

**EXPLORING THE ATTRACTION OF NURSES TO A
MANAGED CARE ORGANISATION**

by

Patrizia Straulino

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**SUPERVISOR: DR MM LEVIN
JOINT SUPERVISOR: DR OM LEDIMO**

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DECLARATION

I, Patrizia Straulino, student number 3345-719-0, declare that '**Exploring the attraction of nurses to a managed care organisation**' is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or have quoted from have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

The style guidelines of the American Psychological Association (6th edition) have been applied throughout this dissertation of limited scope, which furthermore adopted a past tense writing style as the research had already taken place.

I further declare that ethical clearance to conduct the research has been obtained from the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, University of South Africa, as well as from the participating organisation.

SIGNATURE

DATE

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SUMMARY

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by

PATRIZIA STRAULINO

SUPERVISOR: Dr MM Levin
JOINT SUPERVISOR: Dr OM Ledimo
DEGREE: MCom (Industrial and Organisational Psychology)
DEPARTMENT: Industrial and Organisational Psychology

The main aim of this research study was to explore attraction factors pertaining to the literature and to the occupational context of nursing personnel who have exhibited employment interest in a managed care organisation. A qualitative research approach was adopted in which semi-structured interviews were held to collect rich exploratory data from the purposeful sample of nine applicants with nursing qualifications.

Twenty-five themes were identified through interpretive data analysis as being important factors in the pre-interview attraction process. The highest ranking of these were identified to be opportunities for professional and personal growth and the relationship with the managed care client, followed by salary and working hours. This study contributes knowledge to Personnel and Career Psychology in the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology and is pertinent to organisations recruiting nurses, advising them in the formulation of contextually appropriate attraction strategies that attend to the most notable attraction factors.

KEY TERMS

Attraction factors; Scarce skills; Qualitative research; Managed care; Member/Patient relationships; Opportunities for growth; Push factors; Salary; Working hours; South Africa

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CHAPTER 1

SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH

This dissertation will focus on an exploration of the attraction of nurses to a managed care organisation in the South African context, where such organisations are also often referred to as medical aid companies. Attraction in the context of this study is viewed as a component of talent management, within the sphere of Industrial and Organisational Psychology and with the emphasis being on those factors that influence the attraction of nurses specifically. Integration was nonetheless important in this study, as pertaining to all factors influencing attraction in order to provide perspective and clarity to the topic.

With this intent and moreover to clarify the scientific orientation of the research, Chapter one contains the background and motivation for this research study. It additionally specifies the problem statement, aims, paradigm perspective and the research design and methods as appropriate to this study. Lastly, the layout of chapters to follow will be presented.

1.1 BACKGROUND

A review of the literature reveals that *talent management*, which typically involves people management activities such as the identification, attraction, integration, development, motivation, retention and redeployment of people (Heinen & O'Neill, 2004; Iles, Chaui & Preece, 2010), is a constantly and internationally discussed topic, especially within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. Talent management as a term appeared in the late 1990s when McKinsey and Company referred to it in their report, which is titled after a second term they coined, namely "war for talent" (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998; McKinsey & Company, 2001). The war for talent has been described as an aggressive competition to attract and retain the best people (Knez & Ruse, 2004; McKinsey & Company, 2001). It remains acute as described by Guthridge, Komm, and Lawson (2008) who refer to two *McKinsey Quarterly* global surveys completed in 2006 and 2007 in which business leaders indicate major trends as the finding of talent and the competition for talent. Harro and Miller indicated in 2009 that an increased focus on the importance of managing organisational talent had taken place in the previous two years, demonstrated by searching on Google Scholar for scholarly literature on the concept of talent management. A similar search, initiated by the researcher, on a leading scholarly publisher of journals and books in Business and Management, including Human Resources and Organisational Psychology, namely Emerald Group Publishing Limited (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com>), revealed over 500 peer-reviewed articles, which included

the concept talent management. More than 80% of these were published after 2006, revealing a similar trend to the one identified by Harro and Miller (2009). This is represented in Figure 1.1.

