

**Potential positive consequences of employee turnover  
on remaining employees**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The past century has seen expansive and pervasive research into employee turnover, the focus of which has largely been on its causes, consequences as seen from the organisation's perspective, costs relative to the firm's performance, and on strategies aimed at predicting turnover intent and prevention strategies to enhance employee retention. Very little of the past employee turnover research has focused on its positive consequences with respect to remaining employees. The objective of this qualitative case study research was to explore the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees.

The interpretivist research philosophy guided the research, whilst the mono method exploratory qualitative research methodology was applied. Data was collected cross-sectionally from a purposively chosen sample of 15 participants via the in-depth, open-ended semi-structured interview method. The sample comprised a mixture of management and bargaining unit employees. The conceptualised integrative Effort-Reward Model theoretical framework provided the lens through which this research was conducted.

Key findings suggest that employee turnover results in remaining employees being positively impacted, albeit under conducive workplace environments where harmony, respect, trust, and empowerment prevail. Finally, the 'Modified Effort-Reward Model' which delineates the role management should play in setting up workplace environments that enable remaining employees to be positively impacted amid employee turnover events is proposed. It is anticipated that the application of the ME-RM model will culminate a reduction in operational costs associated with the replacement of departing employees, where currently between 90% and 200% of the departing employee's annual salary is incurred when a replacement employee is recruited.

## **KEYWORDS**

Employee turnover, positive consequences, remaining employees, staff turnover,

## **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 submit this research project.

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2 November 2021

## DEFINITION OF KEYWORDS AND TERMS

<b>Bargaining Unit Employee (BUE)</b>	The permanent employees of a business firm who are members of a trade union recognised for collective bargaining with an employer, and who have their terms of employment set through the same collective agreement (Oxford University Press, n.d.)
<b>The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)</b>	A communicable respiratory disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that causes illness in humans (African Union, n.d.)
<b>Employment Equity (EE)</b>	The application of staff hiring policies, regulations, and guidelines that encourage fair and equitable representation of employees from designated groups of a society aimed at eliminating unfair, biased, or discriminatory hiring practices
<b>Employee turnover</b>	The act that involves employees of a business firm terminating their employment contract with their employer, volitionally or otherwise, and being replaced with new staff members by the business firm
<b>Employee turnover positive consequences</b>	The positive outcome, result, product, or effect of employee turnover with reference to something else, for example, the positive outcome of employee turnover with reference to employees
<b>Remaining employees</b>	The group of employees of a business firm that stay employed by the business firm when their colleagues terminate their employment contracts for one reason or another
<b>Staff turnover</b>	Same as employee turnover. The term 'staff' is used interchangeably with the term 'employee' in this research report

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH PROBLEM**

### **1.1 Introduction and Problem Description**

Research problems refer to knowledge gaps or troubling questions that exist in research, scholarly literature, theory, or in practice, and which researchers endeavour to resolve with the aim of offering meaning and adequate understanding about the phenomena under study, with the solution itself contributing to or expanding on current theory (Ellis & Levy, 2008; McCombes, 2020; Sacred Heart University, 2020). This exploratory research into the potential positive consequences on remaining employees is anchored on a well-structured, viable, and research-worthy problem that is informed by literature-based troubling questions and knowledge gaps (Ellis & Levy, 2008). The research-worthy problem underpinning this research, as shall be seen in the sections that follow, is not only readily apparent to the researcher, but also to scholars and practitioners as it is steeped in a field of a real need for research (Kothari, 2004).

Employee turnover – the phenomenon associated with when an employee or a number of a firm’s employees volitionally leave their employer for another, or when they terminate their employment contract involuntarily owing to retirement, or as a result of a restructuring drive by the employer (Pietersen & Oni, 2014; Sands-Dawling, 2020; Tsai, Wu, Yen, Ho, & Huang, 2005) – has in more than ten decades in the past been a research topic of interest both to practicing managers and scholars alike (Grotto, Hyland, Caputo, & Semedo, 2017; Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom, Lee, Shaw, & Hausknecht, 2017; Lee, Hom, Eberley, Li, & Mitchell, 2017; Li, Lee, Mitchell, Hom, & Griffeth, 2016). Though it has attracted research attention over the past ten decades, an interestingly large amount of knowledge gaps and troubling questions surrounding the topic still linger (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Wynen, Van Dooren, Mattijs, & Deschamps, 2019), and literature points to the fact that much more research is needed to uncover the other facets of this phenomenon (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017). Despite the expansive research into employee turnover over the past century, very little attention into this topic has up to now focused on its potential positive benefits or consequences (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Wynen et al., 2019), and certainly, no prior research focus into employee turnover has up to now focused on its potential positive

consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees. It is the aim of this research to explore the potential positive consequences that employee turnover may have on remaining employees.

The focus of the research into employee turnover in the past has largely been on (a) its causes (Bridger, Day, & Morton, 2013; Thomas, 2015; Wynen et al., 2019), (b) its mostly negative consequences, such as the impact it has on labour productivity and organisational performance (De Winne, Marescaux, Sels, & Van Beveren, 2019; Park & Shaw, 2013; Ton & Huckman, 2008), (c) the costs associated with recruiting and upskilling replacement workers (Li et al., 2016; Ton & Huckman, 2008), (d) knowledge loss (Urbanconva & Linbartora, 2011), (e) a decline in organisational performance (Ferreira & Almeida, 2015; Lee, 2018; Ton & Huckman, 2008), and (f) on how it “impinges” on the remaining employees on “whom a higher demand for productivity is placed during the period of absence” (Urbancova & Linbartora, 2011, p. 85).

Furthermore, research has shown that employee turnover disrupts productivity-related processes and that it reduces a firm’s performance owing to the estimation that it costs a firm between 90% and 200% in annual salary terms of the departing employee when hiring their replacement (Li et al., 2016, p. 1436; Sands-Dawling, 2020; Rubenstein, Eberley, Lee, & Mitchell, 2017; Stamolampros, Korfiatis, Chalvatzis, & Buhalis, 2019), it stands to reason that a sect of the bulk research that has up to now been conducted into the topic has also focused on devising models that enable firms to predict the likelihood of their employees’ intentions to quit and on retention strategies aimed at preventing the exodus (Bridger et al., 2013; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Grotto et al., 2017; Hom et al., 2017; Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberley, 2008; Lee, 2018; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001; Lee, Hom, Eberley, & Li, 2018; Olubiyi, Smiley, & Melaragno, 2019; Sands-Dawling, 2020).

One troubling question or knowledge gap that arises from all of this is whether employee turnover can have any positive consequences, especially on remaining employees, or not. Another troubling question, according to Lee (2018), is whether employee turnover does indeed impact the organisation’s performance negatively (p. 522). Dalton, Todor and Krackhardt (1982) support Lee’s concern with the argument

that the dysfunctional nature of employee turnover is seemingly overstated, and that “turnover may actually be of benefit to both the individual and to the firm” (p. 117). In fact, Surji (2013), and Dalton et al., (1982) suggest that employee turnover may in a few cases be positive and beneficial to the firm and to the individual in certain situations. Lee (2018) found in his study that the theoretical standpoint on the relationship between staff turnover and firm performance present a different picture, which accordingly suggests that turnover may in fact be beneficial to the firm by improving its performance (p. 522). This stance by Lee is echoed by McElroy, Morrow and Rude (2001) and by Sands-Dawling (2020), who posit that organisational performance should be enhanced assuming that poor performers are replaced by properly qualified and skilled employees and that new recruits bring new ideas.

Olubiyi et al., (2019) established that employee turnover associated with retail business in the United States of America (US) “increased steadily between 2015 and 2018 despite unemployment rates falling from 5.7(%) in 2015 to 3.7(%) in September 2018” (p. 7). By implication, Olubiyi et al.’s finding means that even in times of economic growth, there will still be events of employees (voluntarily or involuntarily) terminating their employment contracts with their current employer for various reasons, including personal reasons, despite all the suggestions by Grotto et al. (2017) aimed at improving employee retention strategies. What this means, in simple terms, is that employee turnover is bound to be a common feature despite all and any retention strategies that firms turn to, thus presenting businesses with a real problem on their hands.

According to Hom and colleagues (2017), “turnover research is dynamic and ever-changing”, and “many new vistas” about this research topic “remain to be explored” (p. 540). Chaltiki and Sigala’s (2010) tourism research study’s findings state that “staff turnover is typical across a variety of tourism sectors” and that “seasonality and financial returns” were found to be the most important causes of employee turnover (p. 15). Given that we live in a dynamic world that is at the mercy of many different grand developments and phenomena like COVID-19, seasonality, and financial turmoil such as was the case during the 2008 global financial meltdown, it can be stated without hesitation that (especially) the tourism industry, and indeed other industries, will continue to be faced with employee turnover, regardless of whether the turnover will be due to the choice of employees terminating their employment

contracts, or whether it will be the result of a downsize intervention by the employer. This research has its interest in employee turnover's potential positive consequences on remaining employees, regardless of the cause of the turnover event.

There is therefore no doubt, based on the foregoing passage, that there still lies a significantly large number of troubling questions about employee turnover research that still linger, despite the extensive research attention that the topic has enjoyed over the past one hundred years. This is evidenced by Chaltiki and Sigala's (2010) research work, where in their acknowledgment that staff turnover does cause disruption, they argue that the disruption might be the result of who has left the organisation, and not necessarily owing to how many employees had terminated their employment contracts. Additionally, Hausknecht and Trevor (2011), along with Wynen et al., (2019) suggest several potential positive consequences of employee turnover that should form the basis of subsequent and future employee turnover research. Hausknecht and Trevor (2011) include in their suggested list of potential positive consequences that may result from employee turnover, and which should form the basis for subsequent future research into turnover research, "scaled innovation, elevated adaptation and flexibility or latitude, lessened worker conflict, pronounced promotional prospects and accelerated career growth, heightened morale, reduced labour costs and better role performance" (p. 381). On the other hand, Wynen et al. (2019) suggest that turnover may increase human capital – which is defined as the individual or "unit-level resource capacities based on individual knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics of individual employees that are accessible for unit-relevant purposes" (Ployhart, Nyberg, Reilly, & Maltarich, 2014, p. 376) – when new recruits come with fresh ideas that inevitably will challenge the remaining employees' ways of engaging with their work. Furthermore, the remaining employees' motivation and therefore performance is likely to be reinforced than diminished when poor performers are let go according to Wynen et al. (2019).

The researcher presupposes that one such potential positive consequence that manifests from the phenomenon of employee turnover is the elevated effort by the remaining employees in carrying out their tasks, based on the hope that their efforts would be recognised by management, leading to them being rewarded with monetary and non-monetary awards, including a promotion in some cases, as a direct result of employee turnover. The researcher's stated presupposition offers a different view to

that of Urbancova and Linbartora's (2011), as well as Lee et al.'s (2018) assertion that the result of employee turnover on remaining employees is a negative result in that a higher demand for productivity is placed on them during the period of absence. The researcher, however, does not downplay the reality that the remaining employees in one or other set of dimensions do get negatively impacted by employee turnover as asserted by Urbancova and Linbartora, as well as by Lee and colleagues. Instead, the researcher's contrasting view confirms the presence of employee turnover's troubling Research Questions and knowledge gaps that still linger, suggesting that this research is readily apparent and in a field of a real need for the research, and that if carried out it would address both a practical and a theoretical shortcoming (Ellis & Levy, 2008; Kothari, 2004).

Therefore, the troubling question or research gap relevant to this research project is to explore and establish the potential positive consequences or benefits of employee turnover on the remaining employees of a firm, and the contextual settings or conditions under which this might occur (Ton & Huckman, 2008; Wynen et al., 2019).

## **1.2 Research Purpose**

Yang, Wan and Fu (2012) group the major elements that lead to employees leaving their employer for another (or for any other reason for that matter) into five categories, namely "inappropriate recruiting practices; dissatisfaction with salary, benefits and job opportunities; inappropriate work placements; inappropriate management of company staff; and job stress and burnout" (p. 838). By implication, this means that employees will at any point in their employment lives terminate their employment contract with their employer for any of the five category-reasons advocated by Yang and colleagues. For example, it cannot be stated with certainty that salary increment as a retention strategy may be enough to prevent a highly job-stressed and burned-out employee from terminating their employment contract. This is particularly true based on the finding by Olubiyi et al. (2019) that staff turnover rates in fact rose steadily between 2015 and 2018 despite a fall in unemployment rates in the same period.



It can thus be concluded, from the perspective of the organisation and practitioners, that employee turnover will be a constant and common presence in the life of their operations. This, therefore, calls for a different approach for practitioners to engage with and address or deal with employee turnover, as a result. The different approach includes understanding the extent to which employee turnover impacts the remaining employees positively. Amid an employee turnover event, the assumption is that remaining employees will be impacted positively such that they would look to being appointed in the resulting vacancy. When the remaining employees become positively impacted by employee turnover, it can be perceived that the positive impact will lead to them performing at elevated effort levels to be recognised by management as worthy replacements for the departing employee in accordance with the expectancy theory (Chiang & Jang, 2008). This, in turn, will suggestively lead to a potential reduction in the 90% to 200% cost associated with the recruitment, training, and placement of a replacement employee for the one who departs. This is because instead of recruiting from outside the organisation, the filling of the vacancy with one that already knows the ropes within the organisation may make the recruitment process a lot less costly than the current quoted range of between 90% and 200% of the departing employee's annual salary.

Based on the foregoing, it can be concluded that there is a need for research and exploration into the potential positive consequences that employee turnover may have on the remaining employees. This research work is geared towards contributing to current limited knowledge and expanding on existing, if not build new, theory around employee turnover. In the event that this research supports the notion that employee turnover does impact the remaining employees, the practical implications will be that practitioners will not just focus on retention strategies aimed at retaining their skilled workforce, they will also be aided by the knowledge that remaining employees will raise their effort levels seeking to be recognised by management in response to vacancies arising amid an employee turnover event, and therefore improve, if not maintain, productivity and output levels under certain conditions.

This research study is qualitative in nature, and it is aimed at exploring the potential positive consequences that employee turnover has on the remaining employees, as well as the contextual setting or conditions under which this might be the case.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Technically, this study into the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees will not be based on a 'problem' that seeks to be resolved. Rather, it is an exploratory study that will focus on uncovering several other facets about employee turnover that still linger (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Wynen et al., 2019).

The aim of this research project is to explore, for meaningful understanding and contribution to literature and theory, the extent to which employee turnover positively impacts the remaining employees, as well as the context under which the phenomenon may result in the remaining employees being positively impacted (Chaltiki & Sigala, 2010; Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Wynen et al., 2019; Ton & Huckman, 2008).

The objective, purpose, or aim of this research is to explore, through the qualitative research method, the possibility that employee turnover does positively impact the remaining employees by addressing the following overarching research focus areas:

1. The way in which employee turnover results in positive consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees (Dalton et al., 1982; Ton & Huckman, 2008; Wynen et al., 2019),
2. How the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid an employee turnover event (Wynen et al., 2019), and
3. The contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees (Dalton et al., 1982; Ton & Huckman, 2008; Wynen et al., 2019)

Qualitative research as a method of research is pertinently useful and applicable for this research since more knowledge about the phenomenon of employee turnover still lies uncovered, a situation that supports the researcher's endeavour to develop a deeper understanding of the employee turnover phenomenon through this research (Tavakol & Sandars, 2014). To enable the exploration and understanding of the factors that lead to remaining employees being positively impacted by the

phenomenon of employee turnover, a hypothetical theoretical framework, namely the Effort-Reward Model, was developed based on the outcome of the literature and theoretical review that is presented in Chapter 2. This model presupposes that when an employee turnover event arises, the remaining employees tend to be enticed by the resulting vacancies, and thereby they are theorised to be motivated to raise their effort levels in the belief that their elevated efforts will be recognised and compensated in response, either by way of being appointed in those vacant positions (a promotion in some cases) or some other reward, which may or may not be monetary.

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

The foregoing sections have established that despite such extensive research work into the phenomenon of employee turnover, both by practitioners and scholars, very little of the focus had been on the potential positive consequences thereof. This study endeavours to explore the possibility and the conditions under which employee turnover positively impacts the remaining employees of a business firm. The review of the employee turnover literature, as presented in Chapter 2, focused on understanding (a) the way in which employee turnover results into positive benefits from the perspective of the remaining employees, (b) how the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon, and (c) the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees.

The remainder of this report discusses the following chapters as briefly outlined below:

- Chapter 2 discusses the literature review, and presents the theoretical framework which clearly outlines the lens or the framework upon which this research was based
- Chapter 3 presents the Research Questions – which were derived from and based on the literature review in Chapter 2 – that provided the direction which this research followed

- Chapter 4 discusses this study's methodological choice, population and sampling approach undertaken, data gathering method employed, approach to data analysis, quality control issues, and research limitations
- Chapter 5 presents the results of the study relative to the Research Questions presented in Chapter 3
- Chapter 6 presents the interpretation of the analysed data and findings with specific reference to the Research Questions and how the study fits in with theory, and
- Chapter 7 presents a summary of the results with reference to the Research Questions presented in Chapter 3. The chapter further puts forth the recommendations for scholars and practitioners, as well as proposes focus areas for future research into employee turnover.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The phenomenon of employee turnover is a complex and pervasive problem both for business and academia and has received extensive research focus over the past century (Grotto et al., 2017; Rubenstein et al., 2017; Sands-Dawling, 2020). Yet, little of the focus of research into this topic has focused on its potential positive consequences (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Wynen et al., 2019). The objective of this qualitative research was to explore the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees. An integrative literature review was carried out, giving rise to the theoretical framework that guided this research.

To enable the researcher to justify the purpose of this research, along with its Research Questions, the researcher sought to undertake an effective review of the employee turnover literature by integrating opposing views of various studies within this area of research, the result of which was the derivation of the Effort-Reward Model theoretical framework which served as a firm foundation for the advancement of knowledge and theory development for employee turnover as a research topic (Snyder, 2019; Webster & Watson, 2002). The integrative approach to conducting the literature review was suitable for this research since it enabled for synthesizing the literature on employee turnover and its potential positive consequences on remaining employees, and therefore guiding the emergence of new theoretical frameworks and perspectives about the turnover phenomenon (Snyder, 2019).

The integrative literature review for this research enabled the synthesizing of previous research studies' findings and helped uncover areas wherein further research was needed, which was critical for the creation of the theoretical framework for this research (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Leshem & Trafford, 2007; Snyder, 2019; Webster & Watson, 2002). The significance of the theoretical framework for this research was in its shaping of the Research Questions for this study, in its guiding of the gathering of data for this research, and it helped the researcher to explore, uncover, and explain the knowledge gaps and troubling questions surrounding employee turnover as a research topic (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Tavakol & Sandars, 2014; Wynen et al., 2019).

The theoretical framework for this study is presented in section 2.2.9. Finally, section 2.3 discusses the synthesized review of existing literature into prior research on employee turnover. The conclusion to this chapter is presented in section 2.4.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research, which provided the structure for the study, was developed through an integrative, logical synthesis and summation of theories and concepts of previously tested and published knowledge from various employee motivation fields (Kivunja, 2018; Snyder, 2019; Varpio et al., 2020). This research's theoretical framework provided a clear lens through which the research was conducted, and it helped guide the processing of new knowledge about employee turnover that was uncovered during this research (Collins & Stockton, 2018; Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Many different reasons why employees volitionally terminate their employment contracts have been advanced by researchers. These reasons were found to include the nature of work, low pay associated with the job, and the stresses brought on by jobs' long hours of work (Chiang & Jang, 2008). To address the issue of employee turnover among hotel employees, Chiang and Jang have argued for management to investigate the issues of employee motivation. Motivation leads to increased effort, which in turn leads to results, and when employees feel a sense of accomplishment of goals related to their jobs, they become more motivated to work even harder (Cespedes, 1990; Chiang & Jang, 2008), especially when rewards are tied to the achievement of set goals.

Individuals, or employees with reference to this study, are motivated through a great variety of needs, and these needs vary in their order of importance, in situations that prevail at a given time, as well as over different timeframes (Lundberg, Gudmundson, & Andersson, 2009). This is particularly true when employees expect a reward for their hard work, and these rewards can be in different forms, including financial and non-financial rewards, power and status, individual development and career advancement, self-actualisation, or social payoffs such as making it as a member of a high-performing team (Kuratko, Morris, & Covin, 2011). Lundberg and colleagues

describe motivation as a set of intrinsic and extrinsic energetic forces that are responsible for driving an employee to initiate work-related behaviour, and to decide the direction, form, intensity, and duration of the work-related behaviour they decide upon when carrying out their duties. The concept of motivation is a “core competence of leadership” (Bronkhorst, Steijn, & Vermeeren, 2013, p. 3).

Managers are therefore charged with the responsibility of creating harmonious work environments that are conducive to promoting elevated motivational levels of their subordinate employees, because motivated employees mean better corporate performance as highly motivated employees tend to put in more effort into the completion of their jobs, resulting in the quality of their performance improving (Harris, Murphy, DiPietro, & Line, 2017; Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008). Harmonious work environments are those in which there is respect for and between employees, and environments that are perceived by employees as being “friendly and accommodating” (Bui, Liu, Ko, & Curtis, 2020, p. 2). The element of motivation in the workplace is posited as an important job performance determinant, and it is greatly affected by the workplace or organisational environment (Bronkhorst et al., 2013).

Employees tend to respond positively to work-related situations or events when they are motivated. To better understand the possibility that employee turnover impacts the remaining employees positively, the researcher set about to review the various motivation theories with the aim of establishing the appropriate theoretical framework for this research study through consilience, that is the convergence of knowledge by linking facts and fact-based theory from different disciplines of motivation theory to develop an appropriate platform to serve as basis for the explanation of events (Steel & König, 2006). The “Effort-Reward Model” theoretical framework, presented in section 2.2.9 below, was derived as an output of the literature review of the various relevant theories that underpin employee motivation.

According to Wacker (1998), the purpose of “good theory-building research is to build an integrated body of knowledge to be applied to many instances by explaining who, what, when, where, how and why certain phenomena will occur” (p. 371). Based on Wacker’s argument, the researcher sought to opt for a theory that (a) identified ‘who’, that is the remaining employees in an organisation, (b) explained ‘what’, that is the

impact of employee turnover on the remaining employees, (c) described 'when', that is when a vacancy arises owing to the resultant staff turnover event, (d) pinpointed 'where', that is the organisation the remaining employees work in, (e) detailed 'how', that is whether the remaining employees were impacted positively or not, and (f) helped outline 'why', that is the contextual settings or conditions that must prevail for employee turnover to have a positive impact on the remaining employees.

Expectancy theory, social exchange theory, transformational leadership, goal setting theory, job satisfaction, job embeddedness, self-efficacy, and employee engagement form the core of the theoretical review of motivation theory associated with employees in the workplace and therefore necessary to guide the exploration of the potential positive impact of employee turnover on the remaining employees. It is this collection of theories of motivation that the theoretical framework for this research was derived. Additionally, the transformational theory was a key element in the development of this study's theoretical framework since, in large part, management is responsible for motivating subordinate employees. The sections that follow present a review of these motivation theories and culminate with a discussion on the Effort-Reward Model in section 2.2.9, which served as the theoretical framework for this research.

### 2.2.1 Expectancy Theory

The expectancy theory is a theory that delineates the process people follow to make decisions on varying behavioural alternatives; it has to do with the perceived likelihood that higher levels of effort result in superior performance which in turn results in the attainment of a reward (Chiang & Jang, 2008). The concept of expectancy theory, according to Ngo-Henha (2017) and Ramlall (2004), is governed by an individual developing an expectation to earn an attractive reward when they perceive that performing at higher, satisfactory performance levels will result in them achieving superior performance outcomes, leading to them being rewarded for their achievements in the end. Hom et al. (2017) observe that staff "may stay in bad jobs because they expect positive utility (promotions or desirable transfers), or they may leave good jobs because they expect higher utility from alternative employment" (p.



533). This means central to employees' decision-making regarding their work situations is the notion of expectancy.

Expectancy theory is said to provide a general structure for “assessing, interpreting, and evaluating employee behaviour in learning, decision-making, attitude formation and motivation” (Chiang & Jang, 2008, p. 313). In line with the potential positive consequences of employee turnover and in accordance with the expectancy theory of motivation, the researcher presupposed that the remaining employees are bound to go beyond the proverbial call of duty when they are of the belief that their elevated effort levels in performing their duties, in response to a vacancy that materialises when another employee in a level higher than them terminates their employment contract, will lead to higher levels of output and therefore attract organisational rewards, either monetary or non-monetary rewards, including a promotion (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Nyberg, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2018). On the other hand, Nyberg argues that when expectations are not met, the employee is bound to reduce their effort levels. Figure 1 below depicts an illustration of Vroom's expectancy theory.

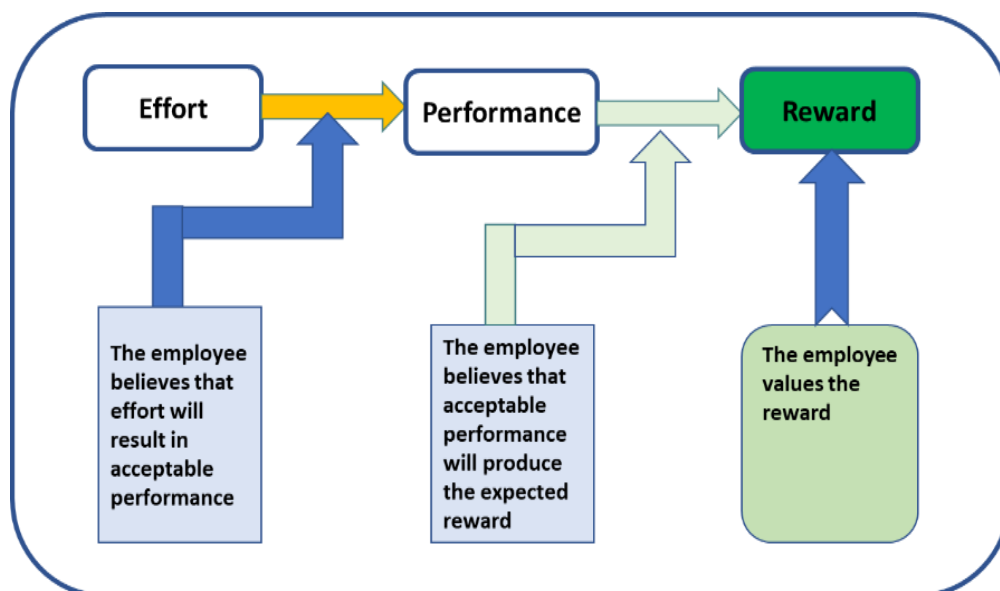


Figure 1: Vroom's Expectancy Theory. Adapted from Ngo-Henha (2017)

Even though the expectancy theory has to do with the relationship between effort and outcome (Chiang & Jang, 2008) as based on a person's perception about the

possibility of given outcomes (Ramlall, 2004), Chiang and Jang (2008) stress the need for managers to motivate their subordinate employees continuously. This is because “when employees feel a sense of accomplishment about their jobs, they are motivated to work hard” (Chiang & Jang, 2008, p. 321). Secondly, a motivated workforce means improved organisational performance (Nohria et al., 2008) since motivation leads to higher levels of effort and higher levels of effort beget results (Cespedes, 1990). This suggests that the expectancy theory on its own is not sufficient to enable an employee to expect to earn a perceived reward simply by performing at elevated levels. Where motivational levels are low in the workplace, no amount of ‘expectancy theorising’ will push employees to raise their performance levels, despite the attractiveness of the reward in question. The motivation that Chiang and Jang (2008) expect management to bring about in the workplace includes the creation of work environments in which employees will feel a sense of belonging and where they will bond with their fellow co-workers (Nohria et al., 2008). Additionally, Chiang and Jang assert that the variables that affect an individual’s expectancy perception consist of “goal difficulty, and perceived control” (p. 314).

