

Future proofing business: attracting, retaining and motivating talent

By

Kalin Alexandrov Matev

GIBS Student number: 18001604

UP Student number: 26212227

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ABSTRACT

Organisations are engaged in a war for talent striving to attract and retain talented individuals in pursuit of unique competitive advantages. The largest workforce in the market, currently, is millennials and organisations are introducing new human resource (HR) practices designed to resonate with them in order to future proof their business. South Africa has one of the highest degrees of inequality, in the world, and this reality combined with historical social consequences has led to a shortage of skilled labour.

The main aim of the study is to provide insights to South African organisations regarding which new HR practices are most effective in attracting, retaining and motivating millennials. The study was guided by these new HR practices that have emerged globally within the last decade: employee value proposition; unlimited paid-time-off; flexible workplace arrangements; relaxed workplace attire; and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment.

The study reviewed literature surrounding the key concepts of attraction, retention and motivation of employees together with the literature on these new HR practices. An exploratory study was conducted, in an organisation currently implementing some new HR practices, in order to understand the phenomenon as it occurred. A sample size of thirteen was obtained comprising of ten millennials and three HR practitioners. The participants partook in semi-structured interviews targeted at understanding the effects the new HR practices had on millennials in an established South African organisation, and the data were analysed with thematic analysis.

The study found that HR practices promoting flexibility, autonomy and accountability are most attractive to millennials, and while the new HR practices are generally received positively by HR practitioners, they come with unavoidable negative implications, the impact of which can be mitigated proactively. The study provides a framework to managers and HR practitioners with which they can lessen the impact of the latter by following an approach that guides their decisions when selecting and implementing a new HR practice.

KEYWORDS

Talent attraction;

Talent retention;

Employee motivation;

Future proofing.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Kalin Alexandrov Matev

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CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction

Corporates and large organisations, with longstanding cultures and practices, are beginning to introduce new human resources (HR) practices in order to attract and retain talent in the market. This type of practice was referred to as the war for talent (Whysall, Owtram & Brittain, 2019). This is not a new war, in fact, it is a voluntary war fought by companies who believe that having better talent than their competitors gives them an advantage in the market (Whysall et al., 2019).

Organisations, including *JPMorgan Chase* and *Goldman Sachs*, that have a traditional brand, fuelled by its formal dress code, are starting to remove their ties, unfasten the top button and substitute their suit jackets for *Patagonia* vests (Green, 2016; Kollewe, 2019). Companies, such as *Apple*, *Google*, *Ernst & Young*, *Bank of America*, *IBM*, that have historically required specific qualifications from brick-and-mortar academic institutions are beginning to waive the requirement, of a formal degree, and give more weight to micro-qualifications, collected skills, personality and culture-fit for their entry-level positions (AccountingWeekly, 2019; Connley, 2018; Harte, 2019). Law firms, banks and businesses are beginning to allow their employees to take advantage of more flexible workplace arrangements by working from home or working at alternate times as long as they work a certain amount of hours a day (Harte, 2019; Legally India, 2018; Muhammed, 2018; Rubino, 2016). Leave policies have been seen as contentious issues in the past, as some employees do not feel that they have enough time off to spend with their new-born children, families or to recuperate from an arduous stint at the office but companies are beginning to offer 26-weeks of paid maternity and paternity leave (Hancock, 2019) and even unlimited paid-time-off to be used by employees when they need some valuable time away from the office (Carsen, 2019).

Organisations are favouring these HR practices as their aim is to target the current largest workforce in the market: generation Y, or millennials (Solomon & van Coller-Peter, 2019). It is these HR practices that organisations are building into their

employee value propositions (EVP) as they help position the brand, its tangible and intangible characteristics, in such a way that speak to the organisation's (i) culture; (ii) quality and image of current employees; (iii) its products and services; and (iv) what value the organisation offers its employees (Mascarenhas, 2019). The EVP is a way for an organisation to create an identity, or an employer brand. This translates into the type of individuals it looks to attract and what it believes gives it that competitive advantage in the industry (Mascarenhas, 2019).

There has been extensive research in the field of generational theory, and it is widely accepted that millennials can be defined as persons born between the years of 1981 and 1996 (Ng, Schweitzer & Lyons, 2010). The researcher acknowledges that there are varying definitions for millennials but has chosen to follow Ng et al. (2010)'s definition for purposes of this study. Ng et al. (2010) go on further to say that millennials carry with them a different set of values and expectations to their predecessors and these expectations extend to their career paths and their work environment.

Talent attraction and retention is an important strategy and as much as organisations are jumping on HR trends, and adapting their practices for the millennial worker, they too are experiencing negative side effects from these same changes. Allowing for employees to have unlimited paid-time-off and flexible workplace arrangements only works well under certain circumstances. In cases, this has led to childless employees feeling obligated to fill in when parents choose to leave early or take time off to attend to their familial responsibilities (Weikle, 2018). Some employees feel that having unlimited paid-time-off is paradoxical as they are still prescribed to take mandatory leave and feel that they need to mimic their boss's attitude towards time out of the office (Carsen, 2019). If an employee has a boss that trusts their team and is comfortable that they will meet their deliverables without being in the office, then that employee enjoys the perks of unlimited paid-time-off (Carsen, 2019). However, if an employee has a boss that rarely takes leave then they feel like that is the standard, and identity, that has been set by the archetype of their team (Carsen, 2019; Hogg, 2009).

There is also a financial impact when organisations look to introduce unlimited paid-time-off practices as they need to decide how to manage the current leave balance

sitting with employees (Carsen, 2019). Unlimited paid-time-off has been shown to attract talent but for existing employees it can have the opposite effect if an organisation were to zero out the balances without compensation or handle the existing leave balance incorrectly (Carsen, 2019).

Studies show that there is no silver bullet when it comes to an organisation's dress code either. Cardon and Okoro (2009) explored the perceptions that were attributed to dress code, showing that employees believed that a person is perceived as either authoritative and competent, productive and trustworthy, or creative and friendly depending on the level of formality of their clothes.

Considering South Africa's current economic climate of inequality, persistently high unemployment, declining global competitiveness, and a shortage of skills (Whiting, 2019) it is clear that the war for talent is at its fiercest in this country. Large South African organisations, seeking to participate in these trending HR practices, are confronted with a difficult decision as an uninformed change, in their HR practice, can lose them the battle and send talented individuals to their competitors. Studies have shown that certain practices are accepted and others not, Schlechter, Thompson and Bussin (2015) revealed that South African employees value financial benefits equally as much as non-financial ones but employees tend to have a preference for financial benefits. Makina and Bosch (2013) suggest that female employees felt more comfortable in a more formal dress code as it gave them a higher social status in the organisation.

There is uncertainty on the effect a new HR practice can have in an established South African organisation. In this war for talent employee satisfaction is arguably the most important determinant of employee commitment to an organisation (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014). However, it can also have a negative and unforeseen effect on an organisation's finances, productivity and brand (Carsen, 2019; Jensen, 2019; Johnston, Jackson & Kelley, 2009).

1.2 Purpose of research

Organisations are beginning to approach their HR strategies in much the same way they approach their marketing strategy. HR departments are focusing on the brand of the company to attract talented employees by introducing practices that promote work-life balance and are appealing to millennials (Harte, 2019) and by targeting their desired market through digital channels and social media (Professional Sourcing, 2019). This outward direction comes at a price and opens up an organisation to risk if the brand is not upheld across these new media.

The introduction of flexible workplace arrangements (Legally India, 2018; Muhammed, 2018; Rubino, 2016; Harte, 2019), relaxed workplace attire (Green, 2016; Kollwe, 2019), removal of the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment (AccountingWeekly, 2019; Connley, 2018; Harte, 2019), flexible workplace arrangements (Hancock, 2019) and unlimited paid-time-off (Carsen, 2019) are powerful levers that need to be pulled strategically as large organisations might be targeting the new millennial workforce but need to remain cognisant that the marketplace currently has five different generations in the mix and that not everybody will react positively (Harte, 2019).

Talent shortages are some of the biggest challenges that developing countries face today and this is largely due to the mismatch between skills produced at academic institutions and those required by business (Xingwana, Smith & Mazibuko, 2019). Coupled with South Africa's recent increase in its, already high, unemployment rate (Trending Economics, 2019), the war for talent has never been more topical as South African organisations are not only competing against other organisations, in the market, but are fighting the brain drain in the country as skilled South Africans are migrating to more developed countries for better opportunities (Xingwana et al., 2019).

This research seeks to identify the trends with which HR practitioners are experimenting in the South African market, to outline the positive and negative implications associated with these changes and to provide insights into the effects they have on an organisation's employees considering the context of the current economic climate. This study is aimed at providing organisations with an

understanding of the HR practices that will be most impactful and are perceived as most important for their targeted audience, millennials. It will seek to uncover and identify the potential implications of these practices by observing the effects they have in a South African organisation.

1.3 Research Problem

A number of established organisations, in South Africa, have recently introduced some of these novel HR practices: *Ernst & Young SA* removed the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment (Breakfast, 2017) and *Investec Limited* has lifted the lid on the paid leave and has left the choice of work attire to their employees (Le Roux, 2019). The researcher seeks to gain a view on whether the use of these new HR practices, namely (i) an organisation's EVP; (ii) relaxed workplace attire; (iii) removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment; (iv) unlimited paid-time-off; and (v) flexible workplace arrangements can be effective in increasing the level of attraction, retention and motivation of the largest cohort of employees, the millennials, which could ultimately lead to future proofing of the more traditional, established businesses in South Africa.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The war for talent (Whysall et al., 2019) is fought by companies looking to attract and retain the most skilled and talented individuals in the market. Studies by Xingwana et al. (2019) and Direct Hire (2019) show that HR practitioners find the shortage of skills in South Africa to be their biggest challenge in this war to attract and retain talent. Organisations have their targets set on millennials as they currently make up the majority of the workforce in South Africa (Solomon & van Collier-Peter, 2019). Millennials have been described as entitled, impatient and lazy; however, studies suggest that they are merely learning from the experiences of their parents and not seeking to follow in the same footsteps of frequent layoffs, high divorce rates and being over-worked (Ng et al., 2010). Ng et al. (2010) further show that millennials prioritise (i) good pay; (ii) good benefits; (iii) the prospect of rapid career advancement; (iv) meaningful work experiences; and (v) a nurturing work environment. It is for those reasons that millennials choose to negotiate their working conditions more fervently in order to have them aligned to their priorities of “making a life” over merely “making a living” (Ng et al., 2010, p. 282).

Amidst high unemployment rates and alarming inequality (Trending Economics, 2019) South Africa is currently faced with a fundamental shortage of skills and HR practitioners have changed their approach, from merely tolerating the millennial work force, to deliberately targeting them for recruitment (Direct Hire, 2019; Xingwana et al., 2019). Organisations are aware that skills are scarce in South Africa and believe that if they manage to recruit the best talent, from the existing pool of candidates, then it will provide them with a competitive advantage, enable the organisation to reach economies of scale with the aim of future proofing the business (Direct Hire, 2019; Xingwana et al., 2019; Whysall et al., 2019).

In order for an organisation to create volumes, and reach economies of scale, it must bring the right people together and connect them in such a way that they work together towards a shared goal. The modern economy has evolved from the first

industrial age into the age of information and hyper-connectedness and an organisation's connectivity, with its resources, has evolved with it.

The modern economy continues to have artefacts of a more traditional business model: organisations promote a retirement age of 65; employees are required to be physically present at the office and the regular working hours are from 08h00 – 16h30, Monday to Friday. This is no longer the world in which we operate, and millennials are connecting more with organisations that promote flexibility in their approach which suggests that there is a need for traditional organisations to adopt new approaches to their HR practices. As the world has transitioned into the fourth industrial revolution, and through the development of new technologies, organisations are required to enable a different form of connectivity which allows them to disperse their workforce and still co-create and work together.

There are a number of contemporary HR practices currently being used by younger, more modern, organisations, but this research only focuses on a few of these which will be presented in 2.3 below. These are 21st century practices that have emerged in the last 5 to 10 years and are not yet ubiquitous in the workplace however, organisations that are using them can certainly attribute part of their success to them.

2.2 Longitudinal overview of Human Resource Management

Human resource management (HRM) is a relatively new phenomenon, that originated in the 1980s, but it can trace its roots as far back as the beginning of the 19th century.

2.2.1 The 19th Century of human resources

The job landscape was quite different 200 years ago: large factories and manufacturing plants did not exist, but goods were rather produced by artisans and craftsmen using their own skills and tools. Thereafter, they would sell their wares at marketplaces. These small craft businesses were generally family-owned and managed whereby the family members would also form part of the workforce. More successful craftsman would experience a higher demand for their goods which had

led them to hire apprentices. Once these apprentices were trained up, experienced enough and had gained a good understanding of the industry they would tend to create their own craft business and the cycle followed. The first industrial revolution, of the mid-19th century, saw the emergence of factories and mass production. This led to the need of a different type of worker that was tasked with a single step of a much larger production process.

This period can be argued as the origin of HRM practices as the way of working had changed significantly: as machines and factories were immovable it required employees to work from a central location and saw the migration of workers to the factory. In order for the greater process to function effectively the factory owners were required to recruit competent individuals; train them on the specific task they would fulfil; and then devise a way of managing the large workforce.

2.2.2 The 20th Century of human resources

The beginning of the 20th century saw the emergence of a paternalistic approach from employers where factory owners began taking care of their human resources much like a father would their children. This led to reducing working hours, improved working conditions and the development of social welfare programmes. Thereafter, an era of scientific management was developed which sought to increase workers' productivity through standardisation and simplification of work based on the principles; (i) replace rule of thumb with science; (ii) harmony, not conflict; (iii) cooperation, not individualism; and (iv) development of every person (Turan, 2015).

While there were many philosophers that contributed to the field of human relations, the most influential of them all was Elton Mayo who is considered the founder of human relations theory. Through a number of experiments, Mayo sought to understand what things affect human behaviour and his findings revealed that social groups affect an individual's motivation and behaviour at work (Mayo, 1945). This research provided a different approach to managers, when working with their subordinates, as it highlighted the importance of the interest, respect and attention that they need to show to employees if they want them to be motivated to work harder.

2.2.3 The 21st Century of human resources

Since the first industrial revolution the concept of the workplace started emerging and the trends of the 20th century showed an increased focus on the employee and an appreciation of the importance their contribution has on the success of an organisation. The HR practices that led to the success of organisations, in the 20th century, have been thoroughly researched and this study is aimed at focusing on what is currently emerging: the non-traditional HR models of the new working world.

The function of an HR practitioner is to attract, select, retain and develop human resources with the aim of achieving employee and organisational goals (Cascio, 1998). What is widely accepted is that both traditional and non-traditional HR models find common ground with this definition as they relate around attraction, retention and motivation. Amidst the current economic climate, the labour market is forced to seek out other forms of income. This has led to the rise of the gig economy that is characterised by flexibility, variability and the fulfilment of spontaneous jobs on-demand (Gandini, 2019). A logical assumption can be drawn that, in this new world of work, traditional HR practices might not work, however, the practices that are showing promise are non-traditional, emergent and currently used in some of the world's most influential companies; examples will be presented in 2.3 below.