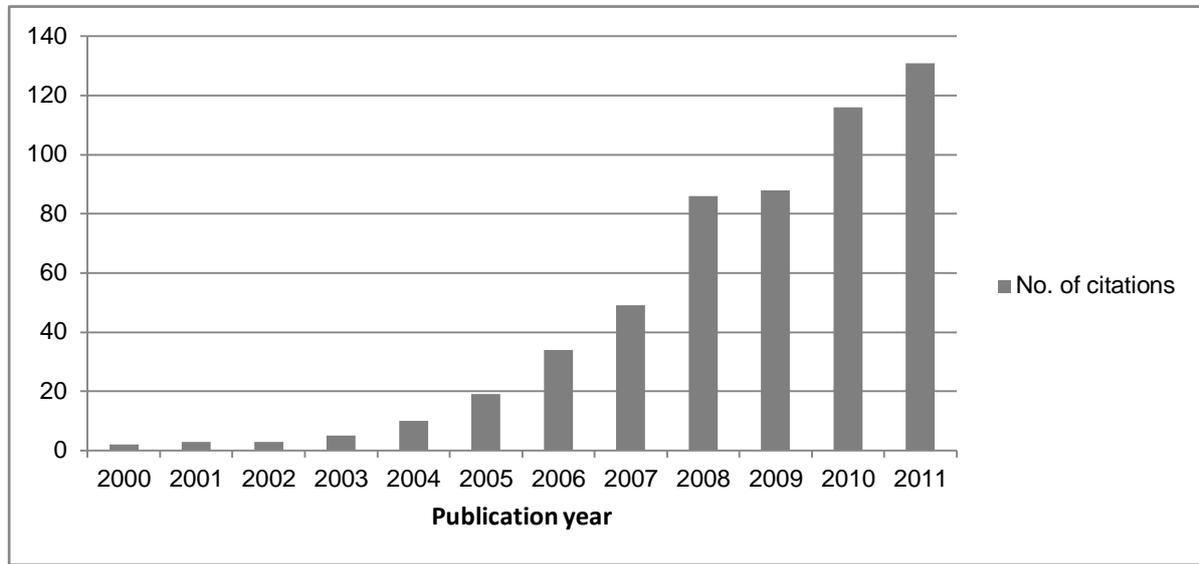


Figure 1.1 Emerald database publications citing the concept *talent management* (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com>)

The starting point of any talent management process is arguably the attraction of prospective employees to organisations (Aghina, De Jong, & Simon, 2011). The attraction of employees, together with retention, is indicated to be a common major issue for talent management (Stewart & Harte, 2010). This aspect of talent management is also a subject matter of interest in its own right given the aforementioned war for talent. This is especially of interest in the current economic climate which is that of a shift out of global recession and therefore out of survival mode as indicated by David Conradie, Industrial Psychologist and the Director of Human Capital at Deloitte in a popular trade magazine, *Human Capital Review* (Conradie, 2010). Brotherton (2011) appears to have a similar view, indicating that companies coming out of the recession now tend to focus more on talent management, including attraction and retention to support innovation efforts. There are however still instances of organisations that have the understanding of the high costs associated with losing talent during a recession and thereafter having to re-employ such individuals to retain competitiveness (Johnson, 2010). Shen and D'Netto (2012) facilitated a study in support of the outlook that talent acquisition is an effective human resources management strategy to espouse during a recession, specifically in order to enhance employee spirits and safeguard the future viability of organisations. This is however not the approach adopted by corporates, who instead opt for

retrenchment in order to reduce costs (Shen & D'Netto, 2012) and then only review the effects and the need for motivated, talented employees when the economy starts to recover.