Chiang and Jang’s (2008) study also illustrated the criticality of motivation in that when employees are highly motivated, they tend to put in more effort in their jobs and therefore enhance their productivity. The notion of the crucial role played by the element of motivation required to enable expectancy to take root and enable employees to “perform a task” was additionally advanced by Harris et al. (2017, p. 56).

Chiang and Jang’s (2008) assertion suggests that expectancy theory on its own is not capable of yielding the outcomes it purports. It is therefore the understanding and position of the researcher that other conditions governed by other motivational theories work in tandem with the expectancy theory to enable the attainment of what it purports. It is therefore expected that employees that raise their performance levels in anticipation of a reward do so with the belief and trust that the organisation will reciprocate their efforts, hence next the social exchange theory of motivation is reviewed.

### 2.2.2 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) describe SET as one of the many prominent conceptual archetypes necessary to figure out workplace behaviour. The SET is posited by Sands-Dawling (2020) as a relationship that is built around the concept of social reciprocity, and which defines promises and commitments to be fulfilled in exchange for fair and acceptable rewards. The concept of reciprocity applies in instances where a benefit or a harm is meted out by one individual onto the other, as opined by Bui and colleagues (2020) that individuals are inclined to “reciprocate benefits with benefits and respond with either indifference or hostility to harms” (p. 3). Conditions such as the nature of the relationship between parties determine the degree to which reciprocity may play itself out in the workplace (Bui et al., 2020). For reciprocity to work under conditions of a good and harmonious work environment, the individual that offers a favour to another does so with the understanding that the one whom they offer the favour will reciprocate the favour in some future time. The one who offers the favour does so when they have trust that the one receiving their favour will indeed reciprocate the favour.

Trust, therefore, is regarded by Jena, Pradham and Panigrahy (2018) as a susceptibility that “presumes mutual reliability” (p. 228). From an employee-employer perspective, when the employee is of the belief that the employer is doing all in their power to resolve work-related problems facing the employee, the trust factor rises and in turn spurs the employee on to develop a positive attitude toward their work and therefore do more knowing that the employer will reciprocate their employment contractual obligations (Jena et al., 2018). In her research on employee turnover, Sands-Dawling (2020) posited that employees who perceived being treated fairly and rewarded with what they perceived appropriate in relation to their effort displayed higher levels of motivation and hence performed on a higher level resulting in turnover intention rates decreasing.

Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) argued that SET was more pronounced in individuals that harbour a firm exchange orientation and therefore are more likely to reciprocate a good deed compared to those with a weak exchange orientation. The authors further argued that though reciprocity was a universally accepted principle, the concept is applied in varying degrees by individuals. For social exchange to

evolve in the workplace, Cropanzano and Mitchell suggest that employers should “take care of employees” – a move that may engender beneficial consequences (p. 882). Sands-Dawling (2020), on the other hand, posited that transformational leadership was found to be effective in engaging subordinate employees “in social exchange processes based on interpersonal trust, loyalty, and ongoing reciprocity with their supervisor” (p. 15). This interpersonal trust, Sands-Dawling observed, was made possible through transformational leadership.

Emerson (1976), in his critiquing of the SET, argued that SET was not a theory, but that it was rather a “frame of reference within which many theories can speak to one another” (p. 336). Sands-Dawling (2020) concurs with Emerson’s notion in advancing the point that SET “involves a series of interactions that generate obligations” (p. 15). It therefore stands to reason that SET on its own is insufficient to explain the broad spectrum of reasons why and how employees are motivated and behave in the workplace, or why they respond in the differing manners they do given work-related situations. What is a sure case, though, is that individuals take to establishing goals when they decide to achieve given outcomes related to their work, especially when they seek recognition in response to their elevated work efforts. The goal-setting theory is thus reviewed in the next section.

### 2.2.3 Goal-Setting Theory

Sides and Cuevas (2020) describe goal setting as the pinpointing of a particular achievement to be attained in a given area with measurable outcomes, such as milestones and short-term results to be attained in order to successfully achieve a pre-set end goal. Clements and Kamau (2018) posited that goal-setting theory (GST) suggests that individuals perform better when they act in accordance with goals that are specific, achievable, and challenging. Clements and Kamau further argued that (a) challenging goals lead to elevated motivational levels and require “new strategies that enhance effort or performance”, and (b) specific goals enable employees to take stock of their progress (p. 2280). With reference to this exploratory study into how employee turnover may potentially impact the remaining employees positively, the researcher presupposes that the knowledge of there being an opportunity for growth

or promotion, employees are bound to seek out information pertaining to the functional requirements of the said vacant position. This act can therefore be likened to the act of setting goals, by way of attaining the necessary information as stated above.

One reason why some people succeed in setting challenging career goals suggests that these people have higher resilience levels which make them persistent pursuers of their goals (Clements & Kamau, 2018). A goal, according to Locke and Latham (2002), is the aim of an individual's undertaking to attain an intended standard of proficiency, usually within a predefined timeframe or deadline. Additionally, Locke and Latham argued that (employees) "high in a mastery approach orientation to setting career goals do best in not only setting themselves the most challenging career goals but also work on proactively building their future career" (p. 2281). Since not all goals influence performance, their overall potential impact is moderated by the level of commitment that employees have towards their goal, the strength of their Self-Efficacy, the extent to which they get provided feedback, and the complexity of the activities to be performed in the attempt to attain those goals (Bronkhorst et al., 2015; Clements & Kamau, 2018; Sides & Cuevas, 2020).

Goal difficulty and goal specificity were put forth as important aspects of goal setting theory by Bronkhorst and colleagues (2015), whilst Locke and Latham (2002) found that the highest or most difficult goals produced the highest levels of effort and performance. Higher-order goals are said to affect performance as they (a) direct focus and effort towards activities that are relevant to the goal, (b) have an energising element about them and they result in greater effort than lower-order goals, (c) foster employees' persistence and prolong effort enabling employees to achieve job goals, and (d) influence "action indirectly by leading to the arousal, discovery, and/or use of task-relevant knowledge and strategies" (Locke & Latham, 2002, p. 707).

The extent to which employees will elevate their effort levels owing to the attainment of their short-term goals in the pursuit of pre-set end goals depends also on their level of satisfaction with their job. Employees that attain their pre-set work goals tend to develop some level of satisfaction with various aspects of their jobs. The next section presents a review of the job satisfaction theory.

#### 2.2.4 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction can be described as a measure of the extent or degree to which an employee is gratified or content with many aspects of their job. Stated differently, job satisfaction is a positive or pleasurable affective response that results from appraisals associated with the various aspects of an individual's job experiences (Pietersen & Oni, 2014). On the other hand, Tsai et al. (2005) suggest that job satisfaction "is a totality of feelings regarding the working environment which includes the work itself, supervisors, working groups, organisations, and even family life" (p. 104). Job-specific measures include span of responsibility and autonomy afforded the employee by the employer when carrying out their work, recognition of the employee's performance by management, opportunities for growth within the job or organisation, and all other matters that are associated with the motivation of employees, such as company-specific factors (work rules and company policies), fringe and other types of benefits, wages and salaries, and time awarded the employee for breaks or family vacations (Flowers & Hughes, 1973).

In addition, job satisfaction is measured through non-work factors such as community relations, friendships, and other societal factors such as schools (Flowers & Hughes, 1973). Huffman, Casper and Payne (2013), who define job satisfaction as an employee's constructive state of emotion that results from the employee's job experience, asserted the compatibility of the job with important life roles like family time (or work-life balance factors) as an important factor that influences the degree to which an employee is satisfied (or dissatisfied) with their job. Zimmerman and Darnold (2009) contended that "organisational researchers place job satisfaction as an important antecedent in the turnover process" in that "almost all theoretical turnover models contain the relationship between job satisfaction, intent to quit, and actual turnover behaviours at the core" (p. 145).

Akgunduz and Sanli (2017) posited that employees who believe their employer value their efforts tend to develop positive feelings about satisfaction with their job and business firm. In service industries where service providers are in contact with the consumer, customer satisfaction and organisational performance are reportedly higher where employees are satisfied with their job, whilst low quality of service and

weak organisational performance are associated with employees that have low job satisfaction levels (Stamolampros et al., 2019).

For firms to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction among their employees, it is important that they focus on improving organisational factors such as role clarity, market-related compensation schemes, career growth, and promotional prospects, organisational justice (that is how employees perceive the fairness with which they are treated by their employer), organisational support in the form of functional and general training, and the enablement of work environments where team-oriented organisational culture thrives (Stamolampros et al., 2019). Additionally, higher job satisfaction levels among employees materialise when there is a balance in the employees' work and their family life according to Stamolampros and colleagues.

According to Huffman and colleagues (2013), employee turnover theory suggests that employees that become dissatisfied with their jobs develop intentions to terminate their employment contracts. Job satisfaction has for long been a crucial voluntary turnover predictor, and to the degree that employees decide to stay or terminate their employment contract, job satisfaction is regarded as a significant motivator in making that decision (Huang, Lee, McFadden, Murphy, Robertson, Cheung, & Zohar, 2016; Nyberg, 2010). By extension, the researcher argues that employees tend to not bother to raise their effort or performance levels, regardless of the perceived reward, if they are dissatisfied with their job.

Therefore, job satisfaction was found as an important element in the development of the Effort-Reward Model as dissatisfied employees will arguably not respond positively to stimuli that offer rewards, whether monetary or promotional, and regardless how attractive these rewards may be deemed. This is because if the employee's source of dissatisfaction is the result of non-work conditions (such as them wanting to relocate back to their home city, or seeking to spend quality time with their family, for instance), they simply will not respond to the stimulus and raise their work effort levels even with the existence of an attractive reward such as a promotion. The societal links highlighted by job satisfaction theory extend the association of job satisfaction with job embeddedness, which is presented in the following section.

### 2.2.5 Job Embeddedness

Job embeddedness, according to (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017), refers to the general factors which impact an employee's decision to keep or quit their job. It is a theory that is significantly related to the reasons why employees opt to continue functioning in their jobs. Job embeddedness is concerned with factors that connect employees with their job, outside-work community groups, employer, and society. This is what Hom et al. (2017) refer to as on-the-job forces that lead to employees deciding to stay in their job, namely "job fit, links, and sacrifices, as well as the corresponding off-the-job forces such as community fit, links, and sacrifices" (p. 536). The theory is concerned with how employees connect with other employees, other people outside the organisation, and society at large, thus making them adapt to the organisation and the wider environment.

Job embeddedness is measured by the personal losses that an employee attaches to their decision to quit their job or their decision to stay in their job. If the employee perceives significant personal losses for leaving their job, they are deemed to have high job embeddedness, a situation which leads the employee to be more devoted and therefore enhance or improve their work performance, making it difficult for them to leave their job (Akgunduz & Sanli, 2017; Hom et al., 2017). It can be argued, therefore, that employees high in job embeddedness, and who achieve work-related goals they set themselves, and who receive reciprocal recognition and reward for their elevated work efforts, are set to be engaged in their job. Employee engagement, the "extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs", which differs from job satisfaction in that job satisfaction signals how content a firm's employees are with their jobs (General Manager, n.d.), is reviewed and presented in the next section.

### 2.2.6 Employee Engagement

Smith (2020) defines employee engagement as a Human Resource Management concept that highlights the keenness and dedication levels that workers feel relative to their jobs. Although the concept is a "relatively new phenomenon within the turnover literature", the concept does "appear to be a useful predictor" of turnover



intention (Rubenstein et al., 2017, p. 34). Employee engagement is referred to as a workplace approach meant to see to it that employees stay (a) dedicated to their work goals, (b) motivated to contribute meaningfully to the success of their employer, and (c) that they take time to enhance their own development and sense of wellbeing (Kwon & Park, 2019; Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). The key psychological elements of employee engagement include “meaningfulness of work, psychological safety of the work environment, improved job characteristics and rewards or pay to improve job meaningfulness, reduced or a lack of work-family conflict and role clarity” (Rubenstein et al., 2017, p. 34).

High employee engagement levels result in high job performance levels by staff according to Truss et al. (2013). Furthermore, “engaged employees express their authentic selves through physical involvement, cognitive awareness, and emotional connections” during “role performances”, whereas disengaged employees decouple themselves from their roles and suppress their personal involvement in “physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects” of the job (Kwon & Park, 2019, p. 2; Truss et al., 2013, p. 2659). The extent to which employees are engaged is influenced by contextual and interpersonal factors (Truss et al., 2013).

Kwon and Park (2019) suggested that work engagement, which they equate to an employee’s state-level engagement, is likened to an employee’s “positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption” (p. 3). This implies that employees that are engaged with their work (a) display high energy levels and resilience that aid them to persist in the completion of their tasks successfully in the face of difficulties, (b) are driven by a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration, and approach their work with high levels of dedication leading to them putting in significant efforts into their work, and (c) become deeply absorbed by or engrossed in their work displaying high levels of concentration. It stands to reason, therefore, that engaged employees tend to respond positively to different forms of stimuli, like a reward for good work results.

Employees that are highly engaged, who are satisfied with their jobs and who perform at elevated effort levels, and in reciprocation get recognised for their stellar performance, tend to develop the belief that they can perform subsequent job

outputs, and therefore achieve pre-set work goals, based on a theoretical concept known as self-efficacy, which is presented next.

### 2.2.7 Self-Efficacy

Self-Efficacy refers to an employee's belief, or lack thereof, that they have what it takes to organise and execute tasks necessary to produce pre-set attainments (Lunenburg, 2011; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). It is a "person's felt confidence to perform" a given task (Ozyilmaz, Erdogan, & Karaeminogullari, 2017, p. 4). Lunenburg (2011) advances the idea that Self-Efficacy affects an individual's performance and learning in three different ways, namely that it (1) influences the particular goals that employees set for themselves, (2) has an influence on an employee's learning and the effort they exert on the job, and (3) influences the degree to which employees persist when attempting new and challenging tasks. According to Margolis and McCabe (2006), low Self-Efficacy levels lead to motivational shortcomings in employees, and hinder goal achievement, and thus creates a self-fulfilling prophecy in employees that they are not up to the task. This suggests, by extension, that employees low in self-efficacy tend to not be motivated by promotion prospects when they know they are not up to the task with the requirements of the job in question.

The impact of self-efficacy on employee performance is strong when a given task is low in complexity (Ozyilmaz et al., 2017). Gallagher (2012) posited that Self-Efficacy stresses the relative significance of personal factors, but that it equally acknowledges the weighty behavioural and environmental factors' impact on performance outcomes. These related factors (personal, behavioural, and environmental factors) act in a triadic reciprocal fashion to reinforce the idea, for instance, that if the environmental effects are consistent (e.g., welcoming and engaging, an even playing field for all, et cetera), employees will take on a greater role in determining their behaviour in the workplace, according to Gallagher (2012).

In summary, an employee is bound to check their belief in whether they have what it takes (in other words the experience and relevant other requirements) to perform in a given job. In the event they have a lack of these requirements, they are likely not

to want to be associated with the job. This implies that employees will not attempt to be appointed into a position, regardless of the attractiveness of the reward for completing that task, if they are of the belief they do not possess the required skills, experience, or requirements for the job. For employees to possess higher levels of self-efficacy, they would have performed successfully in prior tasks associated with the job they ponder applying for, a situation which would have been made possible by all other aspects of motivation as described in the foregoing sections, including work environments that are welcoming, engaging, and which ensure an even playing field for all (Gallagher, 2012). Leadership is characterised by a form of leadership that ensures work environments in which employees can give their best and thrive, among other things, are created. In the next section, transformational leadership is reviewed and discussed.

#### 2.2.8 Transformational Leadership

Du Brin (2013) argued that transformational leaders drive big, positive changes by channelling peers and subordinates beyond their self-interests for the greater good of all the group members. In essence, transformational leaders develop and transform people, and they are arguably better equipped at elevating followers' motivation and performance levels to superior levels of achievement (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003; Du Brin, 2013). Du Brin further posited that transformational leaders are characterised by agreeableness and extraversion and that they are optimists and open to the viewpoints of those around them – this means they enable environments wherein subordinate employees can fearlessly contribute either by questioning authority, or by contributing with game-changing opinions and ideas. These are qualities that Chiang and Jang (2008) have suggested managers should possess as they are responsible for creating work environments that foster a motivated workforce, a notion supported by Jena and colleagues that transformational leadership “plays a crucial role in instilling confidence in an engaged employee to perform beyond expectations” (Jena et al., 2018, p. 228).

It is the qualities of transformational leadership that Nohria and colleagues (2008) appealed to when they declared that management must create for their subordinate employees, and peers alike, work environments that enable and drive them to want

to bond with their co-workers. This is because engaging work environments promote functioning employee-manager relations that are characterised by “appreciation, confidence, and trust” (Jena et al., 2018, p. 229). Thus, management must strive for transformational leadership qualities to recognise and respond to each employee’s needs and aspirations, thus creating a supportive environment for their growth and development (Sun & Wang, 2016). Sun and Wang posited that transformational leaders’ “inspirational motivation makes it possible to reduce the level of individual isolation and generate more opportunities for collaborative practice” among subordinates and peers (p. 6).

Inspirational motivation holds that transformational leaders motivate their subordinates and peers by providing meaning and challenge to their work to achieve group or organisational targets in the process (Anderson, Baur, Griffith, & Buckley, 2017; Bass et al., 2003). Transformational leadership brings about the collaborative culture which engenders a highly supportive and developmental environment that results in the workforce feeling embraced and included in the organisation (Sun & Wang, 2016), thus making it possible for employees to bond with their fellow co-workers (Nohria et al., 2008) as they strive to achieve their goals.

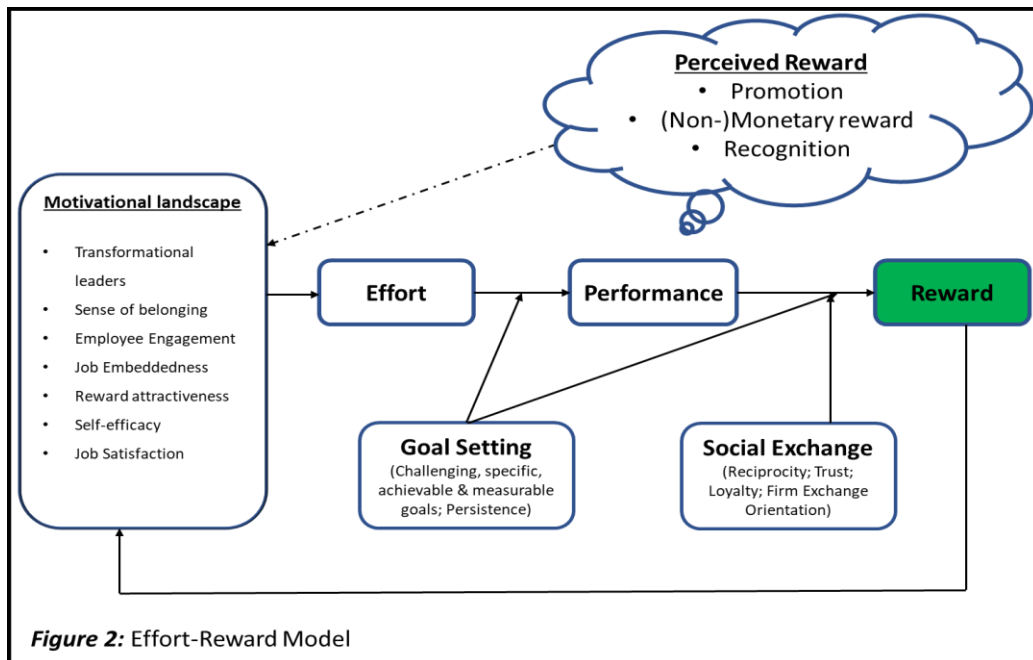
It is expected that employees (a) who feel supported and embraced owing to their transformational managers’ efforts, (b) whose trust levels are high as theorised by the SET, and (c) who tend to elevate their effort levels when they expect a form of reward owing to their elevated performance levels, they tend to set goals that enable them to measure their output levels in relation to their targeted elevated performance levels. In their study, Bronkhorst et al. (2015) argued that transformational leadership affected goal specificity and difficulty.

#### 2.2.9 Theoretical Framework: The Effort-Reward Model

This exploratory research sought to explore the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees. It is premised that motivation plays a key role in employees that remain being positively impacted by employee turnover. The theoretical framework necessary to guide this research was developed through an integrative, logical synthesis of relevant concepts and premises from the set of

motivation theories as discussed in the foregoing sections (Kivunja, 2018; Varpio et al., 2020). The Effort-Reward Model (figure 2 below) was derived based on the understanding that “theories are used to justify and support” a researcher’s arguments, variables, and the phenomenon that is under study (General Manager, 2020).

While each of the theories reviewed in the foregoing sections are necessary for evaluating employee motivation in relation to turnover, none is complete and therefore sufficient to individually guide the exploration, the understanding, and the sense-making of positive consequences that employee turnover may confer on the remaining employees (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004). This is exemplified by Ozyilmaz et al.’s (2017) theorising that employees’ self-efficacy should be jointly studied along with their trust (trust is a key tenet of the social exchange theory) in their organisation. The role played by their self-efficacy “will be stronger when the individual operates in a context that is trustworthy” (Ozyilmaz et al., 2017, p. 5). Of great importance is the fact that “each of the different theoretical orientations offers a unique perspective”, they can certainly be integrated to create a general and encompassing model (Meyer et al., 2004, p. 992).



The workings of the Effort-Reward Model (E-RM) presupposes that when a reward arises, such as a vacancy that results from a turnover event, the remaining employees are likely to be driven to improve their performance levels so that they are recognized by management and thus attain the reward, either by way of being appointed into that vacancy or some other form of reward. For them to decide to increase their effort levels, the attractiveness of their perceived reward will lead to them, as is argued through the E-RM, setting goals for themselves so that they can measure and adjust their performance as needs be in line with their expected outcome of ultimately being recognised and rewarded.

Another critical aspect of the E-RM theoretical framework is that the employees' decisions to increase their effort levels will be based on their perceived levels of trust that the organisation will reciprocate with a recognition or reward for their improved effort levels. Additionally, the E-RM recognises that for all this to materialise, the management, who possess transformational leadership qualities, will have created a non-toxic work environment that enables the bonding of their subordinate employees, thus making them feel that they belong. Lastly, the E-RM theoretical framework recognises the need for employees to be engaged, satisfied, and embedded in their jobs, and that they have high levels of self-efficacy if the perceived positive response to a reward stimulus is to materialise.

Finally, job satisfaction lists salaries (or wages) as one of its key job-related factors as a measure of employees' satisfaction levels. Yet, Yang et al. (2012, p. 845) found that when 25 of their research participants indicated their intention to quit their jobs, their managers "used salary adjustment to attempt to retain them". It turned out that salary was not considered by 17 of the 25 respondents as their main reason for quitting. Yang et al.'s finding clearly illustrates that it is not always just a single variable that is at play when it comes to the motivation of employees, hence the derivation of the E-RM theoretical framework which encapsulates the several applicable concepts of the motivation theories relevant for this study.

The following section presents the review of the existing literature into employee turnover as a research area of focus.

## 2.3 Employee Turnover Literature Review

### 2.3.1 Introduction

Employee turnover is the phenomenon that comes into effect when an employee or several employees volitionally leave their employer for another, or when they terminate their employment contract owing to retirement or attrition, or as a result of a restructuring drive by the employer (Ongori, 2007; Pietersen & Oni, 2014; Tsai, Wu, Yen, Ho, & Huang, 2005). It is one phenomenon that is pervasive and continues to receive extensive research focus, despite it having had research attention for over a century (Grotto et al., 2017; Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Li et al., 2016; (Rubenstein et al., 2017; Sands-Dawling, 2020; Wynen et al., 2019). It is unlikely that interest in employee turnover research will wane, at least in the short-term, both from practitioners and scholars owing to the significantly large knowledge gaps or research troubling questions around the topic that still linger (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Wynen et al., 2019).

Much of the past 100 hundred years of research into employee turnover has focused on (a) its causes (Cho, Rutherford, Friend, Hamwi, & Park, 2017; Holtom et al., 2008; Jung & Yoon, 2014; Stanley, Vandenberghe, Vandenberg, & Bentein, 2013), (b) its mostly negative consequences (De Winne et al., 2019; Lee, 2018; Ton & Huckman, 2008), and (c) on predictive measures necessary to enable practitioners to foretell when their employees are likely to quit and therefore thwart their turnover intentions through strategies and interventions aimed at retaining their services (Griffeth et al., 2000; Grotto et al., 2017; Holtom et al., 2008; Olubiyi et al., 2019). It can thus be deduced, based on the reviewed literature, that employee turnover is informed by the two forms of (i) voluntary and (ii) involuntary turnover (Arokiasamy, 2013), and that the phenomenon can be divided into three major categories, namely (1) its causes, (2) its (mostly) negative consequences on the organisation's productivity and costs, and (3) strategies to predict and combat turnover through retention interventions (De Winne et al., 2019; Ton & Huckman, 2008; Wynen et al., 2019).

The sections that follow present a concise and synthesized literature review of the research work that has up to now gone into employee turnover in a theme-based manner that focuses on the major categories and forms of prior employee turnover

research. The first part of the next sections will cover the different forms of employee turnover, followed by a discussion on its causes, consequences, and retention strategies.

### 2.3.2 Employee Turnover Types

The two basic types of employee turnover are voluntary and involuntary turnover. Voluntary turnover refers to a state when an employee, or employees, decide to sever their employment contract with their employer (Hom et al., 2017; Liu, Zhang, Wang, & Lee, 2011) for various reasons, including personal. A broad definition of involuntary turnover, on the other hand, has to do with the reluctant departure of the employee, owing either to decisions by the employer to terminate the employment contract with the employee, or when the employee departs due to retirement (Arokiasamy, 2013).

Under the voluntary employee turnover type, Li et al. (2016) distinguished between “reluctant leavers” and “enthusiastic leavers” (p. 1438). The authors describe reluctant leavers as those employees that volitionally terminate their contract owing to, for example, toxic work environments that involve bullying tactics by their supervisors or peers. Enthusiastic leavers, on the other hand, Li and colleagues found to be those employees that have a high preference for leaving their employer owing to factors that include, for instance, low embeddedness in their job, or a lack of satisfaction with their job.

Arokiasamy (2013) and Holtom et al. (2008) noted that employee turnover, whether voluntary or involuntary, can either be avoidable or unavoidable. Avoidable turnover, according to these sets of authors, refers to turnover that is avoidable when employers recruit, train, place, and motivate the right employee with the right person-organisation fit or job-fit qualities, thus minimising the chance of the employee quitting their job, hence avoiding, or preventing turnover. Unavoidable turnover, on the other hand, is described by the authors as voluntary turnover where a high-performing employee is offered better pay elsewhere for instance, which their current employer cannot counter, and ends up terminating their contract in favour of the greener pastures elsewhere. Holtom et al. (2008) further suggested that unavoidable



turnover can also be a result of the firm terminating the employment contract of a highly skilled, high-quality, and high-performing individual due to them violating any of the policies of the company.