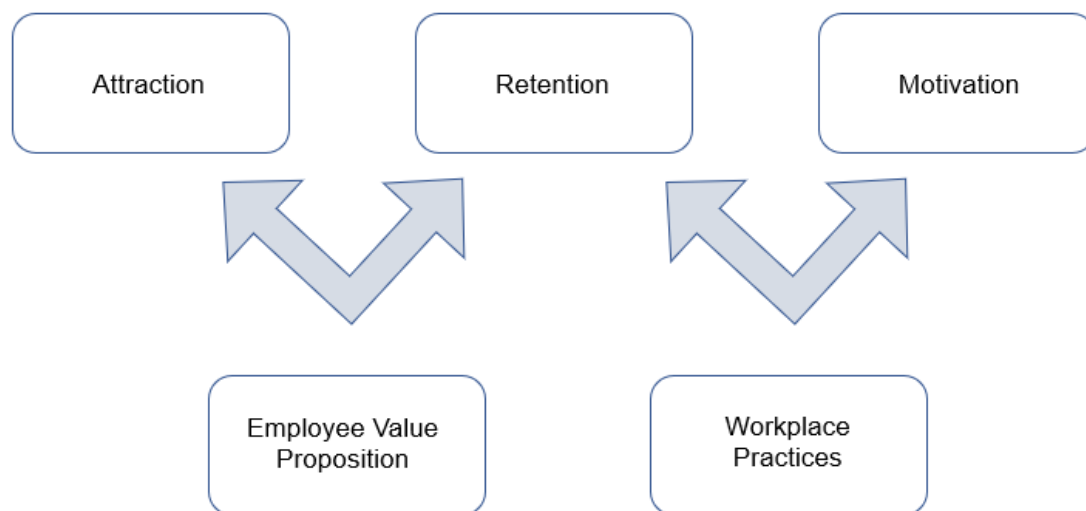
2.3 New HR Practices

Marketing departments focus on developing and executing a strategy to promote the organisation's value proposition to its target-market clients: its client value proposition (CVP). Similarly, HR departments focus their strategies at their targeted talent pool by developing monetary and non-monetary benefits that encourage the attraction and retention of talent (Watson, 2008) and if organisations can create a unique employee value proposition (EVP) then it can have the desired effect of attracting the targeted talent (Botha, Bussin & de Swardt, 2011). Extensive research has been done over the last few years on the types of HR practices that South African corporates have experimented with in order to improve their EVP. These include, but are not limited to, using technology in recruitment processes by creating online portals for applications and making use of social media recruitment through *LinkedIn*

and *Facebook* (Brandão, Silva, & dos Santos, 2019). Organisations have begun to implement gamification software and processes in order to drive productivity and have devoted much attention to the workplace environment by making it more engaging and comfortable for the same reason: to improve its EVP (Wanick & Bui, 2019). Organisations have also recognised that their younger workforce is aware of the fast pace of change of the market and seeks to provide further learning opportunities to employees so that they can acquire the necessary skills and stay relevant (Chaubey & Sahoo, 2019). This study will be focusing on the following HR practices that have not been used to such an extent before.

The literature below will show that new HR practices have an effect on the attraction, retention and motivation of employees; namely that an employer's value proposition, to its potential and existing employees, helps attract new talent and retain current talent; and that workplace practices serve as retainers and motivators in the workplace. The workplace practices that have been selected are relaxed workplace attire; flexible workplace arrangements; unlimited paid-time-off and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment.

Figure 1 Relationship of HR practices to Attraction, Retention and Motivation



2.3.1 Employee value proposition and employer branding

Since the global financial crisis, the war for talent has heated up as large organisations have found themselves in a position where they needed to cut their complement of employees and focus on attracting and retaining talented individuals (Gunesh & Maheshwari, 2019). For organisations to be successful they began to position themselves as aspirational employers by involving the HR department in their internal marketing. Employer branding and an organisation's EVP are linked to the extent that the EVP positions the organisation's values and personality in such a way that it crafts the ultimate brand and identity of the employer (Mascarenhas, 2019). The researcher considered the strong link between employer branding and EVP and referred to them together in this study. To this point Gunesh and Maheshwari (2019) highlight that marketing to clients is different to marketing to your employees as the value propositions vary. The EVP of an organisation needs to be unique for it to be successful in attracting and retaining talent (Botha et al., 2011). For South African organisations it is paramount that they develop an attractive EVP that will help them hold on to their competitive advantage otherwise the limited talent will seek out more attractive EVPs elsewhere. Considering the importance of the EVP, how can employers be sure that their positioning in the talent market is effective and, in the South African context, is it even necessary?

2.3.2 Relaxed workplace attire

Karl, Peluchette and Collins (2017) show that employees felt more confident and appropriately dressed when they wore formal business attire. It increased the perception of their power and similar studies show that women, in a South African consulting firm, felt like they were taken more seriously when they were dressed in formal business attire (Burger & Bless, 2017; Makina & Bosch, 2013). Formal business attire conveys authority and aptitude (Cardon & Okoro, 2009) which is not necessarily the case with more casual options (Cardon & Okoro, 2009; Karl et al., 2017) which at times can create the perception of a lower level of education (Johnston et al., 2009). However, there are conflicting views as organisations feel that allowing employees to dress more casually, rather than in traditional business attire, increases their level of engagement and commitment as it can be seen as a non-financial benefit in their EVP (Schlechter et al., 2015). South African

organisations are looking to stay relevant in the current market by following international trends (Green, 2016; Kollwe, 2019) but have they considered the potential negative effects that follow the relaxation of workplace attire in traditionally formal organisations?

2.3.3 Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment

The war for talent is predicated on the limited availability of skills in the market (Whysall et al., 2019). Traditionally, universities were designed to produce skills that the market required (Lan, 2018) however many studies have shown, and it is generally accepted, that there is a clear disparity between the skills graduates emerge with, from university, and the skills required by business (Xingwana et al., 2019). Coupled with the increase in new learning opportunities, that some organisations make available to their workforce, this had led organisations to lower their entry-level requirements for employability by removing the need for a university degree (AccountingWeekly, 2019; Connley, 2018; Harte, 2019). This trend has not yet spread too widely, across all disciplines, as some organisations are steadfast on the minimum requirement of a university degree as they feel that the experience and life skills, gained from the time spent at university, are also beneficial to the organisation (Lan, 2018). In the current war for talent can South African organisations risk employing non-degreed individuals or are they missing an opportunity by not doing so?

2.3.4 Unlimited paid-time-off

One of the defining factors of millennials is that they seek a work-life balance (Ng et al., 2010) and organisations are beginning to introduce unlimited paid-time-off into their EVP in order to attract and retain these millennials (Carsen, 2019; De Jong & Arevalo, 2015). The rationale behind unlimited paid-time-off is that it allows employees to take time off when they need to recuperate in order to be more productive when at work (De Jong & Arevalo, 2015) however, for it to be effectively introduced organisations need to have a conducive culture, the employees need to exhibit high levels of commitment and maturity, and the organisation must demonstrate effective leadership, trust in its employees and accountability (De Jong

& Arevalo, 2015). If an organisation does not have trust in its employees it can manifest in such a way that they do not take any time off, because they feel too guilty, and risk burning out (Carsen, 2019). Further, if the employee's leader demonstrates behaviours that are contrary to the flexibility of unlimited paid-time-off then employees would feel that it is not prudent to take time off (Carsen, 2019; Hogg, 2009).

Certain organisations require employees to take mandatory leave, as part of their internal compliance procedures, which can make the employee feel due to the leave being prescribed it acts more like the traditional leave practice as opposed to an unlimited paid-time-off practice (Carsen, 2019). Further, organisations must be aware that the initial implementation of this type of practice comes at a financial price as employees, which have accrued leave days, would be inclined to sell them back to the company as they will soon become worthless and organisations must ensure that that leave balance is handled correctly as it could have the opposite effect, to retention, if that balance is simply cleared (Carsen, 2019). An unlimited paid-time-off practice has shown to be effective and successful in start-up, and tech, companies (De Jong & Arevalo, 2015) but it has not been tested in a large traditional and established corporate. Do South African corporates have the correct foundations in place to successfully implement this type of practice and has the financial implication been considered?

2.3.5 Flexible workplace arrangements

Following the theme of work-life balance another benefit, that organisations are beginning to add to their EVP is reduced rigidity in the form of flexible workplace arrangements (Harte, 2019; Legally India, 2018; Muhammed, 2018; Rubino, 2016). Some advantages of flexible workplace arrangements include (i) improved comfort and efficiency on the job; (ii) the ability to tailor your workday schedule to be available for family commitments; (iii) the accommodation of unforeseen and non-routine commitments such as family illness and health care appointments; while the disadvantages include (i) that employees are more difficult to manage; and (ii) that there is greater difficulty when coordinating group activities (Danielson et al., 2003). The rationale behind flexible workplace arrangements is that it allows for employees to cater for their own circumstances and take accountability for their own work

without being prescribed specific working hours (Eversole, Venneberg & Crowder, 2012).

While studies on flexible workplace arrangements have been extensive there is no conclusive answer on whether flexible workplace arrangements increase an employee's work-life balance or productivity (De Jong & Arevalo, 2015). South African organisations might find this benefit attractive as, in the absence of an extensive and effective public transport network, it removes the pressure from an employee to battle traffic to be in the office at a specific time, it will allow the employee to potentially have more monthly disposable income as they will not feel the need to live somewhere close to the office, and it allows the organisation to be more agile with its capacity without the need to have to cater for a physical space for each person employed. Organisations must remain cognisant that there is a positive effect of the social system that exists in an office environment and that extended periods away from the office can have a negative effect on the employee (Muhammed, 2018). It has been suggested that mandatory days in the office could be beneficial to ensure that the employees remain connected and committed to the organisation (Muhammed, 2018). Do South African organisations have the necessary technologies in place to effectively enable their employees to work away from the office and how will they manage their remote staff?

2.4 Conclusion

There has been extensive research in the fields of talent attraction, talent retention and employee motivation but the literature is silent on which factors South African millennials perceive as having a stronger force of attraction, retention and motivation in their work lives. Further, there is a clear gap, from the organisation's point of view, on which factors the organisation feels are the most important and whether they correspond with the perceptions of their employees.

Future proofing entails understanding the impacts of external influences on your organisation, or thing you are looking to protect, and taking active steps to ensure future viability. Jones, Gallagher, Nicholls and Benn (2019) provide that elements for future proofing include the preparation of your employees to innovate at the rate of

change of the external environment in order to be able to take advantage of opportunities.

For an organisation to truly future proof itself, amidst the talent shortage in South Africa, it would benefit from understanding the levers that they can pull to attract, retain and motivate employees. The literature review was curated from multiple sources and it has emerged that there are differing opinions and findings on the topic of using new HR practices for millennial talent attraction, retention and motivation in a traditional and established South African corporate organisation. This study will aim to provide useful insights in a previously unexplored area to see if these new practices can be applied in more traditional business models and in more long-established companies.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Research Questions

3.1.1 Research Question 1: How are new HR practices affecting millennials in the workplace?

Research question 1 aims to understand the effects that new HR practices have on millennials in an organisation and to confirm whether they correspond with the desired outcome of the organisation. An organisation's EVP is seen as an attractor, and a retainer, of talent (Botha et al., 2011) while workplace practices, such as those mentioned in chapter 2, are also used to retain and motivate talent, see Figure 1. Karl et al. (2017) findings differ to those of Makina and Bosch (2013) and Burger and Bless (2017) as the former found that relaxed workplace attire aids in retaining and motivating millennials whilst the latter authors found that millennials felt that they were taken more seriously in formal attire. Ng et al. (2010) and De Jong and Arevalo (2015) posit that unlimited paid-time-off meets the needs of millennials and as such enables organisations to retain and motivate them for longer. Similar to unlimited paid-time-off, flexible workplace arrangements have also shown to retain and motivate millennials as they too provide an enhanced level of flexibility that millennials desire (Eversole et al., 2012).

The researcher proposes that if South African organisations implement these new HR practices that they can expect similar outcomes, namely augmented attraction; retention and motivation of their millennial talent.

3.1.2 Research Question 2: Which of the practices are perceived as most important to millennials when considering attraction, retention and motivation?

Research question 2 will help identify which HR practices millennials perceive to be most important in achieving work-life balance and a more satisfactory workplace environment. Ng et al. (2010) found that millennials desire (i) good pay; (ii) good benefits; (iii) rapid career advancement; (iv) meaningful work experiences; and (v) a nurturing work environment: essentially making a life over making a living. The

literature, in chapter 2, shows that the practices, this research is focused on, are attractive and desirable to millennials. Botha et al. (2011) posit that a unique EVP attracts and retains talent and if organisations focus on improving their own EVP it could give them a competitive advantage in the war for talent and help future proof the organisation.

The researcher proposes that new HR practices that promote flexibility, autonomy and accountability will emerge, as commonalities, from this question that will inform organisations which of the new HR practices are valued most by millennials and which should be considered, for inclusion, in their EVP.

3.1.3 Research Question 3: Why do millennials find certain new HR practices more appealing than others?

The new HR practices have been shown to have both positive and negative implications. For example, flexible workplace arrangements provide flexibility to the individual and creates a sense of personal accountability (Eversole et al., 2012). However, if an employee only works remotely, and does not engage within the social network of the organisation, it can be detrimental as performance is not only measured on output of work (Muhammed, 2018). Similar dualities exist with unlimited paid-time-off where this protects employees against burnout as it provides tired employees with the freedom and time to recuperate. However, employees have been found to feel too guilty to take time off which leads to inevitable burnout (De Jong & Arevalo, 2015).

Research question 3 aims to establish the reasons behind the choices of the millennials as this will inform organisations about potentially previously unknown effects of new HR practices. From this an organisation can determine whether these practices could be effective in future proofing the organisation in a way that is desirable and aligned to its values.

The research proposes that the new HR practices, introduced by organisations, will have both positive and negative implications but will be predominantly positive for the millennial workforce leading to an understanding behind these implications.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The intention of this research study was to see whether implementing new HR practices would be effective in the attraction, retention and motivation of the millennial workforce, in a traditional and established South African organisation, ultimately leading to increased performance and future proofing of the business. As new HR practices are emergent in South Africa, and supported by the literature, it influenced the chosen research methodology and design. This chapter focuses on the research methodology and design, target population and sampling method, and data collection, analysis and validation.

4.2 Research methodology and design

The research was approached from an interpretivist philosophical stance as the researcher sought to understand the social phenomena as they occurred in organisations (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This entails the researcher to understand the social world of the participants from their perspective. This research sought to uncover the meaning that the social actors, in the organisation, applied to the new HR practices (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) concur with the connection between the philosophy and add that this allows for meaningful insights to emerge through the study of the phenomenon.

As the researcher aimed to interpret the meaning of the world, from the perspective of the social actors, they inductively developed a general theory to explain the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Saunders and Lewis (2018) describe induction as a method in developing theories that involves moving from observations to hypothetical propositions and arriving at a general conclusion. This differs from a deductive approach, that seeks to test an existing general theory through investigation, and abduction which combines both deductive and inductive approaches in arriving at a conclusion (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The philosophical stance of the study, and that this phenomenon is an under researched area of study, has led to the research following a qualitative methodology. A qualitative approach allowed the researcher to create trust with the participants, of the study, by virtue of it being in their natural environment (Saunders et al., 2012) and to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomena at play in the organisation, which shed further light on the topic as it was not highly explored in the context of an organisation (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

In contrast, a quantitative study is associated with a positivist philosophical stance and a deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2012). Where a qualitative methodology gathers data to develop a general theory, a quantitative methodology uses data to test a general theory (Saunders et al., 2012). Further, the data, in quantitative studies, are gathered in a more structured manner which requires less rapport to exist between the researcher and the participants. Maxwell (2019) adds another fundamental difference between qualitative and quantitative methodologies in pointing out their founding theories: the former is based on process theory and the latter on variance theory. Process theory speaks to the connection between phenomena and events and how they influence each other, while variance theory revolves around the relationship between variables and their values (Maxwell, 2019).

In order to uncover more information about the topic, and gain more insight into the phenomena, the study was designed to be exploratory in nature (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher expected that this type of design would most likely lead them to tentative answers to which they propose, below, the need for it to be followed up with further and more detailed research into the phenomenon (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin, 2013). The hope of the research was to open the doors for future studies into the topic which were presented in chapter 7 below.

4.3 Population

The population of the study included all millennial workers and HR practitioners in the financial services industry as studies, of this nature, into this population are not yet extensive. Ng et al. (2010) define millennials as persons born between the years of 1981 and 1996 and HR practitioners are defined as persons working, in an

organisation, with the functional purpose to attract, select, retain and develop human resources with the aim of achieving employee and organisational goals (Cascio, 1998).

4.4 Sampling Method and Size

The researcher used non-probability purposive homogenous sampling for this study with two subsamples: millennials and HR practitioners. This meant that the participants of the sample were chosen based on explicit and clear defining criteria which allowed the data to be less random and provide more meaning to the study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Further, the homogeneity of the sample allowed the data to be more targeted towards answering the study's research questions presented in chapter 3 (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). In order to be successful, the researcher would need to gain physical access to the participants while building a relationship of compassion and empathy so that they may access the participants' insights and data (Maxwell, 2019; Saunders et al., 2012). Saunders et al. (2012) provide that judgmental sampling is where the researcher uses their own judgement in selecting the participants of the study and posit that it is appropriate in cases where the data from those participants would be best suited in reaching the research objectives.

The research was conducted at one point in time thereby classifying it as a cross-sectional study; further the researcher collected data from staff that were at different stages in their journey within the organisation and drew general conclusions based on the data that emerged (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The criteria, of the two subgroups, was chosen in order to limit the amount of variation emerging from the data which allowed for more in-depth exploration (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The criteria used for the millennial subgroup was that the millennials:

- Were between the ages of 25 and 35 i.e. Generation Y, or Millennials;
- Had little to no corporate work experience prior to joining an organisation in the financial services industry;

- Were currently employed in an organisation in the financial services industry; and
- Have worked in that organisation for a period of at least six months.

The criteria used for the HR practitioners' subgroup was that they:

- Had worked as an HR practitioner in the financial services industry;
- Had at least five years' work experience in the field of HR management (HRM) and/or recruitment;
- Were currently employed in an organisation in the financial services industry;
- Had worked in that organisation for a period of at least six months.

Due to the exploratory design of the study the researcher chose to collect data from a large organisation that was in the process of implementing new HR practices as they felt that it would enable them to gain a better understanding of the phenomena in a contextual and naturalistic way (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The researcher chose the sample from a single organisation to lessen the effect of immaterial variables that could affect the perceptions of the participants of the study (Verma, 2019). The selected organisation was a single South African bank. The bank has been considered to be one of the top employers in South Africa based on its progressive approach to new HR practices that are aimed at attracting, retaining and motivating millennial talent.

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) have proposed that twelve in-depth interviews would be satisfactory for a study targeting a fairly homogenous group where the researcher's aim is to seek similarities within that group and reach saturation. Similarly, Adler and Adler (2012) have a congruent view and suggest that a sample between twelve and sixty is ideal in qualitative research in order to reach saturation. Ryan and Bernard (2004) posit that saturation is dependent on a number of variables, one of them being the researcher's experience. There is no clear guideline to the size of the sample in a study using non-probability sampling (Saunders et al., 2012) but as the researcher was targeting a homogenous group, in a single organisation, and the researcher was a novice in the field of research the sample size totalled thirteen individuals whereby the researcher believes they reached

saturation (Ryan & Bernard, 2004). Data saturation is reached once any additional data, collected, yields little to no new themes (Saunders et al., 2012).

The millennial subsample size comprised of ten individuals that met the criteria. Five of the individuals were employed in an entry-level position and the remaining five were individuals that had since moved from that position into another role within the organisation. All ten individuals were selected from varying business units in the organisation; the researcher believes that this allowed the data to be more reliable as it was collected from varying perspectives (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The HR practitioner subsample size comprised of three individuals that met the criteria. All three individuals had at least a decade of experience in the field of HR which gave this research an experienced perspective on the phenomenon.

4.5 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis of this study was the perceptions of the individuals employed in the organisation who met the listed criteria.

4.6 Interview Guideline

The researcher conducted the study, and collected the data, by using semi-structured, in-depth interviews as it allowed the conversation to flow naturally, around the chosen topics of discussion, and it further allowed for new ideas to be brought up in the interview (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to spontaneously introduce new material into the interview, and probe the responses, in order to gain a more in-depth understanding from the participants' answers (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

As the study included two subsamples, the researcher designed two separate interview schedules to ensure that the questions were meaningful for each participant subsample. The two interview schedules can be seen in Appendix 2 and Appendix 3, respectively.

4.7 Data Collection

Potential participants were approached in person and invited to participate in an interview. Prior to the interview, they received a copy of the consent form, for their perusal, and were asked to sign it before commencing. The form contained an assurance that their data would not be used in an unethical way and that the data would be used solely for the purposes of the study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The consent form is presented in Appendix 4.

The study involved direct interactions with individuals on a face-to-face basis leading the researcher to avoid telephonic interviews as they felt that there could be a lot of information that could be gleaned from the interview experience itself which would otherwise have been lost telephonically (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis and the venue for the interviews was somewhere convenient in which the participants felt comfortable. The purpose of this was to create an environment that was conducive to an open and honest conversation where the researcher was able to probe deeper, into certain answers, to gain more clarity (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

In the interview room the participants were made aware of the voice recording device and asked to consent to its use so that the conversation could flow more naturally (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher made use of the interview schedules to ensure that there was a level of consistency of topic in the interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The interview schedules were used as guidelines and were not meant to be prescriptive in the order of the conversation (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Participants were encouraged to speak freely, provide any additional insights and ask pertinent questions, where they saw fit, but were asked to keep the conversation on topic if they did stray. The data from the recordings together with any observations and notes, from the interview, formed part of the data of the study.

4.8 Data Analysis

The researcher used an inductive, or conventional, approach when analysing the data as they believed that the existing theory was limited when referring to millennials

in a corporate organisation (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). On completion of the interviews, the researcher enlisted the help of a transcriber to have them transcribed to text. Following that the researcher made use of a data analysis tool, *Atlas.ti*, to code, categorise and theme the interviews. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) provide that an advantage to the conventional approach is that it allows the researcher to get direct and raw information from the participants which allows for a more effective testing of theory.

The researcher made use of thematic analysis to theme the data from the interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Following a process by Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher (i) read the data three times to gain a clear sense of the conversation; (ii) generated 74 initial codes; (iii) searched for themes in the initial codes which led them to (iv) review the themes closer finding relations between duplicate, or similar, themes; (v) defined the final list of 20 themes; and (vi) produced a final report presented in Tables 5 and 7 below.

4.9 Data Validity and Reliability

The researcher made use of respondent triangulation in order to validate the findings from the interviews and to ensure that the data was reliable (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The sample choice was deliberate in its design, by not selecting the potential participants from the same department. By interviewing individuals from different departments, the researcher was able to examine the evidence from the different sources to identify and build themes (Creswell, 2014). The researcher found converging themes from the various sources giving the study more validity (Creswell, 2014). Further, the researcher presented both positive and negative responses, in Chapter 5, allowing for the research to be more realistic and valid (Creswell, 2014).

Saunders and Lewis (2018) provide that qualitative research is underlined with a level of subjectivity in its collection and analysis. To ensure that the interview questions were understood as intended, the researcher ran a pilot interview prior to collecting data and made amendments to the interview schedule (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

To confirm that the data were reliable, the researcher checked the transcripts of the interviews to ensure that there were no material mistakes in the transcripts (Creswell, 2014).

4.10 Research Limitations

An important limitation of qualitative research is that the data collection process is often time consuming and complex (Rahman, 2016). The researcher's skill in research is limited which could have led to meaningful data being lost in the process or meaningful connections not being made which, the researcher felt, could lead to a need for further research into the topic. The data, in a qualitative design, is subjective as it is of a personal nature which puts a heavy focus on the researcher to remain unbiased when collecting and analysing the data (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The researcher made use of a voice recorder to ensure that no part of the discussion was lost however, as the interviews were not video recorded the researcher could have potentially missed meaningful physical data emerging from the participants' body language. The researcher believes that the results presented, in the following chapter, will need to be tested using a wider-reaching research design so that this research becomes more robust and statistically representative (Saunders et al., 2012). As the sample, in a qualitative design, is quite small it means that the findings cannot be generalised to the greater population as would be possible in a quantitative approach (Rahman, 2016).

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on the presentation of the results of the interviews conducted by the researcher. The study consisted of thirteen one-on-one, in-depth interviews from two subsamples, namely millennials and HR practitioners. The interviews were conducted to explore the perceptions the participants had on the new HR practices introduced by the organisation. The presentation of the data begins with a description of the sample, to give the reader context into the background of the participants, followed by a qualitative analysis of the participants' responses in answering the research questions: the analysis will be presented per research question. The data will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

5.2 Sample Description

The participants included in the sample were deliberately chosen to allow for the study to have rich data from diverse sources. Of the thirteen participants, ten were millennials that met the selection criteria and the remaining three were HR practitioners. 62% of the total participants were female and 38% were male. The average tenure of the millennial subsample was three years and 10 months and they were chosen from business units serving two different jurisdictions, namely South Africa (SA) and United Kingdom (UK) as this has a nuanced difference in their leave benefits. The geographical nuances are not part of the HR practitioners' world, as they are all employed under South African labour law, and their insights were designed to be targeted at their experiences of millennials in the workplace in relation to the organisation's new HR practices. The descriptive information, of the individual participants, is presented in Table 1 below, and the tenure has been rounded off to the nearest half year.

Table 1 Individual participants

No.	Pseudonym	Role	Gender	Tenure
1	Millennial 1 [M1]	UK HNW Banker (BH)	M	4.5 years
2	Millennial 2 [M2]	UK HI Banker (BH)	F	2.5 years
3	Millennial 3 [M3]	SA HNW Banker (BH)	M	3 years
4	Millennial 4 [M4]	SA HNW Banker (BH)	F	2 years
5	Millennial 5 [M5]	UK HI Banker (EH)	F	1.5 years
6	Millennial 6 [M6]	Private Banker (SA)	M	6 years
7	Millennial 7 [M7]	Operations Specialist	M	3.5 years
8	Millennial 8 [M8]	Business Improvement Specialist	F	6 years
9	Millennial 9 [M9]	Data Analyst	F	5 years
10	Millennial 10 [M10]	Data Analyst	F	4.5 years
11	HR Practitioner 1 [HR1]	Recruiter (CA)	F	11 years
12	HR Practitioner 2 [HR2]	Recruiter (IT)	M	10 years
13	HR Practitioner 3 [HR3]	Recruiter (Group)	F	17 years

The millennials listed M1 to M5, in Table 1 above, were employed in an entry-level position at the time of the study and included a mix between bankers that were working in a business hours (BH) role, bankers that were working in an extended hours (EH) role, and bankers that had worked in both business hours and extended hours roles. The researcher chose the sample in that manner as they believed that it would provide more richness to the data due to the participants having a holistic experience of the varying HR practices and how they were felt in their respective contexts.

There are some notable differences between a BH and an EH banker in such that a BH banker generally works during ordinary business hours, is employed on a permanent contract and, that employment contract, automatically gives a BH banker weekends and public holidays off from work. While an EH banker is employed on a contractual basis, with the option to renew after twelve months, generally works all hours outside of ordinary business hours and receives fewer employment benefits in their contract. The differences between these two types of employees, specifically in reference to key HR practices and benefits, are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Comparison between BH and EH (M1 to M5)

HR Practice/Benefit	Business Hours (BH)	Extended Hours (EH)
Remuneration	Annual package paid out as a monthly salary	Hourly pay amounting to variable monthly wage
Working hours (generally)	Weekdays between ordinary business hours of 08h00 – 17h00 (exact times may vary)	Outside of ordinary business hours, including evenings, weekends, public holidays
Provident Fund	Form part of the organisation's fund	Does not automatically form part of organisation's fund
Medical Aid Scheme	Form part of the organisation's scheme	Does not automatically form part of organisation's scheme
Annual Leave	Allocated leave days based on tenure	No contractual leave allocations
Sick Leave	As per provisions in South African labour law	No contractual leave allocations
Public Holidays	Not required to work based on geographical focus (i.e. SA or UK)	Form part of working hours (double pay)

With reference to the jurisdiction of the bankers, M1 to M5, a key difference lies with their annual leave and public holiday policies. Due to the fact that the UK has fewer public holidays, or “bank holidays”, a banker working in the UK jurisdiction is allocated more annual leave days. Further, as the bank holidays do not always correspond with South African public holidays, they would be expected to work during most South African public holidays.

The millennials listed M6 to M10, in Table 1 above, all begun their employment in the organisation, in the same type of entry-level position, as the millennials listed M1 to M5, and had since moved on from that role somewhere else in the organisation. The researcher chose the remainder of the millennial subsample in this manner as they believed that the different demands, and drivers, of the various business units would provide valuable perspectives to the study. The descriptions and key drivers of the roles fulfilled by M6 to M10 are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Descriptions and key drivers of roles (M6 to M10)

Business Unit	Description	Key drivers
Data Analyst	Translation of collected data into a meaningful form to help inform business decisions	Strategic objectives and day-to-day performance of the business
Operations Specialist	Design, implementation and maintenance of operational requirements of the business	Efficient day-to-day operations of the business
Business Improvement Specialist	Design and implementation of strategic initiatives of the business	Strategic objectives of the business
Private Banker	Relationship manager between the client and the bank	Financial targets and growth of individual client base

In contrast to the entry-level role, these roles come with a change in team culture, maturity of leadership and increased flexibility as the work can happen outside ordinary business hours without the need to be in the office building.

The HR practitioners, listed as HR1 to HR3 in Table 1 above, were all employed in the organisation with the task to attract, select, retain and develop human resources with the aim of achieving employee and organisational goals.

5.3 Presentation of Results

The results have been presented per the study's research questions and are presented in Table 4 below. The interview questions, in Table 4, are representative of the ones targeted at the millennial subsample. The questions targeted at the HR

subsample can be found in Appendix 3. The variations, of the interview questions, exist solely to be more meaningful for the different subsamples and hold the same targeted focus.

Table 4 Research questions and interview questions (Millennial subsample)

RQ 1:	Interview Questions
How are new HR practices affecting millennials in the workplace?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has this new HR practice affected you? • If you were applying to the company, how would this new HR practice affect your decision? • How would this new HR practice affect your decision if you were thinking of moving to another company? • Now that this new HR practice is here, how has it affected your motivation?
RQ 2:	Interview Questions
Which of the practices are perceived as most important to millennials when considering attraction, retention and motivation?	<p>I will now provide you with a short list of new HR practices that are being used around the world to improve work-life balance for millennials. Please rank them, from 1 to 5, in order of importance. 1 being most important to you and 5 being least important to you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer branding (EVP) • Relaxed workplace attire • Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment • Unlimited paid-time-off • Flexible workplace arrangements
RQ 3:	Interview Questions
Why do millennials find certain new HR practices more appealing than others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you rank the top 3 as you did? • Why did you rank the bottom 2 as you did?

5.4 Results for Research Question 1

5.4.1 Research Question 1: How are new HR practices affecting millennials in the workplace?

Research question 1 aims to understand the effects that new HR practices have on millennials in an organisation and to confirm whether they correspond with the desired outcomes of the organisation. An organisation's EVP is seen as an attractor, and a retainer, of talent while workplace practices (relaxed workplace attire; flexible workplace arrangements; unlimited paid-time-off and relaxing the minimum employment criteria by removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment), are seen to retain and motivate talent. This question led to the proposition that if South African organisations implement these new HR practices that they can expect similar outcomes, namely increased attraction; retention and motivation of their millennial workforce.

The data were categorised, and presented, around the themes that emerged; attraction; retention; motivation; and other frequent responses. The table below shows the frequency at which the participants agreed or disagreed that these new HR practices would attract; retain and/or motivate them together with four other frequent responses, namely (i) that the new HR practices were nice to have and did not speak to attraction, retention or motivation; (ii) that the new HR practices were a positive addition as it promoted work-life balance; (iii) that the new HR practices led to scepticism and in turn a negative effect; and (iv) that the new HR practices were beneficial to the health of the employees, and positive. The results are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Effects of new HR practices

Rank	Code	Frequency
1	Retention - Yes	12
2	New practices - Nice to have	11
3	Work-Life Balance – Positive	10
3	Attraction – Yes	10
5	Motivation – Yes	9
6	Motivation – No	8
6	Retention – No	8
8	Sceptical of new HR practices - Negative	7
9	Beneficial to Health – Positive	4
10	Attraction - No	0

5.4.1.1 Attraction

None of the 13 participants found that the new HR practices had adverse effects on attracting new millennial talent, to the organisation, and they felt that the organisation had never struggled in that pursuit due to the strength of the brand and positive perception in the market. As the participants, in the millennial subsample, are currently employed in the organisation they were only able to share their opinions on the attraction factor of the new HR practices, and not lived experiences. The researcher felt that the lived experiences of the HR practitioners shed more light on the question of attraction. A participant in the HR practitioner subsample (HR1) stated that the organisation had not battled to attract talented individuals as the brand is “aspirational”; “innovative” and “entrepreneurial” to which people “connect” and want to work for. HR1 continues to say that the culture of the organisation is attractive to talented millennials.

“We haven't really ever battled to attract those types of individuals before, because our brand is an incredibly strong one. It's an aspirational brand, people connect with it, they want to work with it, because it's innovative, it's entrepreneurial, so all of those things already existed. And the cultures appealing to youngsters.” (HR1)

The HR practitioner subsample had a unanimous view on the strength of the new HR practices when it came to attract new millennials to the organisation. All 3 HR practitioners stated that the new HR practices had increased peoples' curiosity with the organisation and that it attracted people that connected more with the organisation and its culture. 10 of the 13 participants agreed that the organisation's new HR practices were strong attractors for millennials.

“And more often than not, they actually ask us about it. So, they're coming in and saying, ‘Oh, my word. I've just seen this in the news!’ or ‘I've heard via my friend!’ or ‘I've read about “x”!’ or ‘Can you tell me about “y”?’ They're curious, they're curious-minded individuals, and which is also, again, the type of individual we would want to recruit.” (HR1)

“So, first of all, it's made it a lot easier to engage people to come to [the organisation]. Because people are interested, people are curious, in terms of how we're doing stuff differently... So, for me, it's made my life a bit easier because these guys know that they don't have to wear a suit and tie, whereas before it was like a repellent” (HR2)

“So, hundred percent from an attraction perspective, we have. It has made sense, people haven't, like when we've been offering people now on the new contracts, people are going on to no leave policy, they're amazed. That from the day dot. We track them, we give them autonomy in the way that they're gonna work, they're going to manage their time, etc. It's a very big statement on behalf of an organisation, specifically with a new starter. And we think that people will engage in a very certain way. You know, there's also, in my mind, specifically, millennials will respond well to this.” (HR3)

5.4.1.2 Retention

When it came to the effect the new HR practices had on retention, within the organisation, the participants had a polarising perspective, as opposed to attraction presented above. Table 5 above shows that 12 of the 13 participants felt that the

new HR practices would increase talent retention within the organisation while 8 of the 13 participants had an opposing view. The results indicate that although the new HR practices are attractive, they would not completely stop an individual from leaving the organisation. Some of the reasons mentioned were financial, career progression and the uncertainty with the South African economy.

“But if I was to make that decision now, after having some experience, I probably would go for the company with the higher pay. It's difficult, because obviously you want the culture, but the culture doesn't pay the bills at the end of the day.” (M2)

“I'm sure, I think the leave, like I said the flexibility is attractive. I don't think that would keep me here, to be honest. I think if there was a better opportunity elsewhere, I don't think the leave would be something holding me here.” (M8)

“And I think that more reason for people leaving would be to say I'm emigrating or ... I'm going somewhere else to further my opportunities, because there's a sense of worry around where we're going as a country. And I don't necessarily think it's because, you know, an employer is offering, you know, something significantly better.” (HR2)

The HR practitioners displayed an awareness that the new HR practices were not enough to retain millennials but added that learning and career progression are tools to retain them.

“But [millennials] [a]re not going to do meaningless jobs, and they're not going to not want to feel that they're progressing. That frustrates a millennial. And I think that as long as a millennial's learning, they'll stay engaged.” (HR3)

Results, from the millennial subsample, showed that since having exposure to the new HR practices, that promote flexibility and employee care, it would be difficult to move to another organisation with more restrictive practices. One of the participants, M4, spoke about her friend's experience in being denied religious leave as she had

already used up her designated days. M4 mentioned that they would not consider moving to an organisation that was not as accommodating as her current organisation. In contrast to M2's earlier comment, M5 stated that quality of life was more important than an increase in salary.

"It would be a big decision to leave [the organisation] and go somewhere that would be, you know, the old rules, the old way of doing things. I think once you've had exposure to a newer way of doing things, or a better way of doing things it will be tough going back to the old standard, you know." (M1)

"[The organisation] has been able to facilitate, you know, all religions, all leaves, as long as it's obviously managed and monitored by team leaders and all of that, and approved, but we've never been denied them. I wouldn't want to then go into a position where I'm denied that." (M4)

"It would be great for the first month or two months, because like I'm getting paid more. But when you don't have enough time to be able to enjoy that money, or just have enough and work-life balance. It just, it's just not worth it." (M5)

5.4.1.3 Motivation

When the participants were questioned on whether the new HR practices would motivate them the results showed that 8 of the 13 participants did not feel more motivated by the relaxed workplace attire but did comment that it made them feel happier. One of the participants, M8, spoke to the possibility of the unlimited paid-time-off leading to demotivation.

"Then those people who are working, slaving, like here every single week because they have responsibilities, are going to get frustrated because someone's taking one day a week, one day, you know." (M8)

“So, I'm trying to think. I don't actually think it's affected my motivation. I think my motivation, for my role, has stayed the same level. But it's made me happy at work, but for some reason that happiness is a different happiness to my role.” (M2)

“If I'm honest, I don't think it's actually changed my motivation too much. It's definitely something maybe to boost the morale a little bit. But in terms of the motivation of wanting to work and things, I don't really believe that comes from the policies of where you work.” (M3)

Through probing in the interview, the results showed that the 9 of the 13 participants elevated their thinking from strictly defining the “new HR practices” as those that had recently been introduced in their organisation. The participants described how their motivation would be positively affected when they were not restricted and are given the flexibility, and trust, to achieve their work in their own way.

“I think it affects motivation purely because there's just a little bit more of self-governance that's involved now. Because I suppose if you're going to be taking flexible leave or you're taking a little bit more time off. Now because there's an element of you being able to decide for yourself, you push a little harder.” (M5)

“And I think also to tie it to millennials in general, are very creative. And think very out the box as opposed to previous generations. So, putting them in boxes and telling them when they can take leave and when they should work, you don't get the most productivity out of them.” (M9)

“It is a two- way value relationship, it's a psychological contract you make with an organisation. If an organisation gives you freedom, autonomy, trust you, very upfront, engages you in a way that sets an expectation that's very different. You respond in that way; you psychologically are connected to that organisation in a very different way and you want to deliver differently.” (HR3)

5.4.1.4 Other frequent responses

5.4.1.4.1 Nice to have

The most frequent response, not related to attraction, retention or motivation, from the participants surrounding the effects that the new HR practices had on millennials, is that they were nice to have. These responses were at times targeted at specific new HR practices and not referring to them as a whole. In line with the new HR practices being “nice to have”, 11 of the 13 participants mentioned that the existing culture of the organisation, and how it has always been flexible, led to the feeling that the new HR practice have little effect. The researcher removed the organisation’s name, and other identifying names, from the quotes.

“Not to say that there was before the policy was implemented, but just as the culture. No matter what, even if [the organisation] introduces the culture of dress for your day, or unlimited leave, I feel like there's an ingrained culture that exists that will continue to exist, you know, as the business continues” (M4)

“I think the values of [the organisation] have always been used, besides the process and now the process finally aligns with it, which is awesome” (M3)

“However, that existed prior to any of the changes coming in. The team was always like that. So, we've always kind of had that freedom prior to any of the changes that HR has implemented recently” (M7)

The participants provided specific examples to their feelings around the unlimited paid-time-off being nice to have as they felt that it had never been denied in past. The participants mentioned that their leave balance was not considered as a restriction on them taking leave when they needed it.

“I really don't know anyone who's been denied because they don't have enough leave days” (M4)

“...that's how we've operated for years already. Even on a permanent contract, if you motivated that you needed it, then they can see ‘Okay, [expletive], capacity is fine’, or the capacity is not fine, doesn't matter, but you need it. It was always considered” (M3)

Similarly, participants, from both subsamples, felt that the relaxed workplace attire, in the organisation, was nice to have but it did not have much of an impact on retention.

“But [relaxed workplace attire] wouldn't form a part of my decision making. I think the job gratification would be more important than whether I get leave and how I dress” (M9)

“Yeah, I mean, I said it already. It's a nice to have, is it really going to mean we retain people, or does it really change people's lives?” (HR2)

“The relaxed workplace attire, as I mentioned earlier, it's much of a muchness for me. I mean, I wear heels everyday anyway, because I'm short. So, If I don't, then having conversations with someone is like, it's a neck ache” (M10)

5.4.1.4.2 Work-life balance

The next most frequent response, from the participants around the effects of the new HR practices, is that it felt like they had a greater balance between their work and their life (work-life balance): 10 of the 13 participants spoke to the improvement of work-life balance off the back of the implementation of the new HR practices. Participants from the millennial subsample mentioned having the time to travel; take care of their pets or attend to obligations outside of work is important to them. One of the participants, from the HR subsample, described that millennials view their lives in an integrated way adding that that was the reason behind the value millennials place on their time.

“I think it's important to travel, to see the world, to spend time with families, to have time to yourself, not just stay in office the whole time.” (M2)

“So, for people who do like to plan their lives and still want to do certain things while they're still young, works out perfectly.” (M3)

“But holding this way that we were thinking about everything in isolation just never worked, you know, to [millennials]... And first it was work-life separation, then it was work-life balance. And now when I say that millennials think about work and life in a very integrated way, it is just life actually.” (HR3)

The participants mentioned that having this flexibility gives individuals the opportunity to do other things that interest them in life giving more meaning to HR3's comment of millennials thinking about life in a more “integrated way”. HR1 speaks to the existence of this perspective as well.

“So, there's that aspect as well. And it may not only be a tech person, it may be a private banker, for example, if they want to further their experience, maybe they're taking their flexible leave to go further their education around a certain topic that they're not hundred percent clued up on.” (M6)

“But so, as a pure example, just in the last week, I've had to go to a doctor's appointment. So, for me to go, ‘cool. I'm leaving the office at three o'clock to get to this appointment’, and then to do the same thing the next day, and now have another referral, where I can go, ‘okay guys, I'm coming to work at 10 in the morning, next week, I've got this appointment’. Plus, then I've got my coach that I go to once every two weeks, and I leave the office for lunch, you know, for an hour and a half to go see my coach, and then come back here and no one asks questions, that is super, super important to me.” (M7)

“So yeah, you know, people want time back, people don't want, especially millennials, they don't want to have to work at a desk the entire day and you know, be constrained, they want to be able to connect with people; they want

to be able to have purpose in their life; they want to be able to fit in a round of golf before they come into work.” (HR1)

5.4.1.4.3 Sceptical of new HR practices

7 of the 13 participants were sceptical about the implementation of the new HR practices. The participants showed that they had their reservations with the introduction of these new HR practices as they believed that they could also have adverse effects. The participants showed concern that this could widen the scope of abuse of the HR practices and that the practices would not necessarily be fairly implemented due to their leader’s perception and feelings of the practice. Some of the participants, from the millennial subsample, were outright unhappy with the practices.

“I’m just worried about the people who are going to take advantage.” (M10)

“I’ll give you the example, like with the dress thing in [a specific leader]’s area, he will not have it...and people are apprehensive. Some areas haven’t implemented it at all. Like there are still conversations going on about it. Certain areas are just completely opposed to it.” (HR2)

“Even when I work from home, I feel like a fish out of water. I feel hella weird. I do feel very strange. And I don’t necessarily... I always sit in bed I’m like, I don’t like this.” (M8)

5.4.1.4.4 Beneficial to health

Lastly, 4 of the 13 participants, specifically from the millennial subsample, mentioned how they feel that an office environment is unhealthy and then spoke to the importance of their mental health. They added that the introduction of the new HR practices, that promote flexibility, are attractive and can be beneficial for an individual’s mental health.

“It's not a nice environment being under these fluorescent lights all day: I can't stand it. We've all dimmed our screens down to yellow, because like the blue light is too much... [the business] gives me anxiety, having all that noise, all the commotion, I'd rather like be in a quiet area.” (M2)

“Like you see some people, when they have to take a day of leave to like, do their own things, whether it's for mental health or things and they come back, sometimes you just needed that day. And I think when people have the opportunity now to take that, it'll definitely benefit them at work, they'll come back feeling refreshed and the big thing in there is no guilt.” (M1)

5.5 Results for Research Question 2

5.5.1 Research Question 2: Which of the practices are perceived as most important to millennials when considering attraction, retention and motivation?

Research question 2 will help identify which HR practices millennials perceive to be most effective in achieving work-life balance and a more satisfactory workplace environment. The literature, in chapter 2, shows that the practices, this research is focused on, are attractive and desirable to millennials; that a unique EVP attracts and retains talent; and that if organisations focus on improving their own EVP it could give them a competitive advantage and future proof the organisation.

The question led to the proposition that new HR practices that promote flexibility, autonomy and accountability will emerge, as commonalities, from this question that will inform organisations which of the new HR practices are valued most by millennials and which should be considered, for inclusion, in their EVP.

The researcher provided the participants with a physical list of new HR practices, that are being used around the world to improve work-life balance for millennials, and then asked the participants to rank them (by marking the list provided) from 1 to 5, in order of importance. 1 being most important to millennials and 5 being least important. The practices included employer branding (EVP); relaxed workplace

attire; removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment; unlimited paid-time-off; and flexible workplace arrangements.

The results show that the two subsamples had similar opinions on the new HR practices as both ranked flexible workplace arrangements; employer branding; and unlimited paid-time-off as the top three most important to millennials. And both subsamples ranked relaxed workplace attire and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment as the bottom two least important to millennials. The results are presented in Table 6 below.

Table 6 Ranking of new HR practices (importance to millennials)

HR Practice	Rank	
	Millennial	HR Practitioner
Top 3		
Flexible workplace arrangements	1	1
Employer branding (EVP)	2	3
Unlimited paid-time-off	3	2
Bottom 2		
Relaxed workplace attire	4	5
Removing degree as minimum requirement	5	4

The question that followed was designed to gain a deeper understanding of the rankings, presented in Table 6 above, and to probe into the participants' reasoning.

5.6 Results for Research Question 3

5.6.1 Research Question 3: Why do millennials find certain new HR practices more appealing than others?

Research question 3 aims to establish the reasons behind the choices of the millennials as this could inform organisations about potentially previously unknown effects of new HR practices. From this an organisation could determine whether these practices could be effective in future proofing the organisation in a way that is desirable and aligned to its values.

This question led to the proposition that the new HR practices, introduced by organisations, will have both positive and negative implications but will be predominantly positive for the millennial workforce leading to an understanding behind these implications.

The data were categorised around the themes of employer branding (EVP); relaxed workplace attire; removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment; unlimited paid-time-off; flexible workplace arrangements; and whether the participants felt that there were positive and negative implications of each. The quotes below provide more detail as to why the participants found that the new HR practices had either positive or negative implications together with detail around what was positive or negative about the new HR practice in question. The table below illustrates the frequency of which new HR practice was found either positive or negative and shows that the majority of the participants felt that the new HR practices had positive implications. The results are presented in Table 7 below followed by a detailed discussion on each new HR practice.

Table 7 Positive/negative implications of new HR practices

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Employer branding (EVP) - Positive	12
1	Unlimited Paid-Time-Off - Positive	12
3	Relaxed Workplace Attire - Positive	11
4	Flexible Workplace Arrangements - Positive	10
5	Removing Degree as minimum req - Negative	9
5	Relaxed Workplace Attire - Negative	9
7	Removing Degree as minimum req - Positive	8
7	Unlimited Paid-Time-Off - Negative	8
9	Employer Branding (EVP) - Negative	2
9	Flexible Workplace Arrangements - Negative	2

5.6.1.1 Flexible Workplace Arrangements

10 of the 13 participants stated that flexibility removes stress by providing an opportunity to do general errands during the week as opposed to the usual stress millennials feel to complete these tasks in their free time during the weekend. Flexible workplace arrangements were also attributed to retention of talent when

corporates provide millennials the freedom they value, and that personal comfort area allow for more focus and creativity.

“And If you can look at it differently and be like ‘Cool, I have an hour flexibility here or I can come in a bit later there, stay a bit later’, it gives you the time to be able to do something in the morning if you need to. Whether it's drop your kid off, go drop your car off for a service or after work you come home early. So, any of these practices that would give you flexibility in your Monday to Friday schedule would definitely benefit me, but I also think they would actually benefit other people. Because people need a little bit of flexibility.”
(M1)

“Millennials’ tendency, they are likely to jump companies, from company A to company B to company C to company D within quite a short period of time because I don't think corporates, let's focus on corporates, I don't think corporates are giving them what they want in terms of their own freedom, in terms of their liberation.” (M6)

“He says cool, because if you want me here from 8, you can have me here at 8, but I know I'm not going to be productive until 10/11. So, I'm going to waste four hours at work. So, I said then speak to your leader, because if you know you more productive in those hours, and you want to come to work for those hours than why not? He says because sure I'll come in that late, and I'll steamroll it for four, five, six hours and then like I take two, three hours to relax, and then I pick it up again at like nine o'clock, and then I'll work until like 2 o'clock in the morning. So, I think as an organisation, that's where we tried to get to, that you don't have to be here in order to be productive. I mean, I know I don't need to be here to be productive.” (HR2)

The data also showed that 2 of the 13 participants believed that it was important to socialise with people in person and that having the physical access to people, in the office, is an advantage.

“I believe in the communication and the networking skills of an office whereby you're walking in the corridor, when you run into someone it sparks up a conversation that you probably wouldn't have had behind a computer screen.”
(M4)

“I wish I was at the office because it's so much easier having people right there and you know, you want to ask them a question you have to go and call them and you have to find them.” (M8)

5.6.1.2 Employer Branding (EVP)

12 of the 13 participants did not want to work for a brand they did not connect with as they felt people, in their lives, associated them with the brand of the organisation. Millennials also showed that they are attracted to the EVP of the organisation when it cares for its employees.

“Corporates are caring more and more about, you know, their employees, it's not just a contract, they're investing in their employees.” (M2)

“Employer branding for me is a no brainer. I want to work for a company and say I'm proud to work for this company. I wouldn't want to work for a company with bad reputation, or with beliefs that I just I don't believe in. Or if they stood for something that I don't agree with.” (M9)

“People don't want to work in organisations with archaic thought processes around how you manage people. You know, they really don't. Because I think millennials are principle driven people. They don't want to work for an organisation whose principles don't connect with them.” (HR3)

However, 2 of the 13 participants stated that the organisational brand is not as important anymore and cannot be seen as a standalone factor of attraction and retention if the lived experience, of an employee, does not match the brand of the organisation. One of the participants, from the HR subsample, interpreted “employer

branding” as being a marketing ploy and has a lesser impact than the lived experience of the employee.

“I feel like you can work in a smaller company that's not that well known, but you can be a part of the development of it until it does become well-know. So, I used to be about big brands and all of that stuff, but that's why it's not number one because for me now it's not that important anymore.” (M2)

“Because I mean, it's one thing to have the company being amazing. But if the workplace arrangement, despite how amazing the brand is, doesn't serve me in my everyday life, or in terms of my greater goals, then what am I getting? Then I can say I worked for this amazing brand, but personally as a self, it drained me. And that's not good, again, I feel like it'll end up negating the employer brand because if people start saying it's a great place, it's a great brand, but you don't really know what it's like to work there.” (M5)

“So, employer branding, in my mind is like a marketing exercise. Try and talk about who we are. But for me, what's more impactful is if all of these other things are in line, people are going to be talking about it anyway. So, people will start to hear rather than have a marketing ploy, like on an ad type of thing.” (HR2)

5.6.1.3 Unlimited Paid-Time-Off

The data showed that 12 of the 13 participants believe that unlimited paid-time-off protects employees against burnout as it allowed them the opportunity to take the time off after tiring spells of work. The participants stated that they do not think that the annual allocation of leave days was sufficient. Unlimited paid-time-off was also seen as an enabler to supplement a millennial's salary by engaging in gig work.

“I know a lot of women who have children, you know, can work a half day for the first few months of the child's upbringing, just to ensure that the child is looked after and [the organisation] provides that, which is fantastic.” (M4)

“I can kind of supplement that time with spending it on my own entrepreneurial ventures which in turn would bring you more money, so there would actually be no need to go to another company which has a shitty culture but higher pay.” (M2)

“I’m looking forward to it, to be able to say ‘Cool, like, I’m really buggered, I need to take a day or two, or I need to take a week here, a week there.’ And then regardless of it being how much time I’ve already taken, you know, because things happen in cycles, you know, you might have like a really tough month and need a recovery day or two and it might only happen a few weeks later when you don’t actually need any time off.” (M1)

Contrastingly, 9 of the 13 participants believed that excessive leave would hamper the productivity of the organisation as the work still needed to be done in the employee’s absence. The participants of the entry-level millennial subsample were sceptical about the unlimited paid-time-off practice as they felt it would be too complex in a time-sensitive role. The participants believed that unlimited paid-time-off was susceptible to abuse and that it required close managerial supervision.

“If I have to go up and go for a month and leave the team to have to fill in for my absence, you know, there’s a part of me that would feel guilty for that.” (M4)

“I think there’s a big responsibility on leadership, leadership has to be on top of this to make sure that it doesn’t have the adverse effect where people are actually getting frustrated, because now the same persons on leave, I’m having to pick up your work.” (M8)

“And the main problem there is putting the responsibility in the hands of people saying to them, ‘Cool, it’s up to you to do it’ Like I don’t really know how to explain it, but people’s self-interests will overrule what the team needs.” (M1)

5.6.1.4 Relaxed Workplace Attire

11 of the 13 participants found that having the option to dress in relaxed workplace attire provided them with more options, and convenience, especially when their role did not warrant the need for formal clothes. The participants saw this practice as an addition to the flexibility that the organisation was looking to implement and HR3 qualified this by saying that millennials do not like doing things that make no sense and having a prescribed dress code is one of those things.

“I think now it's just I have more options if I don't do laundry to be honest. So that's about it. It's just, it's brought a sense of convenience in the mornings. That's about it.” (M10)

“I mean, 40% of our staff are IT individuals, tech people, and obviously the way the world is going is high tech, very digital, we have to teach our kids to code, etc. So, I do think that that probably will start to come up the ranks. I'm looking at it as now and I think that the workplace attire one will probably start to shift to the higher kind of rankings, because of the nature of the role that people are doing.” (HR2)

“We went to dress appropriately for your day. Again, it's about choice. Again, it's around flexibility. We've given people flexibility in dress code we haven't made it relaxed or dress down. I don't think millennials are that specific about not wanting to ever put a suit on. But don't tell me to put a suit on when it's not appropriate for the task that I'm doing. Don't tell me to put a suit on when it doesn't make sense and you're making me rewire something on someone's floor, like no.” (HR3)

While 9 of the 13 participants felt that, in the context of a bank, seeing an individual dressed formally creates an image of trust and shows that one is serious about their job. Furthermore, as this is an established brand, the participants felt reluctant to change to a more relaxed workplace attire as they felt that they were trying to uphold a corporate image and that it would be inconsistent with the organisational brand. A

preference for formal clothes was observed as the participants said that it made them feel like they were at work when dressed in that way.

“Maybe relax a little bit on the dressing on a Friday, but I still feel that if I feel smart, I look smart. If I look smart, I feel smart.” (M8)

“And for me, when I look at somebody who's dressed in a suit, or a woman who's dressed in, you know, an appropriate dress, for me, it creates an image, it still does. I mean, I'm 25 and I'm still in that in that mind frame of formal creates trust.” (M4)

“So, I went to a client the other day, and he said, I'm surprised you're wearing a suit and a tie. And I said you're obviously basing that on the news that went out around the dress for your day policy. He said, absolutely. He said, I'm very pleased that you have come to me in a suit and a tie.” (M6)

“Like, I think you leave high school, you leave varsity and you leave your hoodies and jeans behind and you're like okay I'm old now and entering the corporate world. So, I think, yeah, that might affect me a little.” (M2)

5.6.1.5 Removing the Undergraduate Degree as a Minimum Requirement for employment

The data shows that 8 of the 13 participants feel that a degree is not necessary unless one is looking to go into a specialist role that requires that qualification. When it came to most roles in the organisation the belief was that value should be placed on the output of good work, and experience, and not on the existence of a degree as the participants felt that having a degree does not necessarily mean that one is qualified

“Yeah, for certain industries, I don't think for software development, if you go into any creative field, and I don't believe there is such a big need. But I do

believe you know, if you're going to be a lawyer, a doctor, hundred percent, you need a degree.” (M7)

“I don't really believe that a degree makes a person, you know what I mean? Like it is a qualification. It's an achievement, not trying to take away from it. But, you know, I was lucky enough to start when there were still some people who were studying and had a matric behind them, essentially. But I mean, those are the people who taught me the most in terms of the job that I'm doing now.” (M3)

“I tend to lean towards looking at people's experience before their qualifications, unless it is a specific role that does require it.” (HR3)

However, 9 of the 13 participants stated that, through the process of completing a degree, one learns skills and discipline which is beneficial and should be valued. M5 added to this point by saying that a degree represents a person's tenacity in completing a task they do not enjoy which is a common reality once a millennial has entered the workplace. Another argument against the removal of the undergraduate degree, as a minimum requirement, is that having a degree increases mobility within, and across, the organisation.

“The difficulty on sometimes not having your qualification is not the entry-level role, or not the role you're going to enter into, it's based on the fact that we wanted to enable your mobility. So, if you're wanting to go into a far more technical role, or a space where they do require you to have some sort of a specialization or some sort of technical knowledge.” (HR3)

“But what I enjoy about a degree is that one, it just shows that someone can finish something because a getting degree is not easy. It's difficult and it's challenging. So, I kind of like what a degree represents, the fact that someone can finish something and complete it, sometimes it's not even about whether or not you liked it.” (M5)

“Something about an undergraduate degree that instils some form of discipline.” (M4)

5.7 Conclusion

The results of the research questions were presented in this chapter showing the insights in the effects of the new HR practices, on millennials, from the perspectives of two subsamples: millennials and HR practitioners. The questions were designed to understand the effects that new HR practices have on millennials in an organisation and to confirm whether they correspond with the desired outcome of the organisation, in terms of attraction, retention and motivation. To help identify which HR practices millennials perceive to be most effective in achieving work-life balance and a more satisfactory workplace environment. And, to establish the pros and cons that the implementation of new HR practices has on an organisation; namely, employer branding (EVP); relaxed workplace attire; removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment; unlimited paid-time-off; flexible workplace arrangements.

Through the study the participants showed both positive and negative effects of the new HR practices and there was some alignment between those effects and the expectations of the HR practitioners. The data showed that flexible workplace arrangements; employer branding (EVP) and unlimited paid-time-off were most valued, by millennials, seen in Table 6 above, as they provided an individual with the desired flexibility and an aspirational brand with which to be associated. Lastly, the results showed that each of the new HR practices carried both positive and negative implications, which was expected. However, the positive implications of the HR practices outweighed the negative and were seen as welcome additions to the employee value proposition of the organisation.

The results are discussed in detail in the following chapter after which recommendations will be proposed which could improve an organisation's talent attraction, retention and motivation.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

The following chapter includes a discussion of the results presented in chapter 5 above, from the 13 semi-structured interviews with millennials and HR practitioners, and how they relate to the literature reviewed in chapter 2 and the propositions put forward to the research questions in chapter 3.

6.2 Discussion of Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How are the new HR practices affecting millennials in the workplace?

Proposition: If South African organisations implement these new HR practices, they can expect similar outcomes, namely attraction; retention and motivation of their millennial talent.

Research question 1 aimed to understand the effects that new HR practices have on millennials in an organisation and to confirm whether they correspond with the desired outcome of the organisation. An organisation's EVP is seen as an attractor, and a retainer, of talent (Botha et al., 2011) while workplace practices, such as an organisation's EVP; unlimited paid-time-off; relaxed workplace attire; flexible workplace arrangements; and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment, are also used to retain and motivate talent. Karl et al. (2017) findings differ to those of Makina and Bosch (2013) and Burger and Bless (2017) as the former found that relaxed workplace attire aids in retaining and motivating millennials whilst the latter authors found that millennials felt that they were taken more seriously in formal attire. Ng et al. (2010) and De Jong and Arevalo (2015) posit that unlimited paid-time-off meets the needs of millennials and as such enables organisations to retain and motivate them for longer. Similar to unlimited paid-time-off, flexible workplace arrangements have also shown to retain and

motivate millennials as they too provide an enhanced level of flexibility that millennials desire (Eversole et al., 2012).

This study specially focused on five new HR practices namely, an organisation's EVP; unlimited paid-time-off; relaxed workplace attire; flexible workplace arrangements; and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment. The researcher proposed that if South African organisations implement these new HR practices, they can expect similar outcomes, namely increased attraction; retention and motivation of their millennial talent.

Keeping to the themes of attraction, retention and motivation, the results, presented in Table 5, showed that the participants felt varying effects of the new HR practices: that the new HR practices either did, or did not, help attract, retain and/or motivate them. The participants had also raised previously unexpected themes, namely that the new HR practices were nice to have; that the new HR practices enabled a greater work-life balance; that new HR practices led to reservations and scepticism; and that the new HR practices were beneficial to an individual's mental health. The following sections are structured to discuss each theme separately.

6.2.1 Attraction

The results showed that none of the participants felt that the new HR practices would not attract new talent into the organisation and cited that the perception of the organisation's brand, in the market, together with its culture were strong attractors of new talent. Mascarenhas (2019) posits that the purpose of an organisation's EVP is to position its brand and organisational value in such a way that it creates its own identity; this identity is used to attract individuals with whom the values resonate and, in so doing, create a competitive advantage in the market.

Botha et al. (2011) confirm these findings, and are aligned with Mascarenhas (2019), as they mention the significant relationship between a unique EVP and the attraction of new talent. A majority suggested that the new HR practices were strong mechanisms to the attraction of new talent as they targeted individuals that would connect with this type of organisational approach. In the experienced view of the HR practitioners, they agreed that the introduction of the new HR practices increased

the curiosity and interest, of people, in the organisation. These findings are in line with De Jong and Arevalo (2015) and Ng et al. (2010) as those studies show that the introduction of unlimited paid-time-off into the organisation's EVP makes it more attractive.

The study has shown that new HR practices have a positive effect on the attraction of new talent to the organisation when they form part of a unique EVP to which an individual, and potential employee, can relate.

6.2.2 Retention

De Jong and Arevalo (2015) state that the introduction of new HR practices in an organisation's EVP can lead to an improved retention of talent. Similarly, Schlechter et al. (2015) agree by saying that the introduction of new HR practices can lead to employees being more engaged and committed to the organisation. The results of the interviews are aligned in such that a majority felt that the new HR practices would increase talent retention within the organisation. Participants from the millennial subsample introduced reasons to the point of retention whereby having been exposed to the flexibility and increased employee care that the new HR practices had to offer, it would be difficult to move to an organisation with more restrictive practices. Further, the millennial participants discussed the importance of their quality of life and that it was more important than a salary increase. This aligns to Ng et al. (2010) wherein they state that millennials attach importance to a considerate and nurturing work environment.

While Karl et al. (2017) agree that organisations deliberately use new HR practices with the aim, of retaining talent, in mind they report that certain new HR practices miss the mark. The specifics of Karl et al. (2017)'s study will be discussed, together with Makina and Bosch (2013) and Burger and Bless (2017), below in relation to relaxed workplace attire. Many of the participants did indicate that while the new HR practices were attractive, they would not completely deter them from leaving the organisation amidst the economic uncertainty of South Africa. Xingwana et al. (2019) confirms these findings as their study showed that South Africans are emigrating to more developed nations to seek out better opportunities. This study has shown that new HR practices have the ability to improve the retention of talent in an organisation

but that they cannot defend against the skills drain caused by an uncertain economic climate.

In light of this phenomenon HR practitioners are required to consider way to increase the engagement of their millennial talent. Participants from this study's HR subsample are sensitive to this phenomenon and added that a focus on a millennial's career progression and continuous learning will help retain them for longer.

6.2.3 Motivation

Through the interviews the researcher found that the new HR practices did not outright affect the participants' motivation. The data showed that many of the participants felt happier and that it led to a boost in morale but not necessarily motivation. Schlechter et al. (2015) concur that new HR practices lead to a more relaxed workforce but add that this tends to have the effect of increased engagement and commitment. Further studies have shown that new HR practices that promote flexibility, and that allow for individuals to cater for non-routine commitments, can lead to more efficiency at work (Danielson et al., 2003; Eversole et al., 2012). Aligning to these studies, a large majority of the participants added that having flexibility and autonomy, to achieve their work in their own way, would positively affect their motivation as it allowed them to be more creative and connect with the organisation in a more meaningful way: one that is less prescriptive and more trusting.

While the participants could not articulate a direct link between the new HR practices and an improvement in their motivation, the researcher argues that being happier and more comfortable at work leads to more engagement and, indirectly, motivation.

6.2.4 Other frequent responses

Following the 13 semi-structured interviews, the study produced four previously unexpected themes from the participants, namely that the new HR practices were (i) nice to have; (ii) that the new HR practices enabled a greater work-life balance; (iii) that new HR practices led to reservations and scepticism; and (iv) that the new HR practices were beneficial to an individual's mental health. These themes did not

emerge from the discussion of all the new HR practices as a whole but rather when discussing specific new HR practices.

6.2.4.1 Nice to have

Regarding the new HR practices being nice to have, a large majority mentioned that the culture of the organisation had always been one where flexibility and innovation was encouraged; the new HR practices had merely made the practice more official. These responses align with Mascarenhas (2019) whereby an organisation positions its brand in such a way that it creates its own identity in the market that attracts like-minded individuals. This identity partly comprises of the organisation's values, culture and accepted behaviours (Mascarenhas, 2019). The data show that the organisation, from which the sample was sourced, has been successful in creating the desired competitive advantage. Further, it shows that new HR practices that promote flexibility, autonomy, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit can be successfully implemented in a traditional organisation.

6.2.4.2 Work-life balance

In terms of work-life balance, the majority of the participants refer to the new HR practices as being enablers of a greater balance. Important elements that emerged were that the participants valued having the time to travel; having the time to take care of familial obligations and to do other things unrelated to work. Millennials tend to think about work and life in an integrated way, rather than holding the lens of work-life separation, whereby all activities, including work, are seen as part of their life. Ng et al. (2010) speaks to this phenomenon whereby millennials' expectations of work are to make a life rather than merely make a living. A notable emergence from the data was that increased flexibility allowed the participants to dedicate time to learning new things; going to see a nutritionist during business hours and fit in a round of golf before work, which speaks to the ability to use their time to do things that are important to them, living their life in an integrated way, without feeling guilty that they were not physically present during ordinary business hours.

6.2.4.3 Sceptical of new HR practices

In contrast to the positive effects discussed above, the participants felt sceptical about the implementation of the new HR practices as they believed that they could have adverse effects, namely that (i) the new HR practices were susceptible to abuse without a consistent approach from leaders, and (ii) that a change in some of the current HR practices felt uncomfortable. Danielson et al. (2003) mention that a disadvantage of the implementation of new HR practices is that it becomes more difficult to manage employees when they have been given increased flexibility. There is an alignment between the literature and the feelings of the participants as they feel that the new HR practices have a higher likelihood of being abused which creates difficulty in managing the workforce. Danielson et al. (2003) add that when employees are comfortable, on the job, they are more efficient leading to the conclusion that the discomfort felt by the participants of the study can lead to a decrease in efficiency and an unintended consequence of the implementation of the new HR practices.

6.2.4.4 Beneficial to health

Lastly, a small number of millennials mentioned that they feel that an office environment is unhealthy whether it stem from the blue colour of the computer screens or the constant noise and commotion. The participants stressed the importance of flexibility and how it is attractive and beneficial to an individual's health. Ng et al. (2010) describe the importance that millennials place on having a nurturing work environment and how that is attractive to them. De Jong and Arevalo (2015) found that having increased flexibility promotes productivity when at work as it allows for employees to recuperate from tiring spells at work and allows individuals to focus on their health when they feel that it is being affected by an extended time in the office environment.

The researcher has found that while the implementation of new HR practices is predominantly positively received there are adverse effects that an organisation must protect against if they truly aim to provide an attractive, retaining and motivating environment for their talent. In order for an organisation to successfully silence scepticism and protect against adverse effects, of implementing new HR practices,

they should strongly focus on developing a consistent and robust process when dealing with potential abuse of the new HR practices. Further, when an organisation promotes flexibility and balance, in an employee's life, it can feel confident that it has created an environment that enables productivity and accountability. In so saying, this has the potential to put the organisation in a competitive position when seeking to attract, retain and motivate talented individuals.

6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Which of the practices are perceived as most important to millennials when considering attraction, retention and motivation?

Proposition: Common themes, around new HR practices that promote flexibility, autonomy and accountability, will emerge from this question that will inform organisations which of the new HR practices are valued most by millennials and which should be considered, in inclusion, in their EVP.

Research question 2 aimed to identify which HR practices millennials perceive to be most important in achieving work-life balance and a more satisfactory workplace environment. Ng et al. (2010) found that millennials desire (i) good pay; (ii) good benefits; (iii) rapid career advancement; (iv) meaningful work experiences; and (v) a nurturing work environment: essentially making a life over making a living. The literature, in chapter 2, shows that the practices, this research is focused on, are attractive and desirable to millennials. Botha et al. (2011) posit that a unique EVP attracts and retains talent and if organisations focus on improving their own EVP it could give them a competitive advantage in the war for talent and help future proof the organisation.

The researcher proposed that new HR practices that promote flexibility, autonomy and accountability will emerge, as commonalities, when the participants were presented with a list of new HR practices and asked to rank them from most important to least important. The new HR practices provided were (i) employer branding (EVP); (ii) relaxed workplace attire; (iii) removing the undergraduate degree

as a minimum requirement for employment; (iv) unlimited paid-time-off; and (v) flexible workplace arrangements.

The results of the ranking exercise, as presented in Table 6 above, showed similarities as both millennial and HR subsamples ranked flexible workplace arrangements; employer branding (EVP); and unlimited paid-time-off as the top three most important new HR practices to millennials. These results are congruent with the literature as millennials are attracted to an organisation with a unique EVP, to which they can relate and that considers the engagement of the employee (Botha et al., 2011; Mascarenhas, 2019; Ng et al., 2010), and value increased flexibility that allows them time to recuperate in order to prevent burnout; engage in non-routine commitments; cater for their own circumstances; partake in the gig economy of spontaneous work; and tailor their work day around familial commitments (Danielson et al., 2003; De Jong & Arevalo, 2015; Eversole et al., 2012; Gandini, 2019).

Further, both subsamples ranked relaxed workplace attire and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment as the bottom two least important new HR practices to millennials, which too is congruent with the literature, which shows that millennials feel more authoritative; female employees feel more comfortable; and there is an increased perception of power, and level of education, when one is dressed in formal attire (Burger & Bless, 2017; Cardon & Okoro, 2009; Johnston et al., 2009; Makina & Bosch, 2013). Schlechter et al. (2015) do not agree with this view as they report that when employees are dressed casually, they are more relaxed which leads to increased engagement and commitment. Lan (2018) provides that organisations still value employees with university skills as the experience of attending a tertiary education institution provides them with a greater sense of comfort.

A discussion of the reasons behind these rankings following in 6.4 below however it can be deduced that there is a clear synchronicity between the behaviours of organisations and the expectations of talented millennials in the market.

6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question 3

Research Question 3: Why do millennials find certain new HR practices more appealing than others?

Proposition: The new HR practices, introduced by organisations, will have both positive and negative implications but will be predominantly positive for the millennial workforce leading to an understanding behind these implications.

Research question 3 aimed to establish the reasons behind the choices of the millennials as this will inform organisations about potentially previously unknown effects of new HR practices. From this an organisation can determine whether these practices could be effective in future proofing the organisation in a way that is desirable and aligned to its values (Jones et al., 2019).

The new HR practices have been shown to have both positive and negative implications. For example, flexible workplace arrangements provide flexibility to the individual and creates a sense of personal accountability (Eversole et al., 2012). However, if an employee only works remotely, and does not engage within the social network of the organisation, it can be detrimental as performance is not only measured on output of work (Muhammed, 2018). Similar dualities exist with unlimited paid-time-off where this protects employees against burnout as it provides tired employees with the freedom and time to recuperate. However, employees have been found to feel too guilty to take time off which leads to inevitable burnout (De Jong & Arevalo, 2015).

The researcher proposed that the new HR practices, introduced by organisations, would have both positive and negative implications but will be predominantly positive for the millennial workforce. The discussion that follows will follow the order of the ranking and include the frequency at which the participants responded whether they felt that the new HR practices had positive and negative implications together with the reasons the participants provided.

As mentioned above, the ranking of the new HR practices, from most important to least important produced the following order:

1. Flexible workplace arrangements;
2. Employer branding (EVP);
3. Unlimited paid-time-off;
4. Relaxed workplace attire; and
5. Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment.

6.4.1 Flexible workplace arrangements

A majority stated that flexible workplace arrangements had positive implications as an increase in flexibility removes stress by allowing time for them to attend to general tasks and errands, during the week, that they would otherwise have had to spend their free time on from the weekend. Further, as millennials value freedom (Ng et al., 2010), flexible workplace arrangements provides them with the opportunity to work in a more comfortable location which was more conducive to creativity and efficiency. The responses from the participants are congruent with Danielson et al. (2003) that found that some advantages of flexible workplace arrangements include (i) improved comfort and efficiency on the job; (ii) the ability to tailor your workday schedule to be available for family commitments; (iii) the accommodation of unforeseen and non-routine commitments such as family illness and health care appointments. Similarly, Eversole et al. (2012) propose that the rationale behind flexible workplace arrangements is that it allows for employees to cater for their own circumstances and take accountability for their own work without being prescribed specific working hours.

In contrast, a few participants believed that the social aspect of work is advantageous as it allows for quicker access to people and it aids in strengthening relationships with one's colleagues; if people are not at work it can lead to a breakdown in relationships and stagnate the efficiency of work. To this point, Danielson et al. (2003) found that some disadvantages of flexible workplace arrangements include

- (i) that employees are more difficult to manage when they are not in the office; and
- (ii) managers have experienced greater difficulty when coordinating group activities.

The researcher found that the dominant belief, around flexible workplace arrangements, is that they have more positive implications, than negative, and that the increase in flexibility enables the millennial talent to function in a more creative and productive way: arguably, something an organisation would place high value on. Organisations must keep in mind the potential for inefficiencies that could emerge if the flexibility is abused or mismanaged.

6.4.2 Employer branding (EVP)

The data showed that a resounding majority believe that an employer's brand and the value proposition they offer to its employees carries positive implications for the talent of the organisation. Nearly all the participants mentioned that they did not want to work for a brand with which they did not connect, or with whose actions they do not agree, as they believe that they became personally associated with the brand of the organisation. Further, the millennial participants noted that an organisation whose EVP targets the care of its employees is highly attractive. Pursuant to Mascarenhas (2019)'s study, organisations deliberately position their brand and EVP in such a way so as to speak to the organisation's tangible and intangible characteristics, namely its (i) culture; (ii) quality and image of current employees; (iii) its products and services; and (iv) what value the organisation offers its employees. Through this an organisation articulates an identity that translates into the type of individuals it looks to attract. If an organisation's EVP is unique it can lead to it being more successful in attracting and retaining talent (Botha et al., 2011).

The participants raised conflicting points on the topic of employer branding and EVP where a few of them stated that an organisation's brand is not enough to attract and retain talent if the lived experience of current employees does not match the identity the organisation has created in the market. Millennials prioritise financial benefits, rapid career advancement, meaningful work experience and a nurturing work environment, and if the brand of the organisation does not align to these priorities it can lead to negative implications (Ng et al., 2010; Schlechter et al., 2015). Further,

the participants added that the economic climate of South Africa plays a large role in their decision-making, when it comes to employment, and the employer's brand and EVP would fall short of keeping the millennials from emigrating to more developed countries that can provide better opportunities (Xingwana et al., 2019).

Similar to flexible workplace arrangements, the researcher found that an employer's brand and EVP has predominantly positive implications for the millennial talent. Where organisations position themselves as caring and innovative, and have a good reputation in the market, they can expect to hold a competitive advantage in the war for talent. However, organisations must remain consistent with their brand, EVP and the lived experience of its employees otherwise its identity will lose its integrity and lead to a negative outcome. Finally, there are certain realities that organisations cannot completely defend against, namely a declining economy. The researcher argues that in light of the current economic climate in South Africa, organisations hold a higher responsibility to lessen the gap of inequality and create employment opportunities which could potentially stall the current skills-drain.

6.4.3 Unlimited paid-time-off

Almost all of the participants responded that the positive implications of unlimited paid-time-off protected employees against burnout as it allowed them to take time off after tiring spells at work. These findings align with De Jong and Arevalo (2015)'s study which proposed that introducing unlimited paid-time-off, into the organisation's EVP promotes attraction, retention and motivation of talent as it enables an environment wherein employees have the time to recuperate from tiring spells at work which could otherwise lead to burnout. Upon returning to work, the employees were found to be more productive. Further, the participants claim that unlimited paid-time-off was seen as an enabler to supplement a millennial's salary as they would now have the time to engage in gig work. As this type of work is spontaneous it would require individuals take time off at irregular intervals due to the unpredictable demand from potential customers (Gandini, 2019).

A notable number of participants believed that excessive leave would hamper the organisation's productivity as the work would still need to be attended to in the

employee's absence. This negative implication of unlimited paid-time-off can lead to childless employees feeling obligated to fill in when their colleagues, with children, choose to leave early or take time off to attend to other familial responsibilities (Weikle, 2018). Further, participants of the entry-level millennial subsample were sceptical about the unlimited paid-time-off as they felt it would be too complex in a time-sensitive role such as theirs; Additionally, the same participants believed that unlimited paid-time-off was susceptible to abuse and that it required close managerial supervision. Carsen (2019) proposes another relationship between managers and unlimited paid-time-off wherein some employees feel that they need to subscribe to their manager's attitude. They continue to say describe that if an employee is part of a team that meets its deliverables and is managed with trust, then those employees tend to see the benefit of unlimited paid-time-off. However, if an employee is part of a team in which the manager rarely takes leaves, and values physical presence in the office, then they experience the opposite.

The researcher found that the positive implications, of unlimited paid-time-off, outweigh the negative by a fine margin. This illustrates the importance of consistent and strong leadership in the implementation of this new HR practice as one's leave is linked to emotion and, if managed correctly, can lead to healthier and more productive employees. Historically, paid-time-off was provided to employees through legislation and contracts. This has led to a strong feeling of entitlement and protection surrounding the topic. The researcher argues that if a manager approached the topic of unlimited paid-time-off in a clear way, specifically explaining how it works and highlighting the positive implications for the employee, whilst taking care to manage any negative implications, then that would lead to happier employees and, ultimately, to more organisational efficiency.

6.4.4 Relaxed workplace attire

The participants of the study ranked this new HR practice as one of the least important to millennials, from the list provided. However, there were mixed feelings on the positive and negative implications of its implementation. Most of the participants felt that not having to dress in formal attire provided them with more options and convenience in choosing an outfit for work, especially when their role did warrant the need for formal clothes. The participants saw this practice as a

positive addition to the flexible workplace arrangements practice, which promotes flexibility, as it meant that employees now had more flexibility when dressing for work. Schlechter et al. (2015) found that employees that dressed casually, when going to work, felt more relaxed and that that led them to feel more engaged and committed to the organisation and their work.

Once again, with a fine margin, most of the participants were reluctant to relax their workplace attire as they felt that, in the context of the organisation being a bank, being dressed formally created an image of trust and professionalism and that anything else would create the opposite image. Further, as the organisation, of the study, is an established brand the participants felt that they needed to uphold the corporate image upon which the brand was built: the participants said that it made them feel like they were at work when dressed formally. Numerous studies concur with the feeling shared by the participants, where formal attire is preferred, as employees perceive a person as authoritative and competent, productive and trustworthy, or creative and friendly depending on the level of formality of their clothes (Carsen, 2019). Makina and Bosch (2013) suggest that female employees felt more comfortable in a more formal dress code as it gave them a higher social status, and were taken more seriously, in the organisation. Similar studies add that employees feel more confident with an increased perception of power when dressed formally (Burger & Bless, 2017; Karl et al., 2017). Johnston et al. (2009) introduced that individuals dressed in casual attire, in the workplace, increased the perception of them as having a lower level of education.

Similar to unlimited paid-time-off, the researcher found that the positive implications, of relaxed workplace attire, outweighed the negative by a close margin. Surprisingly, the literature was more pronounced on the negative implications of relaxed workplace attire, especially in a corporate environment. The researcher attributes this surprise to the association the participants with another new HR practice, the flexible workplace arrangements. The researcher argues that while there are negative implications of relaxing a corporate's dress code, be it externally with clients or internally with employees, that giving employees an increased feeling of flexibility in their choices allows them to take up their role in a way that resonates with them and their own values; and in so doing they will be more engaged in their work leading to the retention of motivated talent.

6.4.5 Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment

This new HR practice was ranked last on the list of importance to millennials which, unsurprisingly, manifested in the negative implications outweighing the positive. Most felt that a degree was not a necessary requirement for employment, unless one was looking to interview for a specialist role requiring specialist knowledge. The participants go on to say that, when it came to most roles in the organisation, their belief was that value should rather be placed on the output of work rather than the existence of a degree. While organisations are implementing this new HR practice in the dual belief that (i) talent is not defined as having a formal qualification from a traditional tertiary institution; and (ii) that the required skills can be taught in-house, this practice has not yet officially pierced the definition of a skilled employee in South Africa (Lan, 2018). Xingwana et al. (2019) provide that there is a shortage of skills in South Africa and organisations are finding that the skills learned at university are falling short from matching their expectations and requirements. The participants echoed this statement by saying that having a degree does not making someone qualified to do the role and that people can learn the skills on the job.

The majority of the participants were in a state of cognitive dissonance with relation to this new HR practice as they held the above belief and simultaneously held that through the process of completing a degree, one learns certain skills and develops discipline which is still valued in organisations. As the practice is not yet commonplace among corporate South Africa one of the participants raised the point that a degree enables the mobility of a millennial within, and across, organisations. Organisations continue to require a university degree, as a minimum requirement of employment, as they feel that the experience and life skills, gained from their time spent at university, are also beneficial to the organisation (Lan, 2018).

In contrast to the first four new HR practices, discussed in 6.4.1 – 6.4.4 above, removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment produced more negative implications than positive. The researcher argues that a possible reason for this is due to the make-up of the South African industry. The country has large industrial, mining, agriculture and financial services sectors, all of

which require specialist knowledge and training leading employers to the belief that they will be more successful if they hire university graduates. However, as the world is becoming more connected and the 20th century barriers of international trade are collapsing the researcher expects the scales to tip in favour of implementing this new HR practice.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the results and findings of the study in terms of the propositions that were formulated in chapter 3 above. The discussion drew from literature on the topic of new HR practices and their relation to attraction, retention and motivation of talent.

Proposition 1 sought to find the outcomes of implementation these new HR practices and, as expected, the results showed that implementing the new HR practices into a South African organisation could lead to improved attraction, retention and motivation of millennial talent if coupled with a robust process to take care of potential abuse of the new HR practices.

The aim of proposition 2 was to find if common themes, around new HR practices that promote flexibility, autonomy and accountability, will emerge from a predetermined list of new HR practices most valued by millennials. Through this exercise it emerged that there was congruency between behaviours of HR practitioners in the organisation and the expectations of the millennials in terms of the most valued new HR practices being those promoting flexibility, autonomy and accountability.

Proposition 3 aimed to show that the implementation of the new HR practices would be view as largely positive for millennials, while not excusing their negative implications, leading to an understanding behind these implications. The results showed that the positive implications of the new HR practices convincingly outweighed the negative, especially the new HR practices that resonated with the values of millennials, and those that promote flexibility and autonomy. The results

further shone a light on the negative implications proving new information to organisations that would be interested in mitigating their effects.

The final chapter of the study will focus on the main findings of the study together with implications for organisations and relevant stakeholders, a discussion on the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research into the topic.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

From the outset of the study the researcher aimed to gain a view on whether the implementation of new HR practices could be effective in increasing the level of performance of millennials ultimately leading to future proofing the more traditional and established businesses in South Africa.

The chapter below will outline the main findings of the study followed by a framework derived from those findings and the literature. Further, the chapter will discuss the implications these findings have for relevant stakeholders in organisations and provide suggestions for future research considering the limitations of the study.

7.2 Research Findings

7.2.1 Findings for research question 1

The principle findings for research question 1 are that new HR practices:

- have a positive effect on the attraction of new talent to the organisation when they form part of a unique EVP to which an individual, and potential employee, can relate;
- have the ability to improve the retention of talent in an organisation but that they cannot defend against the skills drain caused by an uncertain economic climate;
- have an indirect link to the improvement of employee motivation as they make employees happier and more comfortable at work which leads to more engagement and, indirectly, motivation;
- are seen as nice to have in organisations that have been successful in creating an environment that promotes flexibility, autonomy, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit;

- that increase flexibility allow people to use their time to do things that are important to them, living their life in an integrated way, without feeling guilty ultimately creating a better work-life balance for an individual;
- can lead to scepticism and discomfort in employees, if not implemented and managed correctly, which leads to a decrease in organisational performance; and
- are beneficial to an individual's mental and physical health and the increased flexibility allows people to spend less time in the office while still meeting their work targets and deliverables.

In conclusion, the researcher has found that while new HR practices are generally received in a positive way, by millennials in an established South African organisation, they do come with unavoidable negative implications. The impact of the negative effects can be managed through a proactive and consistent approach, by the organisation's leadership and HR practitioners,

7.2.2 Findings for research question 2

The principle finding of research question 2 was that there was congruency between HR practitioners and millennials as both subsamples concurred on the most important and least important new HR practices to millennials. The most important being flexible workplace arrangements; employer branding (EVP), and unlimited paid-time-off. The least important being relaxed workplace attire and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment.