Research has been done on numerous components in the ambit of individuals' attraction to organisations with the subject receiving most of its attention from at least three decades ago. This is demonstrated by the available literature on the topic, which includes, but is not limited to, research into:

- (1) applicant job preferences and choice (Feldman & Arnold, 1978; Jurgensen, 1978; Schreurs, Derous, Van Hooft, Proost, & De Witte, 2009);
- (2) the role of individuals' characteristics in attraction (Ehrhart, 2006; Judge & Cable, 1997; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Turban & Koen, 1993);
- (3) perceptions of fit and attraction in terms of various aspects, including pay preferences and website recruiting (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007; Cable & Judge, 1994; Cober, Brown, Levy, & Cober, 2003; Dineen, Ash, & Noe, 2002; Pfielfelman, Wagner, & Libkuman, 2010); and
- (4) organisational attractiveness (Lievens, Decaestecker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001; Turban & Koen, 1993) and factors impacting the measurement thereof (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sienar, 2003), which include factors such as trust (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2002), social corporate performance (Turban & Greening, 1996), corporate image and reputation (Coldwell, Billsberry, Van Meurs, & Marsh, 2008; Tsai & Yang, 2010), and organisational culture (Catanzaro, Moore, & Marshall, 2010; Judge & Cable, 1997).

1.2 MOTIVATION

Turban, Forret, and Hendrickson (1998) recognised the importance of organisational attractiveness as a part of attraction, because reducing the number of highly qualified applicants may decrease the effectiveness of a selection system. It is furthermore recognised that a gap does exist in the body of knowledge with regard to the variables that impact on applicant attraction strategy formulation for different types of employers (Rynes & Barber, 1990). These latter authors also stated that a valuable approach to gain better understanding in this respect could be to conduct qualitative research in the form of intensive interview-based case studies, of how attraction strategies are formulated across different business units of the same corporation. Horwitz, Heng, and Quazi (2003) who completed a study on the attracting, motivating and retaining of knowledge workers in Singapore, identify the need for identifying contextually appropriate and effective human resource practices for attracting

talent. Horwitz et al. (2003) also specify that qualitative studies with focus groups and semi-structured interviews would be helpful in providing elucidation on this topic.

It is consequently in line with these appeals and the identified gap in the literature for qualitative research in the field of applicant attraction that an exploratory qualitative research approach in this sub-field of talent management was embarked upon. This study honed in on an employer in the managed healthcare industry and more specifically, one business unit within this organisation where the skill set called for is that of individuals with nursing qualifications, who are recognised globally as a scarce skill (Dal Poz et al., 2006; World Health Organisation, 2006). According to Thomas and Wise (1999), the recruiting literature still leaves room for focussing on the perceptions and wants of applicants for professional positions rather than those traditionally studied, being undergraduates and non-professionals. This research may subsequently be beneficial to organisations by providing an understanding of the dynamics of the attraction behaviour of this specific subset of the population, whilst contributing to this identified need. The commencement of this study was thus motivated by the specific challenges that health and managed healthcare organisations face when the skill they seek is a scarce one, in which the war for talent becomes further pronounced.

In South Africa specifically, the nurse-to-population ratio as at the end of 2011 was noted to be 1:212 (South African Nursing Council, n.d.[b]). As a positive, this ratio is well within the World Health Organisation's minimum norm of 1:500 as indicated by Hall and Erasmus (2003). On the other hand, the minimum norm is very low with countries falling below it being amongst the poorest on earth. It does not allow for the distinctive health context and disease demographics of the country and fails to differentiate between the levels of nurses that are required (Wildschut & Mggolozana, 2009). In addition, the nursing shortage situation continues to be exacerbated by the significant numbers of nurses who emigrate from South Africa every year (Pillay, 2007). The situation is no less intensified due to the aging nursing workforce (Leurer, Donnelly, & Domm, 2007). According to the 2011 age analysis statistics provided by the South African Nursing Council (South African Nursing Council, n.d.[a]), 36% of the South African nursing population are above the age of 50 years, with registered nurses, being the highest qualified category of all these nurses, comprising 65% of this total. Given these variables, the attraction of nurses can indeed be a tricky situation within the South African context.

