

# **Gordon Institute of Business Science**

University of Pretoria

## **Integrating Early Career Employees Into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements**

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Master of Business Administration.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Flexible working arrangements have become increasingly popular practices within the business landscape, post the COVID-19 pandemic. However, research on integrating employees into organisations utilising these arrangements is extremely limited. Research on integrating employees who are entering the working world for the first time, referred to as early career employees, is even more scarce. This research was therefore conducted, to explore how best to integrate these early career employees into the new world of working, through flexible working arrangements.

The study used qualitative methods to explore the integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. A total of 17 semi-structured, in-depth online interviews were conducted. Eight interviews were conducted with early career employees and nine interviews were conducted with managers of early career employees, to ensure that a holistic understanding was obtained. Interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

The study found that organisations differ greatly in the extent and types of policies and systems implemented to integrate early career employees via flexible work arrangements with varying outcomes. It uncovered a list of indicators of successful integration, to provide an output towards which to work towards. The study developed a framework on how best to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, outlining procedures which can be implemented to better integrate these individuals, drivers of this integration, as well as successful integration outcomes. The study offers theoretical, methodological and practical implications for human resource development scholars and practitioners motivated to improve early career employees integration into flexible working arrangements.

**KEYWORDS**

Flexible Working Arrangements, Early Career Employees, Organisational Integration, Organisational Socialisation.

## 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.



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# CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

## 1.1. Introduction

The aim of this research study was to gain insights into how organisations utilising flexible working arrangements (FWAs) can successfully integrate early career employees, individuals who have entered the working environment within the last 5 years, into their organisations and into the world of working. This was an exploratory study in the field of Human Resource Management.

This section poses the background to the research problem and then details the research problem itself. The aim and scope of the research then follow and lastly, an explanation into the purpose of the research.

## 1.2. Background to the Research Problem

Employees are now, more than ever before both expecting and demanding flexibility and flexible working arrangements in the workplace (Masuda et al., 2012). Today's workforce are actively seeking out opportunities to work flexibly, resulting in the provision and the utilisation of FWAs increasing rapidly and becoming more and more prevalent in organisations. Dramatic changes in workforce demographics today, such as an increase in women in the workplace, more individuals with multiple streams of income, and older workers seeking to work less as opposed to retiring completely, have contributed to the growing frequency of flexibility offered by employers in the workplace (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). Workers are demanding more freedom to choose both their own hours and their own working location (Regus, 2017). In response to these requirements and demands, many employers globally are now attempting to provide employees with more freedom and flexibility, whilst still maintaining the interests of the organisation and keeping employees integrated from afar (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019).

In a direct response to the evolving needs of the workplace and in an attempt to provide employees with the workplace flexibility which they seek, organisations and employers have increased the availability of flexible working arrangements (Regus, 2017). Flexible working arrangements refer to employment practices, allowances and norms that provide employees with more freedom and less rigid structures within which they are able to operate and execute their daily work (Masuda et al., 2012).

FWAs can be in the form of flextime, where employees are able to amend their starting and finishing work times; flexplace, where employees are permitted flexibility in terms of the location of work being conducted; or a compressed work week, with the choice to operate with a 4 day work week as opposed to the standard 5 day work week, amongst various other flexibility alternatives (Shockley & Allen, 2007; Timms et al., 2015). Of the various flexible working arrangements offered by employees, flextime and flexplace are the most widely applied and most commonly found (Azar et al., 2018).

The shift towards the implementation and utilisation of flexible working arrangements has been accelerated due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, forcing companies to adjust and quickly implement remote working (Kumra & Lin, 2022). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many companies have integrated aspects of remote working into their norms, offering flexible working arrangements in pursuit of a better employee experience (Kirschner et al., 2023). Employers globally have increasingly adopted the use of flexible working arrangements, with the aim of attracting and retaining talented employees, making them more competitive in the industry (Peretz et al., 2017).

Research on FWAs, processes, policies and their impact has generally been focussed on the western world: research within the emerging countries and economies within Africa, specifically South Africa (SA), is scarce (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). The limited research on FWAs in SA does however show that the availability and use of flexible working arrangements in the country have been found most popular and effective in emerging multinational organisations and that FWAs would provide positive outcomes for South African employees if utilised, who are likely to consider FWAs as a positive, beneficial way of working (Horwitz, 2017). FWAs are extremely prevalent in South Africa: as per the Regus study (2017) on the Workplace Revolution, more than 60% of South African participants reported that they worked remotely for two and a half days or more per week. This study was conducted pre-COVID-10, whereafter the shift to flexible working arrangements increased dramatically both in South African and globally.

Flexible working arrangements have acquired notable attention by researchers as well as organisations and human resource practitioners, with strongly debated

opinions on the perceived benefits and disadvantages of implementing the various HR practices and policies required to offer FWAs within organisations (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). Various studies have been conducted on the effects of flexible working arrangements, such as the availability of FWAs or the implementation of FWAs by different organisations (ter Hoeven & van Zoonen, 2015), however most studies have not deeply considered the cognitive dimensions of FWAs (Charalampous et al., 2019). This is an integral absence, as most new demands coming from the implementation of FWAs are largely of a cognitive nature: such as the ability for employees to organise themselves and their work in a self-reliant manner, planning and decision making and critically, the integration of employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements.

Research suggests that FWAs tend to be attractive and provide benefits from both the perspective of the organisation as well as the employee (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). The allowance of FWAs has largely signalled to workers that they are valued by the organisation (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). However, FWAs can have their disadvantages: FWAs limit daily interactions and physical contact with employees' colleagues or managers, which can affect their ability to integrate into an organisation and form relationships with co-workers (Masuda et al., 2012).

As organisations implement and utilise FWAs, one challenge they are facing is how best to onboard, integrate and socialise these new remote workers into their organisation. These initiatives require additional thought and attention than usual when adapted for a flexible workforce (Sailpoint, 2021). Employees hired into organisations operating with FWAs still need to feel valued, engaged and connected, being fully aware of what is expected from them as well as what they can expect from the company. They need to be equipped with the correct resources, introduced to the correct people and helped to understand and integrate into the company culture as seamlessly as possible (Maurer, 2022). Employees working remotely are restricted in their ability to build relationships organically or in person, as well as in their ability to observe company culture. For this reason, it is even more critical that companies pay closer attention to how new employees are integrated into their organisations when operating utilising FWAS (Czerwinski, 2021).

Having socialisation tactics as part of the onboarding process for new employees in FWAs can be a critical step to help team members to feel more connected to their colleagues, even when they are not sharing the same office or workspace (Treas, n.d.). There is limited research on what processes and policies work to integrate, onboard and socialise new employees into organisations utilising FWAs, and even less research when these employees are new to the working world as a whole and categorised as early career employees. Given this context, understanding how to integrate employees, specifically early career employees, in FWAs is now more urgent and relevant than ever before.

### 1.3. Research Problem

Employers and organisations globally have increasingly allowed for the use of Flexible Working Arrangements for the benefit of both the organisation as well as its employees (Peretz et al., 2017), particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic (Konig et al., 2020). FWAs have allowed employees the choice of where to work, what hours to work and what location to conduct work from (Azar et al., 2018). Various researchers have studied the relationship between FWAs and different constructs such as job satisfaction (Cech & Blair-Loy, 2014), work engagement (Timms et al., 2015) and turnover intentions (De Jenasz et al., 2013), however there is very little research into integrating employees into organisations utilising FWAs – particularly employees who have only entered the working environment recently, termed as “early career employees”. The lack of depth on this issue has resulted in practitioners being unable to create and implement suitable Human Resources (HR) policies and processes to ensure that early career employees are successfully integrated into organisations, affecting their ability to operate to the best of their capability and enable the strategic objectives of the company.

Integrating early career employees into businesses utilising flexible working arrangements presents various challenges: the prospect of being trained remotely and integrating into the workplace virtually is a unique circumstance, where one cannot rely on organic and spontaneous integration which occurs in the office (Business Graduates Association, n.d; Citrin and DeRosa, 2021). Although more businesses are adopting a flexible mindset with regards to managing remote workers, their views on how to achieve good management and what processes to implement are surprisingly traditional (Regus, 2017). It is integral that organisations

are aware of these challenges as well as how to rectify them to successfully integrate early career employees into these organisations and the working environment.

There is a large gap in conclusive literature on how individuals can be integrated into organisations utilising FWAs, which can be due to a lack of research studies providing insights on the individual experience and impact of FWAs (de Menezes & Kelliher, 2011). There is even less conclusive literature on this integration into FWAs regarding early career employees. There is therefore an opportunity for this research to address the gaps in literature as well as to inform and guide HR practitioners on how to create processes, practices and policies on how best to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising FWAs through a qualitative study. This study will assist in building theory to ensure that these individuals are integrated into the company, the culture and the working world as a whole successfully. The research will also be contributing to literature which is scarce regarding this topic.

#### 1.4. The Aim and Scope of the Research

The aim and scope of the research was to explore how organisations utilising flexible working arrangements can successfully integrate early career employees into the working world at large as well as into their organisation. In doing so, the researcher aimed to do the following:

- Understand the lived experiences of early career employees utilising flexible working arrangements, investigated through the perspective of organisational integration and organisational socialisation
- Determine what processes and practices were successful in integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements and the working world, to be utilised to make recommendations of potential successful policies for HR of organisations to implement
- Determine what processes and practices were not successful in integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements and the working world, to be utilised to make recommendations of policies for HR of organisations to avoid
- Understand how organisations utilising flexible working arrangements can improve their processes to better the integration of early career employees

Given the broad scope of human resource practices and factors which contribute to the integration of an individual into an organisation, the researcher has chosen to narrow down the study to focus on the early career's integration into the organisation and working world in terms of their job satisfaction, job competency, feeling of belonging in their organisation and their ability to identify with the goals of their company. The scope of the research was restricted to South African organisations offering flexibility in terms of hybrid working, where individuals are given the flexibility to work either at an office location or at home, as well as flexibility in terms of the times and hours worked.

### 1.5. Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to gain an understanding of how best to integrate early career employees into organisations operating with flexible working arrangement strategy. The research will address the gap between the aforementioned constructs and evaluate the success of processes and practices implemented to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements.

The research aims to assist HR departments to create policies and procedures to ensure that organisations are better equipped to integrate these individuals in the working world and to transition them smoothly into their organisation, ensuring that they are satisfied with their job performance, that they feel competent at doing their job, that they have a sense of belonging in their organisation and that they identify strongly with the goals of their company. The perspective of both a manager of early career employees as well as early career employees themselves will be sought in an attempt to contribute to the creation of HR policies and practices that effectively serve the manager and the employee alike.

The findings and information derived from the research may assist business's understanding of how to ensure that early career employees are incorporated into the organisation successfully and easily, through the creation of processes, practices and policies guided by the results of this research paper. The research will also contribute to reducing the gap in literature, where policies and models to integrate early career employees are not readily available. Based on the various factors

highlighted by the literature as critical towards understanding the contributors of successful integration of employees, it is critical to research possible processes to assist organisations in becoming more competitive when implementing these practices.

Chapter 2 of the research will provide an in-depth literature review to better understand the various components of flexible working arrangements, early career employees, organisational integration and organisational socialisation. The literature review will be followed by Chapter 3, encompassing the research questions which the researcher aims to answer, as well as an explanation into the methodology used to carry out the research in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 and 6 will consist of an analysis as to the results of the research interviews, with Chapter 7 providing a conclusion and an applicable framework for organisations utilising flexible working arrangements to implement in order to successfully integrate early career employees.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Introduction

Flexible working Arrangements (FWAs), where employees are able to make choices regarding where or how to perform work (Hill et al., 2008), have become extremely popular since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and have remained in extensive use in the working world ever since (Raj et al., 2023). The two most popular forms of flexible working arrangements are flexplace, allowing employees to work remotely in any appropriate location (Atiku et al., 2020), and flextime, where employees are able to determine their own work start times and end times (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2021).

Flexible working arrangements have been receiving increasing demand in today's environment: the current workforce actively seek out and require the opportunity to work more flexibly (Regus, 2017). Workplace flexibility is no longer seen as optional: it is seen as a necessity in today's workplace (Hill et al., 2008), with the demand for flexible working arrangement's increasing rapidly. Despite the increase in demand globally, there has been extremely limited research on FWAs in the Southern African developing countries, specifically within South Africa itself (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019).

Given the increasing availability of FWAs globally, it is important to place considerable effort and input into the creation, existence and availability of formal FWA Human Resource policies within organisations, as these policies guide employees as to how they will be managed when working flexibly (Den Hartog et al., 2004). It is also critical to consider that employees entering the working world into the new world order of flexible working arrangements have a different focus to that of employees historically, as labour market entry into organisations utilising FWAs differs vastly from the in-office context (Gill, 2020).

Early career employees, also referred to often as graduates or new professionals, are employees transitioning into the working world for the first time or within a relatively recent period (Korte et al., 2019). The early career stage is integral as it is a foundational career stage where employees are able to obtain organisational and occupational socialisation, as well as gain professional competence along with self-efficacy (Parry, 2014).

Today, early career employees' experiences' in encountering the professional world and work life are typically studied within the framework of organisational socialisation (Frogelo et al., 2022). Organisational socialisation has been defined as the experience through which new employees are integrated into their organisation (Wanberg, 2012), and is the process by which new hires make the transition from being organisational outsiders to being organisational insiders, feeling a sense of belonging (Bauer et al., 2007). There are a number of indicators and goals of organisational socialisation: for example, reducing the new hire's uncertainty about aspects of their job, their company, and fostering identification (Bailey et al., 2015). Academic literature on newcomer organisational socialisation shows that there are three key drivers of organisational socialisation: the organisation itself; the early career employees or the newcomers; and the colleagues of the new employee (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013).

The integration of a new employee into an organisation is also a critical component required for the organisation to function successfully (Robeva-Stoyanova, 2023). Organisational integration, seen as a specific subset of organisational socialisation, focusses more on technical integration than on the social aspects encompassed in organisational socialisation (Znidarsic, 2018).

There are a number of skills, both soft skills and technical, required for early career employees to obtain in order to succeed in the professional world in organisations utilising FWAs (Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin, 2021). These are skills such as communication (Rehman & Mehmood, 2014), technology literacy, work ethic and the ability to maintain focus and manage distractions (Henke et al., 2022). These skills can be taught to early career employees through processes such as training and development, which can occur in multiple forms: formal education, workplace and job experience, workplace instruction as well as on-the-job training (Riley et al., 2017).

This literature review begins with an exploration into FWAs, with a specific focus on flexplace and flextime. FWAs and COVID-19 are then analysed, with the impact of COVID-19 on FWAs being explained. The increasing demand for FWAs are then explored, and FWA studies in South Africa detailed. Thereafter, FWA policies and

entry into the world of work in FWAs are explored. The early career employee is then defined and explained. Organisational socialisation is then introduced, with an in-depth analysis into organisational socialisation indicators and goals, methods of organisational socialisation for early career employees and drivers of organisational socialisation: the organisation, the early career employee and colleagues of the early career employee. Organisational integration is then explored. Finally, the professional skills needed for early career employees utilising FWAs are then presented.

## 2.2. Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible Working Arrangements have been defined by Allen et al. (2013) as work options allowing for and permitting flexibility in terms of the location of work being conducted (the “where”, also defined as telecommuting or flexplace) and/or the time during which work is being conducted (the “when”, also referred to as scheduling flexibility or flextime). Hill et al. (2008) further define FWAs as the ability of employees to make decisions and choices influencing where, when and for what period of time they engage in work-related tasks. FWAs are also seen as alternative working options that enable work to be complete outside of the traditional boundaries and norms of the standard work day (Shockley & Allen, 2007). FWAs refer to employment practices, allowances and norms that provide employees with more freedom and less rigid structures within which they are able to operate and execute their daily work (Masuda et al., 2012). Through the utilisation of FWAs, organisations provide freedom and enhanced opportunities to their employees regarding the choice of where, when and how to work (Allen et al., 2013).

FWAs include variations as to when work is done, where it is done and how it is done (Abid & Barech, 2017). They can include a variety of patterns of work, including working on weekends, working in shifts, overtime work, contracts dictating annual work hours, working part-time, job sharing, working flexible hours, temporary work and homebased work (Berkery et al., 2017). FWAs come in various forms: they can include flextime, where employees are able to amend their starting and finishing work times; a compressed work week, with the choice to operate with a 4 day work week as opposed to the standard 5 day work week; telecommuting or flexplace, for example working from home via technology such as laptops, and part-time work, where work is done for less hours of the day than standard working hours or for fewer

days per week (Timms et al., 2015). Using FWAs, employees are able to have some level of control, to varying extents and degrees, over their working times or location in which they conduct work practices (Chen & Fulmer, 2017).

The two most common forms of flexible working arrangements are flexplace and flextime (Shockley & Allen, 2007). For the purpose of this study, flexplace and flextime will be the focus when referring to FWAs.

### 2.2.1. Flexplace

Flexibility offered along the dimension of place of working, referred to as 'flexplace' or as telecommunicating, can be utilised in various ways in today's organisations (Uhlig et al., 2021). Flexplace comes in various forms, the most prevalent being mobile work, where employees are able to work in any suitable location, such as from home, in co-working spaces, at a client, or in any other location where work is able to be complete successfully (Uhlig et al., 2021). Flexplace generally results in employees working from their homes, or any other location aside from their traditional place of employment (Hill et al., 2008). It allows employees to work from different locations other than their office workspace (Atiku et al., 2020).

Flexplace is an ideal flexible working arrangement for employees who are able to work remotely without required supervision, specifically in occupations such as computer programming, or accounting. It is most often utilised in industries such as banking and information technology (Rooplal, 2017).

### 2.2.2. Flextime

Flextime allows employees to determine and have control over their starting and ending times of work (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2021). Although the beginning and end times per day can vary, employees still often maintain a standardised number of core work hours (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). Flextime can be utilised in various forms, such as: options in work schedules, where starting and end times vary or alternatively, a compressed schedule is worked such as four-day work weeks; options in work hours, where the standard 35-40 hour full-time work week is altered; or options in managing personal and family responsibilities, where employees can take time off and be offline during the work day to see to personal responsibilities (Hill et al., 2008). Working

options related to when work is done often fall within the field of schedule flexibility: allowing employees to change their work schedules using a number of formalised policies such as choosing when to arrive at and leave work, or choosing to utilise a compressed work week (Hill et al., 2008).

### 2.3. Flexible Working Arrangements and Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic posed massive changes to the working world and norms globally. It presented various challenges to navigate and accelerated an almost overnight move to remote and flexible working, forcing the shift from standard, office-based jobs to online working environments (Konig et al., 2020; Mahomed et al., 2022). The pandemic increased the usage of flexible working arrangements across the globe in almost every sector, with record growth in the adoption of FWAs post COVID-19 (Raj et al., 2023). COVID-19 has resulted in an unexpected and accelerated shift from traditional office work to flexible arrangements (Iwu et al., 2022).

The demand for flexible working, particularly the capability to work from home, significantly increased in the years 2020-2021 due to COVID-19 related lockdowns globally (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021). In these lockdowns, governments worldwide implemented severe containment measures to restrict the movement of their population in order to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Khatatbeh et al., 2023). These lockdowns led to the temporary shutdown of businesses deemed “non-essential”, forcing majority of the workforce worldwide to work from home or shift to some sort of flexible working arrangement (Al-Habaibeh et al., 2021). Post COVID-19, a number of businesses chose to remain flexible in some form, increasing the availability of flexible working arrangements and resulting in flexible work becoming the “new normal” (Khatatbeh et al., 2023).

It is integral to note that most existing literature on FWAs is based on a pre-COVID environment, where FWAs were more rarely practiced (Wang et al., 2020). As FWAs pre-COVID-19 were primary voluntary and not often imposed by organisations as it was imposed during COVID-19 and may still be today, empirical literature, research and findings could be skewed as they may have suffered from selection bias - the choice to operate in FWAs was primarily driven by an individual’s choice and personal preferences, with a much lower historical frequency of organisations

choosing to offer flexible working arrangements (Lapierre et al., 2016). The pre-pandemic individual outcomes and perspectives towards remote work can therefore be extremely different to what is applicable post-COVID-19 as the working environment now differs greatly (Mahomed et al, 2022).

COVID-19 has caused FWAs to now be implemented in an unprecedented scale, across more industries and job levels, often as a compulsory requirement, after which only a few studies have been conducted – previously accumulated historical research on FWAs might lack the perspective and contextual relevance occurring in a post-COVID-19 world (Wang et al., 2020). The employees' use of flexible and remote work is an issue that has been examined primarily prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the frequency and occurrence of planned remote work were usually less and circumstances differed greatly (Khatatbeh et al., 2023).

#### 2.4. The Increasing Demand For Flexible Working Arrangements

Flexible working arrangements have been receiving increasing demand for employers as well as employees for a number of reasons: today's workforce actively seek out and require the ability to work more flexibly, resulting in the demand for the provision, adoption and usage of flexible working arrangements increasing greatly within recent years (Regus, 2017). Workplace flexibility is no longer seen as optional: it is seen as a requirement in today's workplace (Hill et al., 2008). The workforce today is increasingly comprised of employees who actively seek out and want higher freedom of choice in work practices and who pursue the ability to work with greater flexibility in terms of both place and time (Regus, 2017).

The increasing demand for flexible working arrangements can be attributed to its various benefits and positive effects, aside from necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Research has shown a positive effect of flexible working arrangements on various aspects of both work and personal life: it has been proven to increase employee morale; employee loyalty; enhance levels of productivity; increase the quality of work; as well as reduce absenteeism levels (Abid & Barech, 2017).

From the perspective of the employer, FWAs have been increasingly offered as they have been proven to provide businesses with enhanced competition (Abid & Barech, 2017). From the perspective of the employee, FWAs have been receiving increased

demand as they allow for better control over their working life; a higher sense of responsibility, possession and ownership; an improved quality of life; the allowance to choose convenient working patterns and lower rates of absenteeism, anxiety and sickness (Abid & Barech, 2017). Further research has proven that FWAs also result in higher performance and increased employee engagement (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). When employees feel that they are better able to meet their needs both in their personal capacity outside of the job as well as on the job by exercising workplace flexibility, they are often more motivated, displaying increased loyalty and levels of engagement (Hill et al., 2008).

## 2.5. Flexible Working Arrangements Studies in South Africa

Apart from a small number of exceptions, the majority of research on flexible working arrangements have been conducted in Western countries as well as in developed economies (Peretz et al., 2018). The limited studies conducted in emerging countries, mostly conducted in Asian countries and not in African countries, often oppose the findings from those within the Western and developed economies (Croucher & Rizof, 2014; Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). Research on flexible working arrangements and their effects in the emerging countries in Africa is scarce and difficult to find (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019). Similarly, research on the adoption of flexible working arrangements in developing countries within Africa is also scarce (Conradie & de Klerk, 2019; Rooplal, 2017).

Research on flexible working arrangements in South Africa and the developing African countries could be limited for a number of reasons. A possible explanation is due to the low adoption of FWAs in these countries, as a result of constraints such as a lack of information technology infrastructure to be able to implement FWA policies as well as the norms and acceptable ways of working within the African culture (Rooplal, 2017). The majority of African developing countries and companies operating within these regions do not have the capacity to implement FWAs (Atiku et al., 2020). Within the South African perspective specifically, South African legislation does not mention nor provide for flexible working arrangements, acting as a contributor to the low level of research on the adoption of FWAs by organisations in South Africa (Ludidi, 2020).

A study conducted on flexible working arrangements in a number of countries revealed that aspects of the national culture do indeed impact the way in which FWAs are implemented, as well as how successful the implementation of these policies will be (Peretz, Fried & Levi, 2018). The study additionally revealed that cultural values have a interceding influence on the use of FWAs and their outcomes. Therefore, it is integral to consider that the African, and specifically the South African, context could differ from research conducted in other countries and regions, especially those that are more developed.

## 2.6. Flexible Working Arrangement Policies

Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, such as flexible working arrangements, can provide a symbolic or a signalling function for organisations by transferring messages that employees can utilise and leverage in order to better understand and make sense of their work situation, circumstances, rules and regulations (Casper & Harris, 2008). Companies vary greatly in terms of the number of formal FWA policies offered that at least a proportion of their employees can take advantage of, as well as in terms of what these policies are (Chen & Fulmer, 2017). As a concept, the existence and availability of formal FWA policies within organisations can be viewed as representing the general intentions of management with regards to how employees will be managed when working flexibly, in whichever form available (Den Hartog et al., 2004).

The design, implementation and management of FWA policies require careful consideration, as it is the implementation of such policies that will ultimately determine whether organisations are able to successfully operate and success in a flexible environment (Rooplal, 2017). It is also integral that human resource policies and strategies regarding flexible working arrangements are clearly communicated with their employees (Abid & Barech, 2017).

A major area of concern underlying existing research on FWAs and HRM policies is whether the prevalence of these policies and the effects of HR practices on the outcomes of organisations are applicable globally and universally, or whether they are specific to certain contexts (Peretz et al., 2018). A key contextual variable to be considered with the ability to strongly affect the impact of HR policies in FWAs is the societal culture within the country wherein the firm is embedded (Rabl et al., 2014).

## 2.7. Entry into the World Of Work in Flexible Working Arrangements

The consequences of individuals entering the labour market into companies utilising FWAs are regarded from opposite perspectives (De Lange et al., 2014). A significant portion of FWA literature highlights the negative impact of FWAs at the early stage of an employee's career, such as restricting the early careers' able to acquire the necessary training, experience and the career development to build an individual's capability to operate successfully in their initial job as well as in future employment (Steign et al., 2006). De Lange et al. (2014) state that the negative impact and effects of entering the labour market in FWAs are demonstrated even after the duration of that first job – the effects are long lasting, evident for years after the first job. However, there is opposing literature which highlights that entry into the working world in a position offering flexibility may bring about various advantages and have a positive impact on the subsequence career of the individual (De Lange et al., 2014).

Employees entering the working world into the new world order of flexible working arrangements have a different focus to employees historically: it is necessary for them to focus on a more in-depth understanding of how to navigate a work environment that allows for both in-office and in person undertakings as well as remote operations; to be able to network and communicate in both a physical environment as well as a digital environment; and to both advance their social networks as well as maintain a significant presence in working relationships with colleagues, managers and the like (Gill, 2020).

## 2.8. Early Career Employees

The early career stage is critical for various reasons, primarily for it being a foundational career stage as one's early career experiences have strong implications towards future career opportunities, establishing successful working habits and ultimately career success. It is during this stage that employees are able to obtain organisational and occupational socialisation and gain professional competence along with self-efficacy (Parry, 2014). Early career experiences have a strong impact on a worker's well-being, their following career decisions and their career development (Korte et al., 2019). Transitions into the working world and early career activities are integral as they shape an employee's initial work-role development, with

a strong impact on the meanings attached to work, work-related strategies as well as the individual's behaviour patterns (Claes & Quintanilla, 1994).

Often, early career employees go through stages of exploration and establishment during this phase of their career. The exploration phase is primarily focused on the development of self-awareness in the working environment: during this phase, an individual's growing perceptions of their competencies, how the labour market operates, and the establishment of confidence within the working world occur. In the establishment phase, the early career begins to establish themselves within the working world, finding their place within their occupational field (Parry, 2014).

The appropriate time period to have passed in a career or requirements to be met for an individual to be categorised as an early career varies hugely in literature. According to Claes and Quintanilla (1994), early career refers to the first 2.5 years of an individual's exposure to the labour market. Kunze (2002) however defines early career as having up to 8 years of work experience. As no consensus has been reached, an assumption will have to be made for the purpose of this study.

## 2.9. Organisational Socialisation

Today, early career employees' experiences in encountering the professional world and work life are typically studied within the framework of organisational socialisation (Frogelo et al., 2022). When employees join new organisations, they must understand their surroundings and make sense of them: this process of sense-making is known as organisational socialisation (Gruman et al., 2006). Organisational socialisation has been defined as the experience through which new employees are integrated into their organisation, as well as their experience of understanding and integration into their new space as members belonging to an organisation (Wanberg, 2012). It is the process by which new hires transition from being organisational outsiders to organisational insiders, feeling a sense of belonging to the organisation (Bauer et al., 2007). The process of organisational socialisation explores how early career employees adjust to their new organisational environment and learn the appropriate and required behaviours, attitudes and skills required to succeed and belong in an organisation and the working environment (Saks et al., 2007). It is integral to note that organisational socialisation encompasses two factors: firstly, the acquisition of the knowledge and skills required to operate

successfully in the professional world, as well as the social knowledge and skills (Muller, 2022).

Organisation socialisation will be utilised to determine how to successfully integrate early career employees into organisations, ensuring that early career employees obtain an understanding of their organisation and the attitudes, behaviours and skills that they are required to learn to integrate successfully. Organisational socialisation is particularly important in flexible working arrangements, given that employees are more mobile in these circumstances (Bauer et al., 2007).

Successful organisational socialisation is critical to integrating early career employees into organisations, as their early socialisation experiences have a direct relation to learning, performance, satisfaction within their role and organisation and their commitment to their job (Saks & Gruman, 2011; Ashforth et al., 2007). The successful socialisation of early career employees is critical to building and sustaining a strong workforce (Colings & Mellahi, 2009). Various factors affect the organisational socialisation of early career employees: such as relationships between the employee and their supervisor; relationships between the employee and their work group; the extent to which early career employees roles and responsibilities align with their experiences and the interactions of early career employees with co-workers (Korte et al., 2018).

It is through organisational socialisation that newcomers learn what behaviours are accepted within their role, team and organisation, and through which they are taught to view their environment and circumstances through the same lens as their colleagues. Organisational socialisation additionally allows for the introduction of the newcomer to the norms of the company which they enter and makes them aware of what kinds of behaviour and attitudes are socially accepted within their new environment (Muller, 2022).

Literature regarding organisational socialisation is fragmented: there is a lack of clarity on the significance of the role of adjustment in newcomer socialisation; inconsistency in terms of how the relevant constructs are measured; as well as a lack of understanding on the effect of sampling and the timing of the data collection process (Bauer et al., 2007). Most critically within the topic of virtual socialisation,

there is extremely scarce literature: virtual studies are insufficient, with most literature focusing on socialisation in an in person or in-office setting with face to face exposure between the new employee and their team (Muller, 2022). This thesis therefore adds to closing the gap in research on the virtual socialisation of early career employees, thereby providing both theoretical implications as well as practical implications on how to facilitate virtual or remote organisational socialisation of these employees and reach successful organisational outcomes.

### 2.9.1. Organisational Socialisation Indicators and Goals

Research is in consensus as to what organisational socialisation indicators may be. Organisational socialisation and adjustment following the entry of a new hire consists of working through two types of transitions: task transitions, such as an understanding of the job tasks required and gaining clarity over the role; and social transitions, where the new hire feels liked and accepted by colleagues (Bauer et al., 2007). Research further suggests that the most important resources for early career employees required to be able to successfully manage the challenges of entering the professional environment are the following: task mastery, the ability of an employee to manage the relevant tasks effectively; role clarity, which concerns the early career employees' knowledge of what is expected within their new role in the professional world as well as the level of influence that they are able to exercise; and social acceptance, encompassing the early career employees' inclusion into their new group of colleagues (Frogeli et al., 2022).

There are a number of goals of organisational socialisation: reducing the new hire's uncertainty about aspects of their job and their company, such as the organisational culture, the required tasks and the roles within the organisation; fostering identification, where the new hires is able to identify with the goals, vision and mission of the organisation; increasing the competency of employees, where employees are better able to perform their work tasks; embracing employees, where the new hire feels as if they have been accepted into the organisation; and lastly control work tasks, where the new hire feels a sense of control over their day to day tasks (Bailey et al., 2015).

## 2.9.2. Methods of Organisational Socialisation for Early Career

### Employees

The concept of collated learning is critical in the organisational socialisation of early career employees. Popular methods of organisational socialisation include: a rotation within different departments of the organisation, where the early career employee works in tight conjunction with colleagues who provide mentorship and advice and job shadowing. In job shadowing, the early career employee is able to work amidst more experienced colleagues to be able to learn in their presence, observing and copying their actions and behaviours. A common factor between most organisational socialisation methods is that they are all a side-by-side process (Bailey et al., 2015).

Organisational socialisation faces a new challenge in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements: the common assumption of co-location does not apply, as teams are distributed with limited, if any, face-time. According to Bailey et al. (2015), there are three methods to socialise remote team members: attempt to adapt and apply standard methods of co-located socialisation to the remote context; create entirely new methods of socialisation applicable to the flexible working arrangement context; or do nothing and attempt no socialisation.

The onboarding process is a huge factor when introducing new employees into the organisation and attempting to socialise these employees. Onboarding has been defined as both the professional integration as well as the social integration of new employees into an organisation, with the ultimate goal of ensuring a quick understanding and accomplishment of work tasks and making the new hire part of the social environment of the organisation (Muller, 2022). The onboarding process encompasses much more than the initial few days of work: according to Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013), the first 90 days after entering the organisation can be considered the onboarding period.

## 2.9.3. Drivers of Organisational Socialisation

Academic literature on newcomer organisational socialisation shows that there are three key drivers: the broader organisation; the early career employees or the newcomers themselves; and the colleagues of the new employee (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013).

### 2.9.3.1. The Organisation

The manner wherein organisations socialise their newcomers, especially when those newcomers are early career employees experiencing the professional world for the first time, is integral as it affects the success of the socialisation process as well as the success of the newcomers' adjustment. Organisational socialisation tactics done by the organisation itself provide a formal and structured setting wherein newcomers can communicate and interact with their colleagues and receive social support (Gruman et al., 2006). The structural aspects of organisational socialisation are one of the most important factors in the process (Muller, 2022). Institutionalised organisational socialisation tactics are expected to result in positive socialisation outcomes as they provide newcomers with the required information to be able to guide their behaviour and reduce role entry uncertainty, as well as result in the formation of strong relationships within the workplace and the build-up of social networks (Gruman et al., 2006).

The organisation can allow for organisation socialisation of the early career employee or newcomer through formal orientation programmes, training and development. These programs explain how the organisation works, what is valued, what the goals of the organisation are and various other critical components of the organisation, which should reduce role conflict, signal to employees that the organisation is concerned about them and , improve commitment to the organisation. Organisational efforts to socialise new employees should lead to a greater understanding of the organisation itself, the structure, the mission, hierarchy and the coordination of various functional areas, all of which assist to socialise the newcomer into the organisation and the world of working (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

As strong representatives of the organisation, supervisors and managers also carry an integral role in the organisational socialisation of early career employees and newcomers at large. Research strongly suggests that supervisor support has a complementary effect on employee socialisation, attitudes and behaviours (Hershcovis & Barling, 2009). Managers are in the ideal position to provide early career employees with assistance in socialising, adapting to the professional world

and the organisation, and adjusting to the demands of their new position and role within the working world (Kammeyer-Muller et al., 2013).

### 2.9.3.2. The Early Career Employee

Although early career employee reactions and adaptation to the professional world are partially due to the environmental social influence, it can additionally be a result of the employee's own efforts and inputs into proactive socialisation behaviour. As organisations and colleagues are not able to provide new employees with all the necessary information required when entering a new, different work environment, especially when entering the professional world for the first time, it is integral for the new employees to be proactive and undertake certain efforts that will assist with and facilitate their own integration and adjustment (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). In this way, new employees are seen as active agents in their own socialisation process – not just bystanders (Gruman et al., 2006). These proactive behaviours include seeking assistance, requesting feedback, and creating and maintaining social relationships with others (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Socialisation theory states that new employees who are proactive in their socialisation behaviours will have a better, more accurate sense of their working environment and their place within it, allowing them to better socialise into the organisation (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Researcher suggests that proactivity is a result of a new employee's own initiative, but also emphasises that new employees who receive higher levels of support feel more comfortable in their organisation and their new workspace and will therefore exert a greater level of effort towards proactively socialising and fitting in. Simultaneously, research also suggests that new employees who experience increased levels of organisational socialisation tactics from the organisation itself are likely to engage in more frequently occurring proactive socialisation methods (Gruman et al., 2006). Proactive new employees will also feel a greater sense of belonging to the organisation as they will understand more about their context and environment (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013).

Proactive socialisation behaviour from the newcomer or early career employee can however be socially costly and daunting, as these behaviours have the potential for embarrassment, rejection or mockery if colleagues do not support the new employee or respond negatively to their requests for assistance (Bolino et al., 2010).

### 2.9.3.3. Colleagues of the Early Career Employee

Although research on organisational socialisation mainly focuses on the organisational and newcomer influences, research has indicated that workgroup socialisation plays a significant role (Muller, 2022). Co-workers thus have a strong impact on successful socialisation of newcomers (Korte & Lin, 2013). Organisational insiders who are comfortable with the social environment of the company as well as with the organisation itself are positioned perfectly to initiate the first steps to approaching a new employees and inviting this individual into the social circle within the company. In doing this, the organisational insider is able to foster feelings of belonging, comfort and confidence in the new employee, encouraging them to conduct increased proactive socialisaiton methods and reciprocate this social interaction (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013).

The support of colleagues is critical in the organisational socialisation of new employees, specifically in the case of early career employees (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). The availability and helpfulness of mentors in colleagues have been shown to result a higher level of organisational commitment and socialisation (Riordan et al., 2001). When colleagues provide support to the new employee, an environment of psychological safety is created. This in turn promotes proactive socialisation tactics by the newcomer. This safety net enables newcomers to be vulnerable, to develop relationships within the organisation and critically, to admit to gaps in knowledge and to be comfortable asking questions (Parker et al., 2006). Social support can signal to an early career employee that the team is happy to provide guidance, encouraging more comfort with proactivity and therefore increased proactivity over time. On the contrary, newcomers who feel that their colleagues are withdrawing their social support will respond by decreasing their initiatives and efforts to socialise and fit in in the workplace (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013).

Colleagues of the early career employee can assist greatly with the organisational socialisation process by facilitating work group integration. This relates to the perceived approval and acceptance from co-workers and inclusion into their social activities, which can create a strong sense of support, belonging and assistance. New employees often also use work group integration as an indication that they

belong and fit into their new positions and organisation (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

## 2.10. Organisational Integration

The integration of a new employee into the organisation is a critical component required for the organisation to function successfully (Robeva-Stoyanova, 2023). Organisational integration, seen as a specific subset of organisational socialisation, focusses more on technical integration than on the social aspects encompassed in organisational socialisation. Organisational integration emphasises the integration of the new hire into the job itself and the existing work structure, with the aim of quick, proficient, successful performance of the individual's required tasks (Znidarsic, 2018). It is considered one of the most critical factors that guarantee an organisation is able to develop to operate effectively and efficiently (Alsawalhah, 2020).

Various factors affect the ability of an organisation to integrate early career employees into their environment and the working world. These are factors such as the organisation's ability to transition the early career employee into their new workplace by providing strong opportunities for the individuals to contribute and learn within the organisation (Eraut, 2007). As early career employees are still determining their work roles, career goals, how to operate and navigate in the working world and what their professional identities are, it is critical that the organisation integrates them successfully and provides sufficient support in these areas (Lichtenstein et al., 2009).

When done right, organisational integration can have an extremely positive effect on the early career employees' transition into the working world and the organisation. Strong organisational integration has been associated with outcomes such as improved performance, a more positive job attitude and higher retention of staff by the organisation (Bauer et al., 2007).

Studies have shown that strong organisational integration can also increase the newcomers' self-efficacy beliefs, making it more likely for newcomers to execute courses of action that lead to desirable outcomes, as well as more likely for them to exert the required effort to overcome obstacles in the workplace and cope with entry stress and anxiety. This increased self-efficacy is also positively related to the

mastery of tasks, role clarity, social integration, satisfaction in one's job and the level of commitment to the organisation (Gruman et al., 2006).

### 2.11. Professional Skills Needed for Early Career Employees Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

The work context today is rapidly changing, increasingly characterised by flexible working and the organisational aspects accompanying these types of flexible work arrangements (Jackson et al., 2022). There are a number of skills, both soft skills and technical, required for early career employees to obtain in order to succeed in the professional world in organisations utilising FWAs (Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin, 2021).

These skills are often referred to as enterprise capabilities and have been widely recognised as being critical in the transition of early career employees into the working world (Jackson et al., 2022). Enterprise capabilities encompass aspects such as communication skills, adaptability, collaboration, the ability to successfully network, commitment to both work and the organisation itself, the ability to embrace and accept change and innovation, problem solving skills, and a strong sense of judgement (Jackson et al., 2022). Other skills included are those such as creativity, teamwork, effective time management and critical thinking capabilities (Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin, 2021).

These professional skills are also often referred to as work readiness: the possession of the necessary skills, the required knowledge, the correct attitude as well as the commercial understanding necessary to enable graduates or early career employees to be able to successfully integrate into the professional world and to make productive contributions to the objectives of the organisation soon after beginning employment (Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin, 2021).

Along with the abovementioned skills, flexible working arrangements have necessitated a focus on additional skills to be able to navigate the digital and remote environment. Being productive and communicating effectively through digital media is extremely different to the in person model of information exchange required in office settings before the implementation of flexible working arrangements (Gill,

2020). Social and interactive skills are increasingly important in flexible working arrangements, as employees often have more interactions with clients and colleagues that are not able to rely on in-person cues and signals (Campaner et al., 2022). Given the new ways of working and requirements for business communication and operations being conducted digitally or remotely, there is a requirement for an improvement of skills in digital communication and remote communication, including the necessary skills to successfully hold digital conversations through electronic devices and telecommunication software, as well as the ability to share information, knowledge and engage in electronic mode (Gill, 2020).

In order for early career employees to succeed in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, communication skills are critical: survival in this environment involved the interaction with colleagues, clients and managerial staff on a day to day basis, within which communication skills are integral. Communication skills are the means through which knowledge is shared, ideas are voiced, relationships are built and information is presented. Communication skills include both the ability to express oneself as well as the ability to listen successfully. Communication skills encompass verbal skills, the ability to express oneself and one's ideas clearly and confidently in speech, as well as written skills, the conveying of ideas, knowledge, information or a message through written text, and reading skills, the ability to successfully comprehend and understand a written message and expel relevant information in written text (Rehman & Mehmood, 2014).

In flexible working arrangements, the required communication skills differ to those required in the traditional work environment: with the complete elimination or reduction in in-person communication, research suggests that there has been an overall decrease in the observed synchronous communication, such as video calls or pre-scheduled meetings, and an increase in asynchronous media which may make it more challenging for employees to convey or converge on the meaning of information clearly. Communication skills further differ in FWAs as employees communicate more by email or instant messages, have more collaboration with their stronger ties instead of their weaker ties, and show patterns of communication that are more siloed and less stable (Yang et al., 2022). It is integral that early careers obtain the communication skills required to not only flourish in the professional world, but additionally in the flexible world.

Various other professional skills are emphasised and required in flexible working arrangements that may not have been as critical in office based jobs. These are skills such as technology literacy, work ethic and the ability to maintain focus and manage distractions (Henke et al., 2022).

It is important to note that these professional skills, enterprise capabilities and work readiness skills can be acquired, developed and enhanced both in the individual's personal capacity as well as through initiatives undertaken by the organisation (Rehman & Mehmood, 2014).

#### 2.11.1. Improving and Enhancing the Professional Skills Needed for Early Career Employees Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

It can be argued that organisations utilising flexible working arrangements are compelled to spend more money, time and effort on employee skills development due to the nature of flexible work and the accompanying requirements of the increased social, interactive and communication skills which are essential to be able to successfully operate in this context (Campaner et al., 2022). The professional purpose and skills required for early career employees to navigate the world of work, build networks and to be self and socially aware have significantly different meaning since working flexibly has become incredibly popular post COVID-19. Most learnings, training and upskilling in organisations have been previously centred around a face-to-face working environment, but the new flexible working environment and context requires innovative ways of navigating these domains (Gill, 2020).

Training of employees, specifically early career employees, plays an integral role in shaping the success of the organisation as employees are often not equipped with the required professional skills to be able to successfully perform a job (Riley et al., 2017). Successful training keeps employees skills up to date and relevant and can also reduce the risk of errors made by employees (Campaner et al., 2022). Employee training develops and nurtures the knowledge and the skills of employees, improving their efficiency and productivity (Riley et al., 2017).

Training and development can occur in multiple forms: formal education, workplace and job experience, workplace instruction as well as on-the-job training (Riley et al., 2017). When considering training and development in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements however, it is noted that this is significantly more difficult due to the physical separations, the reduced opportunities for direct observation and supervision, and the inability to job shadow or learn in person as employees do not always share the same physical space as their colleagues or managers (Bonet & Salvador, 2017).

### 2.12. Conclusion

Having extensively reviewed the literature relevant to the research problem, it is evident that there are various working arrangements contributing towards the FWA definition. The selected research sample will therefore be limited to being in organisations correctly utilising the definition of FWAs explored within the literature review, particularly operating within flexplace or flextime arrangements. Organisational socialisation will be utilised as a model to understand the integration of early career employees into FWAs. The professional skills which are required when transitioning early career employees into both the professional world as well as into the organisation itself have been noted: an understanding on which professional skills are relevant is important to the research. Given that there are stark differences in the definitions of early career employees and the required time period for their work experience, an assumption of early career employees being employees entering the working world for the first time within the last 5 years has been made – close to the average of the tenure found in the literature review. From the literature, it is evident that there is a lack of academic research regarding the integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, thus strongly justifying further research into this area.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the research questions which formed the foundation of this research study, following a detailed explanation and rationale for the specific focus covered in the literature review in chapter 2. The questions were formulated to better understand the processes, practices and policies of organisations utilising flexible working arrangements that were implemented in an attempt to integrate early career employees. Furthermore, the questions were formulated to obtain an understanding of what successful integration entails as well as what successful or unsuccessful integration policies encompassed.

### 3.2. Research Question 1: How have organisations utilising flexible working arrangements integrated early career employees into their company as well as into the working environment?

The aim of this question is to obtain a broad understanding of the processes, practices and policies implemented by organisations utilising flexible working arrangements to integrate early career employees into both the professional world as well as into their specific organisation. The researcher aimed to identify what organisations are doing to integrate their early career employees into the professional world and the organisation, if anything. The research question will allow the researcher to gain insight as to what efforts organisations are making to integrate their early career employees.

### 3.3. Research Question 2: What does successful integration of early careers employees entail?

The aim of question 2 is to understand what organisations and early career employees feel is needed or required to be achieved for the early career employee to be successfully integrated into the organisation. This will present a strong guideline for the researcher as to what successful integration outcomes should be and what the aims of organisational integration are in flexible working arrangements.

#### 3.4. Research Question 3: What successes and challenges do early careers face regarding integration into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements?

This research question aims to get an understanding of successful integration processes and unsuccessful integration processes. The participants will be required to draw on processes that are already in use by organisations, which they have experienced or seen, as well as their own views and what they personally would implement, in an ideal world. The answers from this question will be utilised to provide practical human resource policy recommendations to human resource practitioners in an attempt to improve the integration processes of early career employees in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. Introduction

This section outlines the research methodology and related components that were utilised for this research study. Through this exploratory study, the researcher sought to gain insight into the integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. The data was collected through the conduction of semi-structured interviews from 17 participants (8 early career employees and 9 managers of early career employees) across various industries and organisations.

This section begins with an exploration into the chosen research methodology and design, followed by an overview of the sample population and the unit of analysis utilised. The sampling method and sampling size are then explained, with the data collection explored via the measurement instrument. Data validity and data reliability are then covered, with an in-depth analysis into the data gathering process and data analysis process thereafter. The research limitations and ethical considerations follow thereafter.

### 4.2. Research Methodology and Design

Research methodology is defined by Taylor et al. (2016) as the way in which research problems are approached and answers are searched for and obtained: in the social sciences space, methodology refers to the way in which research is undertaken and conducted.

Interpretivism is a philosophy which relates to the study of social phenomena and seeks to enrich and improve the comprehension of the lived human experience by analysing the contrasts between humans as social actors (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). In this philosophy, there is a focus on an individual's patterns of interaction and the how they assign value, meaning and understanding to events and situations (Leavy, 2017). Interpretivism allows for prioritisation of people's individual understandings and multiple meanings assigned to events in the research process (Leavy, 2017). As the researcher aims to gain an understanding of the experience of early career employees integrating into organisations who utilise FWAs through the lens of both

early career employees and managers dealing with early career employees under these circumstances, interpretivism is the most relevant research philosophy.

An inductive research approach involves the development of theory using a “bottom up” methodology, developing and building the theory through an analysis of data which has been collected for analysis and to create generalised conclusions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). It involves developing concepts, insights and understandings from patterns and themes that are emergent from the data (Taylor et al., 2016). The inductive research approach has been selected for the purpose of this study as the researcher aims to collect data, analyse the data and outcomes with the intention to generalise the themes and messages from responses, formulate propositions, and then add the concluded outputs to the research around the topic.

Mono method qualitative research involves utilising one, single method of data collection (Collis & Hussey, 2014). This research utilised a mono-method qualitative research strategy, consisting of semi-structured interviews with both individuals who have been or are currently early career employees in organisations utilising FWAs as well as managers who have managed or supervised early career employees in organisations offering FWAs. The mono method has been selected to ensure that there is consistency and richness of data collected. A point to be noted is that there are two perspectives to the data collection process, even though a mono method is being utilised: interviews from the early career’s perspective, and interviews from the manager’s perspective. The research strategy involved primary data collection from a sampled group.

The purpose of this research design is exploratory. Exploratory research aims to discover information and insights about a topic which is not clearly understood by the researcher with the intention to assist the researcher in discovering new insights (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). In line with this purpose of aiming to discover information and given that there is currently very limited research about the topic at hand specifically in regard to forming policies and procedures to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising FWAs, this method is appropriate. This method was also selected as there is currently extremely limited research available on how to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising FWAs – research in this area is currently inconclusive.

Cross-sectional research refers to a study which is undertaken as of a particular point in time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). As there are limitations in time allowed for this research study and due to the practical considerations of the proposed timeline given for this research, this cross-sectional research approach is best suited and will be utilised as opposed to a longitudinal approach. The cross-sectional research approach is also appropriate as there is no need to analyse data as of a pre and post state, nor is there a requirement to monitor results to a study over a period of time or follow up once the interviews are complete.

Interviews allow participants to communicate effectively with the researcher and allow individuals the ability to ascribe meanings to their experiences (Leavy, 2017). Semi-structured interviews are composed of elements of both structured and unstructured interviews: an interview guide is incorporated into the interview questions to ensure that all sections of research are sufficiently covered, but the interview also allows for flexibility and open ended answers. The researcher may also choose to exclude some themes and questions if necessary.

#### 4.3. Population

The population of a study refers to the complete set of individuals to be interviewed, who have the ability to provide insights about the topic at hand and who would be available to the researcher when the data collection process is to be done (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The participants within the selected population group should all bear similar characteristics in areas that are relevant to the study (Zikmund et al., 2009).

In order to gain a strong understanding into integrating early career employees operating in FWAs, the population for this study was early career employees who have worked in organisations operating with FWAs (Population A), as well as managers who supervise early career employees working in organisations operating with FWAs (Population B). This multimethod population approach, including both early career employees themselves as well as managers, allowed the researcher to be exposed to greater diversity and gain a more balanced perspective into thoughts and experiences of early career employees operating in organisations utilising FWAs. Both populations represented those who have utilised FWAs in their early career experience (Population A) or in their experience managing early career

employees (Population B). The employees were all selected based either on the researcher's personal network, referrals from participants and snowballing. The researcher ensured that the participants were from various industries to reduce bias, such as:

- Financial Services
- Banking
- Logistics and Supply Chain
- Information Technology

Due to practical considerations when conducting interviews as well as the qualitative nature of this study, the population was restricted to participants operating within South Africa. The benefit of this narrowed region was the exclusion of national effects which could influence responses and participant perceptions.

As per Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin (2013)'s recommendation that participants in research studies should bear similar characteristics, the scope of this research study was limited to employees operating within flexible working arrangements in the form of flexplace and flextime. The FWAs could either be formally or informally documented and established, but it was required that some sort of flexible working arrangement exist between the organisation and the employee.

#### 4.4. Unit of Analysis

According to Saunders and Lewis (2018), the unit of analysis is defined as the perspectives of the participants within the selected sampling group to be interviewed and providing the data as well as the measurement instrument. It indicates who should provide the data and be interviewed for the research study (Zikmund et al., 2009). For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was the lived experiences of both early career employees as well as managers of early career employees operating in organisations utilising FWAs.

#### 4.5. Sampling Method and Sampling Size

Sampling involves the procedure that allows for conclusions to be derived based on studied conducted on a smaller portion of the total population- a sample is therefore a smaller subset for the population (Zikmund et al., 2009). It is critical to select a

sample consisting of individuals who would be most learned (Merriam, 2009). As the researcher did not possess a list of all early career employees operating in FWAs and managers thereof, a sampling frame could not be used and non-probability sampling techniques were used.

The sampling method utilised in this study was purposeful sampling, which is based on the idea that finding the base cases and individuals for the study produces the best data and output (Leavy, 2017). Purposeful sampling required the interviewer to purposefully choose individuals that fit the parameters of the researcher's questions, objectives and purpose (Taylor, 2013). Utilising purposive sampling required that participants be selected according to predetermined sampling criteria (Guest et al., 2006). It was imperative to be strategic when selecting the sampling method and size to ensure that information rich sample populations were interviewed: people who have ample experience with the topic, strong observations and opinions. It was vital to select a population sample consisting of individuals will be learned on the topic and will therefore provide important insights (Merriam, 2009).

Snowball sampling was utilised for this research: this is a sampling method whereby each participant provides a referral and leads to the selection of another valid participant (Leavy, 2017). Snowball sampling involved using probability methods to obtain an initial selection of respondents to begin interviews with, thereafter obtaining additional respondents through referrals provided by these initial respondents (Zikmund et al., 2009).

The sampling criteria for this study is divided in two, as interviews were done from the perspective of both early career employees and managers of early career employees operating in organisations utilising FWAs. For the participants to be categorised as early career employees operating in/having operated in organisations utilising FWAs, participants must currently be working in or have worked in an organisation utilising FWAs during the first 5 years of their career. For the participants to be categorised as managers or supervisors of early career employees operating in/having operated in organisations utilising FWAS, participants must be managing or have managed individuals working in/having worked in an organisation utilising FWAs during the first 5 years of their career. Table 1 provides an overview of the sampling criteria utilised for research participants.

**Table 1: Sampling criteria for research participants**

	<b>Manager</b>	<b>Employee</b>
<b>Participant Location</b>	South Africa	South Africa
Type of FWAs	Flexplace and/or flextime	Flexplace and/or flextime
Minimum period in FWAs	6 months	6 months

The sample size consisted of 17 individuals, with 8 early career employees operating within companies who utilise FWAs and 9 managers of these early career employees. Participants were from a variety of industries in order to create deeper and more rich results. Interviews were held until saturation was reached. Table 2 below provides an overview of the sample. A more detailed description of the sample will be provided in Chapter 5.

**Table 2: Overview of early career sample**

<b>Sample Category</b>	<b>Total No. of Participants</b>	<b>No. of Industries</b>
<b>Managers</b>	9	7
<b>Early Career Employees</b>	8	7

Data saturation was demonstrated during the analysis of the interview transcriptions. Data saturation is not reached but instead it is demonstrated and indicated that additional interviews or research could be counterproductive or of low contribution to address and answer the research questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

## 4.6. Data Collection

### 4.6.1. Measurement Instrument

Semi-structured interviews with early career employees and managers of early career employees who have worked in organisations utilising FWAs were used as the research instrument. This semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to ask specific, pre-determined questions set out in an interview guide, but also allowed the researcher the freedom and flexibility to explore themes and observations that may emerge through these probing questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews are interviews which are open-ended, allowing participants to provide detailed responses if they would like to and giving the participant the freedom to take the conversation in any direction they would like in response to a question asked (Leavy, 2017). These semi-structured interviews were held to gain information such as how early career employees were integrated into the organisation given the use of FWAs, challenges and difficulties that occurred as a result of these conditions, as well as successes and opportunities identified to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising FWAs. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions to discuss processes that were put in place to navigate this situation and personal experiences. Each respondent was interviewed using identical opening questions, however in line with a semi-structured interview, follow-up questions differed per participant as the conversation unfolded. These predetermined questions formed part of the interview guides (Appendices 1 and 2) which were utilised in the interviews. These questionnaires were utilised as a guide, but a conversational approach was still encouraged.

Once a participant confirmed that they would be participating, a date and time was agreed upon and a calendar invitation was sent with a brief overview of the study. The researcher also provided a consent form (Appendix 3) which was signed by all participants. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher reminded the participant about the anonymity and confidentiality of their information, as indicated in the consent form (Appendix 3) and provided some background information about the study to allow for context and to set the scene for the discussion. The participants were reminded that their perspectives were what the researcher was seeking and were encouraged to share openly and freely. A set of background questions to obtain necessary information about the participants, as outlined in the interview guides, were asked to the participants to better understand their experience. The participants were then asked a set of four quantitative questions utilised only to gain an understanding of how successful they believe their organisation has been in integrating early career employees.

The questions posed in the interview guide were designed with a focus on the alignment between the purpose and aim of the study, as the research questions had been formulated based on the relevant literature (Chapter 2). The interview guides allowed the researcher to ask questions which resulted in an in-depth view into the

participants perspectives on integrating early career employees into organisations utilising FWAs and were open-ended to facilitate a meaningful discussion. Tables 3 and 4 below indicate which interview questions were utilised to provide insights on each research question. It is integral to note that the questions below were merely a guide: not all questions were asked if they were not required and the questions utilised in the interview were not limited to those in the interview guides.

**Table 3: Alignment between research question and interview guide (early career employees)**

Research Question	Interview Question
<p>1. How have organisations utilising Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) integrated early careers into their company as well as into the working environment?</p>	<p>a. What is your understanding of FWAs?</p> <p>b. What is/was your FWA arrangement? (at the time of your “early career” experience)</p> <p>c. What processes, practices and policies were put into place to integrate you as an early career into the world of working?</p> <p>d. Do you feel that you were successfully integrated into the world of working through this?</p> <p>e. What processes, practices and policies were put into place to enable you to do your job successfully?</p> <p>f. Do you feel that you were set up to perform your job successfully through this?</p>
<p>2. What does successful integration of early careers entail?</p>	<p>d. How would you describe successful integration of yourself as an early career into the world of working and an organisation? What does it mean to you to be successfully integrated?</p>

	<p>a. What would you have to achieve and what skills would you have to acquire to consider yourself successfully integrated?</p>
<p>3. What successes and challenges do early careers face regarding integration into organisations utilising FWAs?</p>	<p>b. What processes do you feel worked well to integrate you into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>c. What processes do you feel did not work well to integrate you into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>d. Please provide one suggestion for how either of the processes could have been improved?</p>

**Table 4: Alignment between research question and interview guide (managers of early career employees)**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
<p>1. How have organisations utilising FWAs integrated early careers into their company as well as into the working environment?</p>	<p>a. What is your understanding of FWAs?</p> <p>b. Please share some background into how your organisation and team utilise FWAs and what the arrangement is with employees?</p> <p>c. What processes, practices and policies are put into place to integrate early careers into the world of working?</p> <p>d. Do you feel that your early careers were/are successfully integrated into the world of working through this?</p> <p>e. What processes, practices and policies are put into place to</p>

	<p>integrate early careers into the organisation?</p> <p>f. Do you feel that your early careers were/are successfully integrated into your organisation through this?</p>
<p>2. What does successful integration of early careers entail?</p>	<p>e. How would you describe successful integration of early careers into an organisation? What does it mean to you?</p> <p>f. What would early careers under your management/supervision have to achieve and what skills would they have to acquire for you to consider them successfully integrated?</p>
<p>3. What successes and challenges do early careers face regarding integration into organisations utilising FWAs?</p>	<p>g. What processes do you feel worked well to integrate early careers into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>h. What processes do you feel did not work well to integrate early careers into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>i. Please provide one suggestion for how either of the processes could have been improved?</p>

#### 4.7. Data Validity

Qualitative validity means that checks are put in place by the researcher to ensure accuracy of findings – this is a benefit of qualitative research and is based on ensuring that the findings are accurate from all perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Some factors that address validity are trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility of the research (Creswell & Miller, 2010). Although all interviews were semi-structured, two different audiences will be interviewed to gain different perspectives and note common themes, therefore allowing for data triangulation. The use of semi-

structured interviews for data collection allowed for open-ended responses, ensuring validity.

#### 4.8. Data Reliability

Qualitative reliability specifies that the approach used by the researcher is consistent across varying researchers and varying projects (Creswell, 2014). For the study to be reliable, qualitative researchers need to ensure that they document all procedures and steps of their studies, which was done in this case- creating an “audit trail” (Creswell & Miler, 2010). Transcripts were also thoroughly checked to ensure that no mistakes have been made to ensure reliability.

#### 4.9. Data Gathering Process

The data gathering process is the method utilised by the researcher to gain appropriate answers to the research questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The data gathering process utilised was be primary data collection: the researcher conducted their own in-depth, semi-structured interviews as opposed to relying on data from another source.

These semi-structured interviews were conducted through the utilisation of a digital video conferencing tool, Microsoft Teams, as this method was easier and more convenient for participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed on Microsoft Teams and recorded using a laptop to obtain a voice-only recording for submission and as a back-up measure. The transcriptions on Microsoft Teams proved to be extremely inaccurate and were redone manually by the researcher.

The data gathering process began with participants being contacted, or in a few cases with the participant contacting the researcher to volunteer participation. The outlook calendar invitation with a Microsoft Teams link was then sent once the date and time were agreed upon. The invitation included a brief overview of the research and a note of thanks for participation, as well as the consent form. The interviews were then held, with the participant deciding whether they felt comfortable to conduct the interview with their video camera on or off. These interviews lasted between 30 minutes to one hour and ten minutes long per participant, depending on the participant’s willingness to share and comfort answering the questions. Once the

interview was complete, the recordings were transcribed into word documents which created the dataset to be analysed.

#### 4.10. Data Analysis Approach

The analysis process utilised is an inductive qualitative analysis process. Inductive analysis allows for flexibility and changes to be made to the research approach as the process develops. It allows for a shift from observations made by the researcher to answers that have been derived from the emerging outlines in interviews as well as themes identified in the data collection process (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Once all interviews were complete, recordings were be adapted into written transcriptions. Transcriptions were then analysed by the researcher to find common patterns, themes and trends emerging from the interviews. Using the Atlas.ti software, interviews were coded, with key themes being identified and drawn out (Appendix 5 and 6). The data was then transformed into an easy to understand and interpreted format of relationship diagrams, presented in Chapter 6. The researcher did not use a ranking system so that no themes were viewed as more important than another (Clarke & Braun, 2016).

A thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data. This approach is relevant to this research study as a thematic analysis approach is relevant for interview questions that require answers from the perspective of the lived, personal experiences of the participants (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The thematic approach to the data analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2016) six data analysis steps. The application of these steps were as follows:

- 1. The researcher familiarised themselves with the data by reading and transcribing the interviews**

The audio recordings were transcribed manually by the researcher, building off a base of the Microsoft Teams transcriptions, allowing the researcher to become extremely familiar with the data.

- 2. Generation of initial codes in a systematic and pragmatic manner**

The researcher then used the Atlas.ti software to generate and assign relevant codes to the interviews to signify insights that contributed to answering the research questions. A total of 179 employee codes were generated using Atlas.ti (Appendix 5).

### **3. Searching for and creating themes and categories from codes**

The codes were then grouped into code categories relevant to the research questions, based on emerging patterns, which were then grouped into themes (Appendix 6).

### **4. Reviewing the themes identified in step 3**

To ensure that the themes emerged inductively and were accurate, the researcher reviewed the code categories and themes for accuracy.

### **5. Defining and naming the themes**

The researcher refined and grouped the themes in line with the purpose of the research study (Appendix 6).

### **6. Interpreting the identified themes and producing the report**

The researcher identified relevant quotations from responses to the interviews that best conveyed the message of the identified themes. The presentation of these quotations and discussion in together with the relevant literature will follow in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

#### **4.11. Research Limitations**

There were a number of limitations to the research. As the interviews were qualitative interviews, personal bias was likely to emerge from participants, consciously or unconsciously (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), which has the possibility to skew conclusions made by the researcher. The researcher assumed that the participants interviewed would provide subject matter from an unbiased, objective perspective.

Further limitations to the study are:

- Due to a sample size being utilised, the data collected may not be representative of the entire population as a whole.
- As semi-structured interviews were held if the research process is to be repeated, it is highly possible that the results may differ.
- The researcher is not a professional in conducting interviews, nor has the researcher undergone formal training for this: flaws in the researcher's technique or interviewing abilities could influence responses (Agee, 2009).
- Time constraints to undertake the research.
- The study made use of organisations who are utilising FWAs, and respondents may have been biased to the benefits recognised by FWAs.

- Companies in the study were all located within South Africa and the sample may therefore have geographical bias.

#### 4.12. Ethical Considerations

In order to ensure that the research was conducted in an ethical way, the researcher was obliged to obtain ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee. This ethical clearance was complete before any interviews were conducted. The researcher also ensured that a consent form was sent to and signed by all participants, with a consent statement also being provided verbally at the beginning of interviews. The consent form and verbal consent statement ensured participants that all information would remain private and confidential, with generic terms being utilised for both participant names and companies. The consent secured participants' permission to conduct the interview, to record the interview, to transcribe the interview and to make use of the participants' answers as part of the dataset for the research.

#### 4.13. Conclusion

Following an introduction, this chapter described and justified the selected research methodology and design for this research study. An overview of the sample population, unit of analysis, sampling method and size were then provided, with the researcher thereafter detailing the measurement instrument, data collection methods and data analysis approach. The research limitations and ethical considerations were then outlined.

## CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the 17 interviews conducted, across 19 discussed organisations and in 14 different industries. The findings in this chapter are presented in a format in line with the research questions presented in Chapter 3. The data was collected through virtual semi-structured interviews conducted with early career employees as well as managers of early career employees. The interview guide was used as the basis of interviews, however given the nature of semi-structured interviews, discussions differed somewhat in terms of flow and content. The responses from the interviews that were relevant to the study and the research questions were therefore coded using the Atlas.ti software (Appendix 5) to allow for grouping and the emergence of themes (Appendix 6).

The results from the research interviews are presented based on the themes emerging from the qualitative analysis. The themes provide insights into flexible working arrangements, policies and procedures implemented to integrate early career employees into the working world and the organisation itself, requirements and skills needed for successful integration and successful and unsuccessful policies and procedures.

This chapter will provide an in-depth description of the sample and the relevant companies. It will thereafter be followed by the presentation of the results from the qualitative semi-structured interviews.

### 5.2. Description of the Sample

Seventeen online interviews were conducted, made up of 8 early career employees and 9 managers of early career employees. The participants were all based in South Africa. The table below presents an in-depth description of the early career employee sample (Table 5) with the following table representing the managers of early career employees sample (Table 6).

Given that anonymity was guaranteed to all interviewees (Appendix 1, 2 and 3) as well as to protect respondents confidential information and privacy, the tables below depict the aliased names of the participants who were interviewed. The respondents

interviewed were selected using purposeful sampling, based on their experience within organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. All interviews were conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams.

**Table 5: Early career employee sample**

<b>Alias</b>	<b>Current Org. Alias</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Year of Joining First Org.</b>	<b>Highest Level of Qualification at First Org.</b>	<b>Yrs. of Working Experience</b>	<b>Current Experience/ Reflecting on Prev. Experience</b>
Early Career 1	Org A	IT	25	2021	Honours	2,5	Current
Early Career 2	Org B	Professional Services	29	2017	Honours	6	Reflecting
Early Career 3	Org C	Banking	30	2017	Bachelors	7	Reflecting
Early Career 4	Org D	FMCG	29	2018	Honours	5	Current
Early Career 5	Org F	Consulting	25	2023	Honours	1	Current
Early Career 6	Org G	FMCG	29	2019	Honours	4,5	Current
Early Career 7	Org I	IT	24	2022	Bachelors	2	Current
Early Career 8	Org J	Financial Services	29	2018	Honours	5	Current

**Table 6: Managers of early career employees sample**

<b>Alias</b>	<b>Current Org. Alias</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Yrs. of Mgmt. Experience</b>	<b>Yrs. of Experience Managing Early Career Employees</b>	<b>No. Early Careers Managed in the Last Two Yrs.</b>	<b>Current Experience/ Reflecting on Previous Experience</b>
Manager 1	Org I	IT	8	8	5	Both
Manager 2	Org J	ICT	5	5	5	Current
Manager 3	Org K	Logistics	7	7	4	Current
Manager 4	Org M	Supply Chain	20	12	2	Reflecting
Manager 5	Org N	Logistics	5	3	6	Current

Manager 6	Org P	Financial Services	1,5	1,5	30	Reflecting
Manager 7	Org Q	Financial Services and Technology	10	10	7	Current
Manager 8	Org R	Consulting	7	4	3	Reflecting
Manager 9	Org S	Financial Services	4	2	2	Current

### 5.3. Background on Organisations

It is important to note the varying industries of the companies mentioned. This highlighted the variety of organisations utilised and that the results of this study come from a rich sample of organisations. Table 7 provides a description of the organisations the participants are currently working for or have previously worked for. Given that anonymity was guaranteed to all interviewees (Appendix 1, 2 and 3) and to protect respondents confidential information and privacy, the tables below depict the aliased company names provided by participants. An important note regarding Table 7 is that although 17 individuals were interviewed, the number of organisations is higher. This is because some interviewees made mention of previous work experience at companies other than their current organisation.

**Table 7: Organisations mentioned in interviews and industries**

Org Alias	Industry
Org A	IT
Org B	Professional Services
Org C	Banking
Org D	FMCG
Org E	Engineering
Org F	Consulting
Org G	FMCG
Org H	Financial Services
Org I	IT
Org J	ICT

Org K	Logistics
Org L	ICT
Org M	Supply Chain
Org N	Logistics
Org O	Fast Food
Org P	Financial Services
Org Q	Financial Services and Technology
Org R	Consulting
Org S	Financial Services

#### 5.4. Results for Quantitative Opening Questions

To gain a clear understanding of how successful each participant believed their organisations' integration endeavours were, each interviewee was asked four quantitative opening questions. These questions differed for early career employees and managers of early career employees and enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the interviewee's sentiments with regards to their organisations' integration endeavours upfront, setting the tone and an understanding for the interview to follow. These questions followed a Likert scale, from 0-5. The categories will be explained further as per each relevant question. The results of these quantitative questions can be found in Appendix 4.

#### **Part A: Early Career Employees**

Early career employees were asked a series of four Likert scale questions related to their rating of their own performance and competency, and to ascertain whether they feel they belong in their organisation and identify with the goals of the company. These questions enabled the researcher to better understand how the interviewee felt about their capabilities, as well as whether they felt a sense of belonging within their organisation. Across the board, the responses to these questions were positive, with 0 responses in the 1 or 2 category.

##### *Question 1: Are you satisfied with your job performance?*

The Likert scale for this question ranged from 1, very dissatisfied, to 5, very satisfied. The results for this question, displayed below, showed that all participants believed

that they were performing at a score of 3, neutral, or above. 75,00% of participants felt that they were satisfied with their job performance. None of the participants felt dissatisfied with their job performance. This shows that the population sample all believed that their job performance was not dissatisfactory and that majority of the sample were satisfied with their job performance.

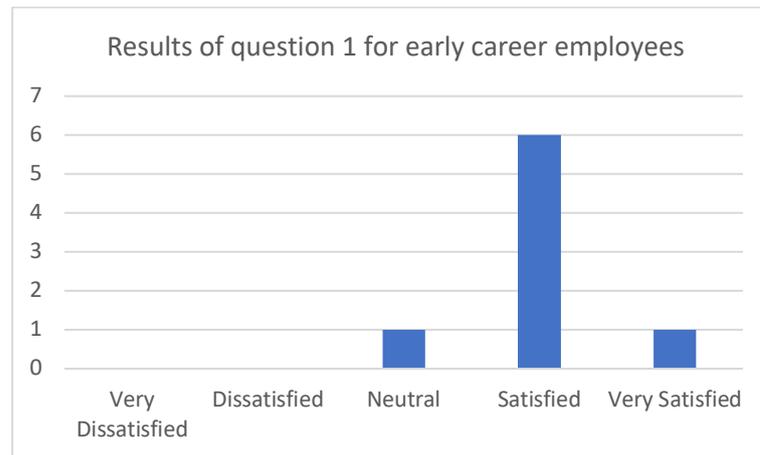


Figure 1: Results of quantitative question 1 for early career employees

*Question 2: How competent do you feel you are at doing your job?*

The Likert scale for this question ranged from 1, very incompetent, to 5, very competent. The results for this question, displayed below, showed that all participants believed that their competency level was at a score of 3, neutral, or above. 62,50% of participants felt that they were competent at performing their job. None of the participants felt incompetent. This represents that the population sample all believed that their competency level at work was not dissatisfactory and that majority of the sample felt competent.

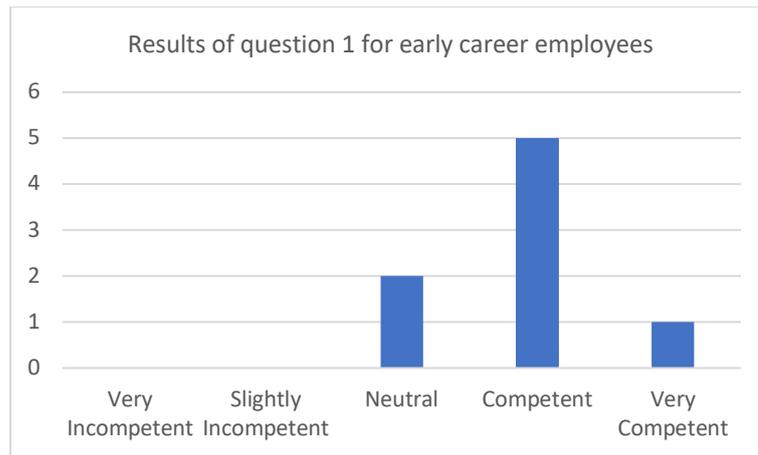


Figure 2: Results of quantitative question 2 for early career employees

**Question 3: Do you believe that you belong in your organisation?**

The Likert scale for this question ranged from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree. The results for this question, displayed below, showed that all participants believed that their sense of belonging in their organisation was at a score of 3, neutral, or above. 50% of participants felt that they agreed, whereas a high 37,50% of participants strongly agreed that they believe they belong in their organisation. None of the participants disagreed at all. Majority of the sample felt that they belong in their organisation.

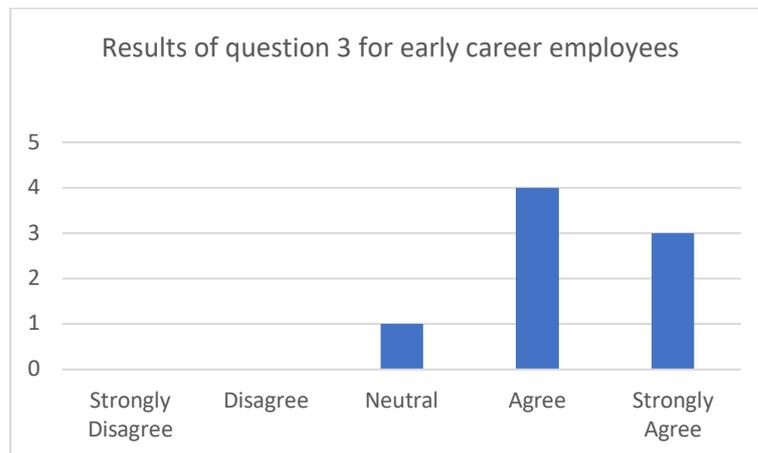


Figure 3: Results of quantitative question 3 for early career employees

**Question 4: Do you identify strongly with the goals of your company?**

The Likert scale for this question ranged from 1, do not identify with goals at all, to 5, strongly identify with goals. The results for this question, displayed below, showed that all participants identified with the goals of their organisation, with a score of 3,

neutral, or above. 62,50% of participants felt that they identified with the goals of their organisation, with 25% of participants strongly identifying with the goals. None of the participants did not identify with the goals of their organisations. Overall, the responses from the interviewed early career employees were positive.

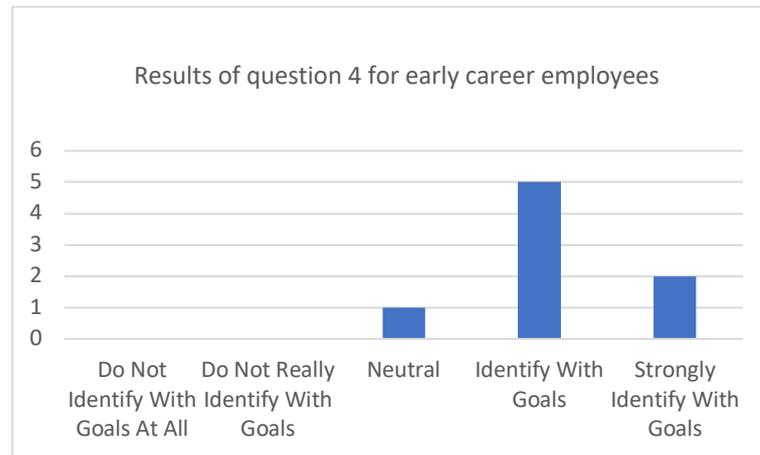


Figure 4: Results of quantitative question 4 for early career employees

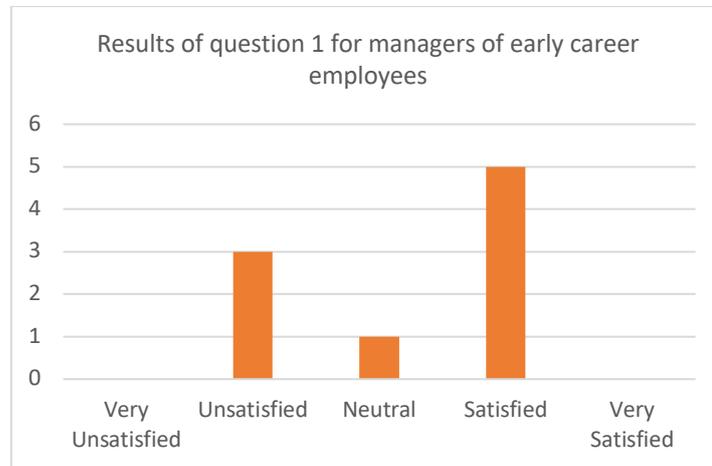
### Part B: Managers of Early Career Employees

Managers of career employees were asked a series of four Likert scale questions related to how successful they believed their flexible working arrangement's socialisation processes to be in four categories: improving early career employees' job performance; improving the competency of early career employees; making early career employees believe they belong in their organisation and lastly; making early career employees identify strongly with the goals of the organisation. These questions enabled the researcher to better understand how the interviewee felt about the ability of their organisations' socialisation processes to integrate the early career employee into the professional world and the organisation itself.

The scales of these questions were identical, with 1 representing very unsatisfied and 5 representing very satisfied. In contrast to the responses of early career employees themselves, these responses were not as positive. Although there were no responses in the 1 category, there were only two responses in the category 5 across the board, with a significant number of responses in category 2. Results overall were therefore significantly more negative, indicating that managers of early career employees did not feel that their organisations were doing an exceptional job with their socialisation processes for early career employees.

*Question 1: Do you feel that your flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes improve early careers job performance?*

The results for this question ranged between 2, unsatisfied, and 4, satisfied. Although 55,56% of participants believed that they were satisfied with the extent to which their flexible working arrangement's socialisation processes improved early career job performance, 33,33% of participants indicated that they were unsatisfied. Although the majority of managers felt satisfied, it is worth noting that almost half of managers felt neutrally or dissatisfied. Although none of the participants felt very unsatisfied, none of the participants felt very satisfied either. Overall, the responses from the interviewed managers of early career employees were closer to the median of neutral. The results for this question are shown below.



*Figure 5: Results of quantitative question 1 for managers of early career employees*

*Question 2: Do you feel that your flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes improve the competency of early careers?*

The results for this question had the highest number of unsatisfied responses. 55,56% of participants felt unsatisfied that their flexible working arrangement's socialisation processes improved the competency of early career employees. Although the mode of these responses were unsatisfied, there were however two respondents who did feel that they were very satisfied with the ability of their flexible working arrangement's socialisation processes to improve the competency of early career employees. Overall, the responses from the interviewed managers of early career employees were negative. The results for this question are shown below.

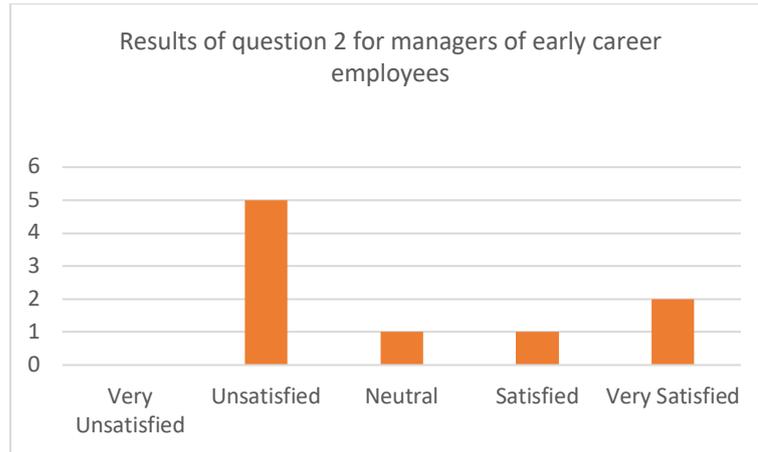


Figure 6: Results of quantitative question 2 for managers of early career employees

**Question 3: Do you feel that your flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes make early careers feel that they belong in your organisation?**

The results for this question also had a high number of unsatisfied responses, with 55,56% of respondents selecting unsatisfied or neutral as their response. It is to be noted however that the rest of the managers of early career employees responded with satisfied. There is quite a fair split in responses between unsatisfied, neutral and satisfied, indicating mixed feelings on managers of early careers opinions regarding their flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes and their impact on making early careers feel a sense of belonging. The results for this question are shown below.

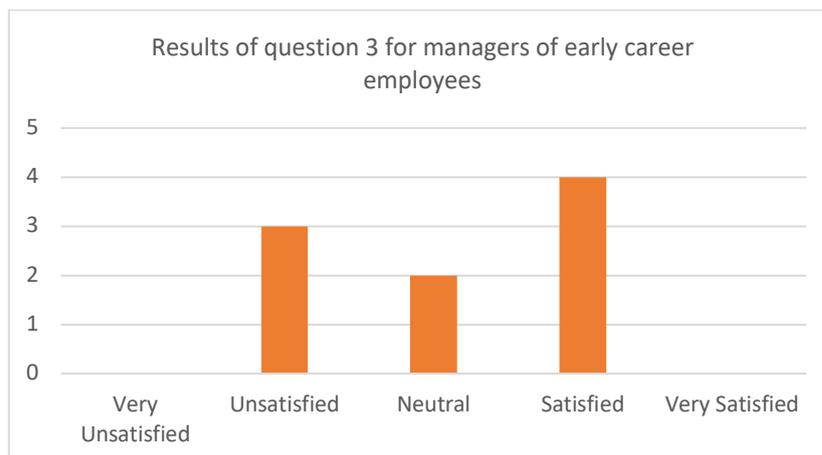


Figure 7: Results of quantitative question 3 for managers of early career employees

**Question 4: Do you feel that your flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes make early careers identify strongly with the goals of your company?**

Across the board, results for this question were generally positive, with 77,78% of respondents indicating that they were satisfied in their flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes ability to make early career employees identify strongly with the goals of their company. The responses to this question showed that most of the sample were happy with their organisation's efforts in this regard. The results for this question are shown below.

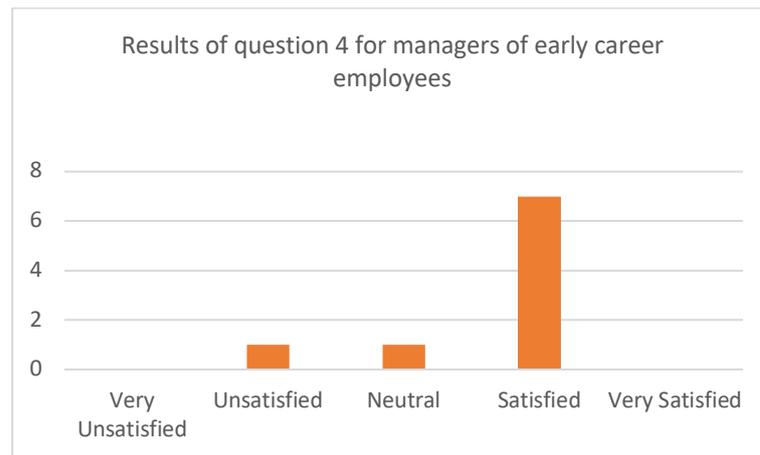


Figure 8: Results of quantitative question 4 for managers of early career employees

## 5.5. Results for Research Question 1

### **Research Question 1: How have organisations utilising flexible working arrangements integrated early career employees into their company as well as into the working environment?**

The aim of Research Question 1 was to understand obtain a broad understanding of the processes, practices and policies implemented by organisations utilising flexible working arrangements to integrate early career employees into both the professional world as well as into their specific organisation. The researcher aimed to identify what organisations are doing to integrate their early career employees into the professional world and the organisation, if anything. Three sets of interview questions were posed: the first (part A) to ascertain participant's understanding of FWAs as well as their FWA agreement with their employer/employee; the second (part B) to understand the processes, policies and procedures implemented to integrate early career employees into the working world; and the last (Part C) to understand the processes, policies and procedures implemented to integrate early career

employees into the organisation itself (refer to Table 3 and Table 4 in Chapter 4). A graphical representation of these results will follow in Chapter 6.3.1.

### **Part A: Flexible Working Arrangements**

To begin the semi-structured qualitative discussion, it was integral to ascertain each participants' understanding of FWAs as well as their FWA agreement with their employer/employees. Three constructs emerged from analysing the early career employees and managers of early career employees responses.

#### 5.5.1. Arrangements with employees/employers

Almost all early career employees (6 of 8) and 4 managers of early career employees made mention of flexplace when asked about their understanding of FWAs. Early career employees and managers of early career employees all shared the view that flexplace arrangements allowed them to work from any location, be it in office, in a different city or in a different country.

*Manager 2: "You can work at home. You can work in the office. You can work in Dubai. I don't care where you are sitting."*

*Early Career 2: "You are allowed to work from sort of wherever you find it most comfortable or where it would be easiest for you. Whether that be the office, at your house, at a coffee shop. But it allows you to work from sort of wherever you feel you would like to."*

*Early Career 6: "You can work from anywhere: it could mean a different city, a different country, it didn't matter."*

With all flexplace arrangements of participants, there was some level of expectation to spend a certain amount of time in office – none of the participants were completely remote, in line with the concept of FWAs. Two early career employees and 3 managers had organisation or team stipulated anchor days in office, regardless of the flexplace arrangements in place. Anchor days were days where the team would agree to all be in office together, to allow for collaboration and to enable the ability to socialise, network and build relationships.

*Manager 9: "So we have an anchor day, so one anchor day a week... The anchor day is not flexible."*

Early Career 7: *"We've got allocated days. So I go in on Tuesdays and Thursdays into the office, regardless of how I'm feeling...it was given to me, so it's stipulated that we show up as a team on Tuesdays and Thursdays."*

Other participants, 2 early career employees and 4 managers, were allowed flexibility in terms of their office days. Employees were allowed to choose the days they would like to be in office, the frequency of office days, or both.

Early Career 6: *"It's basically giving you the flexibility of what days you want to work at home and what days you want to work at the office... we can choose when we want to work from home and when we want to work from the office."*

Manager 7: *"There's flexibility. Our office arrangement currently mandates that they need to be in office two or three days per week."*

Almost all early career employees (6 of 8) and 5 managers of early career employees - made mention of flextime when asked about their understanding of FWAs. Early career employees and managers of early career employees all shared the view that flextime arrangements allowed them to be flexible in terms of when they worked their hours. Some participants were allowed flexibility in terms of how many hours they were required to work.

Early Career 1: *"It's amazing because you can have your own times, you can do whatever at your own time. You work in the afternoon, work in the evening, it's up to you."*

Manager 4: *"My understanding of flexible work arrangement is that your hours can be flexible."*

Early Career 4: *"So instead of having a rigid structure, you're allowed to work your 8 hours and how you work those 8 hours is totally up to you".*

Various reasons were given by managers as to why flextime is important for early career employees. These are reasons such as family responsibilities and attendance of medical appointments.

Manager 3: *“It was okay to not be available in the afternoon if you had to go and do a school run for example. And that was formally documented in employment contracts.”*

Manager 9: *“I’m okay for them to, you know, if they need to go to the doctor, to the dentist, or go pick up something quickly or whatever it is. That’s okay, you know. Life happens and we need it to fit into our work schedules.”*

An important aspect of flextime which was mentioned by 5 managers was the existence of organisations wide core working hours. This meant that although hours are flexible, there are certain business hours during which an employee must be available, unless excused through an arrangement with their manager.

Manager 6: *“We needed to be present probably between 9:00 and 15:00, or be available I would say between 9:00-15:00 because those are the peak hours that your clients used to work as well.”*

Manager 3: *“There was a set time where you were to be available unless by prior arrangement...People need to know that they can get hold of you during these times.”*

A common sentiment amongst early career employees and managers alike is that the key to flexible working arrangements is to be output based, with a focus on the output and final product, not the input hours. Majority of managers (77,78%) referred to an output based focus, with 4 early careers raising the same sentiment.

Manager 5: *“They know I don’t care about how many hours they work. I only care about the output of it. So if we said something’s going to be done, it needs to be done.”*

Manager 3: *“Work is more based on output rather than the inputs.”*

Early Career 2: *“It is strictly output driven...They don’t really mind when you complete the work, as long as you do it. So we’re more output driven as opposed to clocking in at specific times.”*

### 5.5.2. Effects of Flexible Working Arrangements

Sentiments and feelings on the effects of FWAs were mostly shared by early career employees, not managers. Most participants shared mixed feelings on the effects of

FWAs, noting both positives as well as negatives. Overall however, the sentiment was more positive than negative across the board.

Positive sentiments shared related to aspects such as work life balance, the ability to see to family needs, increased productivity, the ability to save money and increased happiness and enjoyment.

*Early Career 2: "I managed to breastfeed for a year, which was really important to me, exclusively. So, I mean, things like that that flexibility allows me, I am grateful for." and "we get a lot more work done, I think, from home...I will say that our productivity has increased."*

*Early Career 7: "I was saving on petrol, so that worked in my favour as well. So those first few months working from home meant I could at least put away some money on the side."*

*Manager 9: "That work life balance, it's really important and you've got to allow for it."*

There were various negative sentiments shared as well, mostly focused around long turn around and wait times as people are less available, more distractions, greater levels of misunderstanding and difficulty building relationships with colleagues.

*Early Career 1: "In person, you can quickly understand and ask questions... you can get things quicker."*

*Early Career 2: "Not everyone can work effectively from home with all the distractions."*

*Manager 3: "Particularly in flexible working arrangements, now you're less available than before...that's a consequence of flexible working arrangements, is people are less available."*

### 5.5.3. COVID-19

Six early career employees and 4 managers discussed the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to their flexible working arrangement. As per the interview responses, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the implementation of flexible working arrangements, shifting the ways of working and the working environment to create a new way of working and new world order. Participants also noted that the COVID-19

pandemic shifted the methods of socialisation, due to lockdowns and restrictions of gatherings.

Early Career 4: *“Because of COVID, there wasn’t really any process. It was just kind of one day they made the decision and they said you can’t come back into the office. And of course we had the national shutdown (lockdown) where you weren’t allowed to go (to the office) unless you were an essential worker.”*

Manager 7: *“I can honestly say it (flexible working arrangements in their organisation) was a by-product of COVID.”*

Manager 6: *“They allowed you to work from home. Obviously that was a by-product of COVID, because everyone was working remotely for a period of time. So eventually, even though we could go back to the office, it was still (with) some sort of flexibility.”*

## **Part B: Processes, Practices and Policies Put Into Place To Integrate Early Career Employees into the Professional World**

Four constructs were identified, forming the processes, practices and policies which have been implemented by organisations utilising FWAs to integrate early career employees into the world of working. When referring to the world of working, the intention was to understand what processes, practices and policies organisations implemented to get early career employees, who are new to the working world, integrated into the professional world, their duties and their responsibilities as an employee.

Early career employees and managers were asked what processes, practices and policies were put into place to integrate into the world of working in an organisation utilising FWAs. They were then asked whether they believed that these processes, practices and policies were successful at integrating early career employees into the working world. The sentiment was generally negative, with most participants stating that they do not believe that the implemented attempts were successful. It is critical to note that more negative responses came from managers of early career employees than early career employees, indicating that there may be a difference in integration expectations. The researcher attempted to clarify this in RQ2, discussed later.

#### 5.5.4. Induction

The induction programme was raised by 5 early careers and 6 managers as a process utilised to integrate early career employees into the world of working. In contrast to the onboarding process, addressed later in this chapter, the induction process aims to introduce the early career employee into the working world, the environment and their specific role. The majority of participant's organisations had some sort of induction process in place to integrate their early career employees. The induction processes cover agenda items such as appropriate dress codes, meeting etiquette, communication skills, and other integral learnings for individuals new to the working world.

Early Career 2: *"We go through an induction when we join and they run you through dress code, how to run meetings, how to speak to clients."*

Early Career 6: *"They did a very lengthy – when I started in my career – a very lengthy induction program, which meant that it was training on all platforms, whether it was systems, whether it was policies. So they integrated me like that. I had enough information by having a set induction programme set out for like 3 months."*

Manager 7: *"When they join, they'll follow the formal programme in terms of they'll go on induction, and the induction will cover work emails, medical aid, dress code, code of conduct, how to talk around a client."*

A critical point raised extensively by both early career employees as well as managers is the importance of initial face time when joining an organisation. Five early career employee and 5 managers raised the importance of initial face time or in office time for early careers entering organisations, to better integrate them into the working world, enable them to learn about the business, be introduced to those around them, and job shadow to learn essential professional skills.

Early Career 1: *"I think that's crucial, especially for early careers, that you have face to face interaction for at least a month or two months."*

Early Career 6: *"I don't think it's helpful for people to be – I'm saying straight out of university- to be having full time remote working or four days a week at home. I just don't think that's helpful. I think that we need to allow them for the*

*first few months until they're up and running to be in office, be around people and understand the job completely because it's only to their benefit."*

Manager 7: *"What I think really worked was that initial one week in office with the team to build a relationship."*

A contrasting opinion however was raised, with strong sentiments towards the negativity of initial face time if this is not the normal way of working. Manager 3 felt passionately that initial face time for early careers is not a good idea, as it can breed resentment within the team and is disingenuous and dishonest.

Manager 3: *"I think one of the big cons is that it gives a false sense of what it's really going to be like. The other con is, you're messing with everyone else's flexi hours. Now you're imposing on everyone else. You've got a new person starting - there will be resentment. Well, imagine we got a new start and I'm like entire team needs to change now. What a load of rubbish. It's not the reality of how we work, so it's disingenuous. We're a company that values honesty, we want to build trust. Being disingenuous from day one is not a good start, because what happens when that honeymoon's over and they get dropped in it, and everything is different from what it was before? So that's a massive drawback on that approach to my mind."*

#### 5.5.5. Skills Development

Training and development of skills required for early career employees to be able to operate efficiently within the working world formed an integral portion of the processes, practices and policies implemented by organisations for their integration. The main professional skills identified through the research as being required by early career employees entering the working world, for which training and development are necessary, are skills such as communication skills, time management, presentation skills, amongst others. Soft skills such as having being motivated, networking skills, the ability to build relationships as well as engagement with stakeholders and showing the willingness to learn are also critical.

Manager 6: *"Your professional skills. The way you deal with clients, the way you deal with managers, the way you deal with partners, you know, those soft*

*of things. The way you deal in hard situations when you have a difficult client, those sort of things. There's a whole month of rigorous training for first years."*  
Manager 2: *"There's probably two key skills for me: communication and resilience."*

Early career 7: *"So it (the training course) goes on for about 6 months and they cover different topics on how to become a better leader. So they'll talk about time management, how to handle difficult conversations, how to build your personal brand."*

Research participants also identified that the ability to do tasks required in the working world are integral skills to be learnt, such as the ability to book a meeting room or how to set up a meeting, as early career employees do not enter organisations with these skills or knowledge.

Early Career 8: *"I feel like the biggest thing when you're starting in a new organisation early in your career is, you need to be able to be trained on the little stuff. So for me, if you want to be successfully integrated, you need to be able to have exactly that... they (early career employees) are allowed to ask how do you book a meeting? How do you book a meeting room? They've never done that in their life, so they need to be able to have enough training on the basic stuff."*

Manager 9: *"Those principles of the workplace or workplace 101. You know, how to show up in meetings, how to write an email, how to sign up to an email when it's relevant, or when it's appropriate to contact someone on Teams verses on email. You know, the purpose of hierarchical systems that are existent in the organisation, how to write reports - basic things like how to write a report- how to structure a the flow of your report basically all the basics. Excel 101, Microsoft Word 101, PowerPoint 101. That should all be part of early career integration because those are tools we use on a daily basis."*

#### 5.5.6. How to Operate in Flexible Working Arrangements

One of the critical aspects of integration of early career employees into the working world in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements is the implementation of processes, practices and policies to teach these individuals the skills required to work flexibly. Virtual meeting etiquette, email etiquette, and time management were

key aspects of flexible working arrangements identified as requiring processes, practices or policies to upskill early career employees as discussed by 4 early career employees and 6 managers.

Manager 4: *“In the framework of a flexible work arrangement, there’s a generic set of rules that apply to both scenarios. So, it was adapted specifically for flexible working. What do companies do? What we did is we developed what we call either best practices or leading practices that define how to work in this new way, This is the minimum. You’re not eating on the call, you’re mindful even though you’re remote, you develop that more as a best practice.”*

Manager 3: *“There were also formal courses that were offered, which most of the items were poached from universities. So how to hold a meeting, how to chair a meeting, how to take minutes, how to draft an agenda.”*

Early Career 2: *“HR did do a few trainings in terms of, you know, when you’re presenting a meeting online, keep your camera on, you should wear an acceptable shirt, you can’t be in your pyjamas, make sure there’s no background noise, make sure it’s well lit. So there would be some sort of protocol just to give you an idea of what’s best practice in terms of running a meeting online.”*

#### 5.5.7. Support: Colleague Support and Manager Support

The idea of support of those around the early career employee, and processes, practices and policies to ensure that support, was one of the most imperative findings from the research interviews. This concept was supported by every participant in some form or another: whether it may be support from managers or colleagues.

Colleague support, in the form of formalised buddy systems or mentorships, or even just as a sentiment of understanding, guidance and assistance from colleagues, was mentioned by 13 participants, 6 early career employees and 7 managers. The buddy system formed the most significant portion of colleague support, discussed by 5 early career employees and 5 managers as being important when integrating early career employees into the world of working in flexible working arrangements. All 10 corresponding organisations utilised buddy systems in some form.

Early Career 5: *“We would have a buddy counsellor arrangement where a buddy is assigned to you for the first 6 weeks when you are a new joiner.”*

Manager 5: *“The other thing that also really helped was that buddy system.”*

Manager 9: *“You’re given a buddy... the line manager has to allocate that person a buddy, and that buddy is someone you can go to.”*

Participants noted that the buddy system provided them with key guidance, assistance, and critically with a safe and trustworthy space to raise issues or ask questions. These aspects of the buddy system practice eased early career employees into the world of working across the board.

Early Career 1: *“For the first month, there’s someone there to guide you, to help you, to set you up, to make sure you have access to everything. The buddy system helped to understand – your buddy will tell you this is how certain things are done, this is how certain people react, this is how you do certain things, this is how you talk to certain people.”*

Early Career 2: *“They also have a buddy system, so there’ll be someone allocated to you who’s a peer... maybe someone who is like one level above you, but still kind of has similar experiences as you. So they can guide you, but they have more experience than you so they’ll be able to guide you better in terms of this is what you should be doing or not, checking in on you or seeing if you’re okay. ”*

Early Career 5: *“Throughout the process of my buddy, it was just any time she’d pick up something like oh, perhaps I think you need to know this, we would have a call and she’ll tell me this is how you do this...she definitely is a very welcoming person. Probably from day one, she really took me under her wings, so it was really easy for me to come to her any time.”*

Manager 4: *“We’ve got a buddy assignment. So what we do, your first day is in office so you can meet your buddy. That will be your buddy for the week then. So they need to help you test your access, show you the ropes, do a little bit of hand holding and all those sort of admin tasks in the first week.”*

The majority of early career employees and managers also felt that manager support was an integral practice to integrate early career employees into the world of working. Six early career employees and 7 managers made mention of some form of manager

support being critical towards integration of early career employees. This manager support comes in the form of assistance, hand holding, teaching and training, specifically job shadowing, check in sessions, the freedom and support to make mistakes, and the allocation of small, manageable tasks.

Early Career 2: *"I think what's key to being integrated is having a manager that is invested in your success. So they teach you and give you the opportunity to learn and to grow."*

Early Career 6: *"You need to have a very good support system in your management."*

Manager 1: *"It's very much my responsibility to teach them."*

One of the major factors in manager support was the practice of regular check in sessions, or one on one sessions. These sessions allow for managers to answer important questions, to obtain an update as to how the early career employee is integrating into the working world, and to touch base and build a relationship with the employee. Three early career employees and 5 managers raised the concept of check in or one on one sessions and their role in displaying manager support.

Manager 2: *"We do check ins with you along the way to see how you're progressing, where you do you need help, etcetera. We normally do that on a bi weekly basis up until the three month period."*

Early Career 2: *"We have check in calls to make sure that you are okay, that you are doing well, that you are utilised."*

Manager 9: *"I have regular meetings, a regular one on one...every second or third month. I check in with each of the team members individually to see how you're doing. Are you unhappy? What can I do to help you?"*

The concept of fear experienced by early career employees was raised by a number of participants: 1 early career employee and 4 managers raised the concept of early career employee fear during the discussions. Early career employees are often scared to make mistakes or intimidated and overwhelmed by the working world upon entry. Manager 1 made an incredibly powerful statement of the role of manager support in reducing the fear of early career employees, again highlighting the

importance of manager support in integrating early career employees into the working world.

*Manager 1: "I'll take the first 2-3 months to be with you in office, hand hold you, until I'm comfortable and you're comfortable. The reason behind it is when I was a junior, I hardly saw my manager. I was very much left on my own and I had to figure out a lot of things. I said I wanted to be that manager I wish I had when I was a junior... it's about making them feel that there's someone there to catch them, because I think a lot of us in our early career days felt we were scared to make a mistake because no one was there to catch us...we're all going to make mistakes. It's fine. I am here to catch you when you make the mistake and support you, and to get you through it."*

### **Part C: Processes, Practices and Policies Put Into Place To Integrate Early Career Employees into the World of Working in Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements**

As introduced in Part B, early career employees and managers were then asked to describe any processes, practices and policies that were implemented by their organisation to integrate early career employees into the organisation itself. The main themes are explored in detail below.

#### **5.5.8. Onboarding**

Onboarding as a method of integrating into the working world was mentioned by almost all participants. Seven early career employees and 7 managers made reference to the onboarding process, making up 82,35% of the population. Almost all organisations had some sort of onboarding process to introduce employees into their organisation. These onboarding processes differed in each organisation, both in the content covered as well as in the time period over which the onboarding process was conducted for. However, the content was mostly similar in terms of introducing employees to the vision, mission and goals of the organisation, providing them with a business understanding and taking the employee through policy and procedure such as applying for leave and completing timesheets.

Manager 2: *“There’s a standard onboarding process that the staff needs to go through. They get given the whole introduction of the company and they get introduced to all the different teams.”*

Early Career 4: *“The general HR onboarding, which covered like the company values and the main goals of the company, product and service offering.”*

Early Career 5: *“When I started with the programme in Feb, we had a three day, 8:00-17:00 onboarding experience where we went through the mission, the vision, where to find the ethics, IT, this is where you go, this is who you contact.”*

Manager 8: *“A lot of the first week is spent on HR onboarding and then there’s videos that need to be watched... there’s a lot of policies that need to be read and training that needs to be done in the first week.”*

It is integral to note that many participants, both early career employees and managers, raised issues with the onboarding process and were unhappy with the practices, policies and procedures incorporated in the onboarding process for various reasons. An important factor causing dissatisfaction with this process for managers is that the onboarding procedures were standardised to all new employees and did not follow any differentiating characteristics for early career employees.

Manager 2: *“So there’s a standard onboarding process that the staff needs to go through... but that process is not different to any normal person starting. So we haven’t defined an early career person verses any person, we treat them the same.”*

Manager 8: *“There’s nothing specifically for early careers, so it’s the same throughout. When I say throughout, I mean at all levels, so it doesn’t matter if you’re coming in as someone fresh out of university or if you’re coming in as a senior manager or as the MD. The process – maybe the MD gets better treatment, I don’t know – but the process is the same in terms of you’ll get all your onboarding documents.” and “There’s nothing tailored for early careers specifically, it’s not a tailored approach. The onboarding is not a tailored approach, it’s a one size fits all approach.”*

Other reasons for dissatisfaction was due to the onboarding process being too broad and shallow, as well as due to the onboarding process providing too much information in too short a period of time, thereby becoming overwhelming.

Manager 8: *“The onboarding for example is quite broad and shallow...there might be certain topics that need to go a big deeper.”*

Early career 8: *“On the first day, they just bombard you with every onboarding material... It’s wonderful to have all of those things, but it’s very overwhelming.”*

Manager 3: *“It’s crammed into half a day. I’m trying to explain how an entire organisation works in half a day.”*

#### 5.5.9. Professional Administration

Multiple aspects of professional administration, such as applying for leave, completing timesheets, how taxes work, understanding company benefits and obtaining access to organisational systems were raised as being important when integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. The majority of participants raised professional admin in some form: 7 early career employees as well as 6 managers, forming 76,47% of participants.

Early Career 1: *“They can teach everything to you during your onboarding, but there’s always certain things, small details, that you only learn once you start doing...the processes and admin side to things that I ask for help for.”*

Manager 5: *“We’ve got the how to guides on how to sign into whatever you need to sign in to, how to test your access.”*

Manager 7: *“They (early career employees) have no idea what to expect. Some of them don’t even know that they’re going to be taxed. Some of them don’t even know they have annual leave.”*

#### 5.5.10. Socialisation: Socialisation Events

Socialisation and the necessary processes, practices and policies required by organisations to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements was a critical point of the research interviews, discussed by

every respondent. The importance of socialisation was stressed by every participant interviewed.

Manager 2: *“Socialisation is absolutely a big aspect for the team.”*

Early Career 2: *“In terms of work and performance, I think socially that’s also a big part of it. Because we are virtual now, we’ve had to try to make an attempt at meeting up socially with colleagues...I think socially, it’s important to, or it helps with integration to have a lot of social events.”*

Early Career 6: *“You need to have some sort of interaction from a social perspective, like when they’re having social events, they need to be inclusive of that as well...just feeling welcomes through all of that.”*

Early Career 8: *“I think in this hybrid (flexible) way of work, the emphasis on socialising is just more pronounced...you lose those coffee chats. They’re not as available as they used to be. There’s a lot more emphasis on building in and being intentional about socialising and having opportunities to socialise, I think that helps a lot.”*

Multiple examples of socialisation processes, practices and policies implemented by organisations to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements were given by participants. Aspects like the use of social events, getaways, get-togethers and providing company stationery to employees were some tactics which were utilised by organisations in an attempt to socialise early career employees into the organisation.

Manager 1: *“Things like pens and books that are company labelled make you feel like a part of something.”*

Manager 6: *“I would say for integration on a social level, there’s a lot of parties and, you know, social gatherings that they’ll have on a monthly basis.”*

Early Career 2: *“We had a pasta making event once. Sometimes we’ll go for a team dinner. They had a movie night recently at the office, because we have this massive screen in our workplace. So I think socially, yeah, it’s important to and it helps with the integration to have a lot of social events.”*

Various benefits to socialisation were raised by early career employees and managers alike, such as providing a sense of support, making early career

employees feel as though they belong, promoting inclusivity, enabling the building of relationships with colleagues and allowing for ease in the transition into the organisation.

Early Career 2: *“Social events are key to integrating...I can’t stress more the importance of social events. I feel like it takes the pressure hugely off. You know, you’ve got to deal with these people for work and it just allows you to relax and get to know them better.”*

Early Career 5: *“Definitely having these little events help you to feel seen, part of the organisation and not just another employee we have here – not just another number.”*

Manager 7: *“They’ll have a social function, they’ll play games, all those sorts of things. It does definitely help foster belonging and that I’m part of something, and we have a goal together.”*

## 5.6. Results for Research Question 2

### **Research Question 2: What does successful integration of early careers employees entail?**

The aim of question 2 was to understand what organisations and early career employees felt was needed or required to be achieved for the early career employee to be successfully integrated into the organisation. Two interview questions (refer to Table 3 and Table 4 in Chapter 4) were used to establish what early career employees felt they needed to achieve to be successfully integrated as well as what managers of early career employees felt their early career employees needed to achieve to be successfully integrated. A graphical representation of these results will follow in Chapter 6.4.

#### 5.6.1. Skills/Characteristics

Displaying skills and characteristics such as confidence, motivation, strong communication skills, the ability to self-manage, being comfortable in the role and organisation, and having a good attitude were raised by 2 early career employees and 5 managers as being indicators of successful integration.

Manager 1: *"It's where that person gets to that point...in himself or herself when they are able to self-manage. I think one of my things is that it's about having the right attitude."*

Manager 6: *"(When) they're motivated and they're committed."*

Early Career 1: *"They feel comfortable with working, I think that's successful. And also I would say the level of confidence in general."*

Manager 4: *"It's a combination of quite a few things...Is this person adding value? Do they have an element of self-discipline? Can they self-manage? Are they utilising the time? "*

Other characteristics and skills mentioned by 3 early careers and 3 managers are the presence of trust, displaying resilience, and alignment with the goals and values of the company.

Manager 1: *"Resilience... You've got to bounce back in these difficult times."*

Manager 7: *"There needs to be a level of trust and understanding."*

Early Career 7: *"Being able to align with the goals and values of the company, which is how I feel as well, the goal, the values, the value system that we have in place at the company. I feel like that's something that I can connect with."*

### 5.6.2. Proactive Employee Behaviour

Five early career employees and 6 managers raised proactive behaviour in various forms as important aspects of successful integration. Both early career employees and managers noted that the individual plays a strong role in their successful integration and that the responsibility for successful integration lies not only in the organisation or their manager, but in the individual themselves.

Early Career 6: *"I had to sort of ask for it (a mentor) because it wasn't just a given that here, here you go, here's a mentor, this person is going to teach you the basics. I had to say, I don't know the basics, so let me get a mentor assigned to me... that's sort of how I integrated myself...I had to be proactive and find that mentor"*

Early Career 8: *"Because of the fact that I was proactive, I was able to integrate properly."*

Manager 5: *"I also think it depends on the individual...we try, but it's still up to the individual to also bring their side."*

There are various forms of proactive behaviour which can be utilised by early career individuals to integrate themselves successfully: displaying autonomy, asking questions, being independent, and taking on more responsibility, amongst others.

Manager 1: *"(Successful integration is) where that person gets to the point where there's autonomy in himself or herself, and they are able to self-manage."*

Early Career 4: *"You are able to work without needing assistance all the time, you were up and running."*

Manager 2: *"When I give you tasks and you do them independently...being able to let go of that hand holding process and give them work to be able to do independently. So that to me is a point where they reach maturity."*

### 5.6.3. Socialisation: Fitting in Socially

As discussed in 5.5.10, socialisation was raised by all participants. It was also raised by the majority of early careers and managers as a factor in determining whether an early career employee is successfully integrated, from the aspects of whether the individual is participating in social events and whether they have built relationships with their colleagues.

Manager 2: *"There has to be that kind of balance for them to grow and create relationships, and they do. They have their own little inside jokes, and that to me is a sign that they're integrating – when they kind of start to create friendships."*

Manager 8: *"At the same time, have they managed to socially integrate with the other team members? Do they get along? Is there good camaraderie? Are they able to function as a unit without necessarily having to be together all the time?"*

Early Career 8: *"I think that (successful integration) is a lot about belonging and purpose and motivation and encouragement."*

## 5.7. Results for Research Question 3

### **Research Question 3: What successes and challenges do early careers face regarding integration into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements?**

The aim of research question 3 was to get an understanding of successful integration processes and unsuccessful integration processes. Participants were questioned on processes they felt worked well to integrate early career employees into the working world and the organisation, as well as what they felt did not work well. For ease, this section was split into two parts: Part A, representing successful processes; and Part B, representing unsuccessful processes. A graphical representation of results will following in Chapter 6.5.

#### **Part A: Successful Integration Processes**

Early career employees and managers were asked to describe practices, processes and policies which, in their experience, opinion or view was successful towards integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. These were practices, processes or policies that improved the integration of early career employees. The main themes of the responses are explored below.

##### 5.7.1. Support

As discussed extensively in 5.5.7, support by the colleagues and manager was a factor raised by every participant as being covered by some process, practice or policy when integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. Support in the form of manager support and colleague support, specifically the buddy system, were raised once again as a policy which has been extremely successful in integrating early career employees.

Job shadowing as a form of learning and development was raised by four managers as a successful integration process. Interestingly, this was not raised by any early career employees. On the job learning however was raised by 5 early careers as well as 2 managers. Managers felt that job shadowing allowed early career employees to learn critical skills from them, through experience and increased exposure. On the

job learning processes were raised as a more informal approach to learning details and tips which cannot be learnt in other forms of training or development.

Manager 8: *“(There is) job shadowing, so they would for example come and sit with me, see what I do, show them the processes that I follow in terms of the workflow, our systems that we use, how reviews are done.”*

Early Career 1: *“There’s always certain things, like small details, which you only learn once you start doing.”*

Early Career 2: *“A lot of it is very much on the job training and you gain experience as you go...a lot of it happens on the job.”*

Giving early career employees the freedom to make mistakes was raised by 3 early career employees and 3 managers as enabling successful integration for these individuals. This helped to alleviate the fear felt by these employees when starting work for the first time or newly joining an organisation – 1 early career employee and 4 managers discussed the concept of early career employee’s fear when joining an organisation.

Manager 1: *“A lot of us, in our early career days, felt we were scared to make a mistake.”*

Manager 9: *“You need to allow for the mistakes and you need to allow for that person to grow on their own.”*

Early Career 7: *“I felt that from the get go, from the onset, the team embraced me. You can make mistakes.”*

Another incredibly successful procedures when integrating early career employees was allowing them to ask questions, regardless of how many questions were asked, how many times a question was repeated, or how basic the questions may seem. 6 early career employees and 7 managers felt that allowing early career employees to ask questions, giving them the safety and trust to be able to raise when they did not know something, and giving them patience and support through their questions was integral to their successful integration.

Early Career 1: *“They (early career employees) are still very confused about how things work and they’re still afraid to ask questions, afraid to ask for help.”*

*You know, I was also in that situation. So I think if that person feels comfortable in asking questions...then I think that's successful."*

Early Career 5: *"She (my mentor) would tell me if there's any questions, please bother me. Don't just sit in the corner. That also encouraged me to ask any time I have questions."*

Manager 5: *"When you start working, you can ask questions... have you integrated into the team in terms of asking for help?"*

### 5.7.2. Differentiation

As raised in point 5.5.8. on the onboarding process, having specific onboarding processes, induction processes, socials and training which is differentiated for early career employees is a critical procedure to ensure their successful integration. 4 early career employees and 4 managers raised that differentiation of processes for early career employees is important, as these employees have different needs and requirements to other employees joining the organisation.

Early career 6: *"I do think that they (companies) need to come up with some sort of basic training for graduates- and not the same training as someone who is coming from a different company. Or don't just throw them into induction without giving them the tools to be able to do their job and again, it's very basic for us who have been in the organisation, but for them it's not. So I do genuinely think that companies need to have a very separate, specialised program for people who are coming out of university."*

Manager 3: *"I think the first step (to being successfully integrated) is identifying that this new start is an early career start, right. So this notion of induction courses being one-size-fits-all that a lot of organisations have is fallacious. As we know, if you're being inducted as an early career, you need different- you have different needs to someone who has already had a successful career."*

### 5.7.3. Initial Face Time

As discussed in section 5.5.4, a critical point raised extensively by both early career employees as well as managers is the importance of initial face time when joining an organisation. This was raised again and stressed by various early career

employees and managers when asked what processes, practices and policies are successful at integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements.

Manager 5: *“So what I really think worked was that initial one week in office with the team to build a relationship.”*

Manager 7: *“It’s actually quite important also in those first few days that you come up and meet your teams.”*

Early Career 8: *“I think that team lunch on my first day was so nice because it really broke the ice... I think that really helps.”*

#### 5.7.4. Socialisation

In terms of socialisation, in person introduction sessions when an early career employee joins a company has been raised by 5 early career employees and 4 managers as a successful process to integrate the employee. According to participants, these introduction sessions help the early career employee to socialise, to feel a stronger sense of belonging, to network and to gain a better understanding of the business functions and hierarchy.

Manager 8: *“Take them through to all of the divisions of the companies, they get to meet all of the partners and senior managers and all of the staff. And then they get to understand exactly who does what.”*

Manager 3: *“I would do a lot of introductions to help them build relationships with people because you know, being isolated in a team is a problem, particularly when you’re in a hybrid (flexible working arrangement) type of situation where everything is on Microsoft Teams and you don’t get to bump into people or get to know them.”*

Early Career 6: *“There needs to be some sort of, in terms of integrating them into the organisation, introducing them to people.”*

#### 5.7.5. Training and Development

Two forms of training and development were raised by participants as being important for successful integration of early career employees: work readiness programmes and rotation programmes. Work readiness programmes were raised

by two managers as a form of training on professional skills required for early career employees, to better equip them to succeed in the working world.

Manager 7: *“Having a work readiness programme could actually go a long way. So now just throwing policies at them... I think maybe a work readiness programme that’s run before they even start.”*

Manager 3: *“We relied on work readiness programmes...(they) cover things like how to send emails, how to book meeting rooms, how to use a printer, you know, proper meeting etiquette.”*

Rotation programmes were highlighted by 3 early career employees and 2 managers as being important for successful integration, as these programmes allow the employees to get a sense of the working world holistically, gives them experience in different divisions, provides them with opportunities and a better business understanding.

Manager 9: *“The best way to understand how the business works is to rotate... Rotate, get the holistic, full understanding, and then come into your job.”*

Early Career 5: *“What was experience throughout the whole rotation...that really helped us integrate into the organisation.”*

Early Career 2: *“(Rotation) gives them a name within the organisation. It helps them with networking, it helps them with building their own personal brand, it gives them experience in different divisions and it provides them with opportunities because people know about them and what their skills are... it is a positive thing.”*

## **Part B: Unsuccessful Integration Processes**

Early career employees and managers were asked to describe practices, processes and policies which, in their experience, opinion or view was unsuccessful towards integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, or could even be detrimental to their integration. The most common themes of responses are described below.

#### 5.7.6. No Differentiation for Early Career Employees

In line with section 5.7.2., having no differentiation for early career employees in onboarding, induction and training and development processes was raised as an obstruction to the successful integration of early career employees. Two early career employees and 5 managers raised that having no differentiation in practices, policies and processes for early career employees is detrimental to their successful integration.

Manager 9: *“There’s no differentiation between early career integration into the organisation verses someone more experienced... and I think there is a real need for it.”*

Manager 3: *“There needs to be some kind of customisation to the curriculum that is appropriate to that person’s level. Most organisations don’t do this. They have an induction and it’s supposed to cover everything for all people and it doesn’t.”*

#### 5.7.7. Flexible Working Arrangement Difficulties

Certain aspects of flexible working arrangements can cause difficulties and inhibit the successful integration process of early career employees. Three early career employees and 2 managers have raised that working remotely can result in the early career employee feeling isolated and lost, can cause in a lack of visibility which can affect performance, and can hinder the early career employee’s ability to build relationships.

Early Career 1: *“We go straight into flexible working arrangements...In this, there’s certain things that you don’t realise that you’re missing out on.”*

Manager 5: *“I think we are struggling with graduates and juniors, because we don’t see them. I’ve had more performance discussions with juniors because I can’t see them.”*

#### 5.7.8. Company Policy

Participants mentioned that organisations with a lack of clear policy can inhibit the successful integration of early career employees, as this results in confusion, a lack of guidance and a lack of consistency in processes and practices implemented.

Participants specifically raised concerns about a lack of company policy regarding flexible working arrangements and how to implement them, as well as a lack of documentation of processes.

Early Career 4: *“In terms of what processes they put in place, I think it was just see as you go.”*

Manager 9: *“There would be some sort of protocol to give you an idea of what is best practice...but I wouldn’t say it was super formalised or a policy.”*

Manager 1: *“We don’t even have internal communication documentation. So we don’t even know what our guidelines are... I think that fundamentally is a problem.”*

Manager 8: *“I don’t think the processes that are in place successfully integrated them (early career employees) into the workplace.”*

## 5.8. Conclusion

The results from the interview questions are presented under the three relevant research questions in this chapter. Participant responses were grouped into themes, and common themes along with relevant quotations from both early career employees as well as managers have been provided to substantiate and further explain the sentiments and ideas derived from the interviews. An in-depth analysis into participants understandings about flexible working arrangements, their flexible working arrangement agreement with their employers, processes, practices and policies implemented to integrate early career employees into the professional world as well as into the organisation itself was conducted. An exploration into what successful integration of early career employees entails was presented, followed by a discussion on the processes, practices and policies that are successful in integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements verses those that are unsuccessful.

## CHAPTER SIX: A RECONCILIATION OF THE FINDINGS AND THE LITERATURE

### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter of the research study discusses the results from Chapter 5, incorporating both the data received from the 8 early career employee interviews and 9 manager interviews with the literature shown in Chapter 2. Through a comparison of the results with the literature, a discussion will proceed to answer the 3 research questions discussed in Chapter 3. Four figures were developed from the thematic analyses in Chapter 5 to integrate the findings into coherent systems and summarised visuals. The research findings contributed to an improved understanding on the integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements.

### 6.2. Discussion of Themes Emerging From Opening Quantitative Questions

As per the discussion in Chapter 5.4., participants were asked a series of four opening quantitative questions to determine how successful they believed their flexible working arrangement organisations' integration endeavours were. The answers to these quantitative questions are presented in Appendix 4. The questions posed to early career employees differed from those asked to managers to enable the researcher to obtain a well-rounded understanding of each group's relevant sentiments. These questions followed a Likert scale, from 0-5.

Early career employees were asked questions regarding their own performance and competency, as well as whether they felt a sense of belonging in their organisation and whether they aligned with the goals of their organisation. This helped the researcher to gauge the overall sentiment of early career participants in terms of performance and socialisation. Overall, responses from early career participants were extremely positive, with no responses in the 0 or 1 Likert scale category.

Managers of early career employees were asked questions related to how successful they believed their flexible working arrangement's socialisation processes to be in four categories: improving early career employees' job performance; improving the

competency of early career employees; making early career employees believe they belong in their organisation and lastly; making early career employees identify strongly with the goals of the organisation. These questions enabled the researcher to better understand how the participant felt about the ability of their organisations' socialisation processes to integrate early career employees into the professional world as well as the organisation itself. In contrast to the responses of the early career employees, the responses of the managers across the spectrum, with the exception of question 4, were quite negative in general, with managers of early career employees generally feeling that their organisations' socialisation processes were not improving the integration and socialisation of early career employees.

The specific questions, regarding performance, competency, a sense of belonging and alignment with the goals of the organisation were specifically chosen due to their alignment with the research in Chapter 2. As per Saks & Gruman (2011) and Ashforth et al., (2007), a strong indicator of successful integration into organisations is improved performance of the new joiner. The researcher therefore aimed to determine whether early career employees and managers aligned with this theory, where early career employees would feel satisfied with their performance and managers would feel that their organisations' socialisation processes improved the performance of early career employees. According to Bailey et al., (2015), one of the core goals of organisational socialisation is increasing the competency of new employees: the researcher therefore wished to investigate whether early career employees felt that they were competent at performing their job and whether managers felt that their organisations' socialisation processes improved the competency of early career employees. Creating a sense of belonging in an organisation for the early career employee is also a critical aspect of organisation integration and socialisation (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Bauer et al., 2007). The researcher aimed to discern whether early career participants felt that they do belong in their organisations, and determine from the view of managers whether they felt that their organisations' socialisation processes improved early career employees' sense of belonging in their company. Lastly, as per Bailey et al. (2015), successful integration of early career employees resulted in these individuals aligning with the goals of the organisation. The researcher therefore concluded the quantitative questions by aiming to uncover whether early career participants aligned with the goals of the organisation and whether managers felt that early career employee

alignment with the goals of the organisation were improved by their organisations' socialisation processes.

The discussion below will link the questions asked to early career employees to the questions asked to managers of early career employees to discern whether these responses align or contrast, and will also highlight outliers and trends in responses. The discussion will most importantly also link the responses to the literature in Chapter 2.

### 6.2.1. Question 1: Job Performance

As per Figure 1 in Chapter 5.4., early career employees were first asked to rate their satisfaction in their own job performance. The majority of participants felt that they were performing to a satisfactory level, with none of the participants feeling very dissatisfied or dissatisfied with their performance. Only one participant felt that their performance was at a neutral level, early career 8, however it is important to note that the participant did disclaim that this response was because she had done a career pivot, starting a new job in a different function and department. She did state that her response was due to her feeling very fresh in her new role and still finding her feet. Early career 8 aside, the sentiment from participants was positive, feeling either satisfied or very satisfied in their job performance.

As depicted in Figure 5 in Chapter 5.4., the sentiment of managers when questioned about early career job performance, specifically whether their flexible working arrangements organisations' socialisation processes improved early career employees job performance, was not as positive. Almost half of the managers interviewed (4 of 9) felt either dissatisfied or neutral towards the impact of their flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes on improving early career job performance.

This highlights that although early career employees felt that they were performing well, managers did not overall believe that early career job performance was being improved by the organisations' socialisation processes. This provides room for growth and improvement on the part of the organisation, indicating that organisations could do more with their socialisation processes in order to have an impact on improving job performance of early career employees. When linking the responses

from this quantitative questions with more detailed responses to the qualitative research questions, it is evident that both early career employees as well as managers do believe that increased job performance is a sign of successful integration, and are in consensus with studies by Conradie & de Klerk (2019), Saks & Gruman (2011) and Ashforth et al. (2007), who have all raised that organisational socialisation and integration processes have the capability to improve job performance of early career employees. Bauer et al. (2007) also noted improved job performance as an outcome of successful integration, which has been in line with the outcomes of this study. This research study however, on account of the responses of managers of early career employees, emphasises that organisations may not be doing enough in terms of their socialisation and integration initiatives to have a strong impact on improving job performance of early career employees: majority of managers felt that their organisations could be doing more. Manager 1 specifically noted that he felt his organisation does not do a fantastic job at improving early career employees' job performance. Manager 2 stated that if the researcher were to ask early career employees within her organisation whether they felt the organisations' socialisation processes improved early career performance, they would say yes, however she herself, as a manager, felt that her organisations' socialisation processes were not improving the job performance of early career employees.

#### 6.2.2. Question 2: Competency

Responses from early career employees regarding how competent they felt they were at performing their job were almost identical to the responses of question one (Figure 2), with the only exception being one more neutral response as opposed to a competent (the Likert scale 4 equivalent in this question). Again, it is important to note the bias of early career 8, who responded neutral and stated that the career pivot always leaves one feeling a little bit incompetent at the new job. Overall, early career employees felt competent at their performing jobs.

Managers of early career employees again presented a much more negative sentiment, as depicted in Figure 6. The majority of managers, 5 of 9, responded that they were unsatisfied in their organisations socialisation's processes ability to improve the competency of early career employees. It is important to note the similarities in answers for quantitative question 1 and quantitative question 2: 3

managers, Manager 3, Manager 7 and Manager 9 responded unsatisfied for both questions 1 and question 2, showing a pattern in the sentiments towards their organisation's socialisation processes. Managers who responded positively for question 1 tended to respond positively for question 2: shown through the responses of Manager 2, Manager 4 and Manager 6.

Although the majority of early career employees felt that their job competency level was satisfactory, the majority of managers felt they were unsatisfied in the organisations' socialisation's impact on improving early career employee job competency. This again provides room for growth and improvement on the part of the organisation, indicating that organisations could do more with their socialisation processes in order to have an impact on improving job competency of early career employees.

Literature by Bailey et al. (2015) noted improved competency of early career employees as an outcome of successful integration tactics by organisations. The results of this question, when unpacked in the qualitative portion of the research, were aligned with this idea. This study did find that managers of early career employees again felt that their organisations were not doing enough in terms of socialisation and integration tactics to be able to improve early career competency, highlighting that organisations may need to do more than what is currently being done to achieve this outcome. Further probing into this question showed that participants felt an increase in training and development, specifically on technical skills required for the job, could be successful integration processes which would improve the competency of early career employees. Manager 1 specifically stated that he does not think that their organisation do enough to improve the competency of early career employees. Manager 7 did state that their organisation does provide videos, webinars and trainings to keep employees up to date with professional competency, despite indicating that she was unsatisfied with her organisations' socialisation process' ability to improve the competency of early career employees.

### 6.2.3. Question 3: A Sense of Belonging

Early career employees were then asked whether they felt that they belonged in their organisation (Figure 3). No participants responded negatively to this question: only early career 8 responded with neutral, whilst every other participant agreed or

strongly agreed. Early career 8 however did state that she felt that she belonged in her organisation, but not in her direct business unit – again, her answers were skewed due to her career pivot, new position and unique circumstance. Aside from early career 8, the sentiment was extremely positive with early career employees feeling that they do belong in their organisations.

Manager responses varied greatly when asked whether their organisations' socialisation processes made early career employees feel that they belong in their organisation (Figure 7). Three managers felt unsatisfied, 2 managers felt neutrally, and 4 managers felt satisfied. It was therefore difficult to find any overarching trend from the responses to this question, due to the high level of variance.

Overall, early career employees displayed a positive sentiment in response to this question. Given the large variance in responses from managers, it is difficult to summarise the results, however it is possible to state that not all managers felt the same positive sentiment in terms of their organisations' socialisations processes impact on making early career employees feel that they belong. The responses from managers were more positive for question 3 than for questions 1 and questions 2, indicating that managers generally had felt that their organisations' socialisation processes were more effective at improving the feeling of belonging than actual job performance and competency, or professional capabilities of early career employees.

Bauer et al. (2007) defined organisation socialisation as the process by which new hires make the transition from being organisational outsiders to organisational insiders, feeling a sense of belonging. This concept was also shared by Wanberg (2012), who stated that organisational socialisation is the experience of early careers' integration into their new space as members belonging to an organisation. The responses from this study showed that both early career employees and managers of early career employees shared this sentiment: the sentiment that successful integration processes improved the early careers' feelings of belonging within their organisation. Manager 2 raised a particularly integral point in the discussion portion of the interview, stating that when organisations push their social messaging to employees in terms of what they are trying to achieve, employees really buy into that narrative and want to be a part of that- fostering a sense of belonging through this

process. Early Career 1 noted that when you feel like you're part of the organisation, you have been successfully integrated.

#### 6.2.4. Question 4: Identification With Organisational Goals

Lastly, early career employees were asked whether they identified strongly with the goals of their company. Again, the responses were largely positive (Figure 4), with the majority of participants indicating that they agreed or strongly agreed. Interestingly, the outlier in this question was not early career 8 as was the case in Chapter 6.2.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3, but was early career 4, who had previously responded extremely positively with regards to her performance, competency, and sense of belonging within her organisation. When analysing her response to understand her neutral stance, she had explained that her neutral response was because she "did not care about the goals of the company". This can be explained by her sentiment voiced later in the interview, where she stated that she is indifferent to the goals of the company as they do not affect her directly or benefit her. She further explained that her current organisation, Org D, is an American organisation, and that she doesn't identify with the American culture. The above does explain clearly why early career 4 does not identify with the goals of her company. Given the unique, specific circumstance, this can also be seen as an outlier response.

Interestingly, and in contrast to the rest of the manager responses, the responses to this question regarding whether the manager felt their flexible working arrangements' socialisation processes improved made early career employees identify strongly with the goals of the company were extremely positive. Seven of 9 managers felt satisfied that their organisations' socialisation processes did indeed make early career employees identify with the goals of their company (Figure 8). Most managers did raise later in the interview that their organisations' onboarding processes did cover the goals of the organisation well, which could explain the positive sentiment in this regard.

The responses of early career employees and managers overall did show consensus in the questions on identification with organisational goals. This indicates that across participants, organisations have been effective at communicating and receiving early career employee buy-in with regards to their goals. This ties back to the study by Bailey et al. (2015) where it was found that one of the goals of organisation

socialisation are for new hires to identify with the goals of the organisation. Manager 8 raised that organisations place a huge amount of emphasis on the values and goals of the company, allowing early career employees to identify with the goals of the organisation.

#### 6.2.5. Conclusion

Across the board, this study aligned with the literature on the impact of organisational socialisation and integration on job performance, competency, creating a feeling of belonging and alignment with the goals of the company for early career employees. The study did add to literature specifically with regards to questions 1 and 2, where managers felt that their organisations socialisation processes did not do enough to improve job performance and competency of early career employees. Participants raised that additional measures, such as training and development in professional skills, would add further value in these areas. Manager 8 specifically noted that she felt that in large corporate companies there is a lot of focus on integrating the early career into the workplace in the form of creating a sense of belonging and aligning with the company's values (and goals), but that there was a disconnect when looking at the focus on improving the actual competency in the job and the early career's ability to perform their specific job or role.

### 6.3. Discussion of Themes Emerging From Research Question 1

#### **Research Question 1: How have organisations utilising flexible working arrangements integrated early career employees into their company as well as into the working environment?**

The aim of Research Question 1 was to obtain a broad understanding of processes, practices and policies implemented by organisations utilising flexible working arrangements to integrate early career employees into both the professional world as well as into their specific organisation. The researcher aimed to identify what organisations are doing to integrate their early career employees into the professional world and the organisation, if anything. The researcher first explored the participants' understanding of FWAs as well as their FWA agreement with their employer/employee to obtain an understanding of the participants' experiences and levels of flexibility. The researcher then further explored the processes, policies and

procedures implemented to integrate early career employees into the working world as well as the processes, policies and procedures implemented to integrate early career employees into the organisation itself.

### 6.3.1. Flexible Working Arrangements

The results from the flexible working arrangements section of the questionnaire were summarised into the below diagram form (Figure 9), using codes and themes developed with the Atlas.ti software. This serves as a graphical representation of the major findings of this category of questions on flexible working arrangements.

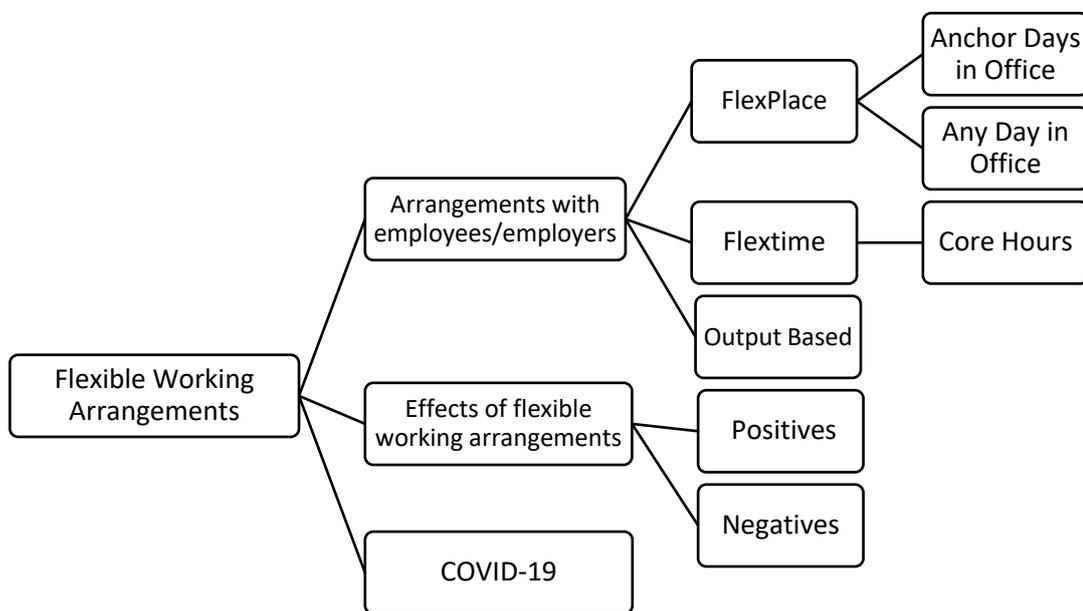


Figure 9: Overview of results for RQ1 part A on flexible working arrangements

The data from the interviews showed that employees utilising flexible working arrangements were given flexibility and freedom as to where to conduct their work as well as when to conduct their work. All research participants noted that their flexible working arrangements provided them with flexibility in their employment practices and allowances, to some extent or the other. The research results were directly in line with the flexible working arrangement literature explored in Chapter 2. As per Allen et al., (2013), flexible working arrangements are work options allowing for and permitting flexibility in terms of the location of work being conducted (the “where”, also defined as telecommuting or flexplace) and/or the time during which work is being conducted (the “when”, also referred to as scheduling flexibility or flextime). Masuda et al. (2012) further stated that flexible working arrangements refer

to employment practices, allowances and norms that provide employees with more freedom and less rigid structures within which they are able to operate and execute their daily work (Masuda et al., 2012).

As depicted in Figure 9, the study found that all participants utilised either flexplace or flextime working arrangements, or even a combination of both. Participants utilising flexplace arrangements were allowed to work remotely on certain days, and were either allowed or required to work at the office on other days. Many managers made note that they were not concerned about where their employees were based when working remotely: whether it may be in a different city, or even a different country. In some cases, office days were mandated in terms of when, through the use of anchor days, or how frequently they were required, and in others, employees had complete freedom to pick their office days. Employees working with flextime arrangements were allowed to choose their starting and end times, were not dictated as to how many hours they were required to work as long as they were completing their required tasks, and were most often allowed to step away from their work during the work day for family responsibilities and commitments, or medical appointments.

In the literature review, specific focus was given to the concepts of flexplace and flextime as flexible working arrangements. In line with the responses and explanations from the 6 early career employees and 4 managers who made mention of flexplace arrangements, Uhlig et al. (2021) defined flexplace as flexibility along the dimension of place of working, appearing in various forms, the most prevalent being mobile work, where employees are able to work in any suitable location, such as from home, in co-working spaces, at a client, or in any other location where work is able to be complete successfully. 6 early career employees and 5 managers made mention of flextime arrangements as part of their flexible working arrangements. Flextime, as raised by 6 early career employees and 5 managers, was defined in Chapter 2 as the allowance of employees to determine their starting and ending times of work (Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2021), which can be utilised in various forms, such as: options in work schedules, where starting and end times vary or alternatively; options in work hours, where the standard 35-40 hour full-time work week is altered; or options in managing personal and family responsibilities, where employees can take time off and be offline during the work day to see to personal responsibilities (Hill et al., 2008).

An integral point to be noted in terms of flexible working arrangements is the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the adoption of these practices. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the usage of flexible working arrangements across the globe in almost every sector, with record growth in the adoption of FWAs post COVID-19 (Raj et al., 2023). COVID-19 has led to an unexpected and rapid shift from traditional office work to flexible arrangements (Iwu et al., 2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of flexible working arrangements and the shift in the ways of working was raised by 6 early career employees and 4 managers. Participants discussed a shift in working norms during and post the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically because of lockdowns, shut downs and restrictions.

### 6.3.2. Processes, Policies and Practices Utilised to Integrate Early Career Employees into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

The results from the questions posed to early career employees and managers regarding processes, policies and practices implemented by organisations to integrate early career employees into the working world, in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements are summarised in diagram form below (Figure 10).

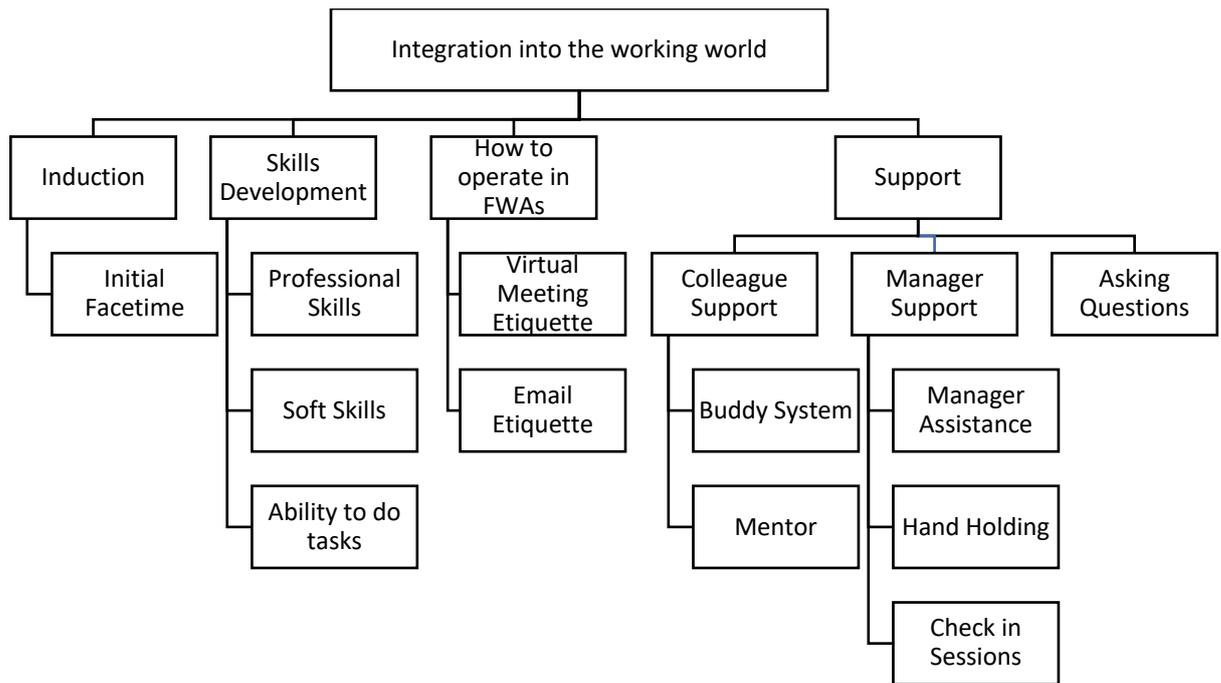


Figure 10: Overview of results for RQ1 part B on integrating early career employees into the working world in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements

The results from the questions posed to early career employees and managers regarding processes, policies and practices implemented by organisations to integrate early career employees into the organisation itself, in companies utilising flexible working arrangements are summarised in diagram form below (Figure 11).

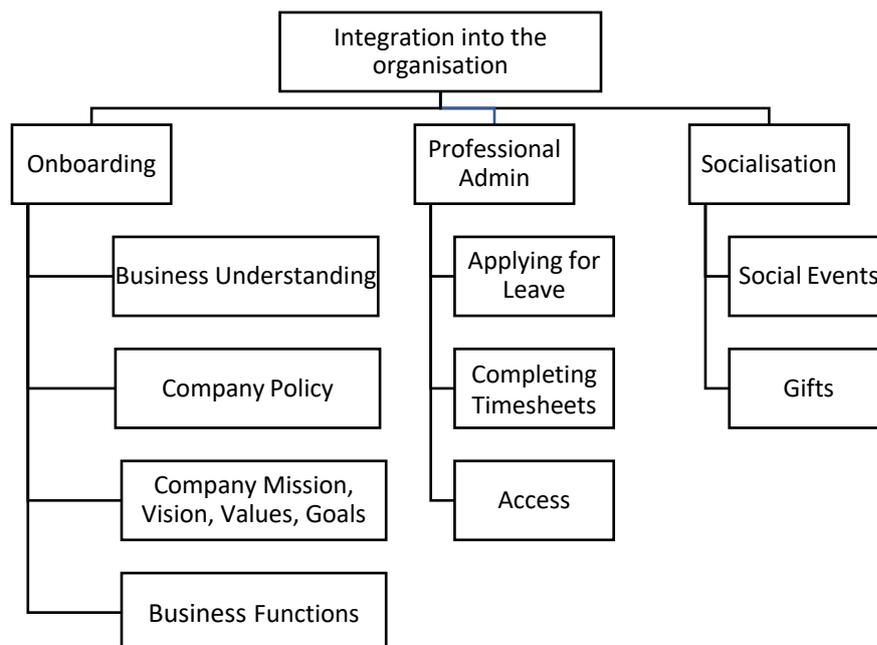


Figure 11: Overview of results for RQ1 part C on integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements

Literature regarding the above topics of integration into the working world and integration into the organisation were extremely scarce and difficult to find. Given that flexible working arrangements have accelerated into popularity in recent years post the COVID-19 pandemic, literature on this field is extremely limited.

As per Chen & Fulmer (2017), companies vary greatly in terms of how many formal flexible working arrangement policies they offer that at least a proportion of their employees can take advantage of, as well as in terms of what these policies are. This was visible from the study, where both early career employees and managers experiences with formal flexible working arrangement varied greatly: whilst some organisations, specifically within the financial services industries, had strong and clear documentation of flexible working arrangement policies, other organisations did not.

A limited number of concepts were found in literature regarding processes, practices and policies to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. As per Bailey et al. (2015), job rotation and job shadowing are popular methods of organisational socialisation, where the early career employee works in tight conjunction with colleagues who provide mentorship and advice. Bailey et al. (2015) also emphasised the benefits of job shadowing, allowing the early career employee to work amidst more experienced colleagues to be able to learn in their presence, observing and copying their actions and behaviours. Rotation programmes were highlighted by 3 early career employees and 2 managers as being important for successful integration, as these programmes allow the employees to get a sense of the working world holistically, gives them experience in different divisions, provides them with opportunities and a better business understanding. Job shadowing was also raised multiple times by participants, in the context of manager support, learning and development, on the job training and a benefit of initial face time when early career employees join an organisation.

Consistent with literature, the onboarding process was raised by both early career employees as well as managers as being a huge factor when introducing new employees into the organisation and attempting to socialise these employees.

Onboarding has been defined by Muller (2022) as the professional and social integration of newcomers into an organisation, with its ultimate goal being to ensure a quick understanding and mastering of work tasks and making the new hire part of the social network of the organisation. This definition is consistent with the findings of the study.

Campaner et al (2022), Riley et al. (2017) and Bonet & Salvador (2017) all raised the importance of training and development in integrating early career employees. Campaner et al. (2022) specifically raised that organisations utilising flexible working arrangements are compelled to invest more in employee skills development due to the nature of flexible work. The importance of training and development for early career employees was echoed by participants of the study, in the forms of work readiness programmes, rotations, and formal and informal training.

Although literature was extremely limited regarding this research question, the research interviews and study obtained valuable insights and information with regards to processes, practices and policies implemented by organisations to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. Some common items were training and development initiatives, upliftment of professional skills, and socialisation tactics in the form of social events.

### 6.3.3. Conclusion of Themes Emerging From Research Question 1

The outcomes of the responses from participants provided critical insights with regards to Research Question 1. The researcher was able to obtain an understanding of flexible working arrangements through the participants' views and was provided with insights on the respective flexible working arrangement agreements in place between early career employees and organisations. The outcomes from the research interviews regarding flexible working arrangements were in line with literature.

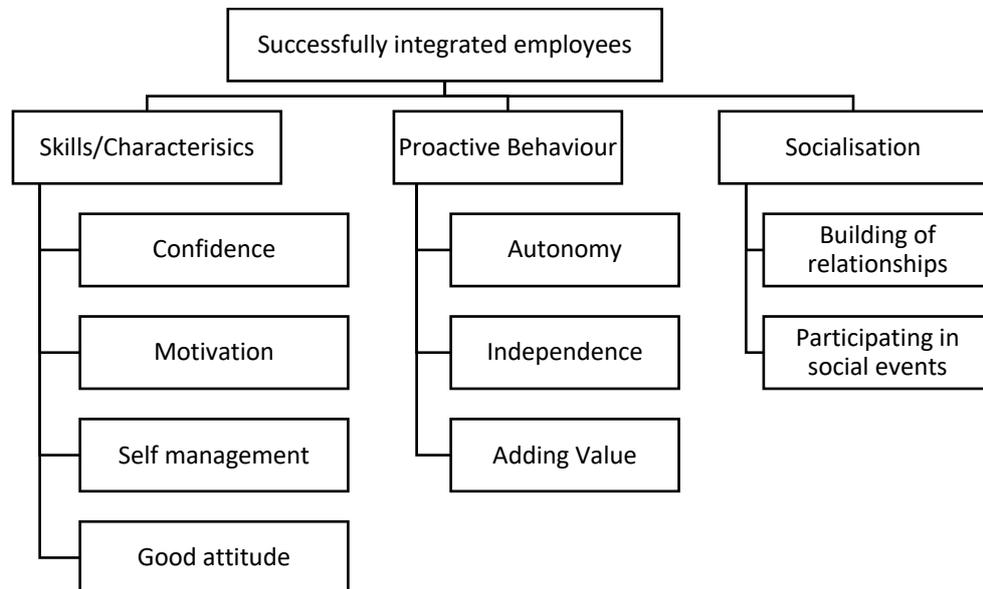
The researcher was then able to identify what organisations are doing to integrate their early career employees into the professional world and the organisation, if anything. Literature on these topics had proven to be scarce, however the outcomes of the research interviews were able to provide a strong understanding of the current

processes, practices and policies implemented by organisations to integrate early career employees into the professional world and the organisation itself.

#### 6.4. Discussion of Themes Emerging From Research Question 2

##### **Research Question 2: What does successful integration of early careers employees entail?**

The results from the questions posed to early career employees and managers regarding what the outcomes of successful integration of early career employees in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements are have been summarised in diagram form below (Figure 12).



*Figure 12: Overview of results for RQ2 on successful integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements*

According to the findings from both early career employees and managers, various skills, both technical skills and soft skills, characteristics and behaviours indicate the successful integration of early career employees. This is in line with the study by Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin (2021) stating that there are a number of skills, both soft skills and technical, required for early career employees to obtain in order to succeed in the professional world in organisations utilising flexible working arrangements.

In terms of skills required to be displayed by early careers to be seen as successfully integrated, early career employees and managers made mention of many, including communication skills, confidence, motivation, the ability to self-manage, being comfortable in the role and organisation, resilience and having a good attitude. Rehman & Mehmood (2014) stressed the importance of communication skills in flexible working arrangements, emphasising that survival in this environment involved the interaction with colleagues, clients and managerial staff on a day to day basis, within which communication skills are integral. In consensus with the views expressed by research participants, Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin (2021) also found that possessing the correct attitude was an important aspect of successful integration.

In contrast with studies by Jackson et al (2022) and Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin (2021), adaptability, commitment to work and the organisation, a strong sense of judgement, critical thinking capabilities and creativity were not raised by participants as skills and behaviours indicating the successful integration of early career employees.

When posed the quantitative question regarding whether participants identified strongly with the goals of their company, 62,50% of early career employees felt that they identified with the goals of their organisation, with 25% of early career employees strongly identifying with the goals. This is in line with literature by Bailey et al. (2015) who stated that one of the goals of organisational socialisation was to foster identification, where the new hire is able to identify with the goals of the organisation.

Early career employees and managers raised various skills, both technical skills and soft skills, characteristics and behaviours which were not found in literature, specifically around socialisation. Socialisation was also raised by the majority of early careers and managers as a factor in determining whether an early career employee is successfully integrated, from the aspects of whether the individual is participating in social events and whether they have built relationships with their colleagues. However, this was not mentioned in literature.

An integral finding from this question was the theme of proactivity of early career employees, where participants across both categories emphasised that the early career themselves play a strong role in their successful integration. Participants

stressed that the early career employees must display proactive behaviour, showing autonomy, independence, and being a driving force in their own integration process. This is directly in line with literature by Kammeyer-Mueller et al., (2013), Gruman et al. (2006) and Miller & Jablin, (1991) who have all stated that the employee's own efforts and inputs are required for successful integration, and that early career employees must facilitate their own integration and be active agents in this process.

#### 6.4.1. Conclusion of Themes Emerging From Research Question 2

The outcomes of the responses from participants proved to be in line with literature with regards to skills, knowledge and behaviours required to be shown by early career employees for them to be considered successfully integrated. These are skills or characteristics such as possessing and displaying a good attitude, self-management and independence. The outcomes from the research interviews regarding flexible working arrangements were also able to further enrich and enhance the understanding from literature on successful integration of early career employees through the provision of further insights.

#### 6.5. Discussion of Themes Emerging From Research Question 3

##### **Research Question 3: What successes and challenges do early careers face regarding integration into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements?**

This research question aimed to get an understanding of successful integration processes and unsuccessful integration processes when integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements. The participants were required to rely on processes that are already in use by their organisations as well as what they personally would implement, were they able to do so.

##### 6.5.1. Successful Integration Tactics

The key findings from the question posed to early career employees and managers regarding successful processes, policies and practices implemented by organisations to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, either through their personal experience or based on their opinion and knowledge, are summarised in diagram form below (Figure 13).

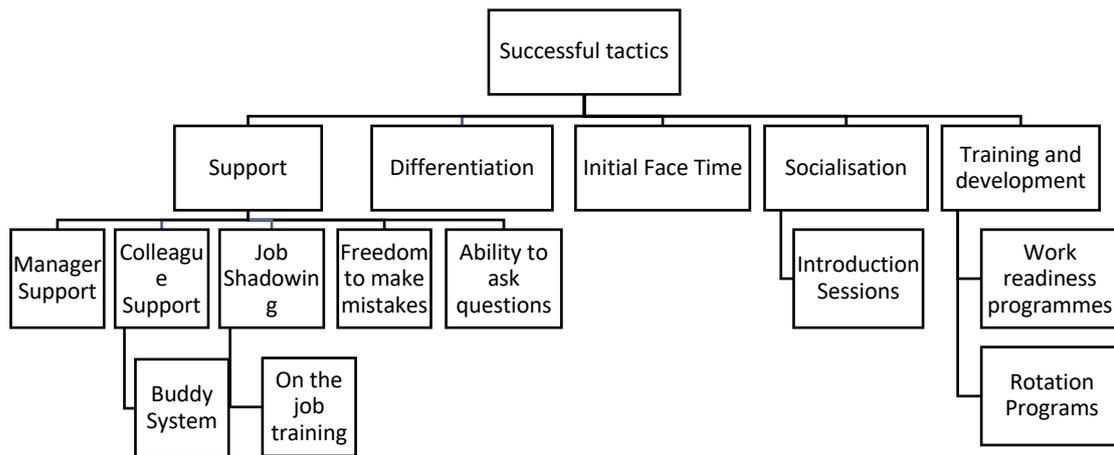


Figure 13: Overview of results for RQ3 on successful policies for the integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements

Literature on successful integration tactics of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements was extremely difficult to find. The outcomes of the research study, specifically with regards to this research question, provided an extremely strong guideline for tactics, processes, practices and policies which organisations can implement to successfully integrate early career employees.

Participants of the research study raised various ideas which can be incorporated into human resource policy within organisations to better integrate early career employees. An incredibly critical point raised by early career employees and managers alike in terms of successes regarding integration into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements was the concept of support. This came in the form of organisational support, manager support and colleague support, echoing the literature discussed in section 2.9.3 on drivers of organisational socialisation. As per Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013), academic literature on newcomer organisational socialisation shows that there are three key drivers: the broader organisation; the early career employees or the newcomers themselves; and the colleagues of the new employee.

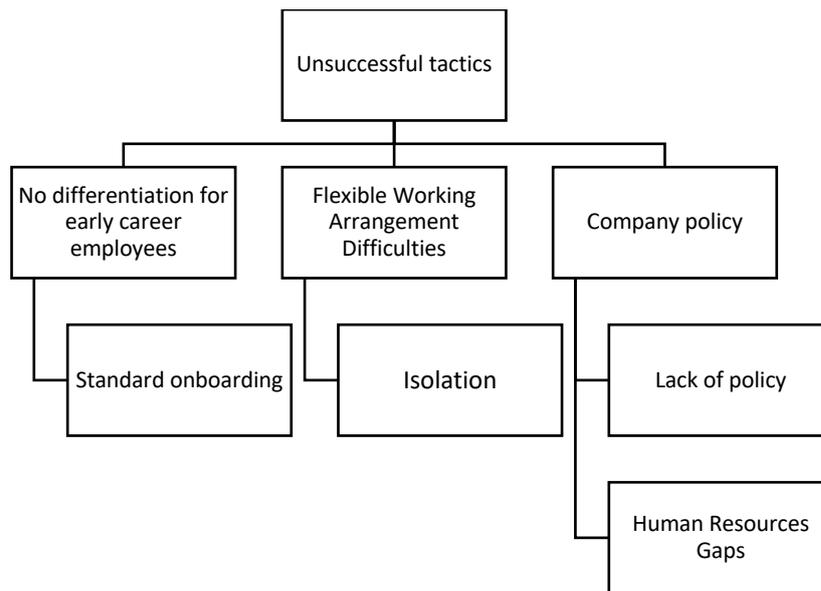
As raised by participants in the research study, both early career employees and managers alike, manager support is critical to the successful integration of early career employees. Managers need to make early career employees feel supported through a hand holding process, providing clear explanations where necessary,

answering questions from early career employees, no matter how basic they may seem or how many times they have been repeated, showing patience, allocating small, manageable tasks, and holding various check in sessions with the early career participant to ensure that they are coping, that they have a safe space to raise issues and concerns, and that they feel as if they have someone to catch them if they fall. Managers also have the ability to successfully integrate the early career employee through the provision of formal training and development, job shadowing and on the job training. These suggestions by participants are directly in line with the studies of Gruman et al (2006), Muller (2022), Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg (2013) and Hershcovis & Barling (2009), who have all stressed the importance of the manager as a driver of successful integration of employees.

Another integral point raised by both early career employee participants as well as managers is the importance of colleague support when utilised to integrate early career employees. The research study highlighted that colleague support, in the form of buddy systems, mentorships, assistance, guidance and helpfulness, were all factors that contributed to the successful integration of early career employees. Organisations can leverage colleague support through the formalisation of buddy systems, mentorships and training and development of these colleagues to better equip them to assist early career employees around them. Colleague support as a driver of successful integration of early career employees was also stressed in literature: studies by Muller (2022), Korte & Lin (2013), Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013), Riordan et al. (2001), Parker et al. (2006) and Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg (2003) all highlighted the importance of colleague support in the socialisation of newcomers and early career employees, emphasising that socially supportive interactions by colleagues accelerated their integration process.

### 6.5.2. Unsuccessful Integration Tactics

The main findings and results from the questions posed to early career employees and managers regarding processes, policies and practices implemented by organisations utilising flexible working arrangements which have been unsuccessful in integrating early career employees, either through their personal experience or based on their opinion and knowledge, are summarised in diagram form below (Figure 14).



*Figure 14: Overview of results for RQ3 on unsuccessful policies for the integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements*

Again, literature on unsuccessful integration tactics of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements was extremely difficult to find. The outcomes of the research study, specifically with regards to this research question, provided an extremely strong guideline for tactics, processes, practices and policies which organisations can take note to avoid in order to successfully integrate early career employees. These are tactics such as standard onboarding and induction processes, where early career employees are treated the same as other, experience employees or not being cognisant of the possible difficulties of entering the working world in an organisation utilising flexible working arrangements, such as feeling lost and isolated. The research study also highlighted that a lack of company policy, unclear company policy, and human resource gaps can also result in unsuccessful integration of early career employees.

### 6.5.3. Conclusion of Themes Emerging From Research Question 3

Key findings emerging from research question 3 provide a strong guideline for what organisations utilising flexible working arrangements can do to successfully integrate early career employees. Literature on this topic was scarce and difficult to come across, however the research interviews provided strong insights as to which processes, practices and policies work and which do not. Successful tactics were tactics such as providing support, providing differentiated integration initiatives for

early career employees, socialisation, initial face time and training and development. Unsuccessful tactics included no differentiation in tactics implemented to integrate early career employees into organisations, the detrimental integration aspects of flexible working arrangements, and a lack of clear company policy and human resource initiatives to integrate early career employees.

## 6.6. Conclusion

This chapter presented a discussion on the findings from Chapter 5 and the literature from Chapter 2, integrating both chapters to determine similarities and contrasts between the two. The discussion examined the various themes emerging from the thematic analysis and debated the findings of this study with literature. The discussion further uncovered elements of integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements that were not prevalent in literature, such as the skills, behaviours and knowledge indicating successful integration of these early career employees.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

### 7.1. Introduction

Given the popularity of and increased demand for flexible working arrangements post the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations globally have implemented flexible working arrangement policies and procedures at an unprecedented scale. As the popularity of these arrangements have grown substantially within recent years, not much research has been done on the topic as yet. There is therefore a lack of academic information on flexible working arrangements and integration, with a specific focus on early career employees who are entering the working world for the first time. This research study set out to explore the integration of early career employees, employees who are in their first five years of working experience, into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, specifically through flexplace and flextime arrangements.

This qualitative study aimed to discover successful and unsuccessful organisational practices, procedures and policies for the integration of early career employees into both the professional working world as well as into the specific organisation, to be able to gain an understanding of how best to integrate these early careers and guide human resources policies in the real world. The researcher aimed to contribute to academic literature with a list of practices, policies and procedures that are successful in integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, as well as suggested programmes that can be implemented to better assist early career employees to integrate into the working world and the organisation when working flexibly.

This chapter presents the conclusions to this study by providing a summary of the principle findings and recognising the implications for both theory and business. A framework for the successful integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements, based on the research, is then provided.

### 7.2. Principle Findings

This section entails the principal findings of the study when addressing these research questions.

### 7.2.1. Successful Integration of Early Career Employees into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

By understanding what organisations require early career employees to display in order to be considered successfully integrated, a guideline and goal for successful integration can be obtained, providing an end point for organisations to work towards and aim for. As noted by Al Asefer & Zainal Abidin (2021), there are a number of skills, both soft skills and technical, required for early career employees to obtain in order to succeed in the professional world in organisations utilising FWAs. The research found that the requirements for successful integration of early career employees can be divided into three categories: skills and characteristics; displaying proactive behaviour; and successful socialisation.

The display of skills and characteristics such as confidence, high levels of motivation, the ability to self-manage and the presence of a good attitude were recognised as significant in the successful integration of early career employees. These skills and characteristics were raised by both early career employee participants as well as manager participants as being integral in indicating successful integration, giving managers and organisations a sense of comfort that the early career employee can operate comfortably in the working world and the organisation.

Proactive behaviour by the early career employee was found to be an indicator of successful integration: the early career employees' ability to work autonomously and independently and add value to the organisation were seen as indicators for managers to be able to let go of the hand holding process required upon the early careers' joining, and feel more confident in the early career employee's ability to work effectively and successfully.

Lastly, the early career employees' ability to build relationships with colleagues, participate in social events and display a sense of belonging were also identified as indicators of the individual being successfully integrated. As per literature suggestion, socialisation was found in the interviews to be a critical aspect of integration of early career employees into organisations when utilising flexible working arrangements. Successful socialisation tactics have been discovered to be a strong contributor towards the successful integration of early career employees.

### 7.2.2. Successful Integration of Early Career Employees into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements Processes, Practices and Policies

Five main focus areas were discovered as integral for processes, practices and policies aimed at integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements: the provision of a strong sense of support; differentiation for early career employees; providing initial face time; socialisation; and training and development.

The study found that support was the most integral aspect of focus for integration processes, practices and policies. A display of manager support and colleague support is critical for successful integration: this can be implemented into processes, practices and policies through encouraging a culture of helpfulness and support; the creation of a buddy system; promoting a culture that embraces mistakes as an opportunity to learn and allows early careers the ability to ask questions freely and openly. As per the research, this will promote successful integration of early career employees and the development of the required skills and characteristics to succeed. It will also encourage and create the platform for proactive behaviour from the early career employee.

An important finding from the study is that the differentiation of processes, practices and policies for early career employees is critical. Early career employees have a specific set of requirements and needs and must be treated differently to employees with years of experience. Differentiated policies aimed specifically at early career employees, specialised to their particular requirements, are integral for their successful integration.

Although flexible working arrangements differ greatly per employee and per organisation, this research highlighted that initial face time for early career employees is critical. Initial time in office, with managers or colleagues, was shown to help build early career confidence, provide a stronger sense of guidance, improve their skills, allow for more effective socialisation, provide a stronger opportunity for networking and the building of relationships, and largely make the integration

process more successful overall. Flexible working arrangement policy could therefore be amended to create mandatory in office time for early career employees joining the organisation to promote successful integration and socialisation.

To improve the socialisation process, the study found that introduction sessions when an early career employee joins the organisation are critical. This allows for the early career employee to build relationships with those around them, to network, to establish a name for themselves and to better understand the various stakeholders integral to their role and their department. Organisations can therefore add introductory sessions to their onboarding or induction policy, to improve the integration process substantially.

Lastly, specific training and development was discovered to promote successful integration of early career employees. Rotation programmes, where early career employees gain exposure and experience in different departments within the organisation, were seen as aiding the early career employee to better obtain a holistic business understanding. Work readiness programmes were suggested as a method to teach early career employees the critical professional skills, such as email etiquette, meeting etiquette and communication skills, required when entering the working world for the first time. Organisations can utilise these programmes as best practice when employing early career employees, to enable a more successful integration.

### 7.2.3. Unsuccessful Integration of Early Career Employees into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements Processes, Practices and Policies

The study found three focus areas which hindered the successful integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements: no differentiation for early career employees; difficulties posed for early career employees when utilising flexible working arrangements; and a lack of company policy combined with human resources gaps.

Using a one-sized-fits-all approach when onboarding or inducting early career employees has been shown in the research to inhibit successful integration. A

standardised onboarding or induction approach cannot be utilised, as this does not cater to the specific needs and requirements of the early career employee. Organisations should therefore eradicate standardised approaches and implement more tailored processes, practices and policies for onboarding and induction.

Early career employees entering the working world for the first time into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements face various difficulties, if the flexible working arrangement policy is not structured correctly. Early career employees can be left feeling isolated, lost and confused if their flexible working arrangement does not cater for their successful integration and socialisation. Organisations therefore need to make sure that they keep the early career employee close, even with flexible working arrangements, and that their flexible working arrangement policies take into consideration the needs of the early career employee.

Lastly, the study found that a lack of policy with regards to the integration of early career employee, as well as gaps in human resources integration processes, can inhibit the successful integration of early career employees. Policies should carefully consider and cover all requirements and needs of early career employees as far as possible, and should be clear to ensure that all stakeholders are guided in how best to integrate these employees.

### 7.3. A Framework for the Successful Integration of Early Career Employees into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

This section presents a proposed framework covering the learnings this study has found. The aim of the study was to be able to understand how best to integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements to add to academic literature and to guide human resources policies in organisations.

Out of the reconciliation of the findings from the study as well as the extant literature, the below framework (Figure 15) has been created as a summary and conceptualisation of the learnings from this research study. This framework outlines the essential aspects of successful integration of early career employees and

provides a holistic view of practical practices, policies and procedures which companies can implement to integrate their early career employees.

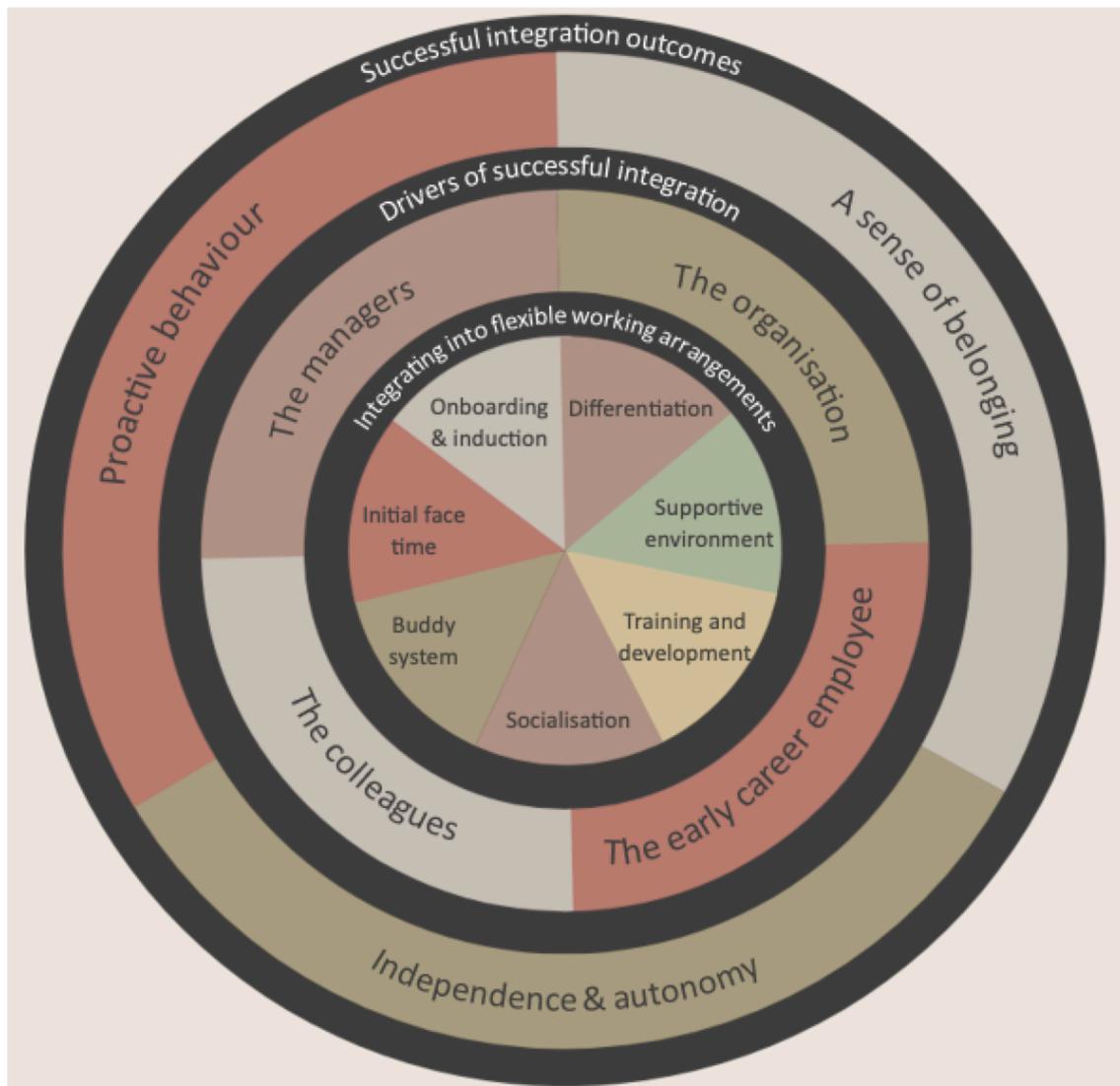


Figure 15: A Framework for the Successful Integration of Early Career Employees into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

### 7.3.1. Integrating into Flexible Working Arrangements

Figure 15 illustrates how the successful integration of early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements has three main components, all of which are centred around each other. It begins with the heart of the framework: methods of integration into flexible working arrangements. There are 7 main tactics which can be utilised by organisations: differentiation of standard procedures, with tailor made programmes for early career employee integration; the creation of a

supportive environment, where asking questions and making mistakes are both openly accepted; training and development on the professional skills required to operate successfully both in the working world as well as within the organisation itself, focusing on both technical as well as soft skills; socialisation, in the form of social events, getaways, and corporate labelled stationary; a buddy system for support and assistance, where a colleague of the early career employee is available to provide guidance, check in, and answer relevant questions; initial face time in office when the early career employee joins to build relationships, learn from job shadowing, and establish an understanding of the individuals within the organisation as well as how the business functions operate, and lastly, successful onboarding and induction processes that are clearly documented and planned, providing enough relevant information and assistance to the early career employee to enable them to successfully integrate.

### 7.3.2. Drivers of Successful Integration

There are four main drivers of successful integration: the organisation; the early career employee themselves; the colleagues of the early career employee; and the manager of the early career employee. It is up to the organisation to ensure that the correct processes, practices and policies are in place to integrate the early career employee. This could come in the form of the HR inductions, the provision of relevant documentation, or the provision of formal or informal training and development for early career employees joining their organisation. The early career employee is also responsible for their own successful integration. It is the onus of the early career employee to be proactive, to get involved socially, to have a good attitude and the motivation to grow and learn. The early career employee has the power to improve their own integration by their behaviours, their ability to ask questions, and their ability to build and form relationships with those around them. The colleagues of early career employees play a significant role in their successful integration, specifically in the implementation of buddy systems, where colleagues take responsibility for assisting with the smooth transition of the early career employee into the organisation. Through programmes like buddy systems, mentoring or counselling systems, as well as through displayed behaviours such as inclusivity and helpfulness, the colleagues of the early career can also improve the integration process. Lastly, the managers of early career employees are also strong drivers of their successful integration. It is critical that managers provide support, that they

create and maintain an environment of trust and openness for early career employees to feel safe in asking questions and making mistakes, that they ease early career employees into their roles through the allocation of small tasks initially and through the provision of feedback to allow for improvement and learning.

### 7.3.3. Successful Integration Outcomes

The model depicts three broad categories of successful integration outcomes: a sense of belonging, independence and autonomy, and proactive behaviour displayed by the early career employee. Successful integration of the early career employee will result in a strong sense of belonging in the organisation: the early career employee will feel successfully socialised, will be comfortable in their environment and will align with the goals and values of the organisation. Independence and autonomy will prevail once an early career employee is successfully integrated: they will be able to complete tasks independently and will be less dependent on those around them, thereby having increased quality of outputs and higher levels of productivity. Lastly, the early career employee will begin displaying proactive behaviours: such as asking for more work, taking on more responsibility, and raising their hand for career growth, new opportunities and challenges.

## 7.4. Recommendations for Future Research

As mentioned in the background for this study, there is a lack of studies on flexible working arrangements and the effects thereof. Other areas for future research have emerged which were outside of the scope of the research. These are therefore suggested as potential, future research areas:

- The role of generational theory in the management of employees utilising flexible working arrangements. The findings of this research indicated that a tailored management and integration approach may be necessary for different generations, which is particularly relevant as we currently have four different generations active in today's workforce, however, further research is required.
- The processes, practices and policies to enable the transition from office based work to flexible working arrangements, and how best to go about this transition.
- Knowledge and skills transmission in flexible working arrangements. The research found that the inability to reach out for help to a colleague in close

proximity hindered knowledge transmission between employees operating in flexible working arrangements. Further research can unpack how to close the gap of knowledge and skills transfer when physical distance is presence.

### 7.5. Limitations of the Research

As highlighted in chapter 4, there were a number of limitations to the research. As the interviews were qualitative interviews, personal bias was likely to emerge from participants, consciously or unconsciously (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), which has the possibility to skew conclusions made by the researcher. The researcher assumed that the participants interviewed would provide subject matter from an unbiased, objective perspective.

Further limitations of the study were identified as:

- Due to a sample size being utilised, the data collected may not be representative of the entire population as a whole.
- As semi-structured interviews were held, if the research process is to be repeated, it is highly possible that the results may differ.
- The researcher is not a professional in conducting interviews, nor has the researcher undergone formal training for this: flaws in the researcher's technique or interviewing abilities could influence responses (Agee, 2009).
- Time constraints to undertake the research.
- The study made use of organisations who are utilising FWAs, and respondents may have been biased to the benefits recognised by FWAs.
- Organisations in the study were all located within South Africa and the sample may therefore have geographical bias.

### 7.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this exploratory research study on integrating early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements has resulted in a comprehensive framework being created, providing guidelines and insights as to how best to integrate these early career employees. The research has extended the field of academic research in line with flexible working arrangements, integration, as well as early career employees and has attempted to fill the gaps in literature on the topic. It is hoped that the research will contribute to both academic debate as well as

management practice in organisations, and allow for the better creation and implementation of human resource policies to successfully integrate early career employees into organisations utilising flexible working arrangements.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Early Career Interview Guide

Research Title: Integrating Early career employees Into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

Participant Name:	
Date:	
Interview Start Time:	
Interview End Time:	

Thank you for making the time to talk to me today and for participating in my research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your responses to this interview as well as your personal details will remain private and confidential. All data and information will be stored and reported anonymously.

Before we start, I would like to inform you that I will be recording this conversation to be able to transcribe this interview at a later stage. Are you comfortable with this?

To give you a brief overview of what we will be talking about today: I would like to chat to you about your experience and perspectives on being integrated into the working environment in an organisation utilising Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs). You have been selected as a participant for this study as you either currently fit into or have historically fitted into the definition of an 'early career': an individual who, within the first 5 years of their career, transitioned into the working world directly into an organisation operating utilising FWAs. My research objective is to understand that integration process better, from your lived experience.

I encourage you to please share your experiences openly and freely. There is no right or wrong answer: just your experience and your perspective on the matters at hand.

#### **Background on participant:**

- e. Please tell me a bit about yourself
  - a. What is your age?

- b. What industry do you work in?
- c. When did you join your first organisation?
- d. What was your highest level of qualification when joining your first organisation?
- e. How many years of work experience do you have?
- f. Do you currently regard yourself as an “early career” or are you reflecting on previous experience?

**Understanding the participant’s level of integration into the working world**

**Please answer the below questions, with the given scales:**

	<b>1 Very Dissatisfied</b>	<b>2 Dissatisfied</b>	<b>3 Neutra l</b>	<b>4 Satisfied</b>	<b>5 Very Satisfied</b>
<b>Are you satisfied in your job performance ?</b>					
	<b>1 Very Incompeten t</b>	<b>2 Slightly Incompeten t</b>	<b>3 Neutra l</b>	<b>4 Competen t</b>	<b>5 Very Competen t</b>
<b>How competent do you feel you are at doing your job?</b>					
	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>3 Neutra l</b>	<b>4 Agree</b>	<b>5 Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Do you feel that you belong in your</b>					

<b>organisation ?</b>					
	<b>1</b> <b>Do Not Identify With Goals At All</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Do Not Really Identify With Goals</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Neutra l</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Identify With Goals</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Strongly Identify With Goals</b>
<b>Do you identify strongly with the goals of your company?</b>					

The following questions are related to when you joined an organisation utilising FWAs. Please share your experience during that specific time period.

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
4. How have organisations utilising Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs) integrated early careers into their company as well as into the working environment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is your understanding of FWAs?</li> <li>b. What is/was your FWA arrangement? (at the time of your “early career” experience)</li> <li>c. What processes, practices and policies were put into place to integrate you as an early career into the world of working?</li> <li>d. Do you feel that you were successfully integrated into the world of working through this?</li> <li>e. What processes, practices and policies were put into place to enable you to do your job successfully?</li> </ul>

	f. Do you feel that you were set up to perform your job successfully through this?
5. What does successful integration of early careers entail?	<p>j. How would you describe successful integration of yourself as an early career into the world of working and an organisation? What does it mean to you to be successfully integrated?</p> <p>g. What would you have to achieve and what skills would you have to acquire to consider yourself successfully integrated?</p>
6. What successes and challenges do early careers face regarding integration into organisations utilising FWAs?	<p>h. What processes do you feel worked well to integrate you into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>i. What processes do you feel did not work well to integrate you into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>j. Please provide one suggestion for how either of the processes could have been improved?</p>
7. Any concluding or additional remarks which you feel are important to take into consideration?	

Thank you for your time and input into this interview.

One final question: do you have any recommendations of individuals who would be suitable to interview as they meet or have met the criteria of currently working as an

early career in an organisation operating utilising FWAs, or they have historically fit this criteria? If so, can you please refer me and provide me with contact details?

Thank you once again. Have a lovely day further.

## Appendix 2: Manager of Early Career Interview Guide

Research Title: Integrating Early career employees Into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements

Participant Name:	
Date:	
Interview Start Time:	
Interview End Time:	

Thank you for making the time to talk to me today and for participating in my research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your responses to this interview as well as your personal details will remain private and confidential. All data and information will be stored and reported anonymously.

Before we start, I would like to inform you that I will be recording this conversation to be able to transcribe this interview at a later stage. Are you comfortable with this?

To give you a brief overview of what we will be talking about today: I would like to discuss your experience on managing an early career who has been integrated into the working environment in an organisation utilising Flexible Working Arrangements (FWAs). You have been selected as a participant for this study as you currently manage/supervise or have managed/supervised an 'early career' employee: an individual who began their career less than 5 years ago and transitioned into the working world directly into an organisation operating utilising FWAs. My research objective is to understand that integration process better, from your lived experience.

I encourage you to please to share your experiences openly and freely. There is no right or wrong answer: just your experience and your perspective on the matters at hand.

### **Background on participant:**

- k. Please tell me a bit about yourself
  - a. What industry do you work in?
  - b. How many years of management experience do you have?

- c. How many years of experience do you have in the management of early careers?
- d. Approximately how many early careers? have you managed in the last two years?
- e. Do you currently manage any early careers or are you reflecting on previous experience?

**Understanding the effectiveness of the participant’s FWA socialisation processes**

**Please answer the below questions, with the given scales:**

	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Agree</b>	<b>5 Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Do you feel that your FWA’s socialisation processes improve early careers job performance?</b>					
	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Agree</b>	<b>5 Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Do you feel that your FWAs socialisation processes improve the competency of early careers?</b>					
	<b>1 Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2 Disagree</b>	<b>3 Neutral</b>	<b>4 Agree</b>	<b>5 Strongly Agree</b>

<p><b>Do you feel that your FWA's socialisation processes make early careers feel that they belong in your organisation?</b></p>					
	<p><b>1 Strongly Disagree</b></p>	<p><b>2 Disagree</b></p>	<p><b>3 Neutral</b></p>	<p><b>4 Agree</b></p>	<p><b>5 Strongly Agree</b></p>
<p><b>Do you feel that your FWAs socialisation processes make early careers identify strongly with the goals of your company?</b></p>					

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
<p>4. How have organisations utilising FWAs integrated early careers into their company as well as into the working environment?</p>	<p>a. What is your understanding of FWAs? b. Please share some background into how your organisation and team utilise FWAs and what the arrangement is with employees?</p>

	<p>c. What processes, practices and policies are put into place to integrate early careers into the world of working?</p> <p>d. Do you feel that your early careers were/are successfully integrated into the world of working through this?</p> <p>e. What processes, practices and policies are put into place to integrate early careers into the organisation?</p> <p>f. Do you feel that your early careers were/are successfully integrated into your organisation through this?</p>
<p>5. What does successful integration of early careers entail?</p>	<p>l. How would you describe successful integration of early careers into an organisation? What does it mean to you?</p> <p>m. What would early careers under your management/supervision have to achieve and what skills would they have to acquire for you to consider them successfully integrated?</p>
<p>6. What successes and challenges do early careers face regarding integration into organisations utilising FWAs?</p>	<p>n. What processes do you feel worked well to integrate early careers into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>o. What processes do you feel did not work well to integrate early careers into the world of working and the organisation? Why?</p> <p>p. Please provide one suggestion for how either of the processes could have been improved?</p>

7. Any concluding or additional remarks which you feel are important to take into consideration?	
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Thank you for your time and input into this interview.

One final question: do you have any recommendations of individuals who would be suitable to interview as they meet or have met the criteria of currently working as an early career in an organisation operating utilising FWAs, or they have historically fit this criteria? If so, can you please refer me and provide me with contact details?

Thank you once again. Have a lovely day further.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

**Integrating Early Careers Into Organisations Utilising Flexible Working Arrangements**

Consent Form

- I ..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially and privately.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### Appendix 4: Quantitative Question Responses

Participant	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Early Career 1	4	4	4	5
Early Career 2	4	4	5	4
Early Career 3	4	5	5	5
Early Career 4	5	4	4	3
Early Career 5	4	3	4	4
Early Career 6	4	4	4	4
Early Career 7	4	4	5	4
Early Career 8	3	3	3	4

	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4
Manager 1	3	2	2	2
Manager 2	4	5	4	4
Manager 3	2	2	2	4
Manager 4	4	4	2	4
Manager 5	4	2	3	4
Manager 6	4	5	3	4
Manager 7	2	2	4	4
Manager 8	4	3	4	3
Manager 9	2	2	4	4

## Appendix 5: Code Book

- Accountability
- Adjustment
- Asking Questions
- Autonomy
- Belonging
- Business Functions
- Business Understanding
- Career Growth
- Change
- Clarity
- Collaboration
- Colleague Support
- Assistance
- Buddy System
- Guidance
- Helpfulness
- Comfortable
- Company Policy
- Clear Policy
- Company Policy
- Documentation of Policy
- Hierarchy
- Internal Documentation of Policy
- Lack of Policy
- Confidence
- Counsellor
- COVID-19
- Culture
- Differentiation for Early Career Employees
- Dresscode
- Enablers of FWA
- Face Time

- In Office
- Initial
- Fear
- Feedback
- Flexible Working Arrangements
- Allow Employees to Choose
- Anchor Days
- Boundaries
- Cameras On
- Communicate Absence
- Core Hours
- Difficulty Communicating
- Disablers of FWAs
- Distance
- Expectation Management
- Face to Face Meetings
- Family Responsibility
- Flexible
- Flexible Working Arrangements

#### Negativity

- FlexPlace
- FlexPlace: Any Day in Office
- FlexTime
- Hybrid
- In Office Negative
- Lack of Oversight
- Low Speed of Responses
- Micromanagement
- Negative Effects of Remote Work
- Output Based
- Pace of Work
- Positivity
- Trust
- Following Process
- Gender Theory

- Generational Theory
- Happiness
- Hard Working
- Hardware
- Human Resources
- Existing Programmes
- Human Resources Gap
- Independence
- Integration
- Adding Value
- Bootcamp
- Demonstration
- Graduate Programme
- Importance
- Induction
- Introduction Sessions
- Job Shadowing
- Knowledge Shares
- Mentoring
- On The Job Learning
- Onboarding
- Online Courses
- Set Up For Success
- Simulations
- Standard Onboarding
- Training and Development
- Work Readiness Programmes
- Workshopping
- Isolation
- KPIs
- Making Mistakes
- Manager Efforts
- Check In Sessions
- Checked Work
- Clear Explanations

- Hand Holding
- Manager Support
- Manager Teaching
- Small Tasks
- Meeting Etiquette
- Mental Health
- Mission, Vision, Values, Goals
- Motivation
- Negotiation
- No Differentiation for Early Career

#### Employees

- Nurturing
- Observation
- Participation
- Patience
- People Focus
- Personal Brand
- Personal Values
- Personality Types
- Probation Period
- Professional Admin
- Access
- Apply For Leave
- Company Benefits
- General
- Payslips
- Taxes
- Timesheets
- Professional Skills
- Attitude
- Communication
- Email Etiquette
- Engagement With Stakeholders
- General
- Interaction

- Nervousness
- Networking
- People Skills
- Planning
- Presentation Skills
- Proactive
- Relationship Building
- Resilience
- Responsibility
- Self-Management
- Teamwork
- Time Management
- Progress
- Recognition
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Rotation
- Rotation Job Satisfaction
- Rotation Opportunities
- Rotation Program
- Sense of Clarity
- Socialisation
- Company Stationery
- General
- Getaways
- Gifts
- Inclusivity
- Relationship Building
- Social Events
- Town Halls
- Soft Skills
- Software
- South African Culture
- Structure
- Technical Skills

- Transparency
- Trust
- Understanding
- Vacation Work
- Virtual Session
- Virtual Working Etiquette
- Ways of Working
- Willingness To Learn
- Work Ethic

## Appendix 6: Themes/Categories Derived from Codes, Relevant to Research

### Questions

- Colleague Support
  - Assistance
  - Buddy System
  - Guidance
  - Helpfulness
- Company Policy
  - Business Functions
  - Business Understanding
  - Clear Policy
  - Company Policy
  - Documentation of Policy
  - Hierarchy
  - Internal Documentation of Policy
  - Lack of Policy
  - Mission, Vision, Values, Goals
- Face Time
  - In Office
  - Initial
- Flexible Working Arrangements
  - Allow Employees to Choose
  - Anchor Days
  - Core Hours
  - COVID-19
  - Face to Face Meetings
  - Family Responsibility
  - Flexible
  - Flexible Working Arrangements Negativity
  - FlexPlace
  - FlexPlace: Any Day in Office
  - FlexTime
  - Hybrid

- In Office Negative
- Negative Effects of Remote Work
- Output Based
- Trust
- Virtual Working Etiquette
- Human Resources
  - Existing Programmes
  - Human Resources Gap
- Integration
  - Adding Value
  - Bootcamp
  - Demonstration
  - Graduate Programme
  - Importance
  - Induction
  - Introduction Sessions
  - Job Shadowing
  - Knowledge Shares
  - Mentoring
  - On The Job Learning
  - Onboarding
  - Online Courses
  - Set Up For Success
  - Simulations
  - Standard Onboarding
  - Training and Development
  - Work Readiness Programmes
  - Workshopping
- Manager Efforts
  - Check In Sessions
  - Checked Work
  - Clear Explanations
  - Hand Holding
  - Manager Support
  - Manager Teaching

- Small Tasks
- Skills/Knowledge/Behaviour for Successful Integration
  - Attitude
  - Communication
  - Confidence
  - Email Etiquette
  - Engagement With Stakeholders
  - Independence
  - Meeting Etiquette
  - Motivation
  - Networking
  - Proactive
  - Relationship Building
  - Resilience
  - Responsibility
  - Self-Management
  - Soft Skills
  - Technical Skills
  - Time Management
- Socialisation
  - Belonging
  - Company Stationery
  - General
  - Getaways
  - Gifts
  - Inclusivity
  - Relationship Building
  - Social Events
  - Town Halls
- Successful Integration
  - Autonomy
  - Asking Questions
  - Differentiation for Early Career Employees
  - Making Mistakes
  - Professional Admin

- Access
- Apply For Leave
- Company Benefits
- Payslips
- Taxes
- Timesheets
- Rotation
  - Rotation Job Satisfaction
  - Rotation Opportunities
  - Rotation Program
- Unsuccessful Integration
  - Isolation
  - No Differentiation for Early Career Employees