Lastly, Dalton et al. (1982) differentiated between functional and dysfunctional turnover. In their article, Dalton and colleagues made the argument that the dysfunctional nature of employee turnover was seemingly overstated and that, in fact, “other researchers have argued that turnover may actually benefit both the individual and the organisation” (p. 117). Dalton et al. define dysfunctional turnover as the turnover type that disrupts the firm’s operations, such as when a high-quality and highly skilled employee leaves, resulting in there not being another person that is readily available to take over and see the work through. Functional turnover, on the other hand, is regarded by Dalton and colleagues as the turnover type that is associated with a poor-performing employee quitting their job, or being let go by the firm.

### 2.3.3 Employee Turnover Causes

Literature reveals that employees voluntarily leave their jobs for a myriad of reasons, including (for example) an employee’s reduced job satisfaction owing to (a) raised occupational stress resulting from emotional labour (Bridger et al., 2013; Jung & Yoon, 2014), and (b) pay or compensation related disputes, or when the employee perceives that their contribution to the firm outweighs the compensation or benefits they receive, which results in an imbalanced employer-employee relationship (Arokiasamy, 2013; Grotto et al., 2017; Yang, Wan, & Fu, 2012). A hotel in Taiwan had the philosophy that “customer service was above everything else” which led to hotel customers making unreasonable requests, and this led to one manager at that hotel quitting their job owing to high-stress levels (Yang et al., 2012). Other documented reasons for why employees opt to terminate their employment contracts include receiving better job offers from other employers (Arokiasamy, 2013; Yang et al., 2012), and in other cases, employees resign from their jobs owing to personal reasons, such as when they feel they do not get time off from their demanding job to spend quality time with family (Li et al., 2016).

Low skills specialisation and “limited opportunities for career growth” were posited as a further set of causes of involuntary and voluntary turnover (Chaltiki & Sigala, 2010, p. 337). Chaltiki and Sigala argued that industry related developments also lead to employee turnover, whilst Olubiyi et al. (2019) and Arokiasamy (2013) advanced the lack of employee-firm fit or job-fit as another cause of turnover. This typically is the case, for instance, when a non-technical person settles for a technical job, leading to them not fitting well with the job. Inappropriate recruiting processes and work placement were highlighted by Yang et al. (2012) as other causes, which might be the reason behind poor employee-firm fit or employee-job fit establishments. Person-organisation fit or person-job fit, according to Olubiyi et al. and Arokiasamy, is a multidimensional concept, whose components include the personality of the employee relative to their co-workers and therefore how they interrelate, their skills-set and needs, and most crucial their values relative to those of their employing firm.

Additionally, Cho et al. (2017) and Stanley et al. (2013) posited that organisational commitment plays a role in the turnover intent by employees. By organisational commitment, the authors meant (a) the affective or emotional attachment the employee has relative to the organisation, (b) the normative or moral obligatory commitment the employee has to the organisation, and (c) the continuance commitment, or commitment that is based on instrumental considerations of the sacrifice with respect to leaving the organisation, versus the perceived lack of employment opportunities elsewhere, should the decision be to leave the organisation. Stanley and colleagues’ (2013) study found that employees with high levels of affective commitment (that is the ‘committed’ employees, and the ones displaying strong Affective Commitment-Normative Commitment Dominant and Affective Commitment Dominant profiles) showed the “lowest mean levels of turnover intention” (p. 184). This means that low levels of affective commitment in employees act as another cause of employee turnover.

Further reasons for why employees terminate their employment contracts according to findings from Yang et al.’s (2012) study include unfavourable work conditions and hours of work, demotivating management styles, the company’s financial status (especially when the firm ends up not being able to pay salaries for work carried out), toxic work environments and a lack of teamwork with co-workers, and company-

related decisions that employees do not agree with at times, for instance, unilateral changes in conditions of work by the employer (p. 842). Pietersen and Oni (2014) highlighted poor relations between the employee and their supervisors, as well as poor relations between the employee and their peers as further hygiene factors that result in involuntary employee turnover.

Involuntary causes of turnover were found to include decisions undertaken by the organisation, for instance, a downsizing intervention aimed at restructuring or reducing operational cost (Arokiasamy, 2013; Tsai et al., 2005). Other examples include decisions by the firm to terminate contracts with employees owing to poor performance by the employees (Arokiasamy, 2013; McElroy et al., 2001), or for discipline-related matters such as when the employee violates company policy or regulations. Arokiasamy further posited that other involuntary turnover causes include retirement and/or death (p. 1533).

Of deep concern is Yang et al.'s (2012) finding that employees do not always give the correct reasons why they quit their jobs. Most of Yang et al.'s (2012) 29 respondents, it was found, did not "set out the real reasons for quitting to their supervisors when they changed their jobs" (p. 842). Reasons such as a change in career, and family or physical reasons were advanced by these employees to their employers why they had resigned. Another concern is that, in the same study by Yang and colleagues, one respondent quit their hotel job after working for eight years in the hotel industry. The reason they advanced for quitting was that they wanted to work "more standard hours" according to Yang et al.'s findings (p. 842). However, the same study by Yang et al. (2012) found that the same employee returned to work for an international tourist hotel because he enjoyed the "face-to-face interaction with customers of the hotel industry" (p. 842). This revelation has serious implications for employee turnover research in that what gets advanced as reasons for quitting by employees may not all be the case, leading to the development of inadequate turnover prediction and employee retention strategies and interventions.

#### 2.3.4 Employee Turnover Consequences

Staff turnover, whether voluntary or involuntary, can be costly and disruptive since it costs firms between 90% and 200% of the departing employee's annual salary to

recruit and train their replacement (Grotto et al., 2017; Li et al., 2016; Sands-Dawling, 2020; Rubenstein et al., 2017; Stamolampros et al., 2019; Ton & Huckman, 2008). Literature suggests that employee turnover consequences can be seen from the perspective of the (i) organisational performance – which tends to extend to a negative effect on customer service levels, (ii) financial performance and costs associated with the firm, (iii) the departing employee(s), as well as (iv) the remaining employees (Cho et al., 2017; De Winne et al., 2019; Ferreira & Almeida, 2015; Grotto et al., 2017; Guilding, Lamminmaki, & McManus, 2014; Lee, 2018; Li et al., 2016; Park & Shaw, 2013; Surji, 2013; Ton & Huckman, 2008; Wynen & Op de Beeck, 2014). The implications for the departing employee include significant energy expending on finding new employment, adjusting to new situations once the new job is landed, learning new practice and routines, and having to form new interpersonal connections with new peers in the new job (Holtom et al., 2008). Additionally, employee turnover is posited as being disruptive in reference to firms' various productivity-related measures – organisational structure-related measures such as Employment Equity take a knock when previously disadvantaged individuals leave – and turnover negatively affects firms' financial performance (Hom et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2011).

De Winne et al.'s (2019) research found turnover to be negatively associated with labour productivity, therefore suggesting that firms find it particularly difficult to deal with fluctuations in staff turnover over time. However, McElroy et al. (2001) and Sands-Dawling (2020) suggested that organisational performance should be enhanced assuming that poor performing staff are replaced by properly qualified and skilled employees who bring with them new knowledge and ideas and that the departure of poor performers' attribution on the remaining employees should be positive given the assumption that the departing employees do so having been dismissed for their poor performance levels. This is an example of what Dalton et al. (1982) refer to as functional turnover. McElroy and colleagues' assertions further strengthen the argument that there may well indeed be some positivity that can be ascribed to employee turnover. Lee (2018) agreed that turnover may in fact be beneficial to the firm by improving its performance (p. 522).

Hausknecht and Trevor (2011) on the other hand, suggest the list for future employee turnover research considerations should include “scaled innovation, elevated

adaptation and flexibility or latitude, lessened worker conflict, pronounced promotional prospects and accelerated career growth (of those employees that remain), heightened morale, reduced labour costs and better role performance” (p. 381).

Cho et al. (2017) warned that firms that fail to manage emotional labour do so at the expense of job-related stress rising among some of their employees, which in turn has the potential to create health risks. Cho and colleagues’ study found that in the US, these risks contributed \$300 billion in annual costs to business firms because of the resultant “employee turnover, absenteeism, and legal insurance” caused by elevated job-stress levels among employees (p. 57).

Sun and Wang (2016), on the other hand, suggested that further research be conducted on the relationship between turnover intention and actual turnover behaviour. According to the authors, evidence on whether turnover intention is a valid proxy of turnover behaviour is mixed. The authors argue that several empirical studies have reached a different conclusion which is contrary to other researchers’ argument that turnover intention is the culmination of the withdrawal process and thus can predict actual turnover. The authors made the argument that employees who report their intention to leave may not end doing so. This is yet another indication that turnover research still harbours troubling questions and knowledge gaps about it.

### 2.3.5 Drive for Retention

Human resource management strategies aimed at retaining a high-quality and high-performing workforce include improving the motivational levels of employees, by ensuring higher levels of employee job embeddedness and job satisfaction, higher levels of organisational commitment, and elevated employee engagement and job-fit levels (Griffeth et al., 2000; Grotto et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2001; Ongori, 2007; Pietersen & Oni, 2014; Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009). Pietersen and Oni offered a comprehensive list of attraction and retention strategies, including considering paying market-related salaries, enabling working conditions and environments that promote work-life balance, retention bonus, enabling and creating

promotion and career growth opportunities, and reward-and-recognition programs aimed at compensating good performance and simultaneously increasing employees' motivation levels (p. 144).

Salary adjustments, opportunities for promotion, the enrichment and enlargement of jobs, and cross-training opportunity offers were found to be some of the management provisions of employee retention interventions by the study conducted by Yang et al. (2012). Yang et al. also found that when employees' self-confidence increases (by having employees share their experiences involving a particular work event), employee turnover effectively reduces. In addition, social events meant for employees, including periodic department celebrations or parties, instil a pleasant working atmosphere which in turn enhanced employee cohesion and teamwork within the team (Yang et al., 2012).

Holtom et al. (2008), Hom et al. (2017), and Lee (2019) suggested that the attraction of high-quality employees and their retention is today more critical than ever before from a managerial point of view owing to a varied set of trends, such as globalisation, the rise in knowledge work, and the accelerating rate of technological developments, all of which makes it important that firms hire and retain quality, high performing staff. To strengthen the employee retention drive, employers have crafted and implemented human resource management interventions and practices aimed at reducing avoidable turnover, such as Hom et al.'s (2017) assertion that better designed orientation programs of new hires, as well as recruiting from particular sources (such as employee referral sources) had the potential to improve staff retention rates.

Li et al., (2016) found in their study on reluctant leavers that employee retention remains vital for organisations since they end up leaving the organisation due to factors that are beyond their control. In order to bolster retention programs, Griffeth et al. (2000) suggested that firms put in place predictors necessary to help detect turnover intent among employees, especially those that are faced with factors that are beyond their control. One such best predictor of turnover offered by Griffeth et al. is the "proximal precursors in the withdrawal process" which includes "job satisfaction, organisational commitment, job search, withdrawal cognitions, and quit intentions" (p. 483).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Past research into employee turnover was focused on turnover's causes, its mostly negative consequences, and on strategies to predict turnover intent and ways to counter those intentions and therefore retain the staff. The literature review discussed in this chapter further led to the development of the theoretical framework, the Effort-Reward Model, that was necessary to provide the lens through which this study was conducted.

Moreover, the literature review has unearthed the knowledge gap or troubling question to be pursued by this research as whether employee turnover positively impacts the remaining employees. (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Wynen et al., 2019). The aim of this study was to explore this possibility as well as to identify the contextual settings under which this may likely materialise (Wynen et al., 2019). To enable this exploration, the researcher set out to address the following overarching research focus areas as established through the integrative literature review conducted and discussed in the foregoing sections:

1. The way in which employee turnover results into positive benefits from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation,
2. How the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon, and
3. The contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees.

These overarching research focus areas are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 3.1 Introduction

The objective of this research was to explore, for meaningful understanding and contribution to theory, the extent to which employee turnover positively impacts the remaining employees and the contextual setting and conditions under which this may materialise. Qualitative research questions, according to Agee (2009), are the basis upon which the direction of both the theoretical and methodological terms of a research study are informed. This study's three Research Questions were derived from the literature review presented in Chapter 2 and they are aligned to the research purpose and problem discussed in Chapter 1 (Agee, 2009; Ellis & Levy, 2008). The three Research Questions underpinning this research are discussed in the following sections.

### 3.2 Research Question 1

**In what way does employee turnover result into positive consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation?**

The aim of Research Question 1 is to establish, from the perspective of the research participants, what they perceive the positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees to be and in what way(s) they regard those consequences as positive (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Wynen et al., 2019). Per Dalton et al. (1982), "turnover may actually benefit both the individual and the organisation" (p. 117). Though Dalton and colleagues may be referring to the individual that is leaving the organisation in their research, it is the remaining individuals that may also be benefitted because of the departing employee, which is what this Research Question 1 seeks to explore.



### **3.3 Research Question 2**

**How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?**

Research Question 2 seeks to establish how the research participants personally react when vacancies, owing to staff turnover events, arise in their organisation. Research Question 2 further establishes what the participants perceive to be the motivating factors or demotivating factors that lead to them reacting in either the positive or the negative manner in response to the resultant vacancies owing to turnover events. By exploring the feelings of the research participants, Research Question 2 seeks to establish what drives them to develop those feelings and subsequently the actions they take in response to the arisen vacancies, as well as the impact of the environment in which they interact with fellow co-workers and their relationship with their supervisors (Anderson et al., 2017; Bass et al., 2003; Jena et al., 2018; Nohria et al., 2008; Sun & Wang, 2016).

### **3.4 Research Question 3**

**What are the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees?**

Research Question 3 seeks to explore, by tapping into the lived experiences, held perceptions, and opinions of the research participants, the contextual settings or the conditions that must prevail for employee turnover to have a positive impact on the remaining employees of an organisation (Chaltiki & Sigala, 2010; Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Wynen et al., 2019). Factors such as work environments that are non-toxic, which foster fairness, and which encourage teamwork, as well as the extent to which managers support and keep their subordinates motivated, will be explored in answering the research problem established in Chapter 1 (Cespedes, 1990; Nohria et al., 2008).

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology that was applied in this research study. The literature review that was discussed in Chapter 2, along with the Research Questions discussed in Chapter 3 as well as the exploratory and qualitative nature of this research are the basis upon which the research methodology to be discussed was designed.

This research followed the interpretive research philosophy as it sought to assess employees' perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and socially constructed meanings with respect to the potential positive consequences on the remaining employees that employee turnover may foster (Kothari, 2004; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornton, 2016). This study adopted the qualitative case study research approach and research design, and the chosen sampling and data gathering methods reinforced the selection of the research methodology to be discussed.

What encouraged the choice of the qualitative research methodology for this research is the several other studies into employee turnover that employed the qualitative research approach, which include Olubiyi et al. (2019), Sands-Dawling (2020), and Yang et al. (2012). Yang and colleagues' (2012) study followed the phenomenological approach to research, whereas Olubiyi et al.'s (2019) and Sands-Dawling's (2020) studies followed the qualitative case study research approach. It is Olubiyi et al.'s research approach that closely resembles the approach that was followed in the research study presented in this report.

The detailed account of this project's research methodology, population, unit of analysis, the applied sampling method and sample size, the applied measurement instrument, data gathering method, approach to data analysis, research quality control concerns, and the limitations to this study, is provided in the sections that follow.

## **4.2 Research Design and Methodology**

The researcher undertook the qualitative research approach to this study to explore and establish new information insofar as the possible positive consequences of employee turnover's impact on remaining employees is concerned (Tavakol & Sandars, 2014). This is because exploratory research is concerned with the discovery of information regarding a phenomenon that is beset with troubling questions and knowledge gaps (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). It is the research type that is applicable when a research study seeks to gain insights into a given field of study, and when the aim of the research is to avail tentative solutions to early questions about the research area of interest (Owens, 2015; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The qualitative approach to research undertaken for this study was relevant as it covered the study's objective, which was to explore the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees and to establish the contextual settings under which this would normally materialise. Based on the outcome of the literature review presented in Chapter 2, pertinent troubling questions with respect to the research into the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees needed to be addressed.

Owing to the qualitative nature of this research, it made sense that the exploratory qualitative research methodology be chosen for it (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Tavakol & Sandars, 2014). The explorative qualitative research design was preferable as it enabled the researcher to express the commonalities of individuals' experiences within the context of employee turnover and its impact on remaining employees (Gill, 2014). This choice was further made on the basis that the exploratory qualitative research methodology would enable the researcher to delve deeper into the pervasive employee turnover phenomenon and establish new insights surrounding the potential positive consequences that employee turnover may have on the remaining employees.

The interpretivist research philosophy, which is qualitative in nature, was therefore the applicable research philosophy that was adopted to guide this research (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Thompson, 2015). Furthermore, the adoption of the interpretivist research philosophy was applicable as it enabled the researcher to concentrate on, dig deeper into, and interpret the meanings, words, perceptions, and

opinions that participants used and displayed during the data gathering process (Alhamdani, 2016; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Stainton, 2020). The gathering of data was through the in-depth, open-ended, and semi-structured interview method (Opoku et al., 2016).

As established in Chapter 1, this study sought to explore the possibility that employee turnover positively impacts the remaining employees of a firm. In so doing, the researcher presupposed that the outcome of the research study could lead to (a) the advancement of the body of knowledge, or (b) the contribution to or the building of new theory with respect to the phenomenon of employee turnover. Therefore, the inductive approach to research, which is suitable in the advent of new theory building or when contribution to theory is achieved or when in-depth understanding of research phenomena is sought, was the research approach of choice for this study (Ellis & Levy, 2008; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Streefkerk, 2019; Tavakol & Sandars, 2014).

Because this research was conducted over a short period of time, the mono method qualitative research methodology was employed as it was suitable for use along with the qualitative case study research strategy where primary data collection was through semi-structured interviews on a once-off snapshot basis. The flexibility that stems from the nature of the semi-structured interview method of gathering research data enabled the researcher the flexibility to pursue new topics that emerged during the data collection process for deeper understanding (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Smith, 2019).

Opoku et al. (2016) posit that the selection of a research strategy is informed by the research questions, objectives, as well as by the philosophical underpinnings of the researcher, among other things. The qualitative case study research strategy was deemed appropriate and therefore chosen for this research, and it enabled the researcher to gain concrete, contextual, inductive, and in-depth exploration of unknown knowledge about the phenomenon of employee turnover (Andersson, Korp, & Reinertsen, 2020; Gammelgaard, 2017; McCombes, 2020; Olubiyi et al., 2019; Ponelis, 2015; Rashid, Rashid, Waraich, Sabir, & Waseem, 2019; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Qualitative case study research supported the researcher's semi-structured interview method of collecting primary data, the choice of which was based

on the research questions, objectives, and purpose of this research project (Dinnen, 2014; Opoku et al., 2016; Wedawatta, Ingirige, & Amaratunga, 2011).

Data was collected as a snapshot once-off event, meaning that the cross-sectional time horizon was applied for this research project through open-ended semi-structured interviews that enabled the researcher to probe the opinions and perceptions of research participants (Melnikovas, 2018; Saunders et al., 2016; Stainton, 2020). Additionally, open-ended semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to rephrase, for common understanding of what the participant meant in their response, the participants' meanings of their responses during the data collection stages. Before moving off to the next question, the researcher sought to get from the participant if what the researcher had rephrased precisely meant that or not. This was particularly necessary to ensure the researcher did not assume what the respondents' responses and opinions meant, thereby ensuring that the research participants' perceptions and lived experiences about the phenomenon of employee turnover being studied in this research were credibly documented and captured by the researcher.

#### **4.3 Population**

The population of this research project was made up of the holistic group of employees of a single organisation that operated in the freight and logistics transportation industry in South Africa (Bhandari, 2021; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This population comprised the Chief Executive Officer, the General Managers, Executive Managers, Senior Managers, Managers, Junior Managers, First-Line Supervisors, and Bargaining Unit Employees (made up of the Chief Administrative Officials, Senior Administrative Officials, and Administrative Officials levels of employees).

#### **4.4 Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis for this study, and therefore the case in the research, was the South African freight and logistics organisation's employees that were chosen for this research (DiscoverPhDs, 2020; Roller, 2019). To secure a holistic understanding of

the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees of the case organisation, the organisation's employees, both at the management and non-management levels, were purposively sampled and interviewed for their perceptions and opinions on the phenomenon studied by this research project.

#### **4.5 Sampling Method and Size**

Qualitative research samples tend to be small and are informed by the researcher's subjective judgment of which potential participants are likely to contribute meaningfully to the objective of the research (Marshall, 1996). The sampling frame for this study was the complete list, by name and occupation level, of the population of employees of the South African freight and logistics case organisation (Glen, n.d.).

Given that it was not possible to gather data from the entire population of the case organisation's employees, the non-probability purposive sampling method which was based on the researcher's judgment was applied to address this research's objectives and questions (Bhandari, 2021; McCombes, 2021; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Taherdoost, 2016). In addition, sampling for this qualitative case study research was informed by the researcher's expectation of the respondents' information richness and not on generalisation properties (Gammelgaard, 2017; Ponelis, 2015; Taherdoost, 2016), which means that sampling for this qualitative case study research was non-random. Effectively, the research study adopted the homogeneous purposive sampling strategy to exclude externalities from other industries, significantly limiting this study's population and sample to one case organisation.

According to Saunders et al. (2016), the sample size for non-probability sampling is dictated upon by the Research Questions and objectives. Different authors offer different sample size ranges for case study research and for semi-structured in-depth interviews. According to Koerber and McMichael (2008), researchers that purposively decide on their sample do so on the basis that they have some degree of choice to do so and are driven by a clear purpose that directs their choice. The choice of the sample selected for this study was purposed on the fact that all sampled employees had at one point or another in their work-lives experienced turnover –

where some of their co-workers would have volitionally terminated their employment contract for personal or other reasons (Koerber & McMichael, 2008).

Ponelis (2015) advises that the sample size in an interpretive research study is, relatively speaking, small and that it ranges between four and ten cases, whilst Saunders et al. (2016) suggest a sample range of between five and twenty-five research participants for semi-structured/in-depth research interviews. Lastly Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, and Fontenot (2013) offer a range of between four to six cases. On the other hand, Marshall et al. (2013) offer the suggestion that a researcher should consider sample sizes that are based on precedents set by prior research studies with similar research problems and designs. Marshall and colleagues additionally suggest that the determination of an adequate qualitative research sample size should be based on the concept of data saturation, which refers to the state when the researcher learns nothing new from the collected data as they continue with their data collection exercise. Olubiyi et al. (2019) suggest a range of between “fifteen to eighteen interviews to reach thematic saturation for a qualitative study” (p. 13).

Most authors seem to converge on a sample size that ranges between four and 18 participants for qualitative case study research. Taking from this account, this research purposed a sample size of a minimum of 12 participants. To ensure data saturation, Marshall et al.'s (2013) suggestion of basing the choice of a qualitative research study sample size on research studies that had a similar research focus as the researcher's project, and given that Olubiyi et al., (2019) used a sample size of 18 cases for their research into employee turnover in business retail, the researcher undertook to adjust the sample size above 12 where data saturation would not be reached from the first group of between 12 participants. In the end, the researcher sampled and interviewed 15 participants, whose brief details are depicted in Table 4.1.

The sample of 15 participants came from ten functions of the South African freight and logistics case organisation. The sample consisted of eight males and seven females, from four different position levels, namely the Bargaining Unit Employee level, the Manager level, the Senior Manager level, and the Executive Manager level. This was done to ensure the maximum variation purposive sampling, thereby

enabling the researcher to tap into as many different participants with as many diverse insights and broadest variety of perspectives as possible into this research (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016; Koerber & McMichael, 2008). To further drive for maximum variation, the researcher set out to select a sample that was split between seven females and eight males, and nine different functional departments. Further descriptions and details of the sample are discussed in section 5.2.

**Table 4.1: Sample description – Gender, Functional Output, and Position Levels**

#	Pseudonym	Gender	Function	Level
1	Wiseman Kalama	M	CI	Exec. Manager
2	Welbrum Roltel	M	RTCC	Snr. Manager
3	Wasneef Rasing	F	TVP: Mining	Snr. Manager
4	Evander Forbes	F	PM (IT)	Snr. Manager
5	Lucky Offal	M	TCCE	Exec. Manager
6	Paratika Atutn	M	SC&D: Capacity	Manager
7	Gift Protection	M	SC&D: Review	Snr. Manager
8	Outter Standings	F	TVP: Agriculture	Snr. Manager
9	Persistence Inimald	F	SC&D: Design	Snr. Manager
10	Holly Gosebaetso	M	ITP: Planning	Manager
11	Koloma Motjekara	M	OCC: Execution	Exec. Manager
12	Handy Rengaw	M	SC&D: Design	Manager
13	Advantaged Amga	F	OCC: Secretariat	CAO (BUE)
14	Emolas Spuiker	F	SC&D: Scheduling	CAO (BUE)
15	Lukin Bhalalast	F	SC&D: Service Codes	CAO (BUE)
<b>TOTALS</b>			Female	7
			Male	8

Table 4.1 above depicts the position levels, gender, and functional outputs of the participants sampled for this research study. Owing to good ethical research, the names of the participants have been pseudonymised. This was done to deliver on the promise made to the participants to report on their data anonymously and confidentially.



#### **4.6 Measurement Instrument**

The different types of collection methods that aid in collecting qualitative, explorative research data include semi-structured interviews, observation, focus groups, diaries, and other archival material (Japheth, 2014; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The most useful method of carrying out exploratory research, according to Saunders and Lewis (2018), is to conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The gathering of primary data for this research study was via the semi-structured interview guide, which, in accordance with Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014), and Saunders and Lewis (2018), provided the researcher the flexibility of pursuing unexpected new information that emerged during the interview stage of data collection, which was not catered for by the Research Questions presented in Chapter 3, and not by the interview questions either. The literature review and Research Questions discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively are the basis upon which the semi-structured interview questions for this study were derived.

Table 4.2 below maps the Research Questions to the semi-structured interview questions that guided the data collection for this research.

**Table 4.2: The mapping of Research Questions and Interview Questions**

#	Research Questions	Semi-structured Interview questions
1.	In what way does employee turnover result into positive consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What, in your understanding are the fundamental causes of employee turnover in your organisation or department?</li> <li>2. In what way do you think employee turnover would have a positive impact on the remaining employees in an organisation or department?</li> <li>3. What other positive consequences on the remaining employees in an organisation would you associate with the employee turnover phenomenon?</li> </ol>
2.	How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Briefly take me through the time when there was a vacancy one level higher than yours in your department:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) How would you describe the feelings and thoughts you developed owing to the vacancy?</li> <li>b) What would you say invoked those feelings and thoughts in you?</li> <li>c) How did you respond to the vacancy in question?</li> <li>d) What motivated you to respond in that way?</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. If you were to be faced with a similar vacancy situation in the future, how would you react to it? (why would you react in that way?)</li> </ol>
3.	What are the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. What conditions will need to be in place for employee turnover to have a positive consequence on the remaining employees?</li> <li>7. What do you consider to be the reasons for why remaining employees will not be positively impacted by employee turnover?</li> </ol>

13 of the 15 semi-structured interviews were carried out through the *Microsoft TEAMS* (TEAMS) platform. The choice of the TEAMS platform was convenient for both the researcher and the research participants owing to the COVID-19 regulations that restricted contact between people to avoid the transmission of the virus (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Participants 14 and 15 were interviewed in a boardroom at their workplace – the proper COVID-19 regulations of personal distancing and with masks worn all the time, were observed throughout the respective interviews. What prompted the boardroom-based interview was that the 14<sup>th</sup> participant’s connectivity at home was erratic and therefore non-functional, whilst participant number 15 had no Wi-Fi connectivity at home.

A standard email (example appended in APPENDIX 1) was used to invite the participants, and where a group invitational email was sent, it was done such that the invitees could not see who else was sampled. The email stipulated the aim of the invitation and appended to it the Interview Consent Letter (APPENDIX 2) as well as the permission from the case organisation that granted the researcher the go-ahead to conduct the research on the firm’s premises and with its employees. The

interviews ranged between 24 and 50 minutes, with one taking 82 minutes. On average, the interviews tended to last for approximately 38 minutes.

At the commencement of each interview, the participants' voluntary participation in the study was reiterated to avoid them feeling coerced in participating in this research project (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Additionally, in accordance with Saunders and Lewis, each participant was requested to fill out and sign the interview consent letter to ensure the researcher collected the research data ethically. Each interview was recorded via the TEAMS platform and permission for this was sought from each participant before commencing with the interviews.

The flexibility afforded by the semi-structured interview data collection method enabled the researcher to probe for the in-depth and meaningful understanding of the participants' opinions and perspectives regarding the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Smith, 2019). When a response was offered and the researcher needed to understand it clearly, the researcher rephrased it and, in the process, sought to retrieve confirmation from the respondent whether the understanding by the researcher was accurate and not misrepresentative of the respondent's intended meaning.

#### **4.7 Data Gathering**

Since unquantifiable, exploratory qualitative research data is collected through interviews (Saunders et al., 2016), the semi-structured interview method of data collection was applied in this exploratory qualitative research study to collect primary data from 15 purposively sampled participants that included the diverse employee levels of Executive Managers, Senior Managers, Managers, and Bargaining Unit Employees. The Research Questions put forward in Chapter 3, the objective and nature of this research, and the adoption of the qualitative case study research strategy led to the researcher choosing the semi-structured interview technique as the appropriate data gathering method for this research (Bhandari, 2020). Of importance is that the semi-structured interview data collection method afforded the researcher the flexibility to pursue new topics as needed, based on respondents'

responses (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Smith, 2019), and this reinforced the exploratory research design chosen for this proposed research.

To eradicate researcher bias, bracketing, a research technique that refers to the drive by the researcher to achieve and maintain neutrality by putting aside their biased stance of their existing knowledge or their understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), was applied in this research project. Equally important, the researcher sought to eradicate participant bias by not sharing the interview questions ahead of time. This approach ensured the participants were in their natural setting or condition during the interviews and therefore free to give of their opinions regarding the focus of this research.

The interview questions (as presented in APPENDIX 3) were derived from the Research Questions presented in Chapter 3, as informed by the consistency matrix (APPENDIX 5), as well as by the literature review presented in Chapter 2. The flexibility enabled by the semi-structured interview data gathering method was suitable and useful as it enabled the researcher to probe the respondents on new information that arose from their responses, and it enabled the researcher to clarify questions that appeared not to be understood by any of the participants (Pollock, 2019; Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The researcher observed and took note of key additional information during the interviews to ensure the collection of as much of the research data as possible, and to capture the richness or thickness of the perceptions held by the respondents about the possible positive consequences of employee turnover (Gammelgaard, 2017; Ponelis, 2015), all of which was meant to support and enable deeper understanding of the possibility that employee turnover leads to the remaining employees of a firm being positively impacted. Responses that were not clear to the researcher were rephrased and stated back to the participants to ensure that the meaning of their responses was not lost in translation. This approach helped the researcher get the actual meaning of the participants' responses right there where they were and with the research topic still fresh in their heads, effectively reducing the need to follow up with clarity-seeking questions after the interviews. Any piece of additional information that did not aid in answering the Research Questions was discarded during the analysis phase.

As stated above, the interviews were held via the audio-visual-conferencing platform, TEAMS, and permission to record the interviews was sought and obtained from the respondents. The recording was aimed at ensuring all interview responses were captured precisely as they were stated by the participants (Sim, 1998), the aim of which was to uphold the trustworthiness and rigour of the collected data (Galdas, 2017). The recorded interviews were saved on the researcher's laptop in a specially created folder for this purpose.

Each interview started with a formal introduction as well as a word of gratitude to the participant for their participation in this research. After the formalities, a brief description of the focus area of the research was provided to each participant. Following this, the interview commenced with the seven open-ended questions, with the participants advised to provide their deeply held beliefs, opinions, perceptions, and understandings of the phenomenon that was being studied (Gammelgaard, 2017; Ponelis, 2015; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Each participant was implored to answer the interview questions objectively, freely and to the best of their natural and deeply held, honest opinions about the matter that was being studied. The participants were encouraged to treat the researcher as a stranger and assume the researcher had no idea what they were referring to in their responses, even though the researcher would have had a firm understanding of what they were referring to. Handwritten notes were also taken by the researcher to bolster the understanding the researcher held as the participants gave their responses. During this process, the researcher observed certain codes and themes emerging, which is the process that can be taken as the actual initial coding process undertaken by the researcher. However, these were either confirmed or rejected during the analysis phase of the data, which applied the inductive approach to coding, effectively meaning that the initial codes referred to here were merely ideas that the researcher formulated as the data gathering process ensued (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

Where the researcher missed what the participants were purporting in their responses, the researcher rephrased the question for better understanding and to ensure that what the researcher heard was precisely what the participant meant given their responses. At the same time, their original responses were recorded and accepted as they were relayed based on the researcher's belief that those answers could serve as secondary data in subsequent employee turnover research studies.

Where participants were found to totally sway astray in their responses, they were redirected back to what the Research Question was with examples meant to further offer clarity on how the participants should interpret the question. This redirection was carried out with care being taken by the researcher not to lead the participants to answer in a biased fashion as far as possible.

Participants' answers were listened to carefully, unhindered, and with respect, and at the end of the interview after interview question 7, the participants were asked if there were any aspects pertaining to employee turnover that they felt were not covered by the line of questioning as informed by the interview guide (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Some gave of their views, whilst others had no additional inputs at the time. They were, however, encouraged to provide any such additional input post the interview. The encouragement led to one of the participants providing further input, post-interview, by email (see APPENDIX 6).

The recordings from the interviews were transcribed through the free or trial version of *Otter.ai*, an online transcription engine, with the researcher cleaning the transcription for words which the transcription engine did not understand, such as when a respondent or the researcher spoke in their native language, such as 'Kahle-Kahle, which means 'what I mean is...'. The cleaning of the transcribed document was done such that the original meaning was preserved with as few alterations as possible, and in the process, most filler words, such as "...uhm..." and "...you know..." were left in their original setting.

#### **4.8 Analysis Approach**

Given that there is no single right or prescribed way of analysing qualitative research data, the Research Questions, objectives, theoretical framework, and the primary data which was collected through the semi-structured interview method all converged to dictate the inductive data analysis technique that was applied in this research (Akinyode & Khan, 2018; Dierckx de Casterle, Gastman, Bryon, & Denier, 2011; Raskind, Shelton, Comeau, Cooper, Griffith, & Kegler, 2018). Qualitative data analysis is an extensive, nuanced, complex, and challenging expedition (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dierckx de Casterle et al., 2011; Kiger & Varpio, 2020), and consists

of six different types, namely thematic analysis, qualitative content analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and interpretive phenomenological analysis, each of which serves different and specific purposes (Warren & Rautenbach, 2020).

Given that thematic analysis is an exploratory process (Warren & Rautenbach, 2020), it made logical sense that thematic analysis be adopted for this exploratory research into the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees, because as “the first qualitative method of analysis that (novice) researchers should learn” owing to its useful and flexible nature which potentially provides “a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data”, it served as a “foundational method of qualitative analysis” for this research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). This exploratory study sought to identify, analyse, and report on the common themes of the perceptions and opinions held by research participants about the exploration of the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis was the appropriate method applied to analyse the qualitative data of this research as it was suitable in aiding the search for, and identification of, the repeated patterns or themes of the participants’ common experiences or perceptions for better understanding and for addressing the Research Questions of this research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The researcher attempted to conduct some initial analysis of the data during the interview stages of data collection, where the attempt was to try to make sense of what the research participants were expressing in relation to the Research Questions and objectives of this research at the time (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard et al., 2008). This initial analysis was inevitable as the researcher was “in the field” gathering primary data and as such was presented with an impossibility of not thinking and making sense about what was being said by the participants in the interviews (Pope et al., 2000, p. 114). A thorough analysis of the data, however, was carried out post the interviews, through the application of the six-phased thematic analysis guideline tabulated in Table 4.3 below (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard et al., 2008; Dierckx de Casterle et al., 2011; Pope et al., 2000).

**Table 4.3: Phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)**

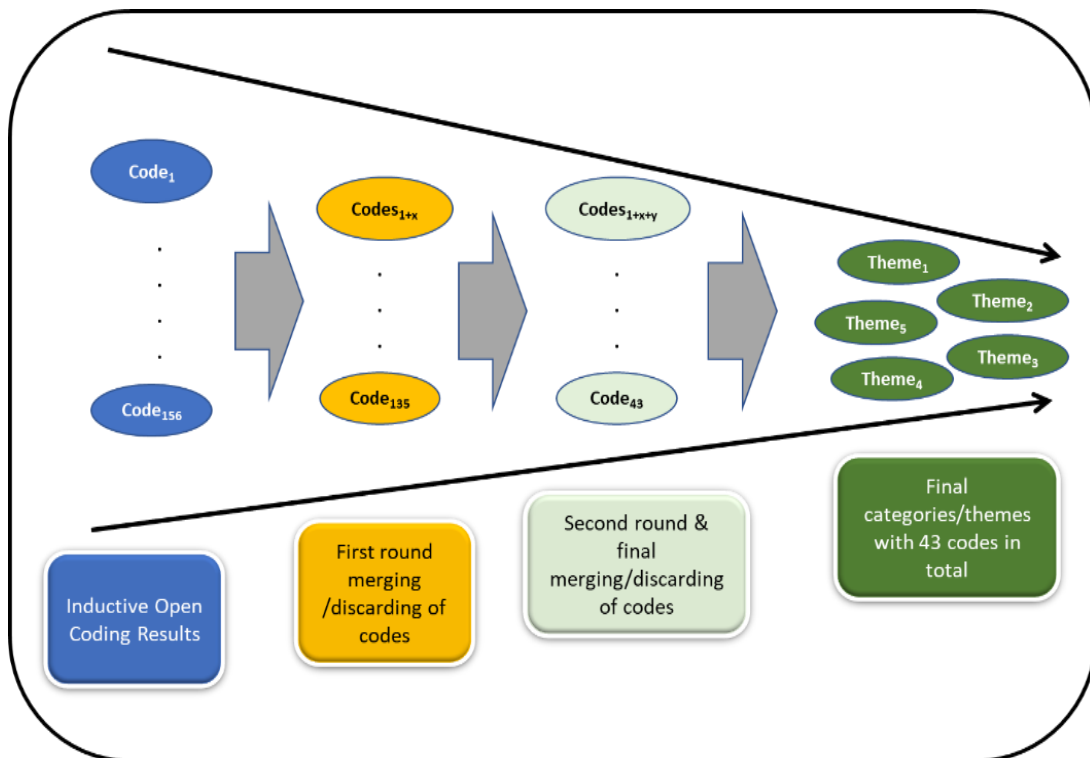
#	Phase	Phase Description
1	<b>Familiarising self with the data</b>	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas
2	<b>Generation of initial codes</b>	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
3	<b>Searching for themes</b>	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4	<b>Reviewing themes</b>	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic "map" of the analysis
5	<b>Defining and naming themes</b>	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6	<b>Producing the report</b>	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Each interview was, with the consent of each participant, as already stated, recorded via the TEAMS platform, after which the trial and therefore free version of the online transcription tool, *Otter.ai*, was used by the researcher to transcribe the data. After its transcription, the data was methodically arranged and organised to enable its reduction through coding and categorisation to enable the researcher to explore, identify, and isolate patterns and themes in the data (Akinyode & Khan, 2018; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kawulich, 2004; Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Wong, 2008). The transcribed data, along with the audio recordings, were read and listened to repeatedly over a multiple number of times, the aim of which was for the researcher to be familiar with the data as suggested by the six-phased thematic analysis guideline (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dierckx de Casterle et al., 2011; Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000).



The post-interview analysis process, which followed the data transcription process, saw the researcher generating and assigning codes to respective data features (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Potential themes were created as informed by the codes that were generated (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The data-driven inductive approach to data analysis was applied in this research, effectively meaning that the identification of the themes came from the data and was not based on any predetermined coding structure or theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard et al., 2008; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Tavakol & Sandars, 2014; Thomas, 2006). However, given that the researcher developed the E-RM theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, it cannot entirely be claimed that a purely inductive approach to data analysis was followed. The reason for this is because the E-RM theoretical framework developed in Chapter 2 does tend to steer the researcher on what to look out for during data collection at the data analysis stage. This situation is an illustration of one of the limitations of this study, in that it can be argued that a purely inductive approach to data analysis was not 'entirely' followed. However, no predetermined code list or coding structure was developed for this research. Instead, codes were created from the data itself, despite the preconceived ideas that may have been created in the researcher's mind prior to the collection and analysis of the data.

As illustrated in figure 3 below, the inductive approach to coding led to the researcher arriving at 156 codes initially. When reviewed later, 21 of the 156 codes were found to be not relevant to the Research Questions, and they were subsequently dropped from the list, resulting in a drop from 156 initial codes to 135.



**Figure 3.:** Initial coding to categorization, and identification of themes

Next, the researcher identified all those codes that were still relevant to answering the Research Questions, which took on different words but held the same underlying meaning (an example here is a code that was defined as “No Management Support”, and another that was defined “Lack of Management Support”). These types of codes were identified, combined, and merged, resulting in the number of codes reducing from 135 to 83 in total. A further refinement was conducted with more codes being merged to finally arrive at five categories, or themes in this case. The five themes were arranged with the logic of addressing the Research Questions and their associated interview questions, which formed the platform upon which the analysis was to be conducted and enabled the presentation of the results in Chapter 5.

#### 4.9 Quality Controls

In qualitative research, the interpretivist researcher gets actively involved in the research process as they must make sense of the social phenomena that is under study by reflecting deeply on the research participants’ explanations and perceptions

about the phenomenon under study even during the stage of data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Carcary, 2009). This active involvement by the researcher tends to be misconstrued as leading to researcher bias since, it is argued, that interpretivist researchers are “biased by their background, knowledge, and prejudices” and therefore rendering the research study’s quality or trustworthiness not being easily evaluated (Carcary, 2009, p. 12). The quantitative research’s scientific approach of validity, reliability, and generalisability to gauging the research’s trustworthiness cannot be applied in this qualitative research (Akkerman, Admiraal, Brekelmans, & Oost, 2008). Instead, to ensure quality control and therefore trustworthiness for this research, the qualitative research control framework that comprises *credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability* was applied (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Saunders et al., 2016). To further enhance the credibility and reliability of this research study, the researcher endeavoured to provide sufficient detail about the research as required to enable those that have an interest in the research to assess the study’s validity, reliability, and credibility through the research audit trail (Akkerman et al., 2008; Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The credibility element of the qualitative research quality control framework was applied to ensure that the research participants’ perceptions and lived experiences about the phenomenon of employee turnover being studied in this research were correctly documented and captured by the researcher. Secondly, the researcher endeavoured to present the full descriptions of the Research Questions, design, findings, and interpretations through the application of the transferability element of the qualitative research quality control framework. Thirdly, to be able to replicate this research, and its findings, and therefore to ensure its dependability, the researcher recorded the data collection process, along with all changes throughout the process. Lastly, to ensure this research’s confirmability or authenticity, the researcher made it a point that all views in this research study were recorded and acknowledged.

To ensure that the above quality control framework elaborated upon was realised, Akkerman et al. (2008) offer the use of the audit process to test the quality of a given research study, and this is because “audit trails represent a means of assuring quality in qualitative studies” (Carcary, 2009, p. 15). The confirmability or quality of this qualitative research study was built into the process undertaken to carry it out (Carcary, 2009). The researcher ensured that any party that has an interest in this

research will be able to audit the influences and actions of the researcher to establish or assess the trustworthiness, validity, and credibility of this research study by keeping records of the process undertaken in this study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Carcary, 2009).

In summary, the control of the quality of this qualitative case study research was embedded in the research process, such that the evaluation of the truthfulness of the research results would not be based on its ex-post assessment, but rather on the entire transparent process through which the research study was executed (Gammelgaard, 2017; Leitch, Hill, & Harrison, 2010). This was achieved with the researcher's endeavour to populate the research audit trail that consisted of (i) the documentation that encompassed the research problem, the conceptual framework or theoretical perspective of the research, the planned research methods along with a reflection of the researcher's position in the study; (ii) the research report; (iii) the collected raw data pertaining to both the primary and secondary data, along with field notes; and (iv) the record of the systematic report on how data was collected and analysed (Akkerman et al., 2008). According to Koerber and McMichael (2008), qualitative researchers should adequately describe, for example, their sampling techniques to render unquestionability and replication of their research, which ultimately tends to enhance the quality of their research.

#### **4.10 Limitations**

The observed limitations associated with qualitative research include: (i) the gathering or collection of data which normally takes up time and resources, and owing to the researcher's perceived biases, there is difficulty that is normally associated with the analysis and the interpretation of the research data (Dudovskiy, n.d.; McLeod, 2019; Queiros, Faria, & Almeida, 2017); (ii) it is not easy to replicate qualitative research (unless the details and steps of all the taken decisions are provided), and owing to the fact that qualitative researchers form an integral part of the study process, objectivity is more often difficult to maintain; (iii) qualitative exploratory research generates non-numeric qualitative data, the interpretation of which is subject to the researcher's background, knowledge and influences, and the findings of exploratory research are not generalisable to the wider population

(Dudovskiy, n.d.; McLeod, 2019); and (iv) inductive research conclusions are not provable, even though they can, however, be invalidated (Streefkerk, 2019).

Furthermore, the researcher was an integral part of the research process and there was no way of separating self from the process (Galdas, 2017). This is a further critical limitation of qualitative research in that the researcher's unavoidable active role in the analysis of the data, both during and after collection, was a must as "no themes, categories, concepts or theories" were going to emerge on their own without the researcher's active role in making them emerge (Dierckx de Casterle et al., 2011). In addition, qualitative case study research involves a situation where the researcher becomes careless and permits questionable evidence or subjective and irrelevant views to influence the direction of the research findings and conclusions (Zaidah, 2007). As was the case with the coding process, the researcher at first included codes that were not relevant to the study. As they bore no influence on the Research Questions, these were subsequently discarded from the study.

The fact that the researcher adopted the inductive approach to data analysis, the fact that the E-RM theoretical framework was developed in Chapter 2 to guide this study, it indeed presented the researcher with preconceived ideas of what to look out for during data collection and analysis. However, no predetermined coding list or code structure was developed or used during the analysis stage. Codes were created from the data as it was read by the researcher, the list of which is presented in APPENDIX 4. Further limitations specific and pertinent to this research include the following:

- The sample was selected from one organisation, therefore rendering the results non-generalisable
- The sample was only drawn from Johannesburg, which means geographical bias in the participants' responses could have manifested
- Although the researcher approached the analysis of the data inductively, there is no confirming that the researcher's derived theoretical framework would not have affected his judgment and thus led to the analysis subconsciously taking the deductive approach
- Given that the participants in this study all came from the same case organisation, it can mean that their responses would have been biased or

influenced by the same experiences as they all would have been exposed to the same conditions prevalent in the case organisation's landscape

## **CHAPTER 5: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the results of this qualitative exploratory research into the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees are presented. To support the key findings from this study, quotations from the interview transcriptions are presented in italics, with the section relevant to that quotation referenced in parentheses immediately after the quotation. For ease of reference to the reader, the parenthesised reference gives the page and line numbers of where the quotation is located, as well as the details of the interview transcription where the quotation was excerpted from.

The findings are laid out in sections 5.3 through 5.5 in accordance with the Research Questions that were derived and presented in Chapter 3. Guiding the presentation of the results are the interview questions that were derived through the application of a consistency matrix (APPENDIX 5). The interview questions were mapped against the Research Questions as depicted in Table 4.2.

Following next is Section 5.2 which gives a brief description of the sample. Chapter 5 will conclude with a summary of the key findings in Section 5.6.

### **5.2 Brief Description of the Sample**

The total of 15 participants, the list of which is presented in Table 5.1 below, were sampled purposively, based on the researcher's subjective thinking that each participant had previously experienced an employee turnover event at least once in their working life. With this assumption in place, the researcher presupposed that the sampled participants would contribute meaningfully towards answering the Research Questions of this research.

The researcher undertook a process that sought to select as diverse a sample as possible to ensure the coverage of a broader range of opinions and perceptions

surrounding this research. The 15 participants were made up of seven females and eight males, ranging in functional levels from the Bargaining Unit Employee level of Chief Administrative Official to the level of Executive Manager. They each have been in the employ of the case organisation for no less than five years, with several boasting up to 20 years of unbroken service.



**Table 5.1: Brief background information on the details of the research participants**

#	Pseudonym	Function	Level	Brief background information of the research participants
1	Mr. Wiseman Kalama	CI	Exec. Manager	Mr Wiseman holds a Master's degree in psychology. He revealed during the interview that he was a registered psychologist. In his role as EM, he has overseen the transition of his staff from what he terms the baby-boomers generation to the current makeup of "Gen X, Y, and Z", a situation that sets him up as a valuable participant who has taken charge of staff turnover events, and who himself has experienced the turnover phenomenon.
2	Mr. Welbrum Roltel	RTCC	Snr. Manager	Mr Welbrum has acted in the position of EM: RTCC for well over 5 years. In this role, he has managed one of the case company's critical functions that is affected by high staff turnover and sits with a significantly high vacancy rate at 26%. The fact that he has had to endure well over 5 years in an acting role, and that during this time he has had to manage his function's high turnover and vacancy rates sets him up as another suitably placed participant for this research.
3	Ms. Wasneef Rasing	TVP: Mining	Snr. Manager	Ms Wasneef has grown through the ranks to the position of SM: TVP (Mining). Having had to experience this growth to the SM role, Ms Rasing is equally appropriately placed to provide insightful inputs into the attempt to answer this research's research questions. She has to move around within her SM Role and cover many different functional outputs, such as TV: Coal, TVP: CAB, and now TVP: Mining.
4	Ms. Evander Forbes	PM (IT)	Manager	Ms Evander is the Project Manager in the IT department and has more than 25 years of working experience, which means that she has witnessed and/or experienced employee turnover and how it would have impacted the remaining employees in the various functions that she has played a role in in her previous working years.
5	Mr. Lucky Gnaosom	TCCE	Exec. Manager	Similar to Ms Wasneef & Mr Welbrum Roltel, Mr Gnaosom rose through the ranks to his current position of Executive Manager; has acted in various senior positions; and currently oversees a function that is beset with a high vacancy rates
6	Mr. Paratika Atutn	SC&D: Capacity	Manager	Mr Paratika is currently the Acting SM: Capacity, and oversees a function that was established approximately two years prior and is still not populated with the required personnel numbers. He currently operates a lean and skeletal function that only has people that carries out the very basics of his function's outputs.
7	Mr. Gift Protection	SC&D: Review	Snr. Manager	Mr Gift also rose through the ranks and transitioned from an operations role back in 2015 to the position of Manager: SD Review & Evaluation. He was appointed to the SM role in 2018 and he too, like many of the participants, is currently managing a team that is not complete owing to turnover and vacancies in his structure. His rise to Senior Manager level means that he too is a worthy participant in answering the research questions of this research
8	Ms. Outter Standings	TVP: Agri	Snr. Manager	Ms Outter has experienced turnover directly, similar to Ms Wasneef, where she has had to cover a number of different TVP roles, including Coal, Cement, and now Agriculture.
9	Ms. Persistence Inimald	SC&D: Design	Snr. Manager	Ms Persistence also rose through the ranks to her current role of SM: Design. She therefore has experienced the impact of turnover, thus making her, too, appropriately positioned to contribute to this research study.
10	Mr. Holly Gosebaetso	ITP: Planning	Manager	Mr Holly has held the role of Manager: Planning since 2007. Despite him not having "grown" from this role or level, he certainly has been exposed to the turnover phenomenon. It was this "non-upward-movement" in levels that made him a worthy participant in that his experience with the impact of turnover on the remaining employees would be different (similar to Mr Welbrum Ms Evander, and Mr Paratika among others) and therefore valuable.
11	Mr. Koloma Motjekara	OCC: Execution	Exec. Manager	Mr Koloma has also risen through the ranks. What makes his his role in the research even more appropriate is that he started out as a driver, and his rising through the ranks landed him the role of EM: Execution. He too, at the time of the research interview, was overseeing a function that was beset with many vacancies, although not so much of a high turnover rate as was the case with, for example, Mr. Roltel's function.
12	Mr. Handy Rengaw	SC&D: Design	Manager	Mr Handy has had the pleasure of taking Young Professionals in Training (YPTs - students that take up internship work with a company in partial fulfilment of their studies). He has seen many YPTs come and go, and over and above this he has struggled to fill vacancies in his structure. Additionally, Mr. Rengaw has himself been in the role of Manager: Design for well over 10 years. These two conditions make him an appropriate participant, too.
13	Ms. Advantaged Ama	OCC: Secretary	CAO (BUE)	Ms Advantaged, Ms Emolas, and Ms Lukin all share a common feature of being Chief Admin Officials. This level is attained either when a person gets appointed into the position when they come fresh from outside the company, and also when the person is promoted from at least two levels below the CAO level. Being Bargaining Unit Employees, these participants are covered by the bargaining council agreements between the organisation and the BUE group on matters such as work conditions, pay raise, retrenchments, et cetera. They therefore were adjudged to have different experiences and opinions about the impact that turnover might have on the remaining employees.
14	Ms. Emolas Spuiker	SC&D: Scheduler	CAO (BUE)	
15	Ms. Lukin Bhalalast	SC&D: Service Codes	CAO (BUE)	

### 5.3 Research Results for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 was established to determine, from the perspective of the research participants, what they perceived the positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees were and in what way(s) they regarded those consequences as positive. Relating to Research Question 1 were three interview questions that were specifically set up to establish participants' understanding of what the phenomenon of employee turnover entailed and how, in general broad terms, they perceived employee turnover could lead to remaining employees being positively impacted by an employee turnover event. To establish what the participants' understanding of employee turnover was, interview question 1 asked them to indicate examples of what the basic causes of the phenomenon were.

Moreover, Research Question 1, through interview questions 2 and 3, sought to gauge from the participants what their perceptive views were pertaining to the way(s) in which employee turnover would have a positive impact on the remaining employees.

This approach was necessary to ensure the rest of the interview was based on a common understanding of what employee turnover was and to ensure participants were appropriately positioned to provide answers to all the Research Questions. The relationship between Research Question 1 and its three interview questions is illustrated in Table 5.2 below, which was excerpted from Table 4.2.

**Table 5.2: Research Question 1 and the three interview questions associated with it**

#	Research Question	Semi-structured Interview questions
1.	In what way does employee turnover result into positive consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What, in your understanding are the fundamental causes of employee turnover in your organisation or department?</li> <li>2. In what way do you think employee turnover would have a positive impact on the remaining employees in an organisation or department?</li> <li>3. What other positive consequences on the remaining employees in an organisation would you associate with the employee turnover phenomenon?</li> </ol>

### 5.3.1 Fundamental causes of employee turnover

This first interview question sought to solicit from each research participant at the onset of the interview what they thought the causes of employee turnover were to establish a firm foundation on which the research could proceed given a common understanding between researcher and participant of what employee turnover was. They were asked to provide examples of their understanding of this phenomenon along with what they thought the reasons why staff turnover events come into being were.

Most of the participants had a good understanding of what employee turnover was as they were able to provide examples of its causes. Mr. Wiseman, Ms. Persistence, and Mr. Handy, though they had the idea what staff turnover was, they still asked for confirmation of what the researcher's definition was, such as when Mr. Wiseman asked, "*I'm not sure how you define turnover, is it defined in the sense that if somebody retires...is that turnover in your definition?*" (page 4, line 7, Mr. Wiseman Transcript, 11 August 2021). What was surprising with Mr. Wiseman's questions is that he had in fact given two relevant causes of staff turnover in interview question 1, yet when asked to provide views of what the potential positive consequences of turnover on remaining employees were in interview question 2, he came up with that clarifying question. Ms. Persistence and Mr. Handy similarly each had the correct idea of what was meant by employee turnover as they simply asked for the researcher to confirm if it meant "*oh, when they leave*" (page 1, line 5, Mr. Handy Transcript, 19 August 2021) according to Mr. Handy, for instance.

Table 5.3 below depicts seven of the participants' commonly held constructs of what the causes of employee turnover were.

**Table 5.3: Establishing participants' understanding of employee turnover through assessment of what causes the phenomenon**

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	They leave for personal reasons, including indebtedness and they want access to their pension funds to settle their debts, or because they want to pursue other interests	27
2	They leave because they are overlooked for promotion opportunities	17
2	Some leave because they are unhappy, for instance, with the firm's discriminatory remuneration or compensation practices	17
3	Others leave because they feel frustrated by what they want or prefer whilst the organisation is pushing for a contrasting need	16
4	They leave because they either do not possess the required skills for the job or they are not engaged	9
5	They leave because "no one cares"	6
6	They leave because they either get let go by the organisation for poor performance, or because they freely apply for a Voluntary Severance Package during the firm's downsizing intervention	3

The highest-ranked construct, with a frequency count of 27, relevant to the causes of staff turnover advanced by most participants is that employees leave for personal reasons, including indebtedness, where they would opt to quit so they can access their pension funds to settle their debts, or they would quit because they want to pursue other interests. Additionally, the constructs ranked second and third highest, with frequency ratings of 17 each, were mentioned by most participants as the causes of why employees sever their employment contracts, advancing reasons such as (1)(i) being overlooked for promotion opportunities, (1)(ii) feeling unhappy due to discriminatory remuneration and compensation practices, and (2) having contrasting expectations with those of the firm.

In analysing the top-ranked construct, most participants shared the view that some employees resign from their work because of indebtedness, with Mr. Parakita remarking that *“in most cases, it will be because people have financial problems”* (page 2, line 8, Mr. Paratika Transcript, 14 August 2021), whilst Ms. Advantaged observed that *“people are so indebted they feel that being out of work could be their only ticket for them to enjoy financial freedom so to speak”* (page 1, line 17, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021). Another reason advanced for why employees quit their jobs was that they could not strike a balance between their work and their life, in the process missing out on spending quality time with family, such as celebrating birthdays together or just simply being there for their teenage children. This was especially the case with employees who are mothers to teenagers, who also are studying at the same time. Ms. Persistence shared about a colleague of hers that is in Operations Management, a function that requires the practitioner to keep their finger on the pulse of the operations on a day-to-day basis, such that *“you don’t have time because you are working 24 by seven, you don’t have time for your family, and with people like me you would want to be there for your kids”* (page 3, line 10, Ms. Persistence Transcript, 17 August 2021). Supporting this notion of people leaving for personal reasons was Mr. Lucky with his suggestion that *“even when you still have a conducive workplace environment, people will still leave for the personal reasons...people [do] not [only] leave because the environment is not conducive”* (page 11, line 9, Mr. Lucky Transcript, 13 August 2021).

Another reason why employees quit their jobs was advanced by most participants as the needs of the individual and those of the organisation were in contrast. Such a situation leads to the individual getting frustrated because they cannot get the goals they have set for themselves, which are basically in contrast to those of the organisation. Examples ranged from employees that simply were not keen to adopt the organisation’s new processes or way of doing things like it was the case when Ms. Emolas remembered a colleague *“that used to work with us, when the new system came in, he did not want to work on [it], or he could not understand how to work on the thing and it frustrated him because he felt that it was unnecessary”* (page 1, line 25, Ms. Emolas Transcript, 23 August 2021). Ms. Emolas further remarked that the same colleague used public transport to commute to work and back home, and he was frustrated mostly by the organisation’s expectation that he undergo training of the new system and, as a result, he would leave late depending on the

training and “*it frustrated him in like ‘no, he can rather not’*”, and he later resigned as “*he could not take the pressure*” (page 1, line 35, Ms. Emolas Transcript, 23 August 2021).

A further point of concern regarding contrasting expectations between the employer and the employee that lead to employees resigning is the issue of discriminatory remuneration practices by the employer, as expressed by Mr. Lucky that “*we tend to be saying that we are one of the [better] paying organisations, but when it comes to parity, which even emanates from the years of apartheid, that is an area which we haven't really dealt with very well as an organisation, the [salary] bands are too wide when it comes to the same people doing the same job, having started at the same time*” (page 2, line 4, Mr. Lucky Transcript, 13 August 2021), with Mr. Handy highlighting the concern that “*and then also, this guy that gets in there he gets more salary than me*” (page 9, line 4, Mr. Handy Transcript, 19 August 2021), suggesting that a new appointee, who finds Mr. Handy in the department ends up being remunerated above him despite Mr. Handy being more knowledgeable and experienced than the new appointee.

Another finding from the analysis of the data, according to most participants, suggests that other employees resign because of their unhappiness at being overlooked for promotion or growth prospects. As a means of triangulating, the researcher engaged a female colleague who had decided to quit following her employer's drive to downsize by offering employees voluntary severance packages (VSPs). The female colleague, who had occupied the Junior Manager position for well over 10 years, decided to resign because she felt she was consistently overlooked when promotion opportunities in her department became available, yet much was expected from her. Instead, outsiders were always brought in to occupy higher-level vacant positions. On the other hand, the reason why the female colleague was overlooked for promotion prospects is that she did not have the minimum qualifications required for the position she felt she could perform in the job. No doubt she had the experience, however, the organisation had decreed that if employees do not possess the stipulated minimum qualifications required for advertised positions, they would not be considered for appointment in those positions. This narrative is testament to the finding that when overlooked for promotion or growth opportunities, most employees would resign and that when the

employee's needs contrast with those of the organisation, the employee would feel not valued and therefore opt to leave. As Mr. Handy put it, *"anyone wants to grow"* (page 5, line 31, Mr. Handy Transcript, 19 August 2021), and if they do not see any growth, they *"perhaps [will] feel that they are not growing in terms of acquiring the necessary experience within the company"* (page 1, line 10, Mr. Holly Transcript, 18 August 2021) according to Mr. Holly, and therefore *"they would be leaving the organisation or the department if they find that there is no growth"* (page 2, line 15, Ms. Persistence Transcript, 17 August 2021) according to Ms. Persistence.

Mr. Welbrum opined that *"the highest reason for turnover, specifically in my department is job dissatisfaction [where] the expectation of the employee is not met. And it could either be perceived expectation in terms of remuneration"* (page 1, line 16, Mr. Welbrum Transcript, 12 August 2021). Supporting Mr. Welbrum's testimony of some employees quitting because they feel their expectations are not being met by the firm was Mr. Lucky who suggested that *"they decide: 'you know what, I [would] rather go and seek greener pastures somewhere with the skills, knowledge, and experience that I have, because here I'm overlooked from the remuneration point of view"* (page 2, line 12, Mr. Lucky Transcript, 13 August 2021).

### 5.3.2 How turnover positively impacts remaining employees

Interview questions 2 and 3 were derived to extract from the participants what their perceptions were on the ways in which employee turnover would have positive consequences on the remaining employees. These interview questions were developed to focus specifically on the participants' observations during their past working lives about how remaining employees would have been, in general, positively impacted by staff turnover. Interview question 2 asked participants to highlight what the generic positive consequences would be on remaining employees. Interview question 3, on the other hand, asked the interviewees to provide further examples of what they perceived the positive consequences of employee turnover could be. This approach sought to ensure participants pondered deeply on their stance in interview question 2, thereby ascertaining that their responses in interview question 2 were in fact what they deeply believed to be the case.

This was necessary to ensure credibility in participants' views. Table 5.4 below depicts the eight constructs mostly referred to by the participants as being the various ways in which employees get positively impacted by employee turnover, with 'perceptions that employee turnover provides opportunities for growth, expansion of skills and knowledge' ranking higher with a frequency count of 45. The second and third-highest ranking constructs, with frequency counts of 27 and 20 respectively, commonly shared by the participants were that employee turnover had the potential to lead to (a) affording the remaining employees opportunities to showcase, prove, or test self, and (b) opportunities for promotion.

Ranked lowly at number seven with a frequency count of four, as depicted in Table 5.4, an important construct or finding from the analysed data, was the view that employee turnover does not result in positive consequences on the remaining employees, according to two participants. A further two participants had struggled to reconcile the idea that employee turnover could result in positively impacting the remaining employees. However, in their struggle to come to terms with this possibility, they ended up providing examples of potential positives that employee turnover may result in relation to the remaining employees. This dichotomous state that the two participants found themselves in was exemplified by Ms. Outter when she remarked "*Well, I'm not quite sure whether it would have a positive impact, but then maybe the other employees would then...if there's no replacement, then they would be able to showcase their talent and be recognized, you know, for having done extra work that the other person was doing*" (page 2, line 17, Ms. Outter Transcript, 16 August 2021).



**Table 5.4: Establishing participants’ understanding of the ways in which employee turnover positively impacts remaining employees**

Rank	Construct	Frequency
1	Perception that employee turnover provides opportunities for growth and expansion of skills	45
2	Opportunity to showcase, prove or test self	27
3	Promotion opportunities	20
4	Opportunity to be recognised	11
5	Sense of being employable outside	8
6	Emulate behavior & occupy leaver's position of power	7
6	Toxic situation turned positive	7
7	Does not always result in positive impact on those that remain	4
8	Opportunity to learn new things	3

As seen in Table 5.4 above, a significantly large number of the participants shared the view that employee turnover did in fact have the potential to impact remaining employees positively, with two respondents indicating that they did not think employee turnover had any positive impact on the remaining employees – the seventh ranked construct with a frequency count of four as shown in Table 5.4 above. One reason advanced by one of the two negating participants was the sentiment that employee turnover results in one of the associates of a closely knit team being lost to the team, and therefore resulting in the team being affected emotionally by the loss. This sentiment was put forth by Mr Gift’s remark that *“I don't think it's always a positive impact, because when one person leaves, he leaves a team. In a team, a good, ‘combined team’, you'd find that people grow together in such a way that when the other is not around, it is felt, which results in a negative kind of impact for the remaining employees”* (page 1, line 19, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021). The second reason that was advanced as to why employee turnover could not result into positive consequences on the remaining employees was the belief that the one that is leaving leaves behind their workload which needs to be spread among those that

remain. This, therefore, as perceived by the two negating participants, leads to the remaining employees being negatively impacted. What compounds this second reason was that when the leaving employee is an Employment Equity (EE) candidate, those that remain who may not be recognised as qualifying candidates under the EE regulations, become frustrated as they are expected to carry the extra workload while in the process they will not be considered for the growth or promotion prospects associated with the resulting vacancy. Mr Welbrum's view was that "*I wouldn't view turnover as having a positive impact, rather as a negative due to the increased workload which I then distribute, unfortunately, to people who are not designated as part of the EE targets*" (page 2, line 5, Mr. Welbrum Transcript, 12 August 2021), who then end "*up being despondent*" (page 2, line 3, Mr. Welbrum) because they know that they will not be considered for any growth, promotion or any other form of opportunities linked to the said EE-linked vacancy.

A view that was never held in mind by the researcher and which is a worthy input was advanced by at least three participants who expressed the notion that the remaining employees may in fact be positively impacted by turnover in a way that suggests they see themselves as being employable outside the firm or department owing to one of theirs being appointed in those outside areas. This means that when a colleague gets recruited by an outside or rival firm, or even by another department within the same organisation, their departure will signal to those that remain that if their colleague could be promoted into a higher-level position or better-paying job by a rival or outside firm, they will see themselves as being able to achieve what their colleague would have achieved. This finding was illustrated by Mr Holly, who suggested that "*if one leaves for a promotion outside of the company, it then shows that we are still employable, it could be in the private sector or could be in other companies*" (page 2, line 7, Mr. Holly Transcript, 18 August 2021). On the other hand, Mr Paratika suggested that when an employee leaves for another company, their departure would lead to the remaining ones thinking that "*there's a demand for people like us out there*" (page 3, line 19, Mr. Paratika Transcript, 14 August 2021), prompting the remaining ones to "*try to do their best to acquire experience within [the company] so that [they could] look for opportunities out there*" (page 3, line 11).

A few participants seemed to converge on the view that remaining employees can be positively impacted by an employee turnover event based on who it is that leaves.

Their view was that a toxic environment could in fact turn positive if a toxic or poor performing colleague were to leave, such as when Ms. Emolas revealed that *“if you were evil, we will be positive and happy that you’re gone”* (page 6, line 21, Ms. Emolas Transcript, 23 August 2021), supported by Ms. Evander’s assertion that *“It can create a more positive atmosphere if it was a negative person”* (page 3, line 1, Ms. Evander Transcript, 13 August 2021) that leaves. Mr. Handy added by revealing that he jumps for joy and exclaims *“hallelujah he is gone...thank you Jesus”* at realising that a General Manager (GM) that had led their department in the *“opposite direction”* had either resigned or had been let go by the employer (page 2, line 29, Mr. Handy Transcript, 19 August 2021). With the toxic colleague gone, the environment becomes non-toxic, leading to happiness enveloping the remaining employees *“because the negativity is now gone, if I can put it that way, and then there will be more positive energy between the employees to create a workable environment”* (page 2, line 14, Ms. Wasneef Transcript, 13 August 2021), according to Ms. Wasneef.

All but two participants in Mr. Gift and Mr. Welbrum held the view that indeed employee turnover was set to result in a positive impact on the remaining employees. Their reasoning for this observation included growth opportunities, either in the form of a promotion or in a form of the remaining employees adding to their skills by virtue of them acting in the vacant role or by expanding their area of work when they take over the leaver’s responsibilities. This was the case with Ms. Emolas who shared that *“when the guy left, they gave me his section which was a bit bigger, and so for me, it was a positive because now I got to know different sections, not just mine, and for him to leave was a bonus”* (page 3, line 9, Ms. Emolas Transcript, 23 August 2021). Ms. Wasneef, on the other hand, declared that *“the feeling that I had was, it was an opportunity to grow”* (page 3, line 26, Ms. Wasneef Transcript, 13 August 2021) because, according to Ms. Evander, *“you get exposed to a higher level of experience, especially [in our] hierarchical structure. The higher you go, your behaviour [has] to change when engaging with different levels of management... basically forces people to step up and do more than what they think they can do”* (page 4, line 5, Ms. Evander Transcript, 13 August 2021).

Other participants simply associated the opportunities availed by employee turnover with a chance to either prove themselves. Others saw themselves stepping into the

vacant employee-turnover-resultant-vacancy, be it at a higher level than theirs or at the same level as theirs but performing different functions to theirs, to learn the new skills associated with that function. This was appropriately attested to by Ms. Persistence who shared that when she was acting in her supervisor's position, which was at the Executive Manager level, she appreciated the acting as being *"more about you're exposed to a lot of things, as I'm saying I mean, you get to attend meetings with the top leadership and you get to understand the strategies that are being [discussed] at that level, where the organisation is heading to, and what challenges we should be focusing [on]"* (page 9, line 6, Ms. Persistence Transcript, 17 August 2021). On the other hand, those participants that had a profound attachment to their supervisor saw their supervisor's departure, interestingly, as a way for them to step into their positions and thereby emulate them as they occupied their vacant positions. Such was the case with Ms Advantaged who shared that *"for me to stay positive when a good person like Mr. Peete leaves the organisation, what would make me sane is to think about [their] work ethic, the good things that the person was doing...if I walk in their shoes, then I [will] make the organisation better"* (page 7, line 30, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021).

The one obvious construct that the participants associated with employee turnover's positive consequences was promotion opportunities and it ranked number three with a frequency count of 20, as depicted in Table 5.4 above. Of the 15 participants, seven referred directly to promotion as a growth opportunity that results from employee turnover, and four others touched on the concept but did not explicitly refer to it in the sense of it being an opportunity that comes up owing to employee turnover, and lastly, the remaining four made no mention of or reference to the term "promotion". Interestingly, of the seven participants that directly linked promotion opportunities as a direct positive consequence of employee turnover on remaining employees were Messrs Welbrum and Gift who had beforehand stated that they saw no positive outcomes that could be associated with employee turnover. Mr. Welbrum's view took a different turn when probed following interview question 3, where he stated *"so, in that [case], based on your question, yes, there is a positive due to the promotion opportunities that's been generated due to staff turnover"* (page 4, line 29, Mr. Welbrum Transcript, 12 August 2021), whilst Mr. Gift shared that *"when there's a vacancy, it opens up an opportunity for one to grow from my position currently to the next position, so it develops some excitement, obviously, as to 'I can take a chance*

*here, and I may get promoted in a way”* (page 4, line 1, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021).

### 5.3.3 Summary of Research Question 1 findings

In summary, although three of the 15 participants sought to confirm their definition of employee turnover, their definition was consistent with that of the researcher, resulting in the view that all 15 participants knew what employee turnover entailed – an important step that ensured the gathering of data was based on a common understanding between the researcher and respondents of what employee turnover was. Most of the participants seemed to converge on the common theme that employee turnover could positively impact remaining employees. Yet two from the 15 felt employee turnover could not result in the remaining employees being positively impacted.

Section 5.4 which follows next explores the ways in which employee turnover could potentially lead to remaining employees being positively impacted. To explore this, the personal experiences of the participants were analysed, and the results are presented in the next section.

## 5.4 Research Results for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 sought to explore how the remaining employees react upon learning that an opening had been created when a fellow employee leaves the organisation. To establish this, interview questions 4 and 5 were set up to guide this exploration. Table 5.5 below, as excerpted from Table 4.2 in Chapter 4, depicts the mapping of Research Question 2 to interview questions 4(a) through 4(d), and interview question 5.

**Table 5.5: Research Question 2 and its two mapped interview questions**

#	Research Question	Semi-structured Interview questions
2.	How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?	<p>4. Briefly take me through the time when there was a vacancy one level higher than yours in your department:</p> <p>a) How would you describe the feelings and thoughts you developed owing to the vacancy?</p> <p>b) What would you say invoked those feelings and thoughts in you?</p> <p>c) How did you respond to the vacancy in question?</p> <p>d) What motivated you to respond in that way?</p> <p>5. If you were to be faced with a similar vacancy situation in the future, how would you react to it? (why would you react in that way?)</p>

5.4.1 How participants are personally impacted by employee turnover

Interview question 4 was set up to dig deep into how the participants had in the past reacted to a vacancy situation that would have come about owing to a colleague quitting their job. The fundamental question this interview question sought to provide answers to was how the participants felt upon knowing of the turnover event which would have resulted in a vacancy one level higher than theirs. In addition, interview question 4(b) probed what would have led to the participants feeling in the manner they felt as described by their response in interview question 4(a), followed by interview question 4(c) which explored how they responded to the vacancy situation in interview question 4(a), and lastly interview question 4(d) explored why they responded in the way they did in accordance with interview question 4(c). Interview question 5 sought to establish how the participants would react in a future time, and why they would react in that way if they were to be faced with a similar vacancy situation as described in interview questions 4(a) through 4(d).

The setting up of these interview questions in this manner was to extract the participants' deeply held beliefs about how they (a) personally were in the past affected by a vacancy resulting out of employee turnover, and (b) how they would

personally conduct themselves in a future time when a vacancy arises amid an employee turnover event and why they would conduct themselves in that way. Table 5.6 below depicts the number of times the key and relevant constructs pertinent to answering Research Question 2 were offered by the participants in their responses to interview questions 4(a) through 4(d), and interview question five.

**Table 5.6: How they feel and react when vacancies arise**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1	Deliberately set out to gain skills required for the job and increase effort levels to land the job	23
2	Sees stepping into vacant position as an opportunity to contribute positively and make a difference	20
3	I develop feelings of excitement when there's a vacancy	17
4	Check if I meet minimum job requirements	14
4	Will apply or did apply for vacant position	14
5	Committed to company goals	13
6	Competent and-or Capable of doing the job	12
7	Feelings of a loss and dejection	11
7	Somewhat mixed feelings	11
8	May apply under certain circumstances	8
9	Growth mind-set	7
10	No feelings or not excited	6
11	Frustration	2
11	Will not apply	2

As already established and illustrated in Table 5.4 (section 5.3.2), most participants opined that employee turnover does result in remaining employees being positively impacted, with only two participants indicating that in fact, it results in a negative impact on the remaining employees.

When asked to share from their past experiences where they would have encountered a vacancy situation that happened to be at a level higher than their respective level, nine of the 15 participants reported they felt excited or great owing to the vacancy as it presented them with growth opportunities in the form of a promotion or in the form of being exposed to the higher-level position and interacting with top leadership thus sharpening up their skills. Many saw themselves being appointed in the higher-level vacant position and thereby growing. In illustrating this finding, Mr. Lucky shared that when *“my manager resigned, I felt excited, I felt motivated, I looked forward to really apply for that position because I had the confidence that I have been doing all these things together [with my supervisor]. And I know where the gaps are, and I know what solutions are required or, actions to make this department much better...the feeling was great”* (page 7, line 32, Mr. Lucky Transcript, 13 August 2021). The opportunities of growth associated with a vacancy that came about owing to an employee turnover event were so enticing that some participants went so far as to say they felt not only excited but ‘hyped-up and energised’, as revealed by Ms. Outter’s lived experience that *“you get all excited and hyped up”* (page 5, line 9, Ms. Outter Transcript, 16 August 2021), with Ms. Advantaged sharing that *“I feel energized. I feel excited”* (page 5, line 22, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021) at being aware of a higher-level vacancy which normally signals growth opportunities, as already established in section 5.3 where the results of Research Question 1 are presented.

Once energised, hyped-up, and excited, individuals tend to see themselves occupying the vacant position to contribute positively and make a difference once they realise the vacant position exists and they meet the minimum requirements of that job as illustrated in Table 5.6 above – the second highest-ranked construct with a frequency count of 20. Secondly, individuals set out to deliberately acquire the skills required to function effectively in the said position after ascertaining they would be competing for the vacant position – the top-ranked construct with a frequency count of 23 as illustrated in Table 5.6 above. This was attested to by Mr. Gift, who, when



he gets to know of a vacancy, asserted that to him *"It's an exciting feeling"* (page 4, line 6, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021) since *"Yes, I'm competent. Yes. I've been trained. Yes, I can do the job. I can do the job without supervision"* (page 4, line 11, Mr. Handy Transcript, 18 August 2021) as revealed by Mr. Handy. Several participants indicated that following their state of excitement owing to the vacancy, they would check if they qualified for the position, then apply for the position if they found they qualified. Then, they would set out to go *"deeper in understanding and reading what is going on into that department"* (page 6, line 15, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021) according to Mr. Gift, whilst Mr. Paratika opts to approach the opportunity by *"learn[ing] most of the stuff this person [the leaver] was doing. Because as the job continues even if the person has left, some of the things that that person was doing they'll still be required, so I started positioning myself along those lines"* (page 9, line 11, Mr. Paratika Transcript, 14 August 2021).

In keeping with the excited, hyped-up, and energised mantra, several participants shared that they see stepping into the vacant position more as a way of contributing positively to the company's course and making a difference. Of the 15 participants, nine shared that they see themselves stepping into a vacant position as a way for them to contribute positively towards the company's course and to make a difference. This is seen in the second-highest construct as depicted in Table 5.6. An example of this came from Mr. Gift, who indicated that to him being appointed into the vacant position is not only just a promotion for him but rather, as he goes *"into that position, my aim is to not just get the position but to succeed and make a difference"* (page 4, line 30, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021). Ms. Advantaged, on the other hand, indicated that for her to be appointed in the vacant position is also not just about a promotion, she sees it as *"an opportunity to play in a bigger space than where you are, and also contribute better than what you are currently on. It's not only about my personal fulfilment, but you feel that, you know, I contribute to the business in a meaningful manner"* (page 6, line 7, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021).

Although most participants felt hyped-up and energised upon realising an employee turnover event had resulted in there being an opening that offered growth opportunities, analysis reveals that several others were not impacted positively by the turnover event. Some, due to their personal attachment to the one that has left, end up feeling that they have lost in the process since *"one is leaving, it becomes a*

*serious, or a negative kind of impact for the remaining employee[s] when a team member leaves” because even when it is only “one team member [that] leaves, the only setback or negative part is one of ours has left us” (page 1, line 22, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021) according to Mr Gift. The feeling of a loss when an employee leaves was further exemplified and supported by Mr Paratika in that “the loss becomes bit of an emotional issue for an individual, because there are things that you appreciated about the individual himself” (page 8, line 4, Mr. Paratika Transcript, 14 August 2021).*

Importantly, associated with the top ranked construct were several of the participants that touched on the fact that upon realising that a vacancy situation has arisen, they undertake to acquire the necessary skills, information, or expertise required to perform in the role should they be appointed. Evidence of this can be seen in Mr Holly’s assertion, when reacting to a vacancy situation, that “*it gives you all level of positivity towards reaching that position, and you see yourself being in that position, and somehow it makes you rethink the way you actually doing things and you would want to elevate a bit to doing things differently to match perhaps your next level”* (page 4, line 15, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021). Mr Paratika on the other hand, in supporting Mr Holly’s stated position, indicated that he would “*try and make sure that I learn as much as I can of that position to increase my chances of getting that post once advertised”* (page 10, line 3, Mr. Paratika Transcript, 16 August 2021).

#### 5.4.2 How future turnover events will impact remaining employees

When asked how they would react in a future state when confronted by an employee turnover event, Mr Koloma firmly stated that he would still not feel excited at the prospect of there being an opportunity to grow. His reasoning behind this stance was more due to the prevailing dynamics in the organisation, “*I don't think I will be putting my hand up or raising my hand to say I want to go for the next level. A year and a half ago, I would have said I'd be excited to apply for the next level of growth in the corporate ladder”* (page 1, line 35, Mr. Koloma Transcript, 18 August 2021) because the environment was different back then. Secondly, Ms Persistence felt that those other employees that keep being overlooked in favour of outsiders for growth opportunities would not feel excited by any prospect of a growth whenever there

would be an opening created by an employee turnover event in the future, because “*they just know that even if I'm going to try to apply [for] that position, [management] always bring[s] different people*” (page 14, line 5, Ms. Persistence Transcript, 17 August 2021).

In contrast to Mr Koloma who indicated he saw no chance of him being energised by growth opportunities that result from an employee turnover event given the “*organisational dynamics currently*” that will effectively cause him not to raise his hand and “*say I want to go for the next level*” (page 4, line 4, Mr. Koloma Transcript, 18 August 2021), most participants, on the other hand, felt they would still feel energised and hyped-up by an opening that results from an employee turnover event, despite the prevailing organisational dynamics. In responding to interview question 5, which asked how they would react in the future when faced with a similar vacancy situation covered by interview question 4, Mr Gift responded by saying that “*the first thing when I see a vacant position, I see an opportunity for me to apply for growth*” (page 5, line 6, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021). Analysis indicates that most other participants would still be positively impacted by an employee turnover event in the future, despite the organisational dynamics prevalent at the time. The vacancy that results from a turnover event is seen as enticing to those that remain since it brings them growth opportunities, even in a future period. This finding is supported, for example, by Ms. Advantaged who stated that “*I will definitely respond by applying for it*” (page 6, line 12, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021). Supporting Ms. Advantaged’s standpoint was Ms. Outter who indicated she would still be positively impacted in the future and would still apply for the vacant position “*even if there was politics, I would still apply. I'm persistent like that*” (page 8, line 3, Ms. Outter Transcript, 16 August 2021).

In line with the sixth-ranked construct with a frequency count of 12, namely ‘competent and-or capable of doing the job’ (Table 5.6), six participants indicated they would apply for a future vacancy owing to the fact they felt ready for the higher-level or that they now know how it should be done, or simply that they have what it takes to function in the position. This finding is exemplified by Mr. Holly who shared that “*if it's a position that you really look at, and you see that in terms of what you have, from the educational point of view, and also from an experience point of view, you really match the position, that in itself gives you the oomph to actually go look*

*forward and apply for the position*” (page 4, line 26, Mr. Holly Transcript, 18 August 2021). In support of Mr. Holly’s submission, Mr. Wiseman put things in a different perspective as he drew from his belief that he has never shied away from complexity, and that his ambition and sense of belief that he was “*capable has always been a call to me to the person that I’m able to understand how value is created. I’m able to understand complex problems. So yeah, I’ve never shied away from the opportunity of more responsibility based on some of those core beliefs*” (page 8, line 22, Mr. Wiseman Transcript, 11 August 2021). A further finding worthy of highlighting was one by Ms. Emolas, who earlier had indicated she could not bring herself to apply for the vacant position that was created when her supervisor went on retirement. Her reasoning for why she could not bring herself to apply for the vacancy was that before he left, the supervisor did most of the work for the team. To her, this was unhealthy and therefore it made her feel uncomfortable about stepping into a managerial position. When asked about how she would engage with a future higher-level vacancy position, Ms. Emolas indicated that she would apply as she “*will be ‘more wiser’, because now I’m familiar with how people think, and I’m learning now from the new younger managers now*” (page 4, line 12, Ms. Emolas Transcript, 23 August 2021) how a manager should manage their department and lead their subordinates.

#### 5.4.3 Summary of Research Question 2 findings

In summary, most participants shared the common view that employee turnover does have the potential to impact the remaining employees positively. Many participants seemed to suggest that future turnover events would positively impact them and thus respond positively to the turnover event. A handful of participants, on the other hand, felt that the phenomenon may suggestively not have any positive consequences on the remaining employees, neither currently nor in the future. Their reasons were largely linked to certain conditions, such as when the increased workload needs to be spread among non-EE candidates who know they will never be afforded the opportunity to occupy an EE position. Several others, in believing that employee turnover does lead to positive consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees, connected their reasoning to several conditions that must prevail, such as a non-toxic environment, for remaining employees to be positively impacted by a staff turnover event. Section 5.5 next explores the conditions under which employees

may likely have positive consequences from the perspective of remaining employees.

### 5.5 Research Results for Research Question 3

The aim of Research Question 3 was to identify conditions that must be in place to enable employee turnover to have a positive impact on the remaining employees. To this end, two open-ended research interview questions were derived. The two interview questions were set up as opposites to (a) establish the conditions that must be in place for employee turnover to have positive consequences on the remaining employees, and (b) identify the reasons why employee turnover would not have a positive impact on the remaining employees. Table 5.7 below, as excerpted from Table 4.2 in Chapter 4, depicts the mapping of Research Question 3 to interview questions 6 and 7.

**Table 5.7: Research Question 3 and the two interview questions associated with it**

#	Research Question	Semi-structured Interview questions
3.	<b>What are the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees?</b>	6. What conditions will need to be in place for employee turnover to have a positive consequence on the remaining employees? 7. What do you consider to be the reasons for why remaining employees will not be positively impacted by employee turnover?

#### 5.5.1 Conditions to enable employee turnover's positive consequences

The aim of interview question 6 was to draw from participants their deeply held views of the conditions that should be in place for employee turnover to have positive consequences on the remaining employees. Table 5.8 below depicts the seven most shared understandings among the participants of what these conditions might be.

**Table 5.8: Conditions that must prevail for employee turnover to impact remaining employees positively**

<b>RANK</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1</b>	Training and capacity building interventions	23
<b>2</b>	Conducive and caring environment with the right culture	21
<b>3</b>	A harmonious and enabling workplace	13
<b>4</b>	An empowering workplace for employees	12
<b>5</b>	Fairness, integrity and transparency in the application of policy and rules	7
<b>6</b>	Recognise & reward good performance	4

In analysing the top four ranked constructs, the three constructs ranked second, third, and fourth all have to do with workplace conditions or environment, and they were mentioned no less than 46 times between them by the participants in answering Research Question 3.

Of the three ‘workplace’ constructs, ‘a conducive and empowering environment with the right culture’ ranked the highest with a frequency count of 21. Before taking the bold step of putting themselves out there and applying for a vacant position, several participants mentioned that they would first assess the state in which the organisation finds itself, suggesting that only when the conditions are conducive will they proceed and compete for the said vacant position. Such was the case with Mr. Gift who shared that when confronted with a vacancy – which he acknowledged earlier that it would invoke that feeling of excitement because to him it would signal growth opportunities – he would “*go back and sit and say, let me then analyse the current situation, the current noise within the organisation itself. If it is the right [move] for me to go for it, or rather stay where I am*” (page 7, line 10, Mr. Gift Transcript, 16 August 2021). Mr. Koloma supported Mr. Gift’s chosen way of considering first what the conditions prevailing in the organisation were before proceeding to respond positively to the

stimulus brought up by an employee turnover event. According to Mr. Koloma, “*with organisational dynamics currently, where I am, I don't think I will be putting my hand up or raising my hand to say I want to go for the next level. Mainly because of the current culture, leadership style, and the instability and uncertainties that are in the organisation*” (page 4, line 5, Mr. Koloma Transcript, 18 August 2021).

The second-ranked construct from the three ‘workplace’ related constructs was ‘a harmonious and enabling environment’ with a frequency count of 13. What came out from the data is that the conditions must enable an environment characterised by trust among employees and between employees and their managers. Furthermore, what came out as another commonly held view was the element of respect among the employees themselves. In addition, the analysed data suggested that when employees, according to Ms. Advantaged, “*work together, they feed off one another*” (page 7, line 28, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021), they are empowered to discuss among themselves who the next person should be to step up and stretch themselves. This was the case with Ms. Persistence who shared that when the new GM needed one of the two Senior Managers to act in the vacant SC&D Executive Manager position, between herself and her colleague “*just had to decide amongst ourselves. It's not that someone came in, pin-pointed and [said]: ‘I want you and you’, you know. We just had a conversation between ourselves as senior managers and I said, ‘Okay, let me take this opportunity to learn because I've never acted’*” (page 17, line 10, Ms. Persistence Transcript, 17 August 2021).

The last of the three ‘workplace’ constructs most shared by participants was that of ‘an empowering workplace for employees’ and had a frequency count of 12. The main message behind this construct was, for instance, the importance of being empowered to listen to one another and engage freely with peers and management alike “*without fearing that my honest opinions or without fearing that whatever I want to share with someone senior will give me career problems in the future*” (page 9, line 16, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021) according to Ms. Advantaged. Another critical input was the importance of enabling the environment for flexibility and learning by allowing employees to make decisions, because “*if you restrict people, you know, in taking decisions, you make them not to grow, they are unable to grow because they will forever be thinking ‘making a mistake...I'm doomed’*” (page 7, line 1, Mr. Holly Transcript, 18 August 2021) according to Mr. Holly, who is

supported by Mr. Koloma who shared that people “*are looking for flexibility, they’re looking for them being allowed to make decisions, with the doing away with bureaucracy and all that*” (page 4, line 22, Mr. Koloma Transcript, 18 August 2021).

Regarding the top-ranked construct with a frequency count of 23, namely ‘training and capacity building interventions’, the analysis revealed a commonly shared opinion by nine of the 15 participants, which is whether there is training, mentoring, coaching, and development of employees in place, because, according to Mr Welbrum, “*before you even get to opportunities for promotion, what needs to be an enabler for that is talent management, training, and development opportunities*” (page 8, line 21, Mr. Welbrum Transcript, 12 August 2021). This finding suggests that training interventions must be focused on training employees for the next level, and not so much for their current level. As can be seen in Mr. Welbrum’s assertion, for employees to be effective in their new higher-level role, they need to be trained appropriately. This notion was shared and supported by Mr. Paratika, who highlighted that the “*one that holds the position, will have one or two people that he or she holds by [the] hand on the things that he or she does*” (page 10, line 10, Mr. Paratika Transcript, 14 August 2021), including deliberate actions by management to develop “*clear succession plans, and policies to allow even job rotation and enlargements, because [in] that [way] you create a body of knowledge and you allow your people to develop themselves*” (page 4, line 25, Mr. Koloma Transcript, 18 August 2021) according to Mr. Koloma.

#### 5.5.2 Reasons why employee turnover will not impact employees positively

Interview question 7 sought to establish the reasons perceived by participants could be responsible for why employee turnover could potentially not have positive consequences on remaining employees. The results associated with the reasons advanced by the participants are illustrated in Table 5.9 below.



**Table 5.9: Reasons why employee turnover may not impact remaining employees positively**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1</b>	Toxic Management or Leadership & Environment	27
<b>2</b>	Delays in filling vacancies coupled to increased workload	21
<b>3</b>	Uncertain future, no capacity building interventions & growth opportunities given to outsiders	18
<b>4</b>	Remuneration and compensation disparities	17
<b>5</b>	Good performance not recognised and rewarded	9
<b>6</b>	Unfair application of policy	8
<b>7</b>	No Management Support	1

The top-ranked reason why employee turnover was said to not result in positively impacting the remaining employees was advanced by 13 of the 15 participants as the prevalence of toxic management or leadership, and environment. This construct was referred to a total of 27 times among the 13 participants that felt that it is an important construct that may be responsible for remaining employees not to be impacted positively when an employee turnover event manifest. The analysis of the top-ranked construct indicated that toxic environments characterised by, among other things, situations where managers, according to Ms. Lukin, are “*threatening employees*” (page 6, line 21, Ms. Lukin Transcript, 27 August 2021), situations where employees feel they are managed “*by fear, and if there is fear or animosity within the organisation, it makes people to be afraid to take bigger roles*” (page 6, line 2, Mr. Koloma Transcript, 18 August 2021) according to Mr. Koloma, contribute as reasons why remaining employees may not be positively impacted by an employee turnover event. Supporting Mr. Koloma’s view is Ms. Wasneef who suggested that “*we have this continuous way of dealing with issues with no respect, no dignity, no integrity, [and] no trust, that would impact on the positive of employee turnover*” (page 6, line 4, Ms. Wasneef Transcript, 13 August 2021). Toxic environments bring with them a

lot of uncertainty and develop fear among employees, to the point that employees are fearful of taking on bigger roles, or even adding to their current responsibilities and in the process “*makes people that are remaining behind to be negative because they never get to be themselves*”, leading to them being “*always scared to come out of their cocoons and give more*” (page 6, line 5, Mr. Koloma Transcript, 18 August 2021) according to Mr. Koloma.

The second-ranked construct with a frequency count of 21, when analysed, revealed that in situations where management delays the filling of vacancies, the remaining employees may not be positively impacted when an employee turnover event takes place owing to the increase in the workload they would be expected to carry. As established in Section 5.3.2, when someone leaves, their workload gets shared among the stayers, who in turn become despondent when they are made to carry the extra workload for long as management fails to fill the said vacancy expeditiously. This finding was attested to by Ms. Persistence who advanced the view that “*as much as I've mentioned that others would see this as an opportunity to be recognised to work extra hard, but it's bound to also lead people to be burnt out, you know, if those positions are not filled speedily*” (page 5, line 2, Ms. Persistence Transcript, 17 August 2021).

Another top-ranked reason that was commonly shared by participants was the notion of uncertainty, coupled with growth opportunities being given to ‘outsiders’. This situation leads to those that remain not being positively impacted by employee turnover as they are not certain what will materialise in the future, according to the data. Ms. Advantaged shared an example of where her employer is downsizing and offering employees VSPs. Her concern about the notion of uncertainty was that “*you wonder ‘if okay, what if in the near future, this may come up again? How will it impact on me?’*” (page 8, line 9, Ms. Advantaged Transcript, 20 August 2021), whilst Ms Otter suggested “*...the issue of uncertainty, ‘today Eric is gone, tomorrow it might be me...so the uncertainty mostly will not put people to be very positive about turnover’*” (page 11, line 10, Ms. Otter Transcript, 16 August 2021) in supporting Ms Advantaged’s shared view.

### 5.5.3 Summary of Research Question 3 findings

In summary, the conditions associated with employees being positively impacted by an employee turnover event included workplaces that are conducive and enabling of employees to work together and feed off one another, and environments that are filled with a state of harmony, where trust and respect prevail. Additionally, the workplace environment must empower employees to contribute ideas and speak freely without feeling they would be victimised in any way or form. Secondly, the reasons that were advanced as critical why employee turnover would not result in the remaining employees being positively impacted included all the opposites of the conditions that must be in place if employee turnover was to impact remaining employees positively. These included examples such as uncertainty in the organisation's operating environment and dealings with employees, and management by fear, leading to employees feeling cocooned and not wanting to give of their best.

## 5.6 Conclusion

The results obtained through the seven interview questions of this study suggest that employee turnover may potentially result in positively impacting remaining employees. Though this was a commonly held opinion by the majority of the participants, two participants offered a contrasting view, suggesting that employee turnover in fact results in a negative consequence in relation to the remaining employees, which they associated with feelings of a loss (of a companion) and the extra workload that results from the turnover event. Even as employee turnover was advanced to can impact remaining employees positively, most participants converged in the thinking that this can be the case under conditions that are void of toxicity, which are empowering and enabling, environments where employees feel a certain level of psychological safety and where there are ample training and development opportunities, and where growth opportunities are not only reserved for outsiders. Chapter 6 discusses in detail, with reference to the literature review and theory presented and discussed in Chapter 2, the research results and findings from Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The objective of this qualitative research was to explore the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on the remaining employees. The three Research Questions that this study sought to address were:

- In what way does employee turnover result into positive benefits from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation?
- How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?
- What are the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees?

In Chapter 5, the findings of this study were presented. In this chapter, the findings will be discussed in accordance with the Research Questions, and the literature review and theoretical framework presented and discussed in Chapter 2. The key findings from this study were that most of the research participants converged on the common view that employee turnover has the potential to impact the remaining employees positively. A further key finding from this study was that certain conditions need to prevail for employee turnover to impact the remaining employees positively, examples included harmonious work environments that were empowering to employees. Sections 6.2 through 6.4 discuss the findings in relation to theory, and it is in these sections that it will be shown how theory supports the findings of this study.

### **6.2 Discussion of Results for Research Question 1**

**Research Question 1:** “In what way does employee turnover result in positive benefits from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation?”

The purpose of Research Question 1 was to explore the understanding of the concept of employee turnover among the sampled participants, as well as to establish participants' perceptions on how employee turnover may result in positive consequences with reference to the remaining employees, and if so, in what way(s). Linked to Research Question 1 were three interview questions. Interview question 1 sought to gauge participants' understanding of what the phenomenon of employee turnover entailed. This was necessary to ensure the sampled participants' responses were appropriate and relevant to the study's Research Questions. The second and third interview questions probed in a more general manner what the participants thought would be examples of how employee turnover may positively impact the remaining employees.

#### 6.2.1 Establish participants' knowledge of the employee turnover phenomenon

The data was analysed by aggregating and ranking the frequency counts of the constructs necessary to answer Research Question 1. Table 5.3 on page 65, Section 5.3.1, presents the seven constructs most referred to by participants in answering interview question 1, which sought to establish what the participants thought were the causes of employee turnover. Interview question 1 sought to establish whether the participants knew or whether they understood what the phenomenon of employee turnover entailed, the importance of which was necessary as the data to be collected needed to be in line with the research topic and not any other understanding by the participants.

Based on the data presented in Table 5.3 in Chapter 5, it can be deduced that the participants had a good understanding of what the phenomenon of employee turnover entailed. Supporting this claim that participants had a good understanding of the concept of turnover is the third-ranked construct, 'others leave because they feel frustrated by what they want or prefer whilst the organisation is pushing for a contrasting need', which is consistent with Yang et al.'s (2012) findings that some employees quit their jobs owing to them not agreeing to company-related decisions, which are at times in contrast to their wishes. When this happens, and drawing from the theoretical framework, employees can become dissatisfied with their jobs, and dissatisfied employees develop intentions to quit their jobs (Huffman et al., 2013).

This is illustrated by the employee who quit his job because “*he could not take the pressure*” that was brought about by changes in the organisation’s processes which required all employees to learn the new system that had been deployed, which the employee could not figure out how it operated, and he could not cope with the demands of training that led to him arriving home late, and ultimately deciding to quit. This suggests that there was a case of contrasting demands between employee and employer, as a result, the employee felt it was time he left, an act which is supported by the job satisfaction theory. The finding is therefore supported by theory in that it can be argued that this employee’s fit with the job was no longer compatible, as a result, he decided to quit (Arokiasamy, 2013; Olubiyi et al., 2019). This concludes that the participants had a firm understanding of the concept of employee turnover.

The highest-ranked understanding of employee turnover construct from Table 5.3 was ‘they leave for personal reasons, including indebtedness and they want access to their pension funds to settle their debts, or because they want to pursue other interests’, with a frequency count of 27. Strangely, the reviewed literature (Chapter 2) had no support for this finding. The strange thing is that the participants could suggest a person with a steady source of income would want to quit their job, gain access to their pension money, and pay off their debt. What does not add up with this logic is what then happens after paying off their debt, given they will no longer have a steady source of income? On the other hand, though, it can also be argued that for them, their expectation was to settle their debts, they would therefore act in a manner consistent with the expectancy theory to achieve their goal by working harder at attaining it (Chiang & Jang, 2008). Additionally, the theoretical framework can be drawn on as a support for this finding given the quitter’s perceived expectation that if he pushes hard for his resignation, he will gain access to his funds and therefore be rewarded with a debt-free life after settling his debts (Chiang & Jang, 2008; Nyberg, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2018). Nonetheless, this finding might well need further research to establish the motivation behind an individual deciding to quit and clean out their pension funds in the attempt to settle their debts, whilst at the same time they will be without a job or any form of income.

Some of the results associated with the highest-ranked construct (Table 5.3, Section 5.3.1) included the view that some employees leave for personal reasons, including when they feel their work is keeping them away from spending quality time with their

family. Based on the theoretical framework, it is evident that this finding is consistent with the job satisfaction theory where, according to Huffman et al. (2013), employees will readily quit when there is no compatibility between their job and their important life desires, such as the important factor of family life, which influences the extent to which an employee becomes either satisfied or dissatisfied with their job, and therefore readily able to quit in the event they are dissatisfied. Bridger and colleagues (2013) support Huffman et al.'s (2013) argument that employees leave their jobs owing to their reduced job satisfaction. It can therefore be concluded that the finding is consistent with and supported by theory, and therefore the participants were knowing of the concept of employee turnover.

The second and third constructs were tied with a frequency count of 17 each, and both were ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> highest as a result. The 'first' second-highest ranked construct with a frequency count of 17 (Table 5.3, Section 5.3.1), which was 'they leave because they are overlooked for promotion opportunities', is consistent with Chaltiki and Sigala's (2010) advocacy that some employees quit owing to "limited opportunities for growth" (p. 337). When employees experience no growth opportunities, the result is they would leave the organisation or the department, if they find that there is no growth. Literature supports this finding, given Chaltiki and Sigala's (2010) advocacy that employees quit owing to limited growth opportunities. Therefore, it can be concluded, based on this finding and its support from a literature point of view, that participants had a good understanding of the concept of employee turnover.

Lastly, the 'second' second-highest ranked construct, also with a frequency count of 17, was 'some leave because they are unhappy, for instance, with the firm's discriminatory remuneration or compensation practices' as presented on Table 5.3, Section 5.3.1 in Chapter 5. The finding associated with this construct was based on a participant that referred to his employer as claiming to be an equal opportunity and parity remunerator meanwhile that was not the case, according to the participant. The finding was that the organisation was instead compensating its employees along old apartheid rules where people doing the same job and at the same level were on different salary bands and were remunerated differently. Sands-Dawling (2020) posits that employees who perceived being rewarded with what they held appropriate in relation to their effort were found to be more motivated and hence performed on a

higher level resulting in turnover intention rates decreasing, which certainly was not the case with this participant's perceptions. Additionally, Arokiasamy's (2013), Grotto et al.'s (2017), and Yang et al.'s (2012) findings were that some employees leave their jobs owing to pay or compensation-related disputes. This finding and the support it has from the literature suggests that the sampled participants did have a good understanding of what employee turnover entailed.

The establishment of whether the sampled participants understood the employee turnover phenomenon was a crucial starting point for the collection of data for this research. This establishment is important in that should they not have known what this phenomenon was about, they would not have been able to contribute meaningfully in the attempt to answer the study's Research Questions.

#### 6.2.2 How turnover positively impacts remaining employees

Interview questions 2 and 3 were concerned with establishing, in general terms, what the impact of employee turnover was on remaining employees as perceived by the participants, where interview question 1 asked what (a) the different ways in which the phenomenon impacted remaining employees positively were, with interview question 2 asking (b) for further examples of how the participants perceived employee turnover impacted the remaining employees, over and above the examples given in interview question 2.

In responding to the interview questions, most of the participants indicated that they agreed with the notion of employee turnover having the potential to impact remaining employees positively. Of the 15 participants, two were particularly not convinced that employee turnover could potentially result in the remaining employees being positively impacted. Another participant from the 15 was not too certain that remaining employees could be positively impacted by employee turnover. However, she later made the connection that this was a real possibility as she gave fitting examples in this regard.

After the analysis of the data, its aggregation returned a ranking with a frequency count of 45 for the top-ranked construct 'perception that employee turnover provides



opportunities for growth and expansion of skills'. This result, along with seven other constructs, is depicted in Table 5.4, Section 5.3.2 of Chapter 5. The top three ranking constructs had frequency counts of 45, 27, and 20 respectively.

One of the interesting findings associated with the highest-ranking construct, namely the 'perception that employee turnover provides opportunities for growth and expansion of skills', was the eye-opening suggestion that if one of their colleagues leaves for a promotion outside the company, those that remain take the move as a signal that they too are employable out there given they possess similar characteristic skillsets as the one that has left. A further finding was that the remaining employees would be prompted to do their best to acquire experience so that they could look for opportunities in the area where their colleague had been hired. Supporting this interesting finding is Chiang and Jang's (2008) observation that remaining employees who develop the perception that they too are employable 'out there' will be prompted to work harder and acquire the skills necessary to get them employed out there too. Drawing from the theoretical framework, this finding can additionally be shown to be supported by theory in that the remaining employees will realise that if one of theirs has been appointed into an attractive position in another company, they will develop the expectation that they too can be employable as well and will therefore elevate their effort levels so they can also attempt to be appointed by the same organisation or any other in the industry (Robbins & Judge, 2018).

The analysed data further reveal that employee turnover does indeed have the potential to impact remaining employees positively when the one who leaves was toxic, a bully, or a poor performer (Table 5.4, Section 5.3.2). When the one who leaves was a negative person, the negativity disappears with them, therefore leaving behind a group that will build more positive energy between them to create a workable environment. Wynen et al. (2019) opined a possible potential positive consequence to be the reinforcement of the remaining employees' motivation and performance when poor performers, and indeed toxic colleagues, are let go or when they decide to leave. Additionally, Hausknecht and Trevor (2011) believed that employee turnover had many yet-to-be uncovered facets about it. The authors gave a suggested list of future employee turnover research, which included as a possible positive outcome of employee turnover, heightened morale, and lessened employee

conflict. The finding from this research, therefore, supports Hausknecht and Trevor's (2011) opinion on the notion that heightened morale may potentially result from a turnover event that involves a toxic employee leaving. This research has made a direct link with Hausknecht and Trevor's original thinking with this finding. And the finding is adequately supported by theory.

On the other hand, the data revealed a case where two of the 15 participants were not in agreement with the remaining employees being positively impacted owing to employee turnover. Their contestation was that when a colleague leaves, the event leads to the remaining employees having to share the resultant increased workload among them. In addition, what the data reveals is that this establishment is compounded further when the one who leaves is an EE candidate and when the ones that remain include in their ranks non-EE candidates, who will be rendered despondent at the expectation that they must share the extra workload despite them knowing that they do not stand to gain from the opportunities associated with this EE-candidature vacancy. The disagreement with the notion that employee turnover leads to the remaining employees being positively impacted by the two participants is supported, from a literature point of view, by the social exchange theory, which suggests that employees who perceive being treated fairly and rewarded with what they perceived appropriate in relation to their effort are bound to be more motivated and hence perform on a higher level, according to Sands-Dawling (2020). Additionally, the E-RM theoretical framework makes the case that employees will not be motivated to increase their effort levels, despite the attractiveness of a rewarding vacancy when they expect that their elevated effort levels will not yield any reciprocal benefits in their favour. Although the finding is not in direct support of this research's exploratory objective of determining the potential positives that employee may have on the remaining employees, it does however support the E-RM theoretical framework and the social exchange theory as illustrated thoroughly in Chapter 2, and as posited by Bui et al. (2020) that all individuals are inclined to "reciprocate benefits with benefits and respond with either indifference or hostility to harms" (p. 3).

### 6.2.3 Research Question 1 conclusive findings

The findings for Research Question 1 concluded that employee turnover does have the potential to positively impact remaining employees. This conclusion is by the fact that the findings are supported by theory. As a first step, knowledge of the employee turnover phenomenon by the sampled participants was established across all 15 participants – the causes of employee turnover shared by the participants, such as being overlooked for growth opportunities (Chaltiki & Sigala, 2010), for instance, were consistent with theory.

What was surprising, however, was the finding that some employees quit their jobs owing to them wanting to access their funds so they could settle their debts. This finding is consistent with theory in that the cause of their departure would be categorised as personal (Li et al., 2016). At first glance, however, the finding does not link up with literature in that the motivation to terminate one's job to access one's pension funds in order to settle debts, and therefore doing away with their only source of income and replacing it with another, does not seem to be supported by theory. Though the expectancy theory of motivation supports this finding, the finding will make for a good research topic in future, where it must be proven that people do quit to access their pension funds to settle debts, and in the process go without a job or steady income. Once proven, future research must establish what the motivating factor or factors would be for people to behave or act in a way that helps them achieve short-term goals at the expense of long-term goals that are supported by a consistent source of income.

Moreover, all findings relevant to Research Question 1 are consistent with the research objective established in Chapter 1, and they are in line with the theoretical framework and literature review presented in Chapter 2. This assertion is true even for the two participants that were resolute in their opinions that employee turnover does not lead to remaining employees being positively impacted. This is because, according to the expectancy and social exchange theories of motivation, individuals are bound not to be motivated to elevate their effort levels when they are of the opinion that their elevated effort levels will not attract any reward whatsoever. This suggests therefore that there is a strong relationship between employees being

positively impacted by employee turnover and the opportunities brought about by the staff turnover phenomenon.

### **6.3 Discussion of Results for Research Question 2**

**Research Question 2:** “How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?”

The purpose of Research Question 2 was to explore how each participant reacts when they are confronted with an employee turnover event. Research Question 2 was appropriately established to tap directly from the participants’ lived experiences. Constructs such as feelings developed in reaction to the knowledge that a fellow employee has left and that their departure has left a vacancy were being addressed in this Research Question 2. Aligned to Research Question 2 were two interview questions – interview questions 4 and 5.

Interview question 4 centred around extracting from the participants their deeply held perceptions, opinions, and perspectives based on their past encounter and lived experiences with the phenomenon of employee turnover and how they were impacted by the event. The question asked the participants to reflect on a time when a vacancy that was a level higher than theirs came about. They were then asked to share the feelings and thoughts they developed as a result. The question went on to ask what, in their opinions, led to them feeling and thinking in that way, and finally it asked how they responded to the situation and why they reacted in that fashion.

Interview question 5 simply asked how the participants would react, and why they would react in that manner, were they to be faced with a similar vacancy situation as in interview question 4. The aim of interview question 5 was to tie the participants’ lived experiences from their past to how they would react in a future time when faced with a similar turnover situation. The importance of this question was to assess what it takes for individuals to act in any one way and if they would act the same way in the future if confronted by similar conditions. The key example of this assessment is one participant that indicated they had in the past reacted positively to turnover

events which resulted in openings at higher levels being created, but that he found himself not in a position that allowed him to be stimulated to react positively to future turnover events owing to the current non-conducive and somewhat toxic workplace environment. This finding is consistent with the 'conditions element' of this exploratory research, which will be discussed in section 6.4.

### 6.3.1 How participants experienced the impact of employee turnover in the past

Table 5.6 (Section 5.4) depicts the number of times that each key and relevant construct pertinent to answering Research Question 2 was referred to by the participants during the data collection stage of the research. The three top-ranked constructs had frequency counts of 23, 20, and 17. All in all, a total of 14 constructs that are relevant to responding to Research Question 2 were aggregated, with three sets of the constructs coming up with joint rankings at spot numbers four, seven, and eleven.

The highest-ranked construct was 'deliberately set out to gain skills required for the job and increase effort levels to land the job' and had a frequency count of 23 as illustrated in Table 5.6 (Section 5.4.1). Findings associated with this construct include participants – assuming that the vacancy was in line with their aspirations – feeling excited, positive, and stimulated to want to attain appointment into that vacant position, a situation which forces them to rethink the way they do things in favour of "*elevating a bit to doing things differently to match*" the requirements of the next level. Drawing from the theoretical framework, it can be seen that this finding is consistent with an individual that sets targets, and certainly goals, aimed at helping them get appointed into the vacant position. The theoretical framework suggests that people perform better when they have goals that are specific, challenging, and achievable (Clements & Kamau, 2018). Goal-setting theory suggests after individuals identify a particular achievement to be acquired, like being appointed into an attractive vacant position, they set themselves measurable outcomes to be attained to successfully acquire their pre-set goal of being appointed in the vacant position, according to Sides and Cuevas (2020). This, therefore, suggests that the finding is supported by

theory and therefore can be taken as an acceptable example of how employee turnover is likely to impact the remaining employees positively.

Based on Table 5.6, the second-ranked construct with a frequency count of 20 indicates that remaining employees actually do get impacted positively as they see themselves stepping into a vacant position as a way for them to contribute positively towards the company's course and make a difference in the process. Nine out of the 15 participants made the connection with this construct as they saw themselves going into the position to contribute in a meaningful manner, or to "*succeed*" and make a difference. The finding suggests that the remaining employees, once appointed into the vacant position, will up their game and "*contribute better than where they currently are*" in reciprocation. The theoretical framework recognises the principle of reciprocity, which defines given promises and commitments to be fulfilled in exchange for fair and acceptable rewards (Sands-Dawling, 2020). According to Bui et al., (2020), individuals are bound to "reciprocate benefits with benefits" (p. 3). In addition to the social exchange theory, this finding is consistent with the employee engagement theory which is likened to an employee's "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption" (Kwon & Park, 2019, p. 3). Kwon and Park's assertion of 'vigour, dedication and absorption support the finding based on the participants' expressed view that they see themselves contributing positively and making a difference, which are qualities that can suggestively be linked to being filled with 'vigour, dedication and absorption'. This finding suggests that the remaining employees get positively impacted by the turnover event such that they get stimulated to want to be appointed into the resultant vacant position not just because it is an opportunity for them to *only* earn bigger salaries, but rather they see themselves "*playing in a bigger space*" to contribute positively and make a difference, qualities that are displayed by engaged employees, who believe they will reciprocate the organisation's offer of appointment with hard work and positive contribution towards its success, should they be appointed into the vacant position.

In as much as most of the participants indicated that they develop feelings of excitement at the prospect of being promoted into a vacant position that arises amid an employee turnover event, several others indicated they actually develop feelings of a loss, especially in light of the close ties they developed between themselves and

the departing colleague. These participants likened the departure of their colleague as a loss not only to them but rather a loss of knowledge and skill to the organisation too. Literature does point to the fact that indeed when an employee leaves, the impact of their departure leads to the firm's productivity and performance dwindling due to the loss in knowledge and experience held by the departing employee (De Winne et al., 2019; Park & Shaw, 2013; Ton & Huckman, 2008), especially when the departing employee was highly skilled and of high quality, their departure then turns into what Dalton and colleagues (1982) refer to as dysfunctional turnover as the departure disrupts the firm's operations, especially when there is not another that can readily take up after the departing employee leaves. From the perspective of the remaining employees, however, the departure of a colleague, according to the finding of 'no feelings or not excited' (third highest ranked construct on Table 5.6), it is argued hereby that them not feeling excited is mostly based on their affiliation with the person. Their response as opined by the few participants was not directed to the vacant position itself.

### 6.3.2 How employee turnover will impact participants in the future

Interview question 5 asked how the participants would react to a turnover event in the future. As depicted in Table 5.6, two of the 15 participants indicated they would not, in the future, apply for a vacant position that arises. One of the participants shared of his concerns with the prevailing situation in the organisation, whilst the second spoke about how, in a broader sense, that many employees would not apply for appointment when vacancies were to be advertised in the future, because the current management overlooks them for promotion prospects. They effectively support the social exchange theory's assertion that when individuals do not seem to be benefiting from a particular transaction, they will "respond with either indifference or hostility" to being overlooked (Bui et al., 2020, p. 3). Additionally, Employees tend to respond positively to work-related situations or events when they are motivated, and they are motivated through a great variety of needs which vary in their order of importance, in situations that prevail at a given time, as well as over different time frames (Lundberg et al., 2009). Lundberg et al.'s assertion supports the participant's shared view of why they would not apply for any vacancy in the future owing to the prevailing situation in the company. The prevailing dynamics referred to by the

participant (Section 5.4.2, page 80) mean that the element of motivation in the workplace, as an important job performance determinant, is missing because of poor organisational dynamics, which then mean that the participant feels demotivated and not keen on taking up any growth or promotion opportunity (Bronkhorst et al., 2013).

As many as 11 participants suggested they would apply for vacant positions in the future as they still saw the vacancy as an opportunity for growth (Table 5.6). Several others indicated they would apply if they felt comfortable with the position, or that they would apply because they now feel ready as they have seen what the right way of functioning in a higher-level position is. Yet another participant indicated the prevalent conditions in the organisation would not deter them from positively responding to a turnover event that results in a vacancy because she is “*persistent like that*”. Furthermore, most participants shared that they saw themselves applying for future vacancies since they believed they had what it takes to do the job. Some of the participants shared that they would be spurred on to apply for the vacancy based on their skills, qualifications, and the training they have or would have acquired by then (Section 5.4.2). Relating these findings to the theoretical framework reveals that they are consistent with the employees’ self-efficacy, which has to do with a “person’s felt confidence to perform” a given task (Ozyilmaz et al, 2017, p. 4), and refers to an employee’s conviction that they surely can execute a given task (Lunenburg, 2011; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Theory supports the finding in that the shared views are that the participants will be applying for future vacancies because they would feel they can function in the position owing to their training, and owing to them having seen how new, younger managers (Section 5.4.2, page 76) managers function in the said higher-level position positions and based on the suggestion that they believe they can function in the job and they can do the work, a situation that is consistent with the self-efficacy theory of motivation.

### 6.3.3 Research Question 2 conclusive findings

The findings for Research Question 2 concluded that employee turnover does have the potential to positively impact remaining employees as it found that remaining employees tend to develop feelings of excitement as they expect to grow by being



promoted into the resultant vacancy. This conclusion is anchored by theory that is in support of the findings as was illustrated and discussed in sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2.

Data revealed that of the 15 participants, two felt they would not be positively impacted by employee turnover in the future as the prevailing organisational dynamics were not conducive for them to want to be promoted, as well as the opinion that when growth opportunities are given to outsiders, the remaining employees will not feel motivated by the turnover event, and therefore will not be positively impacted by the event. However, the social exchange and expectancy theories of motivation support this finding. The other findings are equally supported by theory, therefore suggesting that there is a significantly strong relationship between the employees being positively impacted owing to a staff turnover event and opportunities presented by the event itself, and when the expectation was there would be no positive reciprocation by the organisation, this research found the employees would not bother to act in a manner consistent with being positively impacted by the turnover event.

#### **6.4 Discussion of Results for Research Question 3**

**Research Question 3:** “What are the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees?”

Research Question 3 was concerned with identifying the conditions that must be in place to enable employee turnover to have a positive impact on remaining employees. To this end, two open-ended research interview questions were derived to help answer Research Question 3. The two interview questions were set up as opposites as they sought to (a) establish the conditions that must be in place for employee turnover to have positive consequences on the remaining employees, and (b) identify the reasons why employee turnover would not have positive consequences on remaining employees as opined by the sampled participants.

Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 below discuss the results associated with these interview questions. The results in question were presented in Sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2, and they were depicted in Tables 5.8 and 5.9 respectively.

#### 6.4.1 Conditions to enable employee turnover's positive consequences

In brief, the conditions that were deemed necessary for employee turnover to have positive consequences on remaining employees included training and capacity building interventions by management; the creation of conducive and caring environments that are steeped in the right culture; workplaces that are enabling, empowering, and harmonious for employees; fairness, integrity and transparency in the application of company policies; and conditions where good performance is recognised and rewarded accordingly. In total were six constructs that are relevant to responding to interview question 6 which was established to determine the conditions that must prevail for employee turnover to impact remaining employees positively. The results are depicted in Table 5.8 (Section 5.5.1).

In identifying what the applicable conditions should be for employee turnover to lead to the remaining employees being positively impacted was 'training and capacity building interventions', which was the first ranked construct with a frequency count of 23 (Table 5.8, Section 5.5.1). Nine of the 15 participants shared that a critical condition that must prevail for employee turnover to have positive consequences on the remaining employees was training and development. Some of the key interventions referred to by the participants included job rotation to enable employees to learn about the different aspects of the business from different departments; job-shadowing, where a subordinate employee is identified to job-shadow a manager so that they learn skills required for the said higher-level position; and effective succession plans that are anchored by proper talent management interventions, coaching and mentoring. The main message behind this finding was that if trained well, those that remain will be able to slot in into vacant positions with ease. Them being trained well mean they will have the required confidence to respond to a vacancy that arises out of an employee turnover event. This finding can be likened to a measure of the extent to which employees are gratified or content with every aspect of their job, such as when they receive organisational support in the form of functional and general training (Stamolampros et al., 2019). A further important aspect that is key to establishing whether employees are satisfied with their jobs or not is career growth or promotional prospects (Stamolampros et al., 2019). What job satisfaction suggests, therefore, is that remaining employees that are satisfied with their jobs tend to be impacted positively by the development of growth opportunities,

especially if they believe they receive adequate organisational support in the form of functional and general training (Stamolampros et al., 2019). The finding is therefore supported by theory, and therefore it can be concluded that employees will be positively impacted if they are satisfied with their job, based on them perceiving management support in relation to all aspects of their jobs, including when they perceive they are being trained and developed to enable them being ready for growth opportunities.

Other conditions that were put forth as crucial for employee turnover to have positive consequences on remaining employees was a conducive and harmonious workplace as illustrated by the second and third constructs in Table 5.8. 12 of the participants believed being happy at work and in a workplace environment where trust, respect, and integrity prevailed; where employees “*worked together, and fed off each other*”; where they were happy and looking forward to going to work; and where there was harmony and no one abused their power over the others was, central to them responding positively amid an employee turnover event. It is the responsibility of managers to create harmonious work environments that are conducive to promoting elevated motivational levels of their subordinate employees, which in turn leads to a motivated workforce that would, in turn, put in more effort into their jobs, resulting in the quality of their performance improving (Harris, Murphy, DiPietro, & Line, 2017; Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008). Harmonious work environments are those in which there is respect for and between employees, and which are perceived by employees as being “friendly and accommodating” (Bui, Liu, Ko, & Curtis, 2020, p. 2). Transformational leadership has been associated with playing “a crucial role in instilling confidence in an engaged employee to perform beyond expectations” (Jena et al., 2018). To enable the “*working together and feeding off one another*” finding, it is transformational leaders that are inspirational motivators that make it “possible to reduce the level of individual isolation and generate more opportunities for collaborative practice” among subordinates and peers alike (Sun & Wang, 2016, p. 6). This finding is also supported by theory, and it can therefore be concluded that of the key elements of a condition worthy of employee turnover having a positive impact on the remaining employees is a workplace that is harmonious, and conducive.

In addition to the above passage on the second and third-ranked constructs depicted in Table 5.8 is the finding that the workplace must be empowering to the employees.

The finding that came through in this construct was that employees should feel empowered to freely air their views and opinions without fearing that they will or could be victimised. For employees to speak freely and share their ideas without a fear of victimisation means the work environment must be characterised by higher levels of psychological safety (Rubenstein et al., 2017). High levels of psychological safety tend to lead to high performance levels by employees (Truss et al., 2013). When employees feel the existence of psychological safety is prevalent in the workplace, they will tend to improve their performance levels. The E-RM theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 suggests that when employees perceive a reward tied to an opportunity that arises in the form of a vacancy amid a staff turnover event, the employees will raise their effort levels owing to them seeking to be recognised for appointment into the said position. This finding is also supported by theory, and therefore an acceptable finding that points to the necessary requirements from a conditions perspective for employee turnover to have positive consequences on the remaining employees.

One other key finding was the conditions in the organisation must be encouraging and allow employees to make decisions, and if their decisions were mistaken or incorrect, the employees must be enabled to learn from them and feel like they “*are unable to grow because they will forever be thinking ‘making a mistake...I’m doomed’*”. Drawing from the job-satisfaction theory, employees are bound to be satisfied with aspects of the job when they know that their job-specific measures include a span of responsibility and autonomy afforded them by the employer when carrying out their work (Flowers & Hughes, 1973). The finding is supported by theory and therefore concludes that flexibility, autonomy, and empowerment are critical elements required to enable a conducive workplace wherein employees can experiment and make decisions, and if their decisions are mistaken allow them to learn from their mistakes.

#### 6.4.2 Reasons why employee turnover will not impact employees positively

The summarised reasons advanced by the participants for why employee turnover may not result in the remaining employees being positively impacted included toxic management or leadership; delays in filling vacancies coupled to increased

workloads; uncertain future and no capacity building interventions; growth opportunities given to outsiders; remuneration and compensation disparities; unfair application of policy; and no management support. Table 5.9 depicts these seven constructs in Section 5.5.2.

Toxic environments bring with them a lot of uncertainty and develop fear among employees, to the point that employees are fearful of taking on bigger roles or even adding to their current responsibilities and in the process “*makes people that are remaining behind to be negative because they never get to be themselves*”, leading to them being “*always scared to come out of their cocoons and give more*” (Section 5.5.2, page 82). This finding means that the work environment must be conducive and non-toxic (Bronkhorst et al., 2013; Bui et al., 2020) if employees are to maintain their motivational levels and therefore stand a chance to respond positively to staff turnover events that result in vacancies. It is transformational leaders that are said to be inspirational motivators that make it “possible to reduce the level of individual isolation and generate more opportunities for collaborative practice” among subordinates and peers alike (Sun & Wang, 2016, p. 6). According to Anderson et al. (2017), inspirational motivation holds that transformational leaders motivate their subordinates by providing meaning and challenge to their work so that organisational targets are achieved.

In addition, when management takes long to fill vacancies under normal circumstances, the employees become less responsive to growth or promotional opportunities. Coupled with this shortcoming is the resultant increase in the workload when a fellow employee leaves, leading to the workload being shared among those that remain. When this happens, those that take on the extra workload feel hard done by as they are looked to by management to keep the work going and yet the positions take long to be filled. In accordance with the social exchange theory, employees will reciprocate benefits or harms which they receive from their managers (Bui et al., 2020). It therefore holds that when the filling of vacancies delays, some employees may not be positively impacted by employee turnover events as the resultant vacancies tend to take too long before they get filled. This becomes even more pronounced when the remaining employees are non-EE candidates and yet expected to carry the increased workload that is left behind upon the departure of a fellow colleague. The finding associated with delays in the filling of vacancies is

supported by theory, suggesting that there is a strong relationship between employees feeling of management reciprocating benefits by filling vacancies quicker and thereby leading to those that remain being positively impacted by employee turnover and it can therefore be concluded that the finding is an appropriate reason for why employee turnover may not lead to remaining employees being impacted positively.

Furthermore, when employees feel their performance is never recognised nor rewarded, they tend to deflate and get demotivated, especially when they feel overworked. When they give their best and no one recognises their efforts, they will yet again deflate and be demotivated, and they become dissatisfied with their jobs. Employees are bound to become dissatisfied with their jobs when they are of the opinion that organisational factors necessary to keep their job satisfaction levels high are not met by the organisation, such as a lack of career growth and promotional prospects, they are bound to be demotivated (Stamolampros et al., 2019), and in the process end up reducing their effort levels or even deciding to quit their jobs (Huang, et al., 2016) in the worst-case scenario. They certainly may not respond positively to staff turnover events because of their dissatisfaction with their jobs. This finding is supported by theory, suggesting that there is a strong relationship between employees being positively impacted by a staff turnover event and level of satisfaction with their jobs, such as being recognised and rewarded for their good performance.

#### 6.4.3 Research Question 3 conclusive findings

The findings for Research Question 3 concluded that for employee turnover to have a positive impact on the remaining employees, certain conditions need to be in place. These conditions were highlighted as training and capacity building interventions by management; the creation of conducive and caring environments that are steeped in the right culture; workplaces that are enabling, empowering, and harmonious for employees; fairness, integrity, and transparency in the application of company policies; and conditions where good performance is recognised and rewarded accordingly. In addition, the findings led to the conclusion that employee turnover may not lead to the remaining employees being positively impacted. These reasons

were stated as toxic management or leadership; delays in filling vacancies coupled to increased workloads; uncertain future and no capacity building interventions; growth opportunities given to outsiders; remuneration and compensation disparities; unfair application of policy; and no management support. Support of theory for each of the findings was established in Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 respectively, therefore suggesting a strong relationship between conditions such as a harmonious, conducive, empowering, caring, and enabling environments and employee turnover leading to remaining employees being positively impacted by employee turnover.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

### **6.5.1 Concluding remarks pertaining to key findings**

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees. The findings from the data gathered from the participants adequately addressed each of the Research Questions that sought to understand the way in which employee turnover results in positive consequences as seen from the perspective of the remaining employees, how the remaining employees behave or react amid a turnover event, and what conditions should be prevalent for employee turnover to have positive consequences on the remaining employees. The findings were supported by the theoretical framework and the reviewed literature presented in Chapter 2.

In conclusion, the major findings from this research were that employee turnover does result in remaining employees being positively impacted as they perceive the resultant vacancy as a growth opportunity, either in the form of a promotion or the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. The findings suggest that when remaining employees perceive growth opportunities may result from the resultant vacancy owing to an employee turnover event, they become energised and in turn increase their effort levels, whilst in some cases they deliberately set out to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills associated with the vacant position. They do this in the hope of being recognised and rewarded, by management, with a promotion or appointment into the vacant position. The implications of this are huge and of benefit to the organisation. For one, business firms stand to save on the reported costs of

between 90% and 200% of the annual salary of the departing employee when recruiting to replace the departing employee. The saving referred to here could arise out of the firm not having to pay recruitment agency fees given that the recruitment may be limited inhouse.

In addition, the findings suggest that conditions which empower employees, which are conducive and enable employees to interact harmoniously and with respect for one another, and which are void of toxicity, are important and must be in place if employee turnover is to have a positive impact on the remaining employees.

#### 6.5.2 Implications of the results with reference to the Theoretical Framework

The integrative theoretical framework, the Effort-Reward Model, that was presented in Chapter held that key elements of employee motivation theories each played a significantly large and important role in explaining how the remaining employees may likely be impacted by an employee turnover event. The findings, as presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6, are not supported by the E-RM theoretical framework's element of Job Embeddedness motivation theory. As a result, the E-RM theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 was modified in line with the findings, the result of which is presented in Figure 4 below. The modification of the E-RM recognises that Job Embeddedness was not, according to the findings presented in this research, relevant in this study, nor was it supported by the findings of this study. As a result, Job Embeddedness theory of motivation is excluded from the modified E-RM, which is presented below in figure 4.



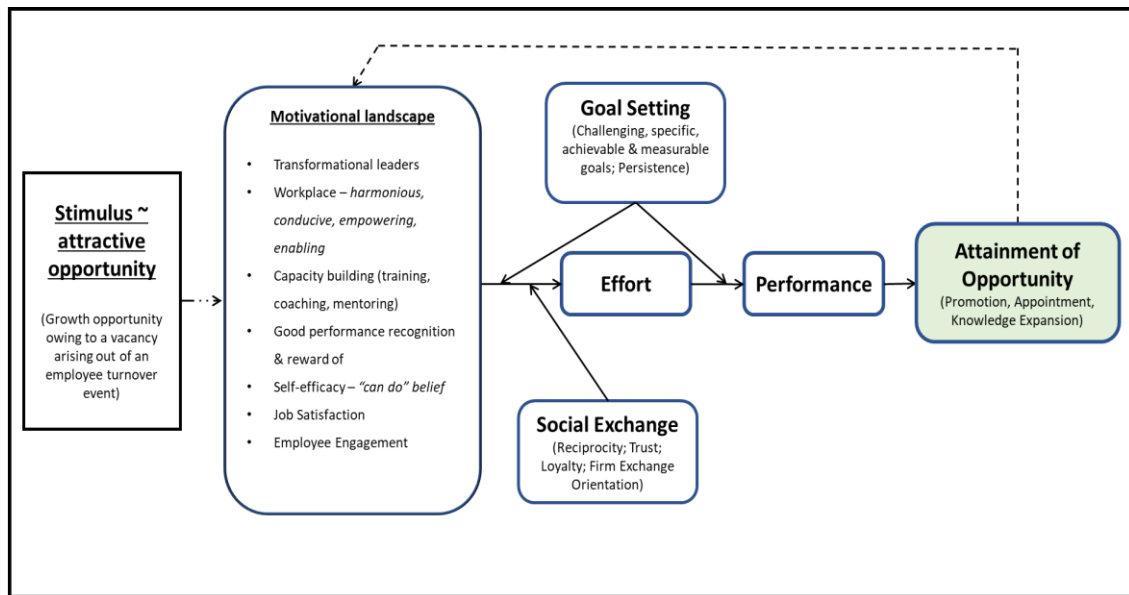


Figure 4: Modified Effort-Reward Model

The significance of the Modified Effort-Reward Model (ME-RM) is that it encapsulates all the standalone motivation theories and brings them together under a consolidated model that clearly delineates that effective motivation does not only lie in any one theory but that each motivation theory relies on the others' elements for effective impact, because "any particular theory necessarily deals with only a subset of motivational factors" (Steel & König, 2006, p. 890). This means, for example, that an individual may have expectations of achieving a higher-order reward (expectancy theory), but if the person believes the system will not reciprocate their effort (social exchange theory), or if the individual believes their effort will go punished owing to a toxic manager in the system, the individual will not elevate their effort level in anticipation of being rewarded. The researcher's approach to integrating different elements of motivation theories as discussed in this report can be referred to as consilience, which refers to the integration of knowledge through linking facts and fact-based theory across various motivation theories to arrive at a common foundation to explore and explain how employee turnover can potentially impact the remaining employees positively (Steel & König, 2006, p. 889). Though they make meaningful contributions to the understanding of the complex nature of motivation, and since "none is complete", each of the "different theoretical orientations offer a unique perspective" and has been combined to form the modified Effort-Reward Model (Meyer et al., 2004, p. 992).

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter 7 highlights the main findings of this research. Based on the findings and the 'Modified Effort-Reward Model' presented in Chapter six and which was adapted from the Effort-Reward Model theoretical framework based on the interpretation of the findings presented in Chapter 5. Recommendations are presented to the stakeholder group of scholars and practitioners. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the limitations of this research and concludes with recommendations and ideas for future research into employee turnover.

### **7.2 Principal Conclusions per Research Question**

Although employee turnover has received research attention over the past century, there has been very little attention given to its potential positive consequences, especially as seen from the perspective of the remaining employees (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Wynen et al., 2019). In addition, despite the numerous recommendations from previous research to address employee turnover, there still is evidence of several employees in retail who still quit their jobs (Olubiyi et al., 2019; Sands-Dawling, 2020). This means, therefore, that there still lingers an interestingly large number of knowledge gaps or troubling questions about the topic (Hausknecht & Trevor, 2011; Hom et al., 2017; Wynen et al., 2019).

The reviewed literature reveals that no focus on prior employee turnover research has focused on its potential positive consequences on remaining employees. It was the objective of this research, therefore, to explore the potential positive consequences that employee turnover may have on remaining employees. The research further sought to determine the conditions under which employee turnover could result in the remaining employees being impacted positively, and the ways in which they could be impacted positively by this phenomenon. To enable this exploratory study, three Research Questions were derived, namely (1) the way in which employee turnover results into positive consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation, (2) how the remaining employees react

or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon, and (3) what the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to potential positive consequences on the remaining employees are.

#### 7.2.1 Research Questions 1 and 2: positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees

Research Questions 1 and 2 sought to (a) establish what the opinions of the participants were with respect to different ways in which employee turnover could potentially impact the remaining employees positively, and (b) draw on the participants' personal experiences about how they reacted, behaved, and responded to employee turnover events they would have encountered in their prior working lives.

In addressing Research Questions 1, the research found that although remaining employees feel a sense of loss owing to the departure of a colleague they had a good relationship with, they get excited, energised, and hyped-up at the knowledge that a vacancy has opened as a result of the departure of their colleague. The research found the level of excitement to be brought up by growth opportunities brought on by the resultant vacancy. The results further revealed that the opportunities come in many different forms, including promotion prospects, exposure to the mechanics of managing or operating in a higher-level position when the remaining employees are asked to act in the vacant position, and opportunities to contribute positively and make a difference once appointed into the vacant position. In addition, the results found that the positive impact that remaining employees may enjoy relates to when a toxic colleague, peer, or manager leaves the organisation. When this happens, the remaining employees become energised in that *“the negativity is now gone, and then there will be more positive energy between the employees to create a workable environment”*, because *“if you were evil, we will be positive and happy that you are gone”*.

An interesting finding was centred around those that remain being impacted positively when one of them gets appointed into a vacant position in an outside firm. The results reveal that those that remain get the sense that since the one that leaves and gets appointed by an outside firm, they too, owing to the skill and expertise they

possess which are similar to those of their departed colleague, are employable out there as well.

The findings were however not always in favour of the research objective. The results revealed that those that remain may feel despondent and therefore not positively impacted when a colleague departs. For one, the feeling of losing a colleague with whom they enjoyed a closely knit relationship was posited as a negative feeling. Secondly, the one that leaves may be an Employment Equity (EE) candidate, which means that their job ends up having to be spread among the stayers, who may include in their ranks non-EE candidates. The non-EE candidates would be expected by the firm to take on the share of the leaver's job, meanwhile, they do not stand to gain from the opportunities associated with the EE-candidature vacancy, resulting in them not being positively impacted. When drawing from the theoretical framework, and certainly from the Modified Effort-Reward Model (ME-RM) it becomes clear that this turn of events is supported by theory in that when the expectation is that there will be no reward for any effort, those that are expected to perform a function will not react in a positive fashion and elevate their effort levels to be recognised and rewarded with a promotion or any other form, whether monetary or non-monetary.

Another finding was that those that remain may not be spurred on to raise their hand and signal their readiness to be promoted into a higher-level position owing to the prevailing "*organisational dynamics*". This suggests that for the remaining employees to be positively impacted, conditions must be enabling. The next section discusses the conditions necessary to enable employee turnover to positively impact the remaining employees.

### 7.2.2 Research Question 3: conditions needed for staff turnover to positively impact remaining employees

The results pointed to the fact that the right conditions must be in place if employee turnover is to impact the remaining employees positively. The conditions revealed by data included work environments that:

- enable employees to interact in harmony, where there is no toxicity among and between them, and where there is respect for one another,
- empower employees to freely air their opinions and suggestions without feeling they will be victimised, especially by management,
- encourage employees to try out different ways of doing things and allow them to make and learn from their mistakes and not feel restricted as that only leads to them not growing

However, the findings reveal that “*even when you still have a conducive environment, people will still leave for personal reasons...people [do] not [only] leave because the environment is not conducive*”. This finding cements the position adopted by this research, and certainly by the researcher, that employee turnover will be an ever-featuring event, at least into the foreseeable future. Therefore, scholars and (particularly) practitioners need to embrace the fact that employee turnover will continue as a common development and in turn engage with the phenomenon differently as no amount of interventions to retain employees will curb this phenomenon.

The results of this research in relation to the conditions required for employee turnover to positively impact the remaining employees are consistent with previous research. Olubiyi et al. (2019) found a friendly workplace environment did not lead to work-related stress since the “work environment fostered good relationships across all employee levels” (p. 4), suggesting that where the environment is friendly (harmonious, conducive, non-toxic, empowering, and enabling as it is referred to in this study), employees will be motivated to respond positively to employee turnover events.

### **7.3 Implications for theory and management**

#### **7.3.1 Theoretical implications**

This study presented the E-RM theoretical framework in Chapter 2 as an important model necessary to understand whether, and if so how, the remaining employees become positively impacted by an employee turnover event. Furthermore, the results

from this study are generally in line with many aspects of previous research on employee turnover, and employee motivation.

In addition, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge of employee turnover in that one area in which employee turnover may lead to positive consequences has been uncovered. Secondly, by integrating and fusing the various motivation theories through consilience, this study contributed to theory in highlighting the significance of leveraging from the different aspects of the related motivational theories to explain how, and why, employee turnover has the potential to impact the remaining employees (Meyer et al., 2004; Steel & König, 2006).

### 7.3.2 Implications for management

Employee turnover persists in being a problem that has expansive and pervasive implications for organisations. Even though numerous recommendations have been made to address the phenomenon, there still are a number of employees that decide to quit (Rubenstein et al., 2017; Sands-Dawling, 2020). Some of the costs associated with employee turnover include the firm incurring between 90% and 200% of the departing employee's annual salary to recruit, train, and place their replacement (Grotto et al., 2017; Li et al., 2016; Sands-Dawling, 2020; Rubenstein et al., 2017; Stamolampros et al., 2019; Ton & Huckman, 2008).

Because employees will still quit their jobs for one or another reason in the future, including the fact that people are bound to quit even though the environment might still be conducive for them to stay, the one implication from this research is for management to engage with employee turnover differently. Instead of focusing solely on retention strategies, by accepting that many employees are bound to quit, management should consider focusing on creating an environment for lower-level employees to be capacitated with requirements to perform at the higher-level positions. This way, instead of looking outside the organisation to recruit a worthy replacement for a departee, the firm could look to those that remain within the organisation that can then be readily able to step up and assume the vacant role's responsibilities. The implication here is that the recruitment, training, and placement costs of between 90% and 200% of the departees annual salary will be reduced

significantly, and it can be argued that productivity levels may not suffer that much since the one replacing the departee would be entrenched in the ways of things are done in the organisation. The Modified Effort-Reward Model (ME-RM), as depicted below in figure 4, could serve as a model worthy of use by management in achieving this recommendation.

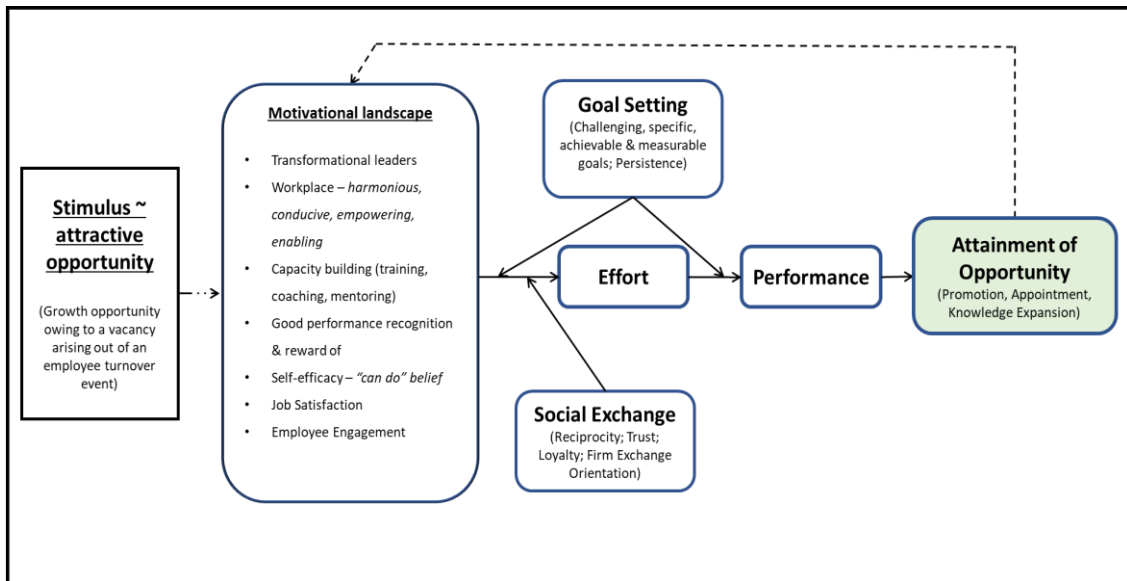


Figure 4: Modified Effort-Reward Model

Employee motivation is expansive and abundant. The significance of the ME-RM is that it encapsulates, through consolidation, all the relevant different standalone motivation theories and brings them together under a consolidated model that clearly delineates that effective motivation does not only lie in any one theory but that each disparate theory relies on the other for effective impact. This means that an individual may have expectations of achieving a higher-order reward, but if the person believes the system will not reciprocate their effort, or if the individual believes their effort will go punished owing to a toxic manager in the system, the individual will not bother to elevate their effort level in anticipation of being rewarded. The ME-RM advocates for this and presents scholars and especially practitioners with a useful model necessary to guide them in addressing employee turnover related developments.

## **7.4 Limitations**

Recognisable limitations associated with qualitative research involve situations where (a) qualitative research results are not generalisable (Dudovskiy, n.d.; McLeod, 2019), (b) the researcher by virtue of being an integral part of the research process, cannot self-separate from the process (Galdas, 2017), and (c) the researcher's active role in extracting themes from the data aimed at addressing the Research Questions (Dierckx de Casterle et al., 2011) may lead to researcher bias. Limitations specific and pertinent to this research include the following:

- The sample was selected from one organisation, therefore rendering the results non-generalisable
- The sample was only drawn from Johannesburg, which means geographical bias in the participants' responses could have manifested
- Although the researcher approached the analysis of the data inductively, there is no confirming that the researcher's derived theoretical framework would not have affected his judgment and thus led to the analysis subconsciously taking the deductive approach
- Given that the participants in this study all came from the same case organisation, it can mean that their responses would have been biased or influenced by the same experiences as they all would have been exposed to the same conditions prevalent in the case organisation's landscape

## **7.5 Future Research**

The limitations associated with this research mean there is room for future studies into the potential positive consequences of employee turnover. For one, owing to the limitations of this research, future studies should consider conducting this research quantitatively to ensure representativity. Secondly, future research into employee turnover could address the surprising reason that some employees resign because they want to access their pension funds, settle their debts, and live debt-free, even though this means they will be set back since they will no longer have any form of a steady income. Thirdly, the reasons advanced by employees when they quit are not always reflective of reality and 'the truth' as found by Yang et al. (2012). For instance,



in their study, Yang and colleagues (2012) revealed that one respondent quit their hotel job after working for eight years in the hotel industry citing the reasons that they wanted to work “more standard hours” (p. 842). However, the same study by Yang et al. (2012) found that the same employee returned to work for an international tourist hotel because he enjoyed the face-to-face interaction with customers of the hotel industry. This turn of events is bound to lead to recommendations being made not being effective at addressing employee turnover challenges. Future research could delve into this area to establish precisely why some quitters do not always give the right reasons why.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

Despite turnover research having enjoyed more than a century of research focus, “many new vistas remain to be explored”, and “the best is yet to come” (Hom et al., 2017, p. 540). In addition, though “numerous recommendations to address employee turnover” have been provided (Sands-Dawling, 2020, p. 76), US retail has experienced a steady increase in employee turnover from 5.7% in 2015 to 3.7% in September 2018 (Olubiyi et al., 2019, p. 7). One fitting vista that this research sought to explore was the potential positive consequences that employee turnover could have on remaining employees and the conditions under which this is likely. The findings of this research suggest that employee turnover does lead to remaining employees being positively impacted. Further research into this area is encouraged, preferably quantitative where the sample to be chosen will be representative and therefore render the results generalisable.

This research contributes to the employee turnover research body of knowledge in that (a) a direct contribution to theory has been made through the development of the ME-RM model, and (b) a new vista, namely that employee turnover has the potential to impact remaining employees positively, has been added. This, however, should not be seen as the end of it, as “the best is yet to come” (Hom et al., 2017, p. 540).

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## APPENDIX 1: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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**From:** Eric Peete Transnet Freight Rail JHB

**Sent:** Tuesday, 20 July 2021 21:03

**Subject:** Research Project: Potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees

**Importance:** High

Dear Colleague

I pray that this email finds you well.

I am writing to you to ask for your assistance in a research project I am undertaking as part of my studies. I am researching the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees in an organisation. I would like to ask for your assistance for to enable me to conduct the research study through an interview that will likely last between 50 and 70 minutes.

I will schedule the interview time based on your availability and closer to the time, with at least a week's notice.

I have attached the interview consent letter, which basically stipulates that your participation will totally be voluntary and that your input will be reported confidentially without any identifiers. Attached also is the permission letter from TFR allowing me to conduct my research on TFR's "premises", with TFR's employees.

Thank you in advance.

Eric

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## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW CONSENT LETTER

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) completing my research project in partial fulfilment of an MBA. I am conducting research on the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees and am trying to find out more about the perceptions and experiences of employees about the research project.

Our interview is expected to last sixty minutes (1 hour), and it will be conducted via the Microsoft TEAMS videoconferencing platform. The insight(s) to be gained from our interview will help shape the understanding of the potential positive consequences of employee turnover on remaining employees, and the conditions under which this materialises. **Your participation in this research study is voluntary and you can withdraw from it at any time without penalty.**

All data to be collected will be reported without identifiers, anonymously in other words, and confidentially. There is a need for the interview to be recorded in order to ensure that every aspect of your response is captured and enables analysis. Kindly indicate if you give consent for the interview to be recorded by marking with an "X" the appropriate block below:

Yes, I **do give consent** to the recording of the interview

NO, I **do not** consent to the recording of the interview

<b>Researcher Name :</b>	Eric Peete	<b>Research Supervisor :</b>	Andre Van Der Walt
<b>Email :</b>	<a href="mailto:mrikitsi@gmail.com">mrikitsi@gmail.com</a>	<b>Email :</b>	vdwalta9@gmail.com
<b>Phone :</b>	083 262 5997	<b>Phone :</b>	082 497 6176

**Participant Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

### APPENDIX 3: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

#	Semi-structured interview questions as they relate to Research Questions
<b>RQ-1: <i>In what way does employee turnover result into positive consequences from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organisation?</i></b>	
1.	What, in your understanding, are the fundamental causes of employee turnover in your organisation or department?
2.	In what way do you think employee turnover would have a positive impact on the remaining employees in an organisation or department?
3.	What other positive consequences on the remaining employees in an organisation would you associate with the employee turnover phenomenon?
<b>RQ-2: <i>How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?</i></b>	
4.	Briefly take me through the time when there was a vacancy one level higher than yours in your department:
	(a) How would describe the feelings and thoughts you developed owing to the vacancy?
	(b) What would you say invoked those feelings and thoughts in you?
	(c) How did you respond to the vacancy in question?
	(d) What motivated you to respond in that way?
5.	If you were to be faced with a similar vacancy situation in the future, how would you react to it? (why would you react in that way?)
<b>RQ-3: <i>What are the contextual settings under which employee turnover leads to possible positive consequences on the remaining employees?</i></b>	
6.	What conditions will need to be in place for employee turnover to have a positive consequence on the remaining employees?
7.	What do you consider to be the reasons why remaining employees will not be positively impacted by employee turnover?

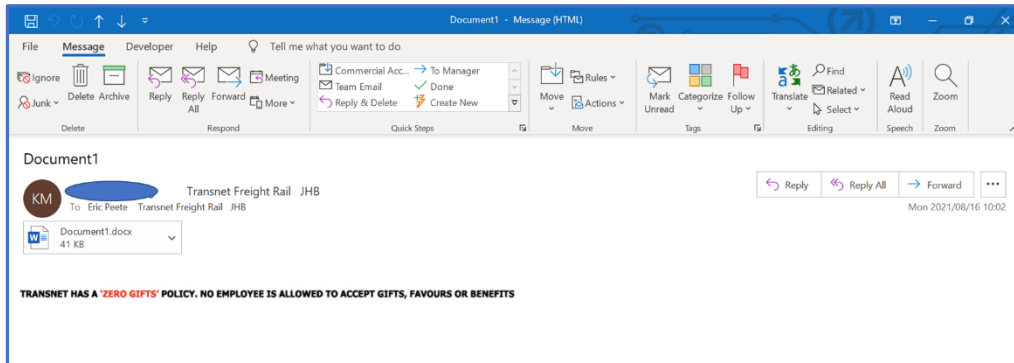
## APPENDIX 4: CODES, CATEGORIES, AND EMERGENT THEMES

CODE NAME / CONSTRUCT	MERGING OF CODES TO CREATE THEMES	EMERGENT THEMES OR CATEGORIES
They leave because "no one cares"	A cause of employee turnover - reason why employees leave	An understanding of what employee turnover is
Others leave because they feel frustrated by what they want or prefer whilst the organisation is pushing for a contrasting need	Merged from Restricted learning or channeled learning and Contrasting expectations	An understanding of what employee turnover is
They leave for personal reasons, including indebtedness and they want access to their pension funds to settle their debts, or because they want to pursue other interests	Merged from Work-life balance, Voluntary Turnover and Greener pastures	An understanding of what employee turnover is
They leave because they either do not possess the required skills for the job or they are not engaged	Merged from Job-fit and Job-fit nonexistent	An understanding of what employee turnover is
They leave because they either get let go by the organisation for poor performance, or because they freely apply for a Voluntary Severance Package during the firm's downsizing intervention	Merged from Dismissed for doing wrong, Dismissed for poor performance and Downsizing exercise - VSP	An understanding of what employee turnover is
They leave because they are overlooked for promotion opportunities	Merged from Being in same position for long and Growth prospects lacking	An understanding of what employee turnover is
Some leave because they are unhappy, for instance, with the firm's discriminatory remuneration or compensation practices	Merged from Dissatisfaction with the job and Salary disparities	An understanding of what employee turnover is
Conducive and caring environment with the right culture	Merged from Good employer-employee relationship and Caring, supportive and conducive environment with the right culture	Conditions for turnover to impact positively
Empowering workplace for employees	Merged from Employee empowering environment and Autonomy	Conditions for turnover to impact positively
Fairness, integrity and transparency in application of policy and rules	Merged from Fair application of policy, Integrity and Opportunity to contest fairly	Conditions for turnover to impact positively
A harmonious and enabling workplace	Merged from Social Exchange Theory, Trust and Harmonious environment	Conditions for turnover to impact positively
Recognise & reward good performance	When employer recognises good performing employees and reward them accordingly (pat on the shoulder, monetary compensation, etc.)	Conditions for turnover to impact positively
Training & Development Interventions	Merged from Capacity building plans, Job rotation and Job shadowing	Conditions for turnover to impact positively
Does not always result in positive impact on those that remain	Merged from Not always a positive impact and No positive impact	How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Emulate behavior & occupy leaver's position of power	Merged from Occupy position of power and Emulate good behavior of leavers	How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Opportunity to be recognised		How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Opportunity to learn new things		How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Opportunity to showcase self	Merged from Morale Improvement when toxic or poor performer leaves, Opportunity to prove one-self, Opportunity to stretch oneself and Opportunity to test self	How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Perception that employee turnover provides opportunities for growth and expansion of skills	Merged from Growth opportunities, Expansion of skills and Knowledge expansion	How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Promotion opportunities	When a higher level position opens up, lower-level employees get a chance to apply for appointment into that vacancy	How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Sense of being employable outside		How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Toxic situation turned positive		How turnover positively impacts remaining employees
Delays in filling vacancies coupled to increased workload	Merged from Delays in filling vacancies and Increased workload on remaining employees	Reasons for no positivity
Good performance not recognised and rewarded	Merged from No compensation for doing extra work and No recognition or reward	Reasons for no positivity
Uncertain future, no capacity building interventions & growth opportunities given to outsiders	Merged from Opportunities given to outsiders, No capacity building and Uncertain future	Reasons for no positivity
Remuneration and compensation disparities	Merged from Dissatisfaction with the job and Salary disparities	Reasons for no positivity
No management support		Reasons for no positivity
Toxic Management or Leadership & Environment	Merged from Poor manager-employee relationship and Toxic Environment & Management	Reasons for no positivity
Unfair application of policy	Merged from Unfair application of policy - Nepotism and Unfair application of policy	Reasons for no positivity
Check if i meet minimum job requirements		Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Committed to company goals	Merged from Loyalty to firm and Committed to company course	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Competent and-or Capable of doing the job	Merged from Competent for the job and Capable of doing the job	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Deliberately set out to gain skills required for the job and increase effort levels to land the job	Merged from Increase effort level to land promotion and Deliberately seek to plan and achieve required skills for the job	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Feelings of a loss and dejection	Merged from Feeling dejected and Feelings of loss	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Frustration	How employees feel when they get to know about a vacancy which presents them with an opportunity to be promoted or to grow	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Growth mind-set		Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
I develop feelings of excitement when there's a vacancy	Merged from Feelings and thoughts developed at knowing that there's a vacancy, No feeling (void) and Not excited	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
May apply under certain circumstances		Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
No feelings or not excited by the vacancy		Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Sees stepping into vacant position as an opportunity to contribute positively and make a difference	Merged from Contribute positively and Sees it as an opportunity to make a difference	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Somewhat mixed feelings	Merged from Anxiety and Mixed feelings	Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Will apply or did apply for vacant position		Response to turnover-resultant vacancy
Will not apply		Response to turnover-resultant vacancy

## APPENDIX 5: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

Research Questions	Literature Review	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
<p><b>Research Question 1:</b> In what way does employee turnover result into positive benefits from the perspective of the remaining employees of an organization?</p>	<p>Hausknecht &amp; Trevor, 2011 Wynen et al., 2018</p>	<p>Questions 1, 2, and 3 of the interview guide</p>	<p>Thematic analysis on open-ended questions to establish range of perceptions on impact of employee turnover on remaining employees</p>
<p><b>Research Question 2:</b> How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?</p>	<p>Anderson et al., 2017 Bass et al., 2003 Jena et al., 2018 Nohria et al., 2008</p>	<p>Questions 4 (a), (b), (c), &amp; (d), as well as question 5 of the interview guide</p>	<p>Thematic analysis on open-ended questions to determine how participants were directly impacted or not by employee turnover</p>
<p><b>Research Question 3:</b> How do the remaining employees react or behave during a time when vacancies arise amid the turnover phenomenon?</p>	<p>Chaltiki &amp; Sigala, 2010 Hausknecht &amp; Trevor, 2011 Hom et al., 2017 Wynen et al., 2018</p>	<p>Question 6 and 7 of the interview guide</p>	<p>Thematic analysis on open-ended questions to gauge the opinions and perceptions of the conditions that must prevail for employee turnover to have impact on remaining employees</p>

# APPENDIX 6: POST-INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION



**The impact of high staff turnover on company culture**

Drawing on her unique combination of experience, Cath Bishop delves into the resilience and leadership required to manage staff turnover.

Author, Date published - September 10, 2019

Categories.

*High turnover is an obstacle that many businesses face, to understand the true cost of this, and how businesses can adjust their culture to reduce their turnover, HRD Connect heard from Cath Bishop, Senior Performance Consultant, Will It Make the Boat Go Faster. As a previous successful Olympian, she draws a comparison between high-performance sport and business.*

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We have all seen the chum of Premier League managers and the lack of upturn in football clubs' performances as a result. The same applies across organisations. If turnover rates are high, the immediate consequences are severe: loss of valuable knowledge and experience, loss of morale for those left, and loss of belief in the team's competence and ability to perform. None of those are quick or easy to replace.

Then at a point when new team members start arriving, they typically encounter a **culture** without a clear identity or clearly understood collective purpose. The initial process of connecting and establishing relationships takes time, leaving a **culture** lacking the vital lifeblood of trust and commitment to a collective vision. Levels of engagement and productivity start to stutter.

**The link between work and sport**

Business and sport both need sustainable high-performance cultures – this requires a balance between building on experience, expertise and performance gains to date alongside fresh input from outside the team to keep the **culture** dynamic. High staff turnover tips this balance one way and performance suffers as a result.

Whether it's the Olympic rowing team, a Premier League football club or a business, performance advantages come from investment in the continuing development of their people (**NB 'people' rather than 'athletes' or 'employees'**) over a longer period. In the business world, staff members who can build on their experience, continue to grow their expertise and see how to add further value through collaboration are similarly crucial to organisations looking to stay competitive, agile and future-ready.

In UK Sport's bid to sustain world-class performance and find the next marginal gains for Team GB, athlete retention is becoming the new buzzword and priority. Advances in sports

medicine, a focus on wellbeing and better understanding of how to create high-performance cultures and training environments are allowing athletes to extend their careers at the highest level. An athlete who can sustain a career over two or three Olympiads is immensely valuable. **New athletes require years of investment in support and coaching to reach the top level.** Wasting the investment, you have already made in people who still have further potential makes no sense. Organisations find themselves in a similar position – recruiting and finding new **talent** is an expensive and risky business.

A high-performance **culture** prioritises the growth of its people, combining expertise and experience with ongoing personal development and renewal. It's that open, learning culture that feels safe and supportive that is undermined by the experience of and reactions to staff leaving.

In the Olympic rowing team, every rower, whether in their first Olympiad or their fifth, gets out of bed motivated to find a way of making the boat go faster. This entails a growth mindset from all team members towards exploring new ideas from across the fields of sports science, technology and wellbeing. That desire for constant improvement drives high performance and is as invaluable in the competitive business world as it is to the world of competitive sport.

**The effects of high turnover**

High turnover disrupts and destabilises that culture of constant improvement: it starts to feel less safe to experiment in an unstable team environment, it becomes easier not to explore new ways of improving performance, and the missing connection to a collective vision undermines basic motivation. When teams are starved of the oxygen of a growth mindset and the momentum that comes from that, performance inevitably suffers.

What has helped athletes to extend their careers and how might organisations learn from them? First **health and wellbeing** is a huge part. Macho sporting environments where athletes were praised for carrying on when injured or when seriously fatigued are falling by the wayside. Such behaviour only curtails sporting careers and diminishes performance levels. No athlete would believe that more hours in the gym and being shouted at by a coach is the answer to going faster in their next race – speed and improved performance requires smart training, recovery, trying different things, and learning from past performances within the sporting world and beyond. The same applies to organisations.

**Workplace environment and culture**

Workplace environment and culture are key. Scandals across Olympics sports from British cycling to the US gymnastics team have shown that the right environment is crucial if high performance is to be sustained over the longer-term. The emerging breed of successful coaches, as shown in football through Jurgen Klopp, Pep Guardiola, Gareth Southgate and Phil Neville, demonstrate a different language, a different style, and a different way of engaging with their players. They speak a language of support and respect – no more the

rating Brian Clough on the touchline, much more the language of support, nurture and trust that we saw from Gareth Southgate at the World Cup last year, where it's ok for a footballer to go home for the birth of their child during the World Cup. The style of **engagement** is changing too. Players and athletes are people first, and footballers, rowers, cyclists second – such a statement used to be dismissed as being soft or uncommitted. Now it's seen as essential to enabling players to rise to the highest levels under the greatest of pressures. Lastly, the language of performance has spread across sporting pitches and pools over the last twenty years whereby athletes and coaches focus on their performance and what lies within their control, not just winning next Saturday's match.

Athletes know exactly why they are getting up in the morning, and many teams set goals beyond the result – like the GB women's hockey team in Rio who wanted to inspire the next generation of hockey players or Barcelona which sees itself as part of the fabric of Catalonia (*'mas que un club'*). This sense of purpose inspires results. **Staff in organisations with high turnover have often lost sight of why their job matters – the results are then less than inspiring.**

Who can resist the opportunity to make the podium at an Olympics? Who can resist the opportunity to find out what they are capable of in the workplace? Who can resist the opportunity to make a real impact in the world around them? The challenge for business leaders is to create an environment where staff are hungry for these opportunities, keen to keep learning and finding new ways of doing things, and working together how they can make the business boat continue to go faster, not jump ship in search of a faster vessel.

Dr. Cath Bishop – Senior Performance Consultant at Will It Make The Boat go Faster

Dr. Cath Bishop is Senior Performance Consultant at Will It Make The Boat go Faster, a performance and **leadership** consultancy specialising in high performing senior teams. Drawing on her unique combination of experience, Cath understands the resilience and **leadership** required to manage complex challenges. She leads seminars on topics including resilience, **leadership**, high performing teams, peak performance and dealing with pressure, and has worked with clients such as Rolls Royce, Coca Cola, Microsoft and many others. <https://www.willitmaketheboatgo faster.com/>

## APPENDIX 7: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

----- Forwarded message -----


From: **Masters Research** <[MastersResearch@gibs.co.za](mailto:MastersResearch@gibs.co.za)>

Date: Wed, 21 Jul 2021 at 20:02

Subject: Ethical Clearance Approved

To: [19384972@mygibs.co.za](mailto:19384972@mygibs.co.za) <[19384972@mygibs.co.za](mailto:19384972@mygibs.co.za)>

Cc: Masters Research <[MastersResearch@gibs.co.za](mailto:MastersResearch@gibs.co.za)>



## Ethical Clearance Approved

Dear Eric Peete,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.  
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.  
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.

### **Masters Research**

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At GIBS we aim to significantly improve responsible individual and organisational performance, in South Africa and our broader African environment, through high-quality business and management education. We are the number one executive education provider in Africa, according to the UK Financial Times. Visit our website to learn more about our rankings and accreditations. [www.gibs.co.za](http://www.gibs.co.za).