In seeking to further motivate the necessity of this study, cognisance was given to the gaps in the understanding of the health workforce crisis in sub-Saharan Africa as identified by

Ogilvie, Mill, Astle, Fanning, and Opare (2007). These authors note one of these gaps as the lack of documented policies and practices which improve attraction and retention of health professionals in all contexts. The current research can assist in providing the starting point for organisations where there is an absence of a formalised attraction strategy and documentation to support the strategy. This is certainly the case in the selected organisation, and the approach may thus be deemed suitable for embarking on by other organisations that have identified the same requirement.

Finally, from a personal perspective, the initiation of this research project stemmed from the researcher's extensive talent acquisition experiences within the organisation and an awareness that there is a specific need for the development of a contextually appropriate attraction strategy, which may also assist in creating a competitive advantage for the organisation. The senior management of the organisation's human capital division have additionally articulated this need, especially with respect to medically qualified personnel, and have accordingly endorsed this exploratory research process. Learning more about the factors that attract nurses to a managed care organisation forms the critical foundation for these loftier endeavours.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study encompassed a consideration of the factors attracting nurses to organisations and included an investigation into the most prevalent factors, as identified in literature and any others emerging that influence this attraction. Careful thought was also given to any other impacting aspects that could be identified. This research question accordingly required the careful evaluation of factors considered to optimise attraction.

Core to conducting this research was the issue of realising that, without talent and certain skills, organisations will lose their prime source of competitive edge (Chambers et al., 1998; Oosthuizen & Nienaber, 2010; Ployhart, Schneider, & Schmitt, 2006) and accordingly their sustainability. The problem lies in the realisation that being in demand, those persons seen as talent and possessing scarce skills are resources that are more likely to have the luxury of choice. Albinger and Freeman (2000) highlight this point in their study indicating that those deemed to have high job choice, in terms of for example having completed an undergraduate degree and in full-time employment, and thus able to be more selective, were more discerning as regards their perception of organisational attractiveness based on corporate social performance. Consequently, organisations seeking such people need to consider seriously whether their offering to prospective employees or their employee value

proposition, is sufficiently attractive, especially when compared to other organisations that compete for the same talent and scarce skills. It appears that very little research evidence exists, especially from a contextual view, to show that organisations have an in-depth understanding of what attracts talent to their organisation (Rynes, 1991). Organisations may therefore lessen their capability to attract that talent and potentially influence the choice of organisation made by those individuals and in so doing could be jeopardising their competitiveness. According to Cappelli (2008), the challenge of attracting and retaining the right people remains at the top of the list of concerns which executives have.

The exploration of applicant attraction in itself and to inform strategy formulation can quite easily involve a great number of external environmental factors and individual differences, as reported in the literature and mentioned earlier in this chapter. All of these can also be considered at different phases of the applicant attraction process. Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, and Jones (2005) describe these phases as recruiting outcomes, namely job pursuit intentions, job-organisation attraction, acceptance intentions and job choice. According to Anderson (2001), the selection procedure influences decision-making, having an effect on expectation, attitudes and, further down the line, on behaviours in the job. As a result and with the aim of sidestepping these influencers, this study only included research participants who had not been through any selection processes, such as interviews or assessments, at the organisation. Similarly, only exhibiting the intention to apply without taking action is seen to be an exercise devoid of emotional cost or involvement in terms of time and efforts (Rynes, 1991). Taking these factors into account, clarification of the stage of the applicant attraction process is considered necessary to facilitate the trustworthiness of the results. Specifically, respondents solely eligible are those who have demonstrated actual job pursuit behaviours, though they remain at the pre-interview attraction phase. Pre-interview attraction is likewise identified to be the strongest predictor of post-interview attraction (Powell, 1991), which consequently supports this phase as a suitable point of departure for this study. Figure 1.2 depicts the phases of applicant attraction as described in this literature.

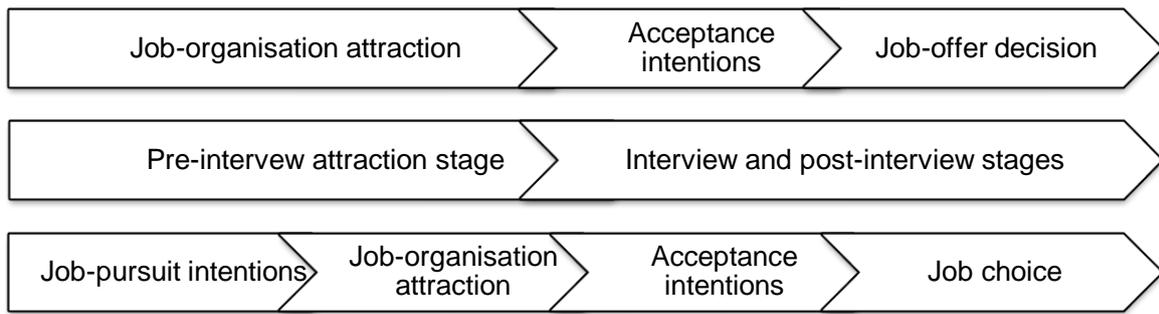


Figure 1.2 Phases of the applicant attraction process (derived from Carless, 2005 and Chapman et al., 2005)

Following this discussion the research issue was therefore more specifically stated as:

An exploratory study of candidates registered with the South African Nursing Council who have demonstrated the intent to pursue employment at the organisation in order to establish the factors that influenced their attraction to the organisation.

The context of this study was demarcated by identifying one organisation to which the research was limited, being a managed care organisation. This organisation specialises in the provision of medical aid administration and health risk management services. It consists of three core business units, the largest of these being where the operational end-to-end medical aid administration activities occur, another where the health risk management portion of the business resides, and the third business unit that comprises the support functions, including the information technology, finance, legal, risk management, marketing and communications and human resources departments. Individuals with nursing qualifications are most often employed in the operational business unit, where their clinical knowledge and skills are critical to facilitate the clinical and financial risk management of cases on a daily basis for both medical aid members and medical aid funds.

This research involved an in-depth study into the factors that had been identified as important in attracting individuals to organisations. These factors could include organisational and job factors as categorised by Feldman and Arnold (1978) or similarly, the three variations described in the recruiting outcome category of job-organisation attraction by Chapman et al. (2005), namely job attraction, personal attraction to the organisation and general organisational attractiveness. The factors may include aspects such as compensation package, internal talent development, reputation as employer of choice and the use of proactive recruitment initiatives, as researched by Horwitz et al. (2003). The

literature-based process to ascertain factors seeks primarily to provide a broad guideline for this research, aiding in the identification of categories and core considerations as relates to the topic.

A number of literature and empirical research questions following from the research issue were more specifically identified, namely:

- (1) What attracts applicants to organisations?
- (2) Which factors are most prominently identified as being important to the attraction of nurses to this managed care organisation?
- (3) Are there additional factors influencing nurses' attraction that have not been identified in the literature?
- (4) How can (managed care) organisations better facilitate the attraction of nurses?

Research questions were appropriate for this research, as the objective was mainly exploratory and the research design was a qualitative one. Research questions also assisted in determining the nature and extent of the issue, in investigating sub-problems and therefore in the collection of information (Du Plooy, 2002). It was also in addressing these questions that this research study informed the formulation of an attraction strategy for nurses to the organisation. Through an analysis of the qualitative data, some of the real-life complexities that are sometimes excluded in the interest of maintaining a simplistic approach were taken into account (Rynes & Barber, 1990).

1.4 AIMS

The formulation of general and specific aims followed on from the research issue and questions identified. The general aim of this research was to conduct an exploratory study of the attraction of nurses that may guide the development of an attraction strategy for a medium-sized South African organisation in the managed care industry.

The specific aims relating to the literature review were:

- (1) to identify and conceptualise factors that impact on the attraction of individuals to organisations; and
- (2) to identify and conceptualise factors that more specifically impact on the attraction of nurses to managed care and other organisations.

The specific aims relating to the empirical study were:

- (1) to explore which factors attract nurses to the selected managed care organisation;
- (2) to formulate recommendations in terms of how managed care or other organisations can better facilitate the attraction of nurses; and
- (3) to make recommendations regarding further research in this regard within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

1.5 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe a paradigm as a system of beliefs or a distillation of what people think, rather than what they can prove, about the world, accompanied by their related methods. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) similarly make the point that different approaches or paradigms permit individuals to know and understand different things as relating to the world. Durrheim (2006, p. 40) explains how "... paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the research and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation". Paradigms might otherwise also be described as the models or frames of references used by individuals to organise observations and reasoning of what is seen and how it is understood (Babbie, 2007). These descriptions provide apt perspectives about how paradigms may facilitate and guide what is to be known about the world and why it is important to thus understand the writer's own paradigm to be able to contextualise the study, the processes to be followed in the study and even the interpretation of the findings and outcomes.

The three dimensions according to which a paradigm may be delineated are ontology, epistemology and methodology. These dimensions provide an indication of the nature of reality to be studied, the relationship between the researcher and what can be known about the reality and how the researcher can practically study what he or she believes can be unearthed during their research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006), an appropriate paradigm can be selected in view of these three dimensions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Careful consideration of the writer's thought processes in terms of these aspects thus guided the selection of a suitable paradigm as explored in the next paragraphs.

1.5.1 Relevant paradigm

In ascertaining a suitable paradigm for this research study, foremost thought has been afforded to that which exists in literature on the topic and the unexplored areas identified where further research may provide a unique contribution to the topic. According to Maxwell (2005), existing research may assist in developing a justification for a study, in terms of addressing an unanswered question. He also indicates that searching through that which is currently available in literature can inform one's decisions about the methods to use. Alignment and integration of these aspects are however necessary whilst keeping research questions and research goals foremost in mind (Maxwell, 2005) and as such these different components could be seen to be held together by being identified to a research paradigm.

Being qualitative in nature and seeking to embrace the outlook and understanding that the observer or investigator holds subjective views, which influence data interpretation, the interpretive paradigm became the guiding worldview and research paradigm for this study. The interpretive paradigm allows for a methodology where qualitative data is interpreted and takes into account the subjectivity of the investigator (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006). A broader set of contexts and meanings, including the feelings and emotions of those involved in the research are important in the interpretive approach (Banks, 2007). Within this paradigm, an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied is possible only through the interpretations of the phenomenon from those experiencing it (Shah & Corley, 2006). Peoples' interpretations of their reality imply that people may differ in the way they respond to similar situations (Gale, 1989). According to the interpretivist point of view, this is a necessary consideration in research, which otherwise negates "meaning-perspectives" and the view that "... causation in human affairs is determined by interpreted symbols" (Gale, 1989, p. 5). This is especially appropriate where data is collected by means of open-ended questioning techniques, which also allow for flexibility in questioning to give the participants some control over deciding the aspects of the phenomenon they may consider important (Shah & Corley, 2006).

From a psychological paradigm perspective, the research was embarked upon from a humanistic psychological stance, which is defined by Reber and Reber (2001) as:

... an approach to psychology developed largely by theorists such as Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Erich Fromm and Rollo May. They proposed it as "a third force" after psychoanalysis, which was, in their view, too concerned with the

neurotic, and behaviourism, which they saw as excessively focused on that which was explainable with mechanistic theory. (p. 327)

Humanism is also described as being different from other mental health orientations in its emphasis in seeing human beings as holistic and with the view that full knowing is possible, that is, that one person can fully come to know another, which is a requirement for psychological growth (Hansen, 2006). The departure point of this paradigm that was relevant to the current study is the understanding from a humanistic perspective that human beings tend towards psychological optimisation or self-actualisation and strive to make choices from a place of awareness as portrayed by Carl Rogers (Boeree, 2003). The organisation at which an employee would therefore like to be employed or to which that person is attracted is considered a choice made actively in alignment with his or her own pursuit towards creating meaning in the workplace (Clay, 2002) and life fulfilment.

1.5.2 Disciplinary perspective

From a disciplinary perspective, the field of Personnel Psychology within the greater subject domain of Industrial and Organisational Psychