and skills rather than the colour of their skin. Another participant felt worried that she would be labelled as overqualified in the labour market because she has a master's degree; she feels that people make assumptions that they would have to give higher wages to someone like her with a higher degree, which is fair. However, she feels that the employers tend to employ others with less education because that means they would pay lower wages. The other participants also stated that they are furious about the fact that some individuals want everything served on a silver platter without working for any of it and that these individuals feel they deserve it because they are labelled as underprivileged.



## Discussion

The objectives of the study were clear; they indicated the problem at hand and what was wanted to be known and explored within the problem at hand. The general objective in article 1 was to establish what influenced the overall perceptions of scarce-skilled graduates when it came to employment conditions. The findings indicated that there were several factors that the scarce-skilled undergraduates defined as factors that they feel would make a difference in their employment options and conditions within the labour market.

- Concerning the employment options in the labour market, they indicated that they were threatened by Acts such as the B-BBEE Act 53 of 2003 and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (Venter & Levy, 2011), because they felt that this could have a possible influence on whether they were employed and whether they were promoted, due to companies following protocol and adhering to the Acts. Furthermore, they indicated that technological advancements were a threat to their future, because some companies are replacing human capital with technology such as machines to increase productivity and cut costs, as indicated in Chapter 2's literature review by Kreitner and Kinicki (2010). They indicated that recruitment also bothered them, because they feel that organisations and companies are not looking at their education or skills, but rather at their age, race and their lack of practical skills.
- Concerning the employment conditions within the labour market, the perceptions were that they felt uncomfortable and unsure about the conditions in the labour market, and they indicated several factors that concerned them regarding the matter, which will be discussed later on in the second objective summary.

Concerning the first objective, the perceptions of undergraduates on their expected wages in the labour market, the participants indicated that they had a preference of where they wanted to be employed, despite the wages they will receive. However, some indicated that they feel that larger settings such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Pretoria had more options in development and growth, leading to more wages being paid. Overall, the graduates were not too focused on wages, but rather on being employed. Barker (2007) indicates that if the equilibrium between supply and demand is disrupted, then there will be an oversupply of workers seeking and accepting employment even if the wages are not up to standard or enough.

Concerning the second objective, the opinions of the scarce-skilled undergraduates and the employment conditions within the labour market, the scarce-skilled undergraduates displayed a sense of concern for the work-life balance they observed in the labour market; they feel that companies are too task-oriented and do not focus much on the balance between work life and their

personal life. The students indicated that they had more of a preference when it came to the geographical area they wanted to work in, despite the different employment options in the labour market, as indicated in the findings in Chapter 3. Furthermore, they indicated that they felt that human resource development such as training and development and recruitment processes seemed hypothetical, because they feel that organisations lack structure when it comes to training and proper recruitment protocols.

Concerning the third objective, the opinions of the economic growth within South Africa, the students did not directly touch the topic of economic growth in the macro-environment. They identified matters that were more close and direct to them, such as the unemployment and human resource development systems, which suffered under the poor economic growth rate. They felt that the economic growth influenced their employment options, because the demand for work seems to be more than the supply of work. Barker (2007) indicates that the increase in production leads to the demand for employees, and this, in general, leads to economic growth, and *vice versa*. However, the economic growth and demand for workers differ from one time period to the next, and the demand may differ – even though the economic growth rate is good, it is unpredictable (Barker, 2007).

Concerning the fourth objective, to explore the perceptions of the scarce-skilled undergraduates on the human resource development systems in South Africa, there are numerous factors that influence the overall perception on human resource development. First of all, they express a feeling of distaste because they feel recruitment processes are not fair and some companies recruit based on the Acts; this, they indicated as worrisome to their possible employment, e.g. the B-BBEE Act 53 of 2003 and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. They also feel that there is a lack of proper training, as stated by Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda and Nel (2006). The lack of training in organisations leads to higher turnover of older redundant employees, low productivity and more illiterate staff members, to name a few. They also feel that through these acts, people are being placed in positions they do not deserve due to their race or gender. Some of the pharmacological participants indicated that they were being limited by government to give proper care because of protocols that had to be followed due to budgeting.

## **Practical implications**

There are various practical implications that could assist in the overall perceptions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on employment and employment conditions in the South African labour market, as well as practical implications for organisations in the labour market.

- For the student

THE WORLD IS FULL OF WILLING PEOPLE;  
SOME WILLING TO WORK,  
THE REST WILLING TO LET THEM

ROBERT LEE FROST

Barker (2007) includes this clever quote in his book from Robert Lee Frost, to indicate that there are different kinds of people, i.e. those willing to put in their all and the rest willing to give up easily. The scarce-skilled undergraduates should not give up easily; they should continue to search for work, and even if it means moving out of their comfort zone, they should continue to search for their ideal job, because, as Barker (2007) also states, individuals entering the labour market for the first time find it difficult to be employed. The scarce-skilled undergraduates should accept that the world of work is not all sunshine and roses, and that their first job might not be their dream job. It takes hard work and dedication and, yes, a few years to reach that ultimate position that everyone dreams about in their career.

The scarce-skilled undergraduates should also accept that companies do not prefer to employ younger inexperienced graduates; they prefer their older practically skilled workers, even if it means that they do not have the education (Kraak, 2010, as cited by Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). Therefore, this means that the internships where you make next to nothing in wages, might all just be worth it because in the labour market the practical experience is what counts the most.

- For the organisation

Organisations should ensure that they practice training and development properly, because as indicated in Chapter 2, a lack in training often leads to a high turnover in older redundant employees (Erasmus et al. 2006). Older employees should support younger people, by offering them a chance, and training them in the skills that they have learned over the years; after all, they are the future generation.

Organisations should take human capital with technology into consideration. By training and developing their employees to use technological advancements, they will also receive more productivity, as indicated in the literature review of Chapter 2 (Venter & Levy, 2011).

Organisations should try to follow rules and regulations regarding human resource development systems, such as training, development and recruitment. By following the correct human resource policies, the company can distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and avoid future complications (Grobler, Wärnich, Carell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2011). Recruitment should be done by the book, and the rules and regulations put in place for the proper recruitment should be followed. Robbins, Judge, Odendaal and Roodt (2009) indicate that recruitment can be a daunting task, but if you follow protocol, then it will help in the long run, because organisations tend to bend the rules when it comes to recruitment.

## **Limitations and recommendations**

In any study, there are limitations that arise, and with it, recommendations that can be made for future research.

Firstly, as this is a qualitative study, the findings were solely based on the opinions and perceptions of the target group. Quantitative research, however, confirms and reports the statistical data according to facts, where qualitative research explores a phenomenon and derives its data from a target group and their opinions (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011). The opinion that the labour market Acts have an influence on employment will need to be confirmed by quantitative research, as do the other opinions, such as poor work-life balance; technological unemployment; the difference of employment by geographical region and the lack of human resource development

and recruitment in organisations. However, this study is solely based on opinions, because the opinions of the scarce-skilled undergraduates and their experiences decide whether they want to mobilise overseas, and that is what determines whether we lose our skills to other countries or not, observed as the influential push and pull factors in Chapter 3.

According to Barker (2007), there are different kinds of people when it comes to work and personal life preferences. You get the workaholic and the pleasure seeker, each of them defining 'work time' in a different manner. Therefore, the limitation that work-life balance brings is that each participant may experience work-life balance and hours of work differently. Some may think that working from 8:00 to 17:00 is too much, while others think it is just enough. Therefore, what the proper work-life balance is, remains subjective, and only depends on the perception of the undergraduates' own perceptions.

This can also be said for wages; the different fields of study may yield different sets of wages. A pharmacological student may expect a different wage than an engineering student would; therefore, the wage inequality is somewhat unclear. The difference between individuals and their expected wages may differ due to their knowledge and field of study. Therefore, the estimate of which wages seem appropriate and enough, may be subjective to each individual's own perspective on the matter.

Lastly, the human resource development systems that are in place were not measured or studied, and therefore it cannot be determined whether there are more or less organisations without proper human resource development systems in place. Future research should be done to determine the unknown, thus leading to the recommendations for future studies.

The first recommendation would be to establish whether all of these factors that were identified could be measured and proven quantitatively; for example, the impact of Acts on employment among graduates; the different employment options in different geographical areas; and whether wages are more in larger settings than in smaller settings, thereby leading to my next recommendation.

The second recommendation is to explore and study the problem of wages and living costs in different geographical regions; whether you really receive more wages or whether it is just the same because the living costs are higher. For example: In Johannesburg you may receive a salary

of R40 000 a month, but you pay R10 000 rent for a decent apartment. In Klerksdorp, you may receive R15 000, but you pay R5000 for rent on a house. The possibilities of this research problem may be an interesting topic for future research.

Lastly, this study could be taken further by reaching the participants of the study afterwards and conducting another study on whether they found employment after graduation and how they experience the world of work and the employment conditions. Their opinions now and then could be compared and another interesting study could be done.

## **Conclusion**

This article explored the perceptions and opinions of scarce-skilled undergraduates on possible employment options and conditions within the labour market. The findings were indicated and explained; however, the shortage of determining whether the geographical area has an impact on employment has not been established, as well as whether the wages differ from a larger setting to a smaller setting. These findings could not be given, because of the lack of knowledge the participants displayed in the subject; they were still students and had not entered the labour market fully; they only had a taste of the labour market through holiday internships.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ARTICLE 2**

## **AN EXPLORATION OF THE IDENTIFIABLE PUSH AND PULL FACTORS THAT COULD INFLUENCE SCARCE-SKILLED UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS OF MOBILITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET**

**Orientation:** The push and pull factors that influence the perceptions and opinions of the scarce-skilled undergraduates also has a noteworthy effect on the intention to spend their skills in South Africa. The influential pull factors were personal and solely based on opinions they included; family, people, culture and loyalty. Whereas the influential push factors on mobility were of an external nature and they included: corruption, politics and unemployment. These factors had a major influence on the opinions and perceptions of the participants in when they decided to mobilise abroad or not.

**Research purpose:** The purpose of the study was to indicate what push and pull factors had a noteworthy influence on the scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions on mobility, be it nationally or internationally. Their intention in spending their skills in South Africa or abroad.

**Motivation for the study:** In order to understand whether the scarce-skilled undergraduates intend to spend their skills in South Africa, it was important to first understand what they identified as influential push and pull factors after they established what their stance was on the employment conditions and options in the South African labour market.

**Research approach, design and method:** A qualitative research design was used throughout the study. An explorative phenomenological approach was utilised with the help of ontology in an interpretive case study design. The sample group consisted out of 21 (N=21) scarce-skilled undergraduates studying at the North-West University in Potchefstroom. Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were used to collect data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach was used to interpret the raw data into important findings.

**Main findings:** The results indicated that some of the participants wanted to mobilise within South Africa, because they felt that the pull factors influenced them more than the push factors. Other participants however indicated that the push factors had more of an influence on them and that if they got the chance they would mobilise overseas. There were three groups, those who weren't interested in mobilising abroad, those who would mobilise abroad temporarily and lastly those who wanted to mobilise abroad permanently. The push and pull factors were the same for all of the participants, but due to different personalities their perceptions and opinions on

mobility were different. There were two categories. Category one had three main themes. Category two had two main themes. Category one and two both had main themes and subsequent sub-themes, it was described in this article in the findings section.

**Practical implications:** The scarce-skilled undergraduates should take into consideration that South Africa might not be the worst of places. There are other people from other countries who might be much worse off than us. The participants should consider spending their skills in South Africa, because the more skilled individuals we lose the more in will negatively impact the country and the labour market. To build something, means to contribute; not to take away.

**Contribution:** The contribution that this study will add is the value of knowledge. The knowledge of what might be the factors that influence the decisions of skilled individuals when it comes to spending their skills in South Africa, and if not; why they do not intend spending their skills in South Africa. Organisations and other external entities could address the problem and then the whole of South Africa could start to build and strive for a better economy and this would definitely influence the internal factors like the labour market; leading to better employment options and conditions.

**Keywords:** **Keywords:** Employment; scarce-skilled undergraduates; wages; push and pull factors; economic growth; human resource development; market segmentation; mobility

## INTRODUCTION

It is only natural to travel from one place to another when an element is not favourable. We can see this behaviour not only in animals migrating from one place to another due to weather, but also in humans (Live Science News, 2018). Animals mostly move around from area to area due to weather, because it is a natural element in which they are incapable of changing; to enable survival they have to adapt rather than try to change the inevitable (Live Science News , 2018).

In each area, the situation differs from the other; in nature it may be weather that forces a living being to adapt; and move on. In the labour market, there may be multiple factors that influence individuals to ‘adapt’ and move on to another more favourable area, for example a different geographical area, as discussed in Chapter 2. They are called push factors, and they can be described as the factors that have such a major impact on an individual that they change their perspective and force them to leave an area they once thrived in, but no longer do (Du Plessis, 2009). Pull factors are quite the opposite, namely those factors that attract and retain an individual to stay in a certain area (Du Plessis, 2009). Push and pull factors are the reason why individuals or groups of people move from one area to the next; this is called mobility.

## **Research objectives**

The general objective of the study was to explore the perceptions and opinions of scarce-skilled undergraduates and the influential push and pull factors on mobility. Whether they intend to mobilise nationally or internationally and if they intend to spend their skills in South Africa. The specific objectives include:

- To determine how push factors, pull factors, market segmentation and mobility are conceptualised within literature;
- To identify which push factors can influence undergraduates' perception to consider mobility;
- To identify which pull factors can influence undergraduates' perception to reconsider mobility; and
- To investigate the contributions that could be made for future research.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Mobility**

Mobility can be described as the freedom to move from one setting to the next because there are numerous factors that influence an individual to do so. According to Barker (2007), the labour market is a perfectly competitive environment where people are free to be mobile, and they are perfectly capable to move between areas, jobs and organisations. Schoole (2017) states that when local demands cannot be met, then the higher educated individuals take mobility into consideration when they feel that they are being undermined or disadvantaged.

Barker (2007) says that the rate of the South African population increases rapidly compared to other countries, but has dropped due to the decline in fertility and the loss of highly skilled workers because of migration. As we can see, the highly skilled are exhibiting behaviour to mobilise when the conditions are unfavourable, and Barker (2007) states that when the population growth or population is too high, then the demands for jobs, services "such as education, health, transport

and the provisions for housing” increase (p. 2). Therefore, one can say that the decline in population may relieve some of these demands, but the only problem is the population group we are losing to migration are the skilled, which can be defined as brain-drain (Barker, 2007).

### **Push factors**

The push factors that the study is focusing on include those that motivate the scarce-skilled undergraduates’ decision to consider mobility to either another geographic area within South Africa or otherwise another country.

The push factors can be from the external or internal environments in the economy. The internal environment mostly includes the business itself; this is the smallest and most controllable labour market environment (Mostert & Lotz, 2010). The internal environment, for example, could include the recruitment, training, culture and climate that a business has. Mostert and Lotz (2010) define the external environment as the external forces that affect and influence the activities and business of the internal environment; these may include the market environment and macro-economy. The internal environment cannot change or impact the external environment, but the external environment can influence the internal environment negatively or positively (Mostert & Lotz, 2010). The market environment can be described as the immediate environment surrounding the business itself, the buyers, sellers and competitors; whereas the macro-environment is those aspects that are uncontrollable and display continuous change, such as the political, economic, technological and socio-cultural changes (Mostert & Lotz, 2010).

In this study, the identifiable push factors that the sample group indicated in the findings were corruption, politics and unemployment:

- **Corruption**

Ethics can be defined as the proper way to interact with other individuals, and therefore it revolves around three concepts, namely “self, good and other” (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010, p. 4). Ethics cannot only be about oneself, but also about what is good for others, as discussed in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Business ethics can be described as the impact that the decisions of the leader have on the rest of the stakeholders (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010) state that business ethics have three dimensions:



- The macro-environment, which includes the wider socio-political framework in which the government or political decisions, law and regulations determine the economic well-being or priorities that should be maintained.
- The market environment, which relates to the role and responsibility the business has in which they develop their own set of rules on how to run and maintain the business process between buyers and suppliers, because it influences internal and external stakeholders.
- The micro-environment, which is the actions and rules that are set within an organisation, and sometimes these rules can be changed because it is done with discretion, because “although the structures, policies and culture of a business organisation pose distinct constraints within which employees, suppliers, contractors and other stakeholders have to operate they will never totally constrain the freedom and responsibility of the individuals” (p. 4).

Through explaining the different environment and what ethical behaviour is, one can understand what it means to display the right behaviour in an environment; however, when individuals place themselves and their needs at the forefront and do not think about the stakeholders, then corruption can come into play. It is only fair that when a person is placed in a position of power, then they should display ethical behaviour at all times, in their daily lives and in business.

According to Egan (2010), a decision-maker must make a choice according to the internal and external factors that influence them to make one; and when the wrong decision is made, then corruption can be considered, especially when a person in power does so selfishly not thinking about the external factors and the stakeholders.

According to Van Vuuren (2014), South Africa is displaying a sense of democracy when it comes to handling corruption. There have been developments in laws to counter the corrupt, but it can be seen even though there are rules and laws set in place that the people are struggling to find measures to fight the corruption of those in power. The inconsistency of the laws further fuels the corruption and the economic inequality (Van Vuuren, 2014).

Levels of corruption are peaking and it seems to be at its highest since the end of the apartheid years, and therefore one can say that the reason for the rise in corruption may be unknown, but it can indicate that the problems of the past may be unresolved and contribute to the rise in corruption

(Van Vuuren, 2014). Van Vuuren (2014) also indicates that “this should not be seen as a phenomenon of individual scandals but rather the outcome of corrupted networks that have morphed and changed over three decades and four unique periods of governance” (p. 1). Therefore, it can be seen why corruption can be a major push factor for the scarce-skilled undergraduates, because ethical behaviour is dismissed and this not only influences their internal environment, but also the extent to how much influence the external environment has on the change in their internal environment.

- Politics

Politicians are individuals who wish to be re-elected by votes to maintain their role as a public official in the economy, by promising favours and ‘buying’ votes through supporting or raising a variety of initiatives or programmes that interest different groups of the economy (Mohr, 2015). The government consists of political figures and they can be labelled as less hardworking or more corrupt than others, but this does not necessarily mean it is true, because they are human too, with their own flaws and limitations (Mohr, 2015).

Bureaucrats are people who are “rational economic agents who respond to incentives and try to maximise their salaries, status, power or prestige” (Mohr, 2015). Mohr (2015) also indicates that the funds and salaries that are distributed can be a somewhat daunting challenge in the public sector, because they tend to be less “cost conscious” (p. 288) than those in the private sector. The bureaucrats in the public sector are trying to ‘give more than they get’ and this results in loss, and a challenge arises when trying to solve this because performance and production are almost impossible to measure in the economic public sector (Mohr, 2015). This results in the unequal distribution of salaries because the bureaucrats disperse and raise salaries and with this status is rising along with the power these political figures hold and the stakeholders are suffering under their hand (Mohr, 2015). The ‘little’ people suffer when something is given, because there has to be someone taking it from; and the people in power will not touch their own pockets, they will rather feed off the economy as a whole.

Van Vuuren (2014) says that political corruption is at the forefront of the anti-democracy leaders’ list in South Africa. A securocrat can be defined as an individual who holds the rank or status by providing security to a politician in power through their status as a military or police officer of the law (Oxford Dictionaries, 2018). Securocrats are bureaucrats who offer security, and “there is

evidence to suggest that the securocrats are playing a key role in politics as they work hand in glove with politically compromised politicians” (Van Vuuren, 2014 p. 2).

Therefore, one can say that politics and corruption are dependent factors and that together they can draw the big ‘picture’ as to why the corrupt political figures and bureaucrats in control of the macro-environment can influence the scarce-skilled undergraduates and others in the market- and micro-environment.

- Unemployment

According to Mohr and Fourie (2008), unemployment may be the most daunting economic problem that not even South Africa faces day in and day out. Unemployment can be influenced by various factors described in the study, such as B-BBEE, employment equity, geographical influences, education, corruption in the macro-, market-, and micro-environment through political bureaucrats who boost their salaries without proper reason. B-BBEE, employment equity, geographical influences and education were explained in Chapter 2. These are some of the major push factors that can influence an individual to mobilise to a more convenient and favourable area, either nationally or internationally. If these elements do not convince someone to mobilise, then the lack of proper employment might be the last straw that motivates an individual to mobilise internationally, especially when the promises of better wages, safety and better living conditions are dangling in front of their faces. The economy as a whole has been suffering, and this results in the slow creation of jobs and the supply outweighs the demand (Barker, 2007). Du Plessis (2009) also indicates that the high unemployment rate leads to poverty, crime and homelessness. These are only a few of the factors that can push someone away from South Africa and all its problems. The unfair employment conditions may have a far worse impact on the decision to mobilise internationally than the unemployment itself, because Barker (2007) indicates that the more education one holds the higher the chances are to be employed. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 “empowers all to have the right to fair labour practices referred to section 23 (1) of the Constitution by establishing and making provisions for the regulation of the basic conditions of employment...” (Juta’s Pocket Statutes, 2013. p. 1). These employment conditions include, according to the Juta’s Pocket Statutes (2013):

1. Regulations of work time
2. Leave
3. Remuneration
4. Termination

5. Monitoring, enforcing and legal proceedings
6. Development
7. Code of good practice
8. Maternity leave etc.

These are merely a few of the employment conditions that the scarce-skilled undergraduates will take into consideration. We can also refer to it as job satisfaction, meaning the values that one defines as important, can identify with what the job offers, and the fulfilment thereof (Compton, 2005).

When one looks at the other push factors, the corruption and politics, one can see that these macro-environmental impacts will have an influence on the micro-environment and the employment conditions, because, like Mostert and Lotz (2010) indicated, the external environment influences the internal environment and the rules and regulations are not always followed. The employment conditions will differ in each situation, from the sector, geographical area, economic growth and external factors influencing the well-being of each and every individual who relies on the external environment and their political leaders, as also discussed in Chapter 2.

### **Pull factors**

The pull factors that the study focuses on include the factors that motivate scarce-skilled undergraduates to reconsider mobility to another country. Mobility within South Africa is not the concerning factor, because we are still retaining our skilled workers, and not experiencing brain drain, which means the loss of skilled workers to other countries (Barker, 2007). Pull factors usually include wages, living conditions, growth and development; and these are but a few that people describe as pull factors. In this study, the pull factors are not influenced by environmental, market or external factors (Du Plessis, 2009). They all include personal and internal immediate pull factors such as family, friends, culture and loyalty. It is shocking to see that not one of the participants named any other factor except these, meaning that there is no external labour market or economic factor that they identify as worthy to keep them in South Africa. The pull factors include:

- Family

The scarce-skilled undergraduates define their family as their parents and siblings, and therefore one can say that most of the participants have no partners or children restraining them from making

major life choices; they are ‘unrestricted’. Positive psychology can be described as the sense of what positively influences a person to be adaptive, positive, creative and emotionally fulfilling in their everyday lives and things that affect the average person’s behaviour (Compton, 2005). Positive psychology focuses on the behaviours of individuals in relation to how they manage to maintain and judge what is right and what is not. Compton (2005) says “this includes what they do for themselves, for their families, and for their communities”. The focus on families is that, on a societal level, the desire to maintain and grow a positive institution is strong; that is why the development of healthy families and communities is what we strive for in our everyday lives (Compton, 2005).

The importance of both mental and physical health is what we strive for, to be adaptive and to live a satisfying and productive life (Compton, 2005). However, sometimes the immediate environment and the positivity that we strive for are in a constant battle, for example the push factors can have such a strong impact on our psychological well-being that we are driven to the point where important factors such as family are the only thing keeping us positive and motivated; sometimes this may or may not be enough reason to reconsider mobility. Authentic happiness can be defined as the most fundamental strengths that one has and using them in our everyday lives, where our families are part of that everyday life (Compton, 2005). Sometimes the negatives of life, such as poverty, crime, unemployment, corruption, politics and other external factors may influence one’s positive well-being and it may be in constant battle with what motivates us to stay positive, such as family. It only depends on which factor overpowers the other factor more; this is what influences decision-making. Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) indicate that there is conflict between work and family life; where family values are the belief that family is important and the role that one upholds in the family and work life is the values that one strives for to achieve work and career goals. In Chapter 2, the undergraduates also indicated that they want a positive work-life balance, which also means to have a well-balanced lifestyle between work and personal life (Robertson & Cooper, 2011). If the South African labour market constraints an individual to reach their full potential and reach their career goals, then a problem may arise when it comes into conflict with family values.

- Culture and people

The culture and people the scarce-skilled graduates are referring to are the South African people and the culture that they are used to and grew up with. Culture can be described as the set of values, beliefs and behaviours that a group of people from one community display towards each other,

which has been passed down from one generation to the next; it is not a display or act, it is inherently learned as children because this is how that community focuses (Compton, 2005). The South African culture is unique and the way that people operate, act and accept is different to how other communities from different countries operate, act and accept. Ethnocentrism can be defined as the belief that your culture, country, language and behaviours are superior to others (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Kreitner & Kinicki (2010) define cultural intelligence as the “ability to interpret ambiguous cross-cultural situations accurately” (p. 100). Sometimes, cultural intelligence is what most individuals lack and it scares them to be unknowledgeable in the matter, so they would rather try to avoid interaction because they fear conflict through misunderstanding someone else from another culture (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). These undergraduates feel that they know the South African culture and the way that things are done, they feel that even though the economy and rest of the negative factors of the country place a strain on their happiness and well-being, they can overcome it with the people and culture they know and love.

- Loyalty

In relation to ethnocentrism in the cultural pull factor, loyalty can be defined as “in the sense of having the willingness to protect and save face for a person” (Bergh & Theron, 2009, p. 207), in this case a country. Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010) say “trust promotes loyalty” (p. 141). Therefore, the scarce-skilled undergraduates place their trust in South Africa and the people in it; they believe that things will get better, because some of the participants indicated in the findings in Chapter 2 that they preferred to mobilise within South Africa, rather than to mobilise abroad. This leads to loyalty for some towards their country. By trusting in South Africa and the people in it, they believe and feel that the goals that are set will eventually be met no matter how dire the situation may be (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Trust can inspire loyalty, which, in turn, benefits the South African labour market because the skilled individuals believe in and act positively towards it; this means that the loyalty that the skilled have towards South Africa may result in retaining and growing the skills in the labour market (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). Family, friends, culture and community can also establish trust between an individual and the larger economy as a whole, because this is what they know and therefore it builds loyalty. The loss of skills can be defined as the demand that another country abroad has for such skills and the promises are better than what South Africa has to offer (Goldman, Maritz, Nienaber, Pretorius, Priilaid & Williams, 2010). This is where loyalty is important to prevent the loss of skilled workers.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Research strategy**

This study explores and analyses scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions of future employment and mobility within the South African context. A multiple case study design was used in order to explore all aspects and options that arose in the data that was collected. These phenomena will be analysed and explored in-depth to ensure reliability and validity in the future.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research setting**

The one-on-one interviews took place in a booked room, in the library on the North-West University Campus grounds. Natural light was let in, so the curtains were opened and it made the room feel more warm and serene. The participants were seated with their backs facing the open window to avoid any distraction that could sway their attention away from the interview. Each participant was greeted when they entered the room with a warm smile and handshake and they were gestured to their appointed seat. Introductions were made and thereafter all the research study content was explained; it was made clear that they had the right to refuse an answer and to withdraw from the study if they felt uncomfortable or unwilling to assist further.

### **Entrée and establishing researcher roles**

Meetings were arranged with all of the important faculties, and the head of each faculty agreed to a certain time slot in which permission could be asked. The interviews were arranged via telephone and emails. The researcher saw the faculty heads as the gatekeepers. Permission was granted by each gatekeeper; they signed an approval letter. Not only did they give permission, but the gatekeepers also supplied randomly selected names and email addresses in their group of students. With this information, the emails were sent out and the interviews could be scheduled. Scheduled interviews ensured that the data collection process could commence.

An invitation was sent through email explaining the research and the study that was being conducted. Most of the students were interested in partaking in the study; a date and time were scheduled that best fit the researcher and the participant. The interview data was caught on digital

voice recordings as well as written down through observation notes. The permission that was granted to record the interview was also caught on tape as the researcher repeated the question “Do you mind if I record our interview?”, when the recorder was on. All of the participants agreed and did not mind that they were being recorded.

The researcher approached in a calm manner, and wished to make the participants feel relaxed and at ease. She remained calm and cool to make the interview feel less stiff and more comfortable, by explaining the research study in a basic way. She also feels that ethical and professional manners are what make you a great researcher, and prides herself in that.

## **Sampling**

Purposive sampling will be used, and the type would be snowball sampling. According to Yin (2016), this is the type of group that one insists on targeting because they have the most rich and important data that could be given in that specific study. Yin (2016) also said that these target groups tend to be smaller, but they are rich full of data, and therefore data saturation is met even though the group is smaller, and sometimes met faster than others. Snowball sampling can be seen as a snowball; it begins with a small amount of data but as the interviews progress, the more and more data can be collected and together the data is enough to be able to reach a conclusion. Snowball sampling also requires a specific target group, which was sought out and data was collected from (Struwig & Stead, 2001). The ‘rare’ target group is the scarce-skilled undergraduates. These undergraduates include engineering (electrical, mechanical and civil), actuarial sciences, chartered accounting and pharmacology, comprising of smaller groups but all of them are one larger target group.

The research sample consisted of 21 scarce-skilled undergraduates ( $N=21$ ) from the different fields, namely engineering (electrical, mechanical and civil), actuarial sciences, chartered accounting and pharmacology. The biographic and demographic characteristics of these participants are displayed below.



*Table 1**Characteristics of the research participants (N=21)*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	12
	Female	9
<b>Age</b>	21-23	21
<b>Race</b>	White	16
	Black	4
	Indian	1
<b>Language</b>	Afrikaans	16
	English	5
<b>Academic year</b>	Final year	21
<b>Field of study</b>	Electrical engineering	3
	Mechanical engineering	5
	Civil engineering	3
	Chartered accounting	3
	Actuarial sciences	4
	Pharmacology	3
<b>Employment status</b>	Employed/Bursary	2
	Unemployed/actively searching	17
	Not interested	2
<b>Work experience</b>	Yes	14
	No	7

The exact same participants were used in the second article as in the first. In the table, it shows that the majority of participants were male (57%) and the rest of the group consisted of females (43%). All of the participants were in the same age group, namely 21 to 23 (100%) and also in the same academic year (100%) of their studies. The majority of the participants were white with a percentage of 76%, and the rest of the group were made up by 19% black and 5% Indian. It is obvious that the language corresponds with the race percentages. Afrikaans is the most prevalent, with a percentage of 76% and the remaining 24% are English speaking. The electrical engineering, civil engineering, actuarial sciences and pharmacology all have a participation percentage of 14.25%. The mechanical engineering group showed a little more interest in the study with a participation rate of 24% and the remaining 19% fell on to the chartered accountants.

80% of the scarce-skilled undergraduates are yet to find a job after they graduate. The remaining 10% consisted of students who had a job for the following year through a bursary, and the other 10% are students who have not started looking for a job. Last, but not the least, it seems that 67% of the undergraduates have had previous employment experience, where they worked during the holidays and the remaining 33% have not had any experience in the labour market, they only studied.

### **Data collection method**

The study data was collected through a semi-structured interview data collection method, with the use of an interpretive case study paradigm. This paradigm can be described as the data that cannot be correct or incorrect, where the patterns and specific answers that arose more were seen as the most important data that could be used in the study. De Vos et al. (2011) states that the researcher has the final say in what can be labelled as important or unimportant, and what will be used in the research.

Multiple realities and outcomes will be retrieved from the data with the use of ontology in this interpretive case study paradigm. The data can lead to different case study outcomes with the use of this method. De Vos et al. (2011) states that all individuals differ from one another, and therefore one cannot expect a precise and one-directed answer from all of them. It is the responsibility of the researcher to interpret the data and place it into a category or group that can then later on be sifted and the best and most important data can then be retrieved through this process.

The interview questions were constructed and developed in such a manner that the main research problem and all of the underlying factors could be answered. The first research question can be identified as the 'ice breaker' and does not bring any value to the data, but can be seen as the introductory question to get the participants into the interview process before the real data can be extracted. The rest of the interview questions were developed through probing and explanatory questions to ensure that all the necessary and important data can be derived from the participants and that every aspect can be covered in the interview. A relaxed environment was established, but the interview process remained professional.

By fulfilling the role of a professional yet relaxed and open-minded interviewer, the researcher strived to obtain ultimate control in the relaxing and warm environment that was created. She remained friendly and open, making eye contact, and making use of gestures and open body language to let the participants feel at ease, so that they are able to share information without hesitation or discomfort. She prompted the importance of ethical behaviour, thereby making the participants aware that they are in a safe environment and that they should feel free to share any relevant information regarding the interview questions.

The interviews were scheduled far apart with extra time to spare; there was at least an hour in between each interview, which made it possible to listen to the interview that has been conducted just a few minutes ago, and to be able to transcribe the raw data onto paper.

The following interview questions were used:

*Table 2*

*Interview questions*

<b>Main questions</b>	<b>Additional probing questions</b>	<b>Explanatory questions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your experience, why did you decide to study (Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Accounting, Clinical Pharmacology, Actuarial Sciences)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What/who influenced your decision to study (Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering, Accounting, Clinical Pharmacology, Actuarial Sciences)?</li> <li>▪ Before making your decision, did you do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

	<p>research on your field of study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Would you identify your field of study as scarce-skilled?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, how satisfied are you with the possible employment options provided in the labour market?</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, how satisfied are you with the prospective employment possibilities in the labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What would you describe as your ideal work environment or condition?</li> <li>▪ Do you think that you will receive the wage that you are expecting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, what do you find worrisome in the South African labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Considering the human resource development systems?</li> <li>▪ Considering the economic growth?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly identify the relationship between economic growth and human resource development in the labour market?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you feel that there are certain geographic settings that can provide better employment opportunities?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you feel that there are bigger demands in certain areas for your skills set?</li> <li>▪ Would you rather be employed in a smaller setting or larger setting?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In your opinion, do you feel that mobility will be an option for you in the future?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do you intend to spend your skills in South Africa?</li> <li>▪ Explain why you would spend your skills abroad if you had the choice?</li> <li>▪ What would influence your decision to mobilise?</li> <li>▪ What would influence your decision to stay where you are?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Can you elaborate on your answer?</li> <li>▪ Can you tell me anything else you experienced?</li> <li>▪ Can you possibly give me some examples?</li> </ul>
Conclusion ( End interview questions)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any matters or aspects that you feel we should discuss further?</li> </ul> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you want to add anything related to your answers given in the above-mentioned questions?</li> </ul>		

## Recording of data

The research data was derived from one-on-one semi-structured interviews, by asking carefully developed interview questions that were recorded and documented through observation and digital voice recordings. It was made clear to each participant that the recordings were to be used for data and that their identity would remain secret. The most important part of the data recording was that each participant understood that they were in a safe and non-judgemental environment where they could withdraw from the study at any time if they feel uncomfortable or unwilling to answer a question.

## Data analysis

The data analysis will be best transcribed through the use of thematic analysis. The thematic analysis approach would be the best approach to use within this study and the data could be sifted and transcribed accurately this way. By confirming that data saturation has been met, the researcher could continue to analyse the data by the use of a six-phase plan developed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which can be defined as the best method to be able to sift and organise the data into relevant and informative data, which could be deemed necessary and useful in the research findings.

This article will identify the scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions; if they wish to spend their skills within South Africa or abroad, and what push and pull factors influence their decisions and perceptions on mobility and their future in South Africa in an exploratory manner.

Through the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase approach, the patterns can be identified. With data saturation and sifting, the patterns can be identified, and labelled through the use of the six-phase plan:

*Table 3*

*Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis*

	Phases	Phase description
Phase 1	Familiarising the raw data	By reading and re-reading the data, the researcher identified and familiarised herself with

		the raw data. She could only then proceed to transcribe the data, after she has “learned” the raw data. After all, one cannot code data without knowing and understanding the content thereof.
Phase 2	Coding the general information	The data was coded after patterns were identified and established within the raw data. The information was coded under “key concepts”. The “key concepts” were counted in each interview and this separated the important data from the unimportant data. The important data was more and repeated itself in each individual interview.
Phase 3	Identifying themes	The patterns could lead to theme identifying. The important data could therefore be separated into different themes. Each theme could be labelled accordingly to their identity and core concept. The themes were all relevant to the data and the research study.
Phase 4	Placing themes into categories	Themes were placed into categories; in this study, there are two categories. The categories are all relevant to



		<p>one another but they do differ slightly in terms of the data that was transcribed and themed in the previous phases. The themes that were developed can be identified as relevant, and the researcher felt that all her research questions could be covered by the data. Therefore, she can state that data saturation has been met.</p>
Phase 5	Naming and defining the main- and sub-themes	<p>The sub-themes described the themes and the themes described the categories. The categories were developed through the use of the research questions. The integrated categories, themes and sub-themes were all part of one whole, and each piece of the data contributed to the puzzle, to answer the research problem at hand. This is what the researcher strived for, to see patterns and answer questions. This was reached.</p>
Phase 6	Naming the final data analysis report	<p>The last phase will be to finalise and check reliability and validity. The researcher feels that she followed all the steps in an ethical and correct manner. She feels that she did</p>

		the best to her ability. All the data was transcribed, all patterns were identified and placed into categories, themes and sub-themes relevant to their content. The findings, limitations and recommendations will be refined and reported.
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### **Quality assurance of data analysis**

The four constructs developed by De Vos et al. (2011) will be used to ensure that the data in the research study is valid, reliable and up to standard. The scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions on the spending of their skills in South Africa or abroad were questioned and what identifiable push and pull factors had an impact on their decisions on mobility in the future.

This study is of an exploratory nature, with a qualitative design and the opinions and perceptions of the participants are what drive the study. The in-depth analysis of social and personal perceptions matter in the data collection method, completely different from quantitative research. De Vos et al. (2011) were used to identify and measure the research data, to ensure that the data is up to standard:

#### **1. Credibility/authenticity**

The data will be sifted and categorised through an ethical and researched approach; by following step-by-step rules, it will deem any data as authentic because it was researched and transcribed according to the book. Thematic analysis was used and therefore the relevant manner of the data that was transcribed and sifted will make the data relevant and credible.

#### **2. Transferability**

Transferability can be described as to transfer data from one situation to another. The researcher transcribed and sifted the data through an in-depth phase plan, and therefore the research can be transferred from one situation to another suitable situation.

### 3. Dependability

By using data that was derived from a valid and reliable research process like interviews, the reliability of the data can be ensured. The data was not changed or tampered with, the information that was derived from the interviews was used in the findings.

### 4. Confirmability

The data that was gathered and transcribed was stored safely and securely; the stored data could be used as confirmation if any other researcher wished to question the research. All the rules and regulations were followed in an ethical and correct manner.

## **Data recording**

Interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder. After each and every interview, the digital audio recordings were transcribed onto a Word-format sheet where it can be seen and read in black and white. Thematic analysis was used as a guideline and the data was transcribed through a well-thought-out plan and with the use of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis six-phase plan. The research participants were all labelled from "participant 1" up onto "participant 21". The researcher knew the age and gender of the participants beforehand with the use of the names provided by the gatekeepers in the permission granting phase. The race and gender could also be identified through observation in the interview phase. The other characteristics were retrieved in the interview answers. Therefore, it was important to transfer data directly after each interview to ensure that every detail and relevant information should not be forgotten or misleading.

The office in which the researcher does her work and stores her data is off limits to other prying eyes. The data is stored safely and securely. The digital audio recordings, observations and hard copy documents are all stored safely and securely. Each time progress was made, the data was printed out, saved and stored to enable dependability and confirmability. The data is stored on a hard-drive and email account. The following data was stored on a hard-drive, email account or printed out as a hard copy:

- The permission letters signed by the gatekeeper of each faculty granting permission to interview their students

- Interview invites, acceptances and scheduling arrangements saved and stored on the researcher's email account
- Hard copies were stored safely and securely
- Original digital audio recordings were saved and stored on a hard drive
- Digital audio permission given by the participant to be voice record during the interview stored on a hard drive

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical behaviour is what the researcher strived for in the research process and afterwards. She feels that ethical behaviour should not only come forth in your work, but also in your everyday behaviour; it should define who you are, and not who you try to be. The interviews and data collection were done in an ethical manner; the rules were followed as any self-respecting individual should do.

Transparency was conducted in her observations, which means to remain unbiased. She remained open-minded to any and all answers and opinions, because there was no right or wrong answer. The answer that was given would always be right because it was not to be compared or judged, it was to be considered and used where applicable. Qualitative data is that of complex and personal opinions and perceptions. If all answers would be the same, the world would be a boring and simplistic place.

All of the participants were informed of their rights during the interview, which include the right to refuse to answer, to withdraw from the study at any time and that they were in a safe space to say whatever they needed to say, because no matter what they would say, their identity would forever remain a secret. The permission to be recorded was caught on the audio tape, thereby making each interview ethical and according to procedure. No individuals were forced or threatened to partake in the study, as it was a voluntary research interview, and all participants were aware of this.

The researcher prides herself in her ethical behaviour and believes that all researchers should remain respectful, show integrity, be unbiased, honest, open-minded, accurate in their

observations, remain ethical and follow rules at all times. The ethical guidelines should be your guide and armour in research.

## FINDINGS

### Category 1: Mobility in and out of South Africa

*Table 4*

*Mobility in and out of South Africa*

Theme	Sub-theme	Quote
Mobility in South Africa		
	Contentment	<p>“P2- If I could go overseas or stay here, my motivation to stay here would be that I grew up here and I studied here and there are so many changes that happen when you go like the mathematics and regulations are different and I will have to study new regulations”</p> <p>“P3- If I had the chance to go overseas it would only be my family that would motivate me to stay here except when I get a better opportunity here. If I do get an opportunity in SA I would rather take that and move there than going overseas”</p>

		<p>“P7- I won’t go overseas because this would be my first job and I’m a very cautious person. I love to study in South Africa and I love this country, and it must be, it’s at the forefront of everything”</p>
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### **Theme 1: Mobility in South Africa**

The first theme covers the desire and satisfaction that the participants have to mobilise in South Africa to be employed, in other words these participants have the desire to spend their skills in South Africa. In the table above, the students are still hopeful about their future in South Africa; they seem to be loyal and think that there is always a way; they are content with staying in South Africa because they believe things will get better and they do not wish to mobilise overseas. They would rather mobilise somewhere in South Africa and test different geographic areas than mobilising overseas.

The participants seem content with staying in South Africa because they still have a hope for the future and what is to come.

#### *Sub-theme 1: Contentment*

To be content, one seems to be keen on an idea or subject of a matter (Soanes, 2002). The students are satisfied and happy with their current position in South Africa; they seem keen on learning and developing their skills in South Africa and show no desire whatsoever to spend their skills somewhere else. They are hopeful and optimistic about their future in South Africa; some of the students also stated that even if they struggle to find a job they would still not consider mobilising overseas or abroad as they have no desire to study or work somewhere other than right here.

Table 4

<b>Mobilising overseas temporarily</b>		
	<b>Exploring</b>	<p>“P5- I was looking to go overseas for a year or 2, but I would return to my home in Namibia. There are less political bickering there and big opportunities”</p> <p>“P6- My opinion is that I want to work for five years and I want to go overseas if I can. I would work for five or ten years and then I would go be a farmer. If I had the opportunity I would go overseas, but I would come back, I don’t have dependants so I feel I can go where I want to”</p> <p>“P9- If I had to travel abroad, I would not travel there to take my skills there, I would travel there to impress them with my skills so that they could come back and work in</p>

		<p>my country. Sometimes we are foolish, we want to take our skills to other countries and fail to apply those skills here”</p>
	<p><b>Skills enhancement</b></p>	<p>“P12- I would go overseas if someone gives me the opportunity, my biggest dream was to go study in Canada, but that didn’t happen. If they offer me a work there I would go over and make money there and then come back because it is still my home and I love my country”</p> <p>“P14- If I decide to go overseas it would depend on the groove of opportunity and the salary, currently I have applied to go to Germany next year and it’s not about South Africa it’s about the knowledge. I would go there for about five years to gain enough experience and then I would come back to South Africa”</p>



## Theme 2: Mobilising overseas temporarily

The participants have the desire to mobilise overseas temporarily, which means that if they do get the chance they will try it out, but they intend to return after a while. To optimise something as a short- and long-term goal is important in this specific situation, because the participants plan on mobilising overseas as a short-term plan, but intend to return because they can see South Africa in their long-term plans and goals.

### *Sub-theme 1: Exploration*

The participants expressed their opinion as that of an adventurous goal; they want to go overseas to explore the sights. Not only do they want to explore the sights, but they also want to explore the culture and people and obtain new skills. The participants want to mobilise overseas temporarily to explore the new environment and experience the way they operate and work. Some of the participants would mobilise overseas for a limited period of time and bring back the skills and experience that they have gained. They are not serious about mobilising overseas permanently – they intend to return.

### *Sub-theme 2: Skill enhancement*

The students are content in gaining skills and knowledge by going overseas and learning the ways that things are done on the other side. They want to gain knowledge by working there and possibly being able to practise it upon their return. Their mobility overseas is purely of a skills enhancement nature and they do intend to return. The students stated that they would jump at the opportunity, but they do intend to return because they have a love and loyalty towards their country.

Table 4

<b>Mobilising overseas permanently</b>		
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	<p><b>Spending skills abroad</b></p> <p>“P1- I would actually like New Zealand because my uncle is there, there’s nothing else work related keeping me here”</p> <p>“P4-I personally want to go overseas, I feel the strikes and stuff are bugging up the countries’ economy. And the places want people with minimum 5 years’ experience and the places I have worked at the labour force is weak generally”</p> <p>“P10- I would definitely go overseas, and it depends on what happens if I would come back or not”</p> <p>“P11- I would go tomorrow if I got the opportunity to go overseas. I would not come back, family and friends it’s sad but I would still go”</p>
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### **Theme 3: Mobilising overseas permanently**

The students in the table above did not mind mobilising overseas; they are tired of South Africa and the challenges and struggles that it has offered them. Their opinions and perceptions are to

mobilise overseas permanently because they see no hope or future for themselves here. There seems to be more push factors influencing their decision to leave than pull factors to stay.

#### *Sub-theme 1: Spending skills abroad*

The participants have no desire to stay in South Africa; they feel that there is no future for them and that there are way too many factors that play against them in pursuing and reaching the goals and dreams that they have set for themselves. They feel hopeless and pessimistic about the situation and various factors in South Africa. The push factors outweigh the pull factors and they have had encounters with the labour market and this changed their perception and opinions on the matter of staying and spending their skills in South Africa.

The students just cannot see why they should struggle with employment even after they have studied so hard and meet the required education, but South Africa keeps on hammering on the fact that one should get practical experience. They just cannot understand how one is supposed to gain practical experience if no-one gives you a fair chance.

The participants feel strongly about the fact that they would mobilise overseas if they had the chance; they do not mind leaving family and friends behind.

#### **Category 2: Influential push and pull factors on mobility**

Most of the time, preferences and opinions are influenced due to external factors, e.g. in this study, the push and pull factors that influence a decision based on whether these students decide to spend their skills within South Africa or decide to leave our country to spend their skills elsewhere. Push factors are those that push an individual out of a country, e.g. in this case, the corruption, politics and unemployment. Pull factors are those influential factors that influence an individual's decision to stay in a country; in this case, the pull factors are family, culture, people and loyalty towards South Africa (Du Plessis, 2009).

Table 5

*Influential push and pull factors on mobility*

Push factors		
	<b>Corruption</b>	<p>“P9- Honestly speaking with the times and status of our government now and matters of parliament we are one of the lowest, lowest and if you remember we were one of the top financial status countries but then we dropped to number three, when they took over and our president came and took the money and spent it and it was not only him its most of our government”</p> <p>“The push factor for me, uhm I should put this nicely, definitely our economic situation and our president doesn’t even have a matrix certificate our country is being ruled by someone who doesn’t even have matrix, it’s like wow. I am studying at a university and I am more qualified than the person ruling our country”</p> <p>P21-. “I would stay overseas mostly because of the</p>

		<p>companies there and experience there compared to South Africa, they are already developed there. The most worrisome thing here is the corruption and the people in positions who aren't qualified“</p> <p>““P8- If I could go overseas I would because the only thing that would bother me is the fact that I don't want to work under someone who isn't competent”</p>
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### **Theme 1: Push factors**

Push factors can be defined as the factors that influence individuals and the decision they make, the factors that drive someone away from something (Venter & Levy, 2011). In this circumstance, the push factors influence students to leave South Africa and work somewhere overseas.

For most of the students, the push factors were more than the pull factors, they were negative about the corruption and politics in South Africa. Strangely enough, this was not the turning point or influential factor that made them decide to leave South Africa; the unemployment was the major and foremost factor that made them negative about their future here. All of the participants said that if they were to struggle to find a job they would mobilise overseas.

#### *Sub-theme 1: Corruption*

Corruption seems to be the talk of the town; it revolves around most of the political figures in South Africa. Corruption can be defined as the improper or dishonest behaviour of individuals to

benefit themselves, disregarding the consequences or rules that have been set out (Holmes, 2015). It can be seen in the news that corruption is everywhere in South Africa and this not only impacts the larger sections such as the economy, but also the smaller factors in the economy, such as the labour market and the individuals within that system. It is like a cycle, one or more factors always influence another factor.

The main concern of the participants seems to be that people are placed in high government positions, and they feel that they are not qualified or competent enough to handle and run such a large system, i.e. a country. All of the students are more educated than the president himself. They feel that the president does not even have matric and that he is instigating corruption by stealing our tax money to benefit himself, as with Nkandla. By doing this, he is showing the whole of South Africa that I am openly and freely stealing, and nothing has happened to me yet. This was stated by some of the participants and is not the meaning or judgement of the researcher herself.

Some of the accounting participants stated that 20 years ago our financial status was one of the best and after that when people were placed in high government positions without prior education or experience that was when everything started going downhill. Shockingly, the leaders of a country can be so corrupt that in 20 years' time a country can be broken down to be able to barely survive at the bottom.

The participants feel that they are not willing to work underneath someone who is placed in a high position, getting the title and the wages and then they would have to do the work in the background and receive fewer benefits and wages. This is a major push factor for the students to consider spending their skills overseas.

*Table 5*

	<b>Politics</b>	“P3- I have looked at going to New Zealand and the only reason I would consider going overseas s because of the political problems in South Africa. The politics I’m talking about could be that the people are selling the
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		<p>companies to the Chinese and then the labour would be operated with machinery and this takes opportunities away from South Africans”</p> <p>“P5-. If South Africa’s politics keeps on going like its’ going then why would I come back?”</p> <p>“P6- The economics and politics could have a role in pushing me out of South Africa”</p> <p>“P11-. The push factor would be the politics and the murders on farms, I am fed up of South Africa”</p>
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### *Sub-theme 2: Politics*

Politics can be defined as the activities and actions that one uses to gain and hold power in a position, as in the government. According to the previous push factor, corruption, this can also be one of the main reasons for unlawful politics in South Africa. Individuals in high positions use their power to manipulate and influence others through various factors such as money, threats and rank to be able to get what they want.

The participants feel that politics are negatively impacting the South African government and within, also influencing the economy and labour market. The students are hopeless and feel that there is no use in staying or returning to the South African labour market if they will be negatively impacted through few employment options, unfair wages and weak employment conditions. To work for something and get nothing out of it, would be a waste, and this is why these students feel that they would rather spend their skills overseas where they will benefit from hard work and dedication.

There is a popular saying among the youth these days: “When an individual is lucky enough then they will receive the job they want with the perfect wage, employment conditions and working hours”. Luck should not be taken into the equation of one’s future, luck has nothing to do with it.

The South African government is corrupt and this affects the politics, economy and labour market negatively. The South African people in this economy and labour market are influenced through the rise and fall of each corrupt decision made by every political figure in power (Smit, Cronje, Brevis & Vrba, 2011).

*Table 5*

	<b>Unemployment</b>	<p>“P1- I want to go overseas because I’m tired of struggling I’ve probably sent out about 50 or more emails or sent in internship forms, and places don’t let you know. I feel I put in all the effort and there comes nothing from it”</p> <p>“P2- The reason I would go is because it is so difficult to find work here. I originally thought when I started studying that companies</p>
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		<p>would come and snatch you just because it is so scarce so I never thought it would be a problem to get work because it is so scarce”</p> <p>“P17-, if I was jobless at that stage then I would consider it but not for the intention of staying there. I would go overseas for the experience, they focus on a much better level than us”</p>
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### *Sub-theme 3: Unemployment*

Unemployment can be described as the inability to be able to be employed when an individual is seeking a job, other than that the disabled or people who are not actively seeking also fall into the unemployed group (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). The participants express that they are worried about their future in the South African labour market, because they are worried about being employed. Disregarding the employment conditions and wages, the students are worried about unemployment in general.

The participants are fed up and tired of struggling to find a job; they send out applications but receive no feedback. Some of the participants had the expectation that they would have many options when it comes to employment, they had a misleading idea about the employment options that they would be offered. The participants also said that if they are not employed and struggle to find a job then they will strongly consider mobilising overseas. They do not want to struggle in finding a job after they studied so hard for so long.

Table 5

Pull factors		
	<b>Family</b>	<p>“P1- I would say probably my family would keep me here and my girlfriend is still studying so I would stay here”</p> <p>“P3- If I had to chance to go overseas it would only be my family that would motivate me to stay here except when I get a better opportunity here”</p> <p>“P4- Probably just my family will keep me here, I would if I go overseas I would try bringing them all over with me”</p> <p>“P8- It depends whether I would come back, probably only because of my family”</p> <p>“P12- My family is the only thing keeping me here, I’m very family and house bound”</p>

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## **Theme 2: Pull factors**

Pull factors can be described as the factors that influence an individual's decision to consider a factor as a positive one (Venter & Levy, 2011). The pull factors in this study are to consider spending their skills in South Africa and not mobilise overseas. These factors are family, friends, culture and loyalty. The researcher observed that the pull factors were those of a personal and emotional bond; the scarce-skilled undergraduates took their emotions and feelings into consideration when they chose to identify pull factors. Through this observation, the researcher also noted that there were no labour market, economic or external factors that could be identified as an important pull factor, in fact none were identified.

These scarce-skilled undergraduates only identified their family as the top priority and after that their friends and the culture that they know. Others feel that they have a sense of patronage and loyalty towards South Africa. This is not labour market related and the researcher can therefore say that there cannot be other labour market or economic factors that can be identified as a pull factor to these scarce-skilled undergraduates. This is quite a scary development and discovery because if these students decided not take any personal feelings into consideration when considering mobilising overseas, then we could possibly lose all our skilled graduates.

### *Sub-theme 1: Family*

Family can be identified as your mother, father, siblings and extended family members such as aunts, uncles, nephews and nieces, to name a few. Family is the people you surround yourself with day in and day out, who you live with and grow up with. These are the people you have known your whole life and who take care of you from birth. It can be a traumatic and sad experience when one loses a family member, and to make a choice to leave those behind you have known your whole life can somewhat feel the same as losing a loved one.

If an individual decides to mobilise overseas, then they make the decision to move to another country and leave their “people” behind. They might be able to call and message, but the embracing hugs and life involvement will not be there anymore. Most of the participants expressed a hesitant and sad emotion when they talked about leaving their family behind to pursue a job. These participants said even if they go overseas to explore, they would return because of their family. Mostly, all of the students said that the thing that would keep them in South Africa is their family. Family seems to be the most important pull factor to these participants to reconsider mobility.

*Table 5*

	<b>Culture and people</b>	<p>“I would come back for the people, I learned on the farm that some people do make things harder for you but they also make it easier. I think that one of these days they will know that some people are more necessary than others, and then the balance would return”</p> <p>“P9-. I would come back for the future generation of South Africa and I would apply it here so that they can improve the skills of South Africa. The pulling factor would be the outcome generation”</p>
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Culture can be identified as the habits and behaviour of people in a certain environment; the way they walk, talk and behave (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). South Africans have a certain culture and most of us are proud of our culture and South African ‘ways’. The students stated that they are proud of the South African culture, because they know what is socially acceptable and what is not. The participants stated that they would come back to South Africa because of the culture and our future generations. They want to better the South African labour market for the future generations in South Africa.

*Table 5*

	<b>Loyalty</b>	<p>“P2-. If I could go overseas or stay here, my motivation to stay here would be that I grew up here and I studied here and there are so many changes that happen when you go”</p> <p>“P5- I would come back because it’s my home, and family and sentimental value. If I could take my family with, but South Africa has a unique mankind, because we have struggled so much we understand each other better”</p> <p>“I won’t go overseas because this would be my first job and I’m a very cautious person I love to study in South Africa and I love this country, and it</p>
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		<p>must be, it's at the forefront of everything"</p> <p>"P19-. My boyfriend would keep me here, my people and also we all have a sense of loyalty and patronage towards our country. I would think about it because their culture and people are way different than ours"</p>
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### *Sub-theme 3: Loyalty*

Loyalty can be identified as the inner emotional commitment one has towards something that has been there and will be there when an individual needs them or it (Soanes, 2002). The participants express a sense of loyalty towards South Africa, even with all the corruption, politics and problems. The students feel that they grew up here and know 'South Africa', and that we have gone through so much together that we understand our struggles and victories when we talk to each other. The students display a sense of loyalty and patronage towards South Africa.

They feel that the people and culture are different and that they would not adapt as well in other places than they would right here in their homeland. The love and loyalty towards South Africa are a somewhat important pull factor to these participants.

## **Discussion**

The objectives of the study indicated what the problem was and what the researcher wanted to explore. The general objective of the study was to identify which push and pull factors had an influence on the scarce-skilled undergraduates' perception of mobility in the labour market. There were several indicators that the participants viewed as possible push and pull factors that influenced their opinions and perceptions, which will all be discussed in the first and second objective summary.

- Concerning their mobility in the labour market, the students indicated three different options, as stated in the Chapter 3 findings.
  - *Mobility in South Africa*, which means that these students did not have the desire to mobilise out of the country; they did not seem interested. They stated that they would rather move around in South Africa from region to region, i.e. different geographical areas, as explained in Chapter 2, than mobilise abroad. The pull factors had such a great influence on their opinions that they did not even consider mobilising abroad.
  - *Mobilising overseas temporarily*: They indicated that if they were to get the chance they would mobilise overseas, but rather because they felt the need to explore or to enhance their skills set through the experience of how things operate “on the other side”. These participants had the intention of returning, because the pull factors were more important than the push factors.
  - *Mobilising overseas permanently*: These participants expressed a sense of anger; they were tired of all the things that were going wrong in South Africa. They indicated that “if they had the chance to mobilise overseas they would jump at the opportunity”. The pull factors did not seem to motivate or influence their decision to stay’ the push factors had taken too much of a toll on them.

Concerning the first objective, to indicate which push factors could influence the perception of scarce-skilled undergraduates to consider mobility, be it national or international, the participants identified corruption, politics and unemployment to be the most influential push factors with regard to their perception about the South African labour market, as well as corruption, meaning the lack of ethical behaviour among people in power in South Africa. According to Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010), corrupt people and their actions in the external environment, meaning the government, are influencing the internal environment, meaning the labour market and companies based in the labour market negatively, as explained in the literature review in Chapter 3.

Politics were also a major push factor that concerned the scarce-skilled undergraduates. As explained in the literature review of Chapter 3, the concerning factors were political parties, more to the point the Bureaucrats in power, who were distributing salaries without proper reason or control. Mohr (2015) states that it is difficult to measure and control where salary distribution is done in the public sector. Another factor that concerned the participants was that they did not want

to be employed under someone who did not have the skills, knowledge or education to be able to do their job or “leading role” correctly, thereby meaning people being placed in high positions without proper training or education.

Lastly, with regard to unemployment, the participants stated that if they were to remain unemployed for a long period of time they would seriously consider mobilising abroad. They did not want to struggle to find a job, and Barker (2007) indicated that the economy has been under a great deal of pressure due to the poor supply in employment and the oversupply in workers. A clear problem that was also indicated in the objectives discussion of Chapter 2 was that if the demand for jobs outweighed the supply of work that was being presented in the labour market, then the participants may even accept jobs out of desperation even if the wages are not up to standard (Barker, 2007). Smit, Cronje, Brevis & Vrba (2011) also indicate that the government can be judged on their need for affirmative action and economic empowerment, because this also places a strain on the supply of work in South Africa.

Concerning the second objective – to identify which pull factors could influence the undergraduates’ perception to reconsider mobilising abroad – the pull factors were all personal matters such as family, friends, culture and loyalty. The researcher observed that not one of the participants named or identified pull factors that were external factors, such as the working conditions or wages. It was all personal, and all of the participants indicated that family was the most important pull factor.

In Chapter 2, the participants stated that they wanted a positive work-life balance and, in Chapter 3, Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) state that there is a constant battle between work and personal life, the duty to uphold your status at work and to work hard, and the responsibility that you have to family members. Therefore, one can say that they would rather not mobilise or follow career goals because their responsibility and role in their family hold more weight and are more important to them.

The second most important pull factors were the culture and the people in South Africa. Those who did not want to mobilise overseas at all may have a feeling of ethnocentrism about them, which means to believe that your country, people and culture are superior to others (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010). The participants feel that they would miss the culture and the way things are done



in South Africa. One participant indicated that he “likes to braai”; and let us be honest, don’t we all?

The last pull factor was the loyalty the participants felt they had towards South Africa; they felt that if they were to mobilise overseas permanently it would be some sort of betrayal to their home country. Like Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2010) state, “trust promotes loyalty” (p. 141); the students trust that things are going to get better and that displays a true sense of loyalty towards their country.

### **Practical implications**

There are several practical implications for the push and pull factors that could assist in the overall scarce-skilled undergraduates’ perceptions on mobility.

Ever heard of the saying, the grass is greener on the other side? That might not be the case in every situation. The participants should take into consideration that not all the things are what they seem; there will always be some degree of corruption in any macro-, market- or micro-environment; it does not matter in which country you are based. In America, they have a president that they do not want. Donald Trump seems to be the most hated president in the history of America, and over a course of six months he has had the lowest approval rating seen in a long time, dating back to President Harry S. Truman (Johnson, 2017).

The participants should identify that other countries with fewer opportunities and skills may consider South Africa as the best place to be, to identify that immigrants are pulled to South Africa because our economy and opportunities might be better than theirs (Rasool, Botha & Boshoff, 2012). To understand that South Africa might not be the worst place to be in, there are other people in other countries who dream to live and work here.

Considering spending their skills in South Africa is important, because, as Barker (2007) states, we are losing our skills to other countries, which can be defined as brain drain. This makes the productivity and skills in the labour market worse, because Barker (2007) indicated that if we lose our highly-skilled workers, then the production may plummet and influence the labour market negatively; all that will be left are the lower-skilled workers. In other words, the scarce-skilled undergraduates should seriously consider spending their skills in South Africa.

## **Limitations and recommendations**

Any study has limitations, but with it comes recommendations that can be made for future research. This study is of a qualitative nature; therefore, facts and findings cannot be based on numbers and large quantitatively proven data. The opinions and perceptions of these scarce-skilled undergraduates are only that: their personal and private opinions based on a subject that they might or might not have much experience in. To indicate the severity of corruption, political influence and unemployment in South Africa, it will have to be compared to other countries; one should quantitatively be able to prove it. However, for these students, they indicated that these push factors were the factors that influenced their decision to mobilise or not, and that is what the research wanted to explore; opinions and perceptions, as stated in Chapter 2's limitations and recommendations.

The mobility of scarce-skilled undergraduates in South Africa seems to be a safe subject, because we still have our skilled workers in the South African labour market. However, mobilising overseas permanently is a lost cause, because we know that if these scarce-skilled undergraduates had the chance they would jump at the first sign to emigrate. The unknown fact is that we do not know if the participants who indicated that they would return to South Africa after two or five years will follow through with their commitment. The pull factors culture, people and loyalty may not have any influence on their judgement after a while, because people adapt and accept change.

Another limitation that should be considered is that the participants have not yet entered the labour market and their opinions and perceptions could change if the environment and circumstances are not favourable, as mentioned in the literature review of Chapter 3. If these scarce-skilled graduates do not find employment, they could possibly consider mobilising abroad, because Barker (2007) indicated that those entering the labour market for the first time might find it difficult to be employed, as indicated in the practical implications in Chapter 2. Future research could determine whether these participants changed their minds after entering the labour market, thereby leading to the recommendations.

The first recommendation is that the push factors should be measured quantitatively, to prove whether the corruption and politics have an impact on the loss of highly skilled workers;

furthermore, to also prove whether the unemployment of scarce-skilled graduates after graduation is the reason why they consider mobilising abroad, which leads to my next recommendation.

The second recommendation would be to reach the participants of this study and conduct another study on their opinions based on mobility and what they deem as plausible push and pull factors now after they have graduated and entered the labour market. The differences of the identifiable push and pull factors could be compared and an interesting study could be conducted.

The last recommendation would be to conduct a study on a comparison between different countries and their labour markets, to establish on what level the South African labour market can be seen. This study could inform and enlighten students on the differences between lower levelled countries and higher levelled countries, and who knows might even convince some of them to stay in South Africa if the results are favourable.

## **Conclusion**

This article explored the push and pull factors that had an influence on the scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions on mobility in the South African labour market. The findings, limitations and recommendations were discussed and explained; however, to indicate what the true and precise mobility of the participants was could not be established; whether they said they would not mobilise overseas, or they would. It completely depends on the experience they had and factors in the labour market once they graduated. The mobility of the participants all hangs in the balance of life events and choices made after graduation, and not in what they thought they would do while they were still students. The push and pull factors could also be different from when they were students until they graduated and entered the labour market; the lack of knowledge they had on the labour market could have limited their view on what can be indicated as important and plausible push and pull factors, because they only had little to none experience through holiday internships.

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

## **4. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

In the last chapter, the discussions and conclusions of each article will be covered. The limitations and recommendations as well as recommendations for practice will be discussed for article 1 and article 2. The findings and objectives of each article will be included in the conclusion. The study focused on the perceptions and opinions of scarce-skilled graduates regarding their employment opportunities and conditions once they enter the labour market. The first article covered this problem that arose in the study, which was that the students felt that labour laws and technological advancements threatened their chances of employment; and that the working conditions such as work-life balance, wages, geographical area, human resource development and recruitment could influence the employment conditions in the South African labour market.

In the second article, the problem that was investigated was the underlying push factors that had an influence on the scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions and opinions towards mobilising, whether the push factors had a major influence pushing them towards international mobilisation or a minor influence that did not influence their perceptions quite as much to have an impact. The pull factors were indicated to be personal and internal factors and feelings such as the love for one's family, the loyalty towards the South African culture and its people.



## **Article 1: An exploration of scarce-skilled undergraduates' perceptions on future employment within the South African labour market**

In the general objective, the participants indicated that they felt there were several factors that could influence their employment options and conditions within the labour market. These factors had a relevant contributing influence on their overall perceptions and opinions. The participants felt that the B-BBEE Act 53 of 2003, Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and technological advancements could hamper their chances of employment in the future (Venter & Levy, 2011). However, work-life balance, wages, geographical area, human resource development and recruitment could have a negative effect on the employment conditions they are faced with in the labour market, when they do find employment in the future.

The first objective covered the expected wages in the labour market; what the participants felt and perceived as the right or wrong wage. Despite the scarce skills they have obtained, the participants did not focus much on the expected wages; they were concerned with being employed as a forefront in their goals that they have set for themselves. This brings attention to the fact that the supply of work might be so limited that those demanding it may find themselves accepting jobs even if the wages are not up to standard (Barker, 2007).

The second objective covered the perceptions and opinions of scarce-skilled graduates regarding the employment conditions within the labour market. First off, the participants were concerned for their well-being, because it seemed that their work-life balance may be dictated by task-oriented companies. Robertson and Cooper (2011) indicate that the balance between your work and personal life may have a huge influence on your everyday positive well-being. Barker (2007) indicated that there are leisure seekers, those who seek leisure more than they seek work and then there are people who are quite the opposite, who prefer working longer hours over leisure time. In other words, the work-life balance that an individual is satisfied with completely hangs in the balance with what they prefer and what their personality is like.

The geographical area was not up for debate, as most of the participants said they preferred a certain area over another; some indicated that being in a small area close to their family was what they wanted, while others preferred a big city such as Johannesburg or Cape Town. This also indicated whether they are more family oriented or more work oriented to reach work goals. Family oriented indicates that they take their role as a responsible family member more seriously

than their jobs, whereas work oriented describes someone who yearns for appraisal and growth in the goals they have set for their careers, as explained in Chapter 3's pull factors (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2010).

Training and development were also under the concerning factors that the participants named; they felt that the training was not up to standard and that they wanted to be trained. The participants indicated that growth and development in a job are important; they want to grow and be promoted. The most meaningful aspect in one's career would be to have the ability to work and function at a higher level than you did the day, month or year before; to strive for growth and development to be able to solve problems and climb obstacles at a higher level than others (Grobler, Wörnich, Carell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2006).

The recruitment processes were also under cross-fire as the participants felt that these days they only look at your race and gender, rather than the qualifications and skills that you have. The undergraduates felt that the recruitment processes and procedures needed work and it would need work if they ever stood a chance at employment in the near future. In the literature review of Chapter 2, Robbins et al., (2009) explain that sometimes in the internal environment of an organisation, it becomes easier to follow habit than protocol, and that managers often take chances on recruitment and do things their way.

The third objective highlights the importance of economic growth and the influence it has on the environments within the external macro-environment. The students were more concerned with their immediate and internal environment, the workplace and the labour market area that they find themselves in. Internal and external environments were defined and explained in Chapter 3's literature review. Barker (2007) indicates that even though the economy is growing, it does not mean that the demand for workers will be more; this can be referred to as job-less growth, and in turn he also includes that the demand for workers may differ from time to time, despite the economic situation.

The fourth objective was to explore the participants' perceptions and opinions on the human resource development systems in the South African labour market. The labour laws, which include the B-BBEE Act 53 of 2003 and Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, were under the concerning factors that the participants indicated (Venter & Levy, 2011). They feel that with the lack of proper training and development and improper recruitment, their chances of employment were slim, and

the labour laws made an even worse impact on their chance because they were not in the favoured or ‘under-privileged’ group that these acts supported.

## **Article 2: An exploration of identifiable push and pull factors that could influence scarce-skilled undergraduates’ perceptions on mobility in the labour market**

The general objective of article 2 was to indicate which push and pull factors had an influence on the participants’ perceptions and opinions on mobility. There were three sets of mobility options that the participants included in their options for the future. The first set was that they considered mobility within South Africa; they had no intention of spending their skills somewhere else, which indicated that the pull factors were more important to them than the influence that the push factors had on them, as explained in Chapter 3’s literature review. The second set was that they would consider mobilising overseas, but that they would return because they wanted to. The reason for this would be that they only want to explore the area and possibly their options, but most of the participants said that they would return because they did not want to be away from their families. The last set was those participants who were fed up with South Africa and the push factors have taken their toll on them; they would mobilise overseas permanently if they were to get the chance.

The first objectives were those push factors that influenced their opinions on what kind of mobility they would consider. The three push factors were:

- *Corruption:* The researcher explains corruption as the lack of ethical behaviour or thought for others (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). The corruption of people in power has been influencing the South African labour market badly, because Mohr (2015) indicates that the actions of individuals in power such as bureaucrats in the public sector cannot be controlled, measured or contained; it is a somewhat difficult task to uphold.
- *Politics:* Politicians are ‘buying’ votes with their empty promises and the country cannot afford these promises that they are making; for instance, right before the start of elections, President Jacob Zuma offers free higher education for the poor and working class population of South Africa; where the Heher Commission clearly says that the state has no available funds to be able to provide free education (Areff & Spies, 2017). Corruption often occurs in the public sector between political parties. The promise of free education can be labelled as corruption, because of the lack of ethical behaviour as explained in the literature review of Chapter 3.

- *Unemployment:* The participants indicated that they were afraid that they will not find a job after graduation, because most of them have sent out their curriculum vitae and they have not received any feedback from employers. The undergraduates feel that if they are not employed within a certain period of time, then they will seriously consider mobilising to a more favourable environment, be it locally, nationally or internationally. It could be a real possible threat because Barker (2007) indicates that people entering the labour market for the first time may find it difficult to be employed.

The second objective includes the indicated pull factors of the scarce-skilled undergraduates. These included family, culture and people, and loyalty. Family seemed to be the most important pull factor, because all the participants indicated it as one; some as the only one. These pull factors were all personal matters and there were no other external factors that they could mention about South Africa that could attract them to stay here; for example, living conditions etc.

- *Family:* There is an old saying “old habits die hard”. The constant is what most people strive for, because it is safe and known. Family provides that safety net from the unknown. Compton (2005) indicates positive well-being as the ability to thrive in one’s immediate environment and to be more creative, open and willing to new things that may arise. Family can provide positive well-being through support and love. The participants feel that family is the most important pull factor.
- *Culture and people:* The culture of South Africa is a unique one, but every nation thinks like that. This can be called ethnocentrism, which means to think that your culture, people, language and behaviours are superior to other countries. The participants felt that they would miss the people of South Africa and they love the culture in which they grew up. Culture can be defined as the values and beliefs a group of people have, and that some behaviour can be seen as acceptable and some unacceptable (Compton, 2005).
- *Loyalty:* The last pull factor can be seen as a trust factor, because “if you trust something set it free, if it comes back it’s meant to be”. To be able to set something free, indicates trust on your behalf and the trust therefore promotes loyalty (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010). The undergraduates feel that there will be a positive change and South Africa will get better; they trust that things will get better. The other two pull factors can also have a positive influence on the loyalty that an individual has towards South Africa. It is of utmost importance that we limit the loss of skilled workers to other countries, because sometimes

the promises of another country can be inviting (Goldman et al., 2010). That is why, no matter how these pull factors may influence one's perception, they might just have an impact on convincing our skilled graduates to spend their skills in South Africa.

## **4.2 Limitations**

### **Article 1 and Article 2**

The limitations presented themselves as the study progressed in article 1 and 2, as well as the recommendations.

The first limitation is of a methodological nature, which means that the qualitative nature of the study limited the researcher to use statistical facts and findings to prove a point; however, as this is of an explorative nature, the opinions and perceptions of the target group mattered rather than the facts (De Vos et al., 2011). The questions in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 can also be researched quantitatively, but this has to be done in an entirely different environment with an entirely different group, because the current group indicated what they think might influence their employment and the employment conditions and those who were in the labour market might have an entirely different view of things, and this could be proven or studied quantitatively or qualitatively.

### **Article 1**

In the world we find ourselves, we meet different kinds of people, with different beliefs and morals. Each and every individual believes something different or they might think similarly about certain subjects; it all depends on the kind of person that they are (Cant, 2010). Barker (2007) indicates that you get someone who prefers leisure and someone who prefers work. This is where the term work-life balance comes into play; a leisure seeker might think that working eight hours a day is interrupting his/her family or personal time, where a work-oriented individual might find that eight hours of work per day might not be enough as they cannot get everything done in such a short time. Therefore, the proper work-life balance may remain subjective and it all hangs in the balance of the perceptions of the participants.

Wages are why we study, aim and work. The more wages you receive, the better living conditions and the more comfortable one can live. However, comfort can mean a whole different thing to one

person than it does to another. According to Brevis & Vrba (2014), Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) indicated that individuals work to fulfil and satisfy those needs that they have for something that they do not have; those unsatisfied needs motivate people to work for what they want. Individuals with different needs may want different things; for example, one may want a new car and this motivates them to strive for a larger salary than the other one who needs a new coffee machine. Therefore, the wages that someone wants can be different from one person to the next. According to Cant (2010), lifestyle refers to the way we live and “personality, motives and attitudes also influence lifestyle (p. 111).

The human resource management systems in the South African labour market were not measured or studied; therefore, one cannot say that there is a lack in the training and development in the organisations. This also includes the recruitment procedures. This can be linked to the first limitations that it has to be quantitatively proven and studied. However, this is a qualitative study and the perceptions and opinions are what matter – to explore the problem at hand rather than prove it through facts. Future research can be conducted to determine these questions in a quantitative manner.

## **Article 2**

The participants who indicated that they will not mobilise at all and those who indicated that they would jump at the opportunity are quite set in their answers. However, the underlying factor of those who wish to ‘explore’ and broaden their horizons for a while might be a daunting challenge. The question remains whether these undergraduates will return after a few years if they are settled and prefer life on the other side, because as Stats SA’s community survey suggested in 2016, approximately one quarter (26%) of South Africans have emigrated to Australia alone in a few years (BusinessTech, 2018). The factors that once motivated them to stay in South Africa might not have such a huge impact on them if they adapt and changed over time.

The second and last limitation indicates that even though these undergraduates indicated that the corruption, politics and unemployment would influence their perceptions to mobilise, their opinions might change once they enter the labour market. Mohr (2015) indicates that employees have “imperfect knowledge (information)” regarding the labour market and the offers it holds (p. 216).

### **4.3 Recommendations**

Despite the limitations, there are recommendations that can be made for future research and practice.

#### **4.3.1 Recommendations for research**

##### **Article 1**

The first recommendation includes to be able to prove the questions at hand quantitatively; to explore and research whether the labour laws have an influence on employment, or whether different geographical areas offer larger wages and better training or development.

The second recommendation might be in a different field of study, but includes not only indicating whether the wages are more in certain areas or less in other, but also comparing it to the living conditions of each section, which might be interesting to explore and research. For example, you might receive a salary of R50 000 in Pretoria, but pay R500 a week on gas; whereas you might receive R25 000 in Potchefstroom, but you might pay R500 a month on gas. The different possibilities and findings might make for an interesting research topic.

The last recommendation for future research will be to research the difference between the undergraduates before and after their graduation – the way in which their opinion and perceptions differ once they have entered and been in the labour market for a time. However, the researcher recommends that the new study might have better results if done quantitatively.

##### **Article 2**

The first recommendation for article 2 is that the push factors indicated in Chapter 3 should be researched quantitatively, to indicate whether the corruption, politics and unemployment really do have a negative impact on the perceptions and opinions of the now graduated participants. Their opinion on the South African labour market and on mobilising overseas could be investigated.

The second recommendation would be to contact the participants of this study in the future and to conduct a new study, based on their more recent opinions and perceptions; if they still feel that the same push and pull factors influence their decisions, or if they have a different opinion after

entering the labour market. Furthermore, it could also be shown who have mobilised and who have not, to compare whether they did what they indicated they would.

The last recommendation is to compare the South African labour market to other countries, which are better or worse off, to establish on what level South Africa can be seen in comparison to others.

#### **4.3.2 Recommendations for practice**

##### **Article 1**

Students should search for employment non-stop. They should also realise early in the game that it takes hard work and dedication to reach that high position in their career; that dream job they dreamed about as a student may be in the future and not in the now. The participants should realise that most new graduates have to first work hard and earn the high paying job that they were promised at university, even doctoral students have to work for a year for next to nothing in wages.

Organisations should remember that they should make way for the next generation by employing new and fresh faces. Kraak (2010) (as cited by Van der Bergh & Van Broekhuizen, 2012) indicated that organisations tend to keep older, skilled employees over younger, unskilled employees. Erasmus et al., (2006) indicate that organisations should also implement training and development as their top priority, because the lack of training leads to older employees, who have outlived their years in the company and might just be labelled as redundant.

Technology is developing at a rapid pace, and organisations should see this as a positive. However, instead of replacing human capital with technology, they should combine the two factors and the results could lead to endless positive possibilities in production (Venter & Levy, 2011).

The last recommendation for practice could be to implement correct recruitment processes and procedures; this can avoid redundant employees as well as unnecessary training. Often, individuals



find themselves in a position they only deem as a stepping stone in their careers, and sometimes companies will recruit and train them on their processes and procedures and after a year or so, they decide to leave. This is a massive setback for organisations because all the hard work and training would be for nothing and this is a loss in productivity. Therefore, the right recruitment procedure could avoid this problem in recruiting and retaining the correct person for the job.

## **Article 2**

To understand the broader aspects in the labour market, such as the economy in the macro-environment and the influences it has on the internal market- and micro environment (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2010), individuals should consider that South Africa might not be the worst-off place, that there are other countries that are worse off than us, the kind of country in which that population sees South Africa as the better place to be (Rasool, Botha & Boshoff, 2012). Lastly, skilled individuals should look at the broader picture and see whether South Africa loses all its skilled people, then the country will only get worse, because all that will be left are the lower-skilled or unskilled workers (Barker, 2007). Some may have to make a sacrifice and spend their skills in South Africa, and make South Africa a better place to be for future generations.

## **4.4 Overall conclusions**

In articles 1 and 2, the findings were indicated as well as the recommendations and limitations. To conclude, the researcher found that there were several findings in both articles; however, in article 1, the wages from different geographical areas could not be indicated because of the lack of knowledge the participants had on the subject and this study is of a qualitative nature. It was also indicated that whether the area is of a larger or smaller setting, it could not be determined whether the participants would receive more or less wages depending on the kind of geographical area for, instance a city or a town; this subject will have to be researched further in another study in the future. The limitations and recommendations in Chapter 2 for article 1 and Chapter 3 for article 2 could also explain what the researcher was able to determine and what information could not be retrieved.

The push and pull factors were included in the findings of article 2; however, due to the lack of knowledge the students had of the labour market, because their only work experience was at holiday internships and not a permanent or 'real' employment positions, it could indicate that their perceptions and opinions might change once they enter the labour market fully, because once people find themselves in an environment fully committed and involved, an internal assessment

could be made. Therefore, the perceptions and opinions could change or stay the same; it all depends on the work they find themselves in and the life events that happen to each and every participant. External factors could always have an influence on internal factors in the same environment. The events influencing the lives of the participants could not be established because this is in the future, and therefore a grey area. It can only be researched and proven through extensive future research.

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