7.2.3 Findings for research question 3

The principle findings for research question 3, in terms of positive and negative implications of each new HR practice, are that:

- Flexible workplace arrangements have more positive implications as the increased flexibility allows millennials to function in a more creative and productive way;

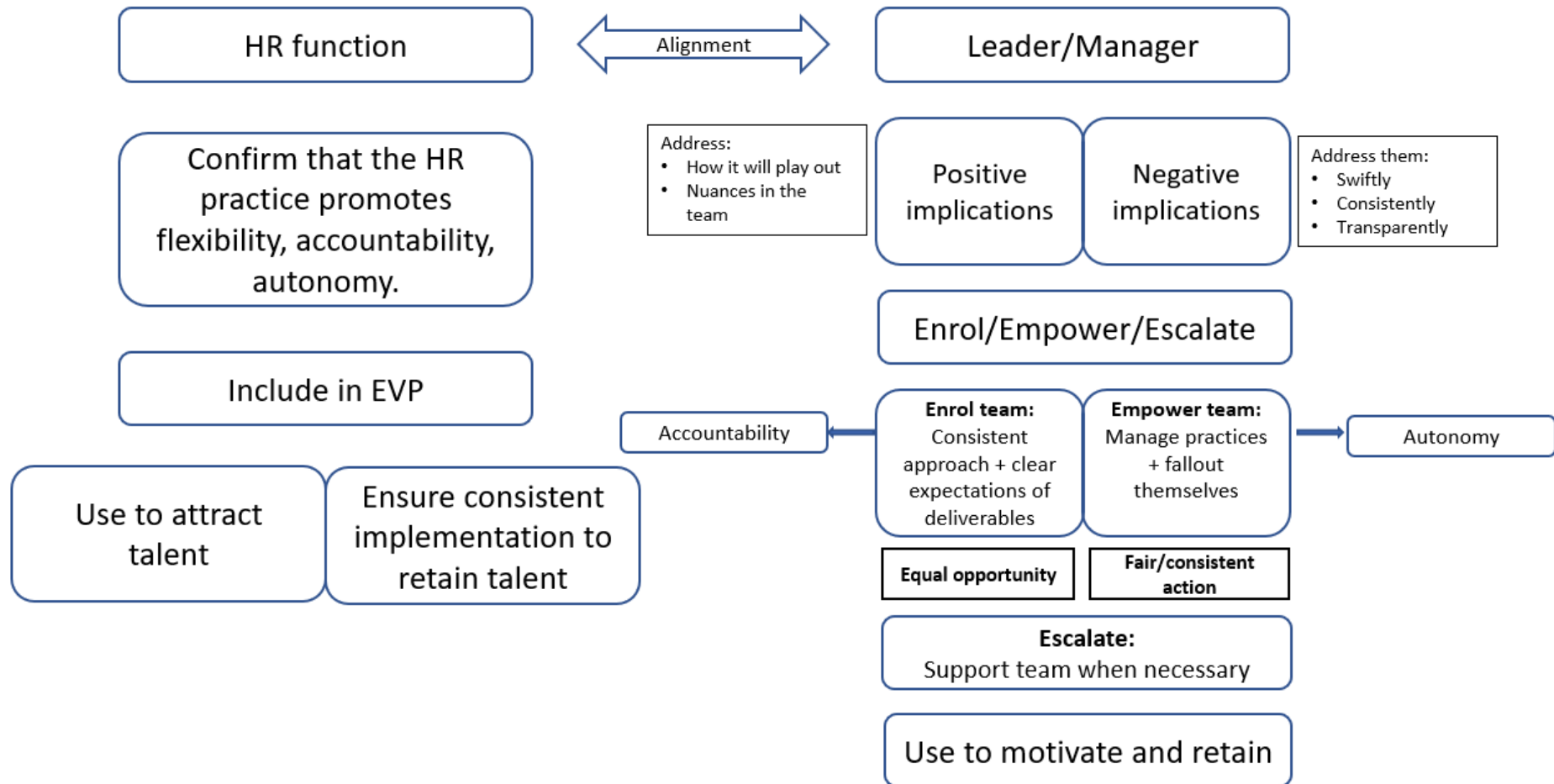
- Employer branding (EVP) has more positive implications especially when an organisation positions themselves as a caring, innovative brand with a good reputation in the market;
- Unlimited paid-time-off has slightly more positive, than negative, implications and, if managed correctly, can lead to healthier and more productive employees;
- Relaxed workplace attire similarly has slightly more positive, than negative, implications when it is positioned in a way that gives employees an increased feeling of flexibility in their choices allowing them to take up their role in their own individual way. This finding was contrary to the literature around this new HR practice;
- Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment was found to have more negative, than positive, implications as a large part of the South African economy is still made up of sectors that require specialist knowledge and a certain level of trust is associated with the completion of an undergraduate degree.

In conclusion, the researcher found that new HR practices that promote flexibility and autonomy are experienced positively by millennials in established South African organisations, despite their negative implications. However, an organisation would benefit from actively mitigating the effects of the negative implications as it could provide them with a competitive advantage in the war for talent.

7.3 Proposed Change Management Framework

The proposed framework was designed for leaders/managers with direct reports, and HR practitioners in an organisation who are involved in the implementation of HR practices. When it comes to implementing new HR practices that attract, retain and motivate millennial talent, these players need to consider the positive and, unavoidable, negative implications that the practices will have and take proactive steps to mitigate the impact of the latter.

Figure 2 Change Management Framework: New HR practices



7.3.1 Application of the framework

When an organisation looks to introduce a new HR practice the decision is generally initiated within the HR department as HR practitioners are responsible for attracting new talent into the organisation, amongst other things. When making this decision the involved parties should evaluate whether that practice promotes flexibility, accountability and autonomy. If the intended practice does not lead to the desired levels of flexibility, accountability and autonomy, the HR department be advised to disregard the practice as this study demonstrates strongly that millennials are attracted to an organisation; remain at an organisation and are motivated to perform more effectively when those factors are present. If, however, the new HR practice does contain and promote the factors of flexibility, accountability and autonomy then it should be considered for inclusion in the organisation's EVP. Further, as influential stakeholders in HRM, the HR practitioners must take care to approach the application of the new HR practices in a consistent way as inconsistency can lead to negative implications and lack of millennial retention.

Once a new HR practice has been introduced into the EVP, for successful implementation and application to occur, the HR practitioners need to engage closely with the organisation's leaders and managers as the latter has a direct link to the employees and has influence over the positive and negative implications that follow. Alignment is crucial to the success of new HR practices as the study, and literature, has shown that inconsistent, or misaligned, approaches lead to an increased impact of negative implications and can ultimately risk the integrity of the organisation's EVP.

Due to the influence leaders and managers have over the human resources of an organisation they are integral in the successful implementation of new HR practices. In light of the new HR practice, leaders and managers need to address how it will play out, taking care to be specific so as not to create any misalignment. Further, as large organisations generally consist of a plethora of teams with varying functions, the leaders and managers need to consider their own team's nuances when addressing them. As the study has shown, there are unavoidable negative implications of new HR practices and leaders have an obligation to address their

existence and prepare a process with which to mitigate them. The process need not be complex but should include swift and consistent action in a transparent manner. In enrolling the team, leaders and managers should apply the new HR practice consistently and set out clear expectations of deliverables while providing equal opportunity to all team members. The leaders and managers should ensure that they include repercussions for non-delivery as it will promote a sense of accountability within the team: if they deliver on expectations, they will enjoy the benefits of the new HR practice otherwise they will be held accountable.

Leaders and managers should empower their team to manage the practice amongst themselves, including handling intra-team fallouts, as this enables the team to have a sense of autonomy in the new HR practice's implementation and management. The leaders and managers need to ensure that while autonomy is given, that the new HR practice, and potential fallout, is managed fairly and consistently.

Support should be given to the team during this process and leaders and managers must make themselves available to handle any escalations that may occur. As the accountable party to the team's overall performance, leaders and managers have an obligation to ensure that the team dynamics are held intact. The study has shown that if leaders and managers approach the implementation of new HR practices proactively then the workplace practices have the increased potential to lead to retention and motivation of millennials in an established South African organisation.

7.4 Implication for Organisations

These new HR practices have already begun to infiltrate the fabric of South African HRM which leads to a confident assumption that they will continue to become more prevalent until they are ubiquitous. If organisations do not consider how they can implement new HR practices that attract, retain and motivate talented individuals then they are at risk of declining.

However, when organisations look to implement these new HR practices the framework will inform them of how to introduce them in such a way that they are successful, lead to less grievances and potential attrition. Further, as the implementation of new HR practices comes with both positive and negative

implications organisations would benefit from approaching them in such a way to mitigate the impact of the latter which can lead to a more productivity, a unique competitive advantage and future viability.

7.5 Limitations to the Research Study

In addition to the limitations provided in chapter 4 above, the research study held additional limitations which would have an effect on the applicability and representation of the findings.

As the study was exploratory in nature it focused on a small sample, in a single industry. Further, the participants were specifically knowledge workers, and not all millennial talent suggesting that the findings might not be applicable to non-knowledge workers, such as blue collar workers, that are generally required to engage in tasks involving manual labour and that require being physically present at work. Therefore, limiting the applicability and generalisation of the findings to all millennials in South Africa.

The study only focused on the millennial generation, to the exclusion of older and younger generations. Increasing the sample and obtaining data from a more diverse set of individuals could increase the reliability and validity of these findings making them more applicable to more types of employees. Further, this study followed Ng et al. (2010)'s definition of millennials as persons born between the years of 1981 and 1996, making the age range of a millennial between 23 and 38 years old. The needs of a 23-year-old millennial would certainly vary from a 38-year-old millennial.

The study was conducted in a single organisation which had an existing strong culture of flexibility and a progressive approach to HR practices, and there limiting the applicability to all traditional and established organisations in South Africa. Further, due to the millennials, in the sample, all being employed in the same organisation this fact limits the applicability to millennials with different backgrounds, demographics and educational backgrounds.

The study focused on specific HR new practices, to the exclusion of all new HR practices emerging in the world, targeted at attracting, retaining and motivating

talent. This limits the applicability of the framework to those specific new HR practices.

The effects of the new HR practices cannot be viewed in isolation, in South Africa, as an example the economic climate plays a larger role in talented individuals' decision-making, when they choose which organisation to be employed at, than HR practices. Similar limitations can be drawn when introducing geographic, cultural and historic factors.

7.6 Suggestions for Future Research

As the study was exploratory in nature, from an interpretivist standpoint, it meant that it would lead meaningful insights and tentative answers to the social phenomenon. The researcher suggests that a more detailed research would be required, in consideration of this study's limitations, in order to establish more widely applicable and conclusive findings. Suggested approaches and topics for future research include:

The findings of this study emerged from a cross-sectional time frame and the researcher suggests considering a longitudinal approach. This could provide new data and the results may vary after the new HR practices have become more ubiquitous in the organisation and more prevalent in South Africa.

This study focused on five specific new HR practices, suggesting that future research, into this topic, could be done by testing other emerging and contemporary HR practices, with the aim of future proofing an organisation, used around the world.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the sample was small and targeted. Changing the sampling technique or widening the sample, either from a demographic perspective, generational perspective (including older and newer generations), or sectoral perspective could bring in valuable insights and data that could be considered more representative and widely applicable.

The study showed an indirect link between the implementation of the new HR practices and the improved motivation of millennials, see 6.2.3 above. Future

research could hone into finding a more direct link between new HR practices and the motivation of millennial talent in the workplace.

7.7 Conclusion

In the war for talent, and the organisational goal of attracting, retaining and motivating talented individuals through the implementation of new HR practices, there is uncertainty on the effect that these new HR practices can have in a South African organisation. The study set out to identify the positive and negative implications of new HR practices and provide insights, to leaders and HR practitioners, into these implications. The purpose being to gain an understanding of which new HR practices would be effective in increasing the attraction, retention, and motivation of South Africa's largest cohort of employees, the millennials, and ultimately lead to future proofing established South African businesses.

The study achieved its original outcome as it gave more certainty on both the positive and negative implications of the implementation of an organisational employee value proposition; unlimited paid-time-off; flexible workplace arrangements; relaxed workplace attire; and removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment with millennials in the workplace, and provided insight into which of these practices would be most effective in attracting, retaining and motivating that millennial talent. Further, with the information from this study, managers and HR practitioners have more information to take active steps to mitigate the negative implications of the new HR practices by being proactive in their approach. This information can be seen as a valuable contribution towards creating a more effective and future proof organisation.

The world is work is changing and the way in which organisations engage with their employees needs to change in order to ensure future viability. Engaging your employees in a meaningful way will attract others to join your organisation, keep people in your organisation and drive them to produce better work leading to a sustainable and competitive advantage in the market.

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9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Consent Form

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

FUTURE PROOFING BUSINESS: ATTRACTING, MOTIVATING AND RETAINING TALENT

Researcher: Kalin Matev, MBA Student at the Gordon Institute of Business
Science, University of Pretoria

Name of Participant: _____

1. I confirm that I understand what the research is about and that I have had the opportunity to ask questions;
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without giving reason;
3. I agree to take part in the research;
4. I agree to my interview being audio recorded;
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotations in publications.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher's Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012)

Appendix 2 – Interview Schedule - Millennials

Name:

Start Time:

Job Title:

End Time:

Date:

Introduction to the interview:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. The structure of our chat will be conversational and exploratory. I am looking to get an insight on your experience and opinion around the implementation of the new HR practices. I would like to make you aware that I will be recording audio of this conversation so that I can review the insights later and that I have received permission to share the information with GIBS.

The questions will be themed as follows:

- Effects of new HR practices
- Ranking of most/least important HR practices to you
- Insight into why the HR practices are most/least important to you and their implications

Are you comfortable for us to proceed?

Questionnaire:

Theme 1 - Effects of new HR practices on millennials in the workplace

Question 1: How has this new HR practice affected you?

Question 2: If you were applying to the company, how would this new HR practice affect your decision?

Question 3: How would this new HR practice affect your decision if you were thinking of moving to another company?

Question 4: Now that this new HR practice is here, how has it affected your motivation?

Theme 2 - Ranking of most/least important HR practices to millennials when considering attraction, retention and motivation

Question 5: I will now provide you with a short list of new HR practices that are being used around the world to improve work-life balance for millennials.

Please rank them, from 1 to 5, in order of importance. 1 being most important to you and 5 being least important to you:

- Employer branding
- Relaxed workplace attire
- Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment
- Unlimited paid-time-off
- Flexible workplace arrangements

HR Practice	Rank
Employer branding	
Relaxed workplace attire	
Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment	
Unlimited paid-time-off	
Flexible workplace arrangements	

Theme 3 - Insight into why the HR practices are most/least important and their positive and negative implications

Question 6: Why did you rank the top 3 as you did?

Question 7: Why did you rank the bottom 2 as you did?

Appendix 3 – Interview Schedule – HR Practitioners

Name:

Start Time:

Job Title:

End Time:

Date:

Introduction to the interview:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. The structure of our chat will be conversational and exploratory. I am looking to get an insight on your experience and opinion around the implementation of the new HR practices. I would like to make you aware that I will be recording audio of this conversation so that I can review the insights later and that I have received permission to share the information with GIBS.

The questions will be themed as follows:

- Effects of new HR practices on millennials in the workplace
- Ranking of most/least important HR practices to millennials when considering attraction, retention and motivation
- Insight into why the HR practices are most/least important and their positive and negative implications

Are you comfortable for us to proceed?

Questionnaire:

Theme 1 - Effects of new HR practices on millennials in the workplace

Question 1: How has this new HR practice affected the millennials in the workplace?

Question 2: How has this new HR practice been successful/unsuccessful in attracting talented millennials to the organisation?

Question 3: How has the new this new HR practice help keep millennials from moving to another company?

Question 4: Now that this new HR practice is here, do you feel that the millennials are more motivated? Please substantiate.

Theme 2 - Ranking of most/least important HR practices to millennials when considering attraction, retention and motivation

Question 5: I will now provide you with a short list of new HR practices that are being used around the world to improve work-life balance for millennials. Please consider your work in the HR department and experience with millennials in the workplace.

Please rank them, from 1 to 5, in order of importance. 1 being most important to millennials and 5 being least important to millennials:

- Employer branding
- Relaxed workplace attire
- Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment
- Unlimited paid-time-off
- Flexible workplace arrangements

HR Practice	Rank
Employer branding	
Relaxed workplace attire	
Removing the undergraduate degree as a minimum requirement for employment	
Unlimited paid-time-off	
Flexible workplace arrangements	

Theme 3 - Insight into why the HR practices are most/least important and their positive and negative implications

Question 6: Why did you rank the top 3 as you did?

Question 7: Why did you rank the bottom 2 as you did?

Appendix 4 – Ethics Clearance



18 July 2019

Matev Kalin

Dear Kalin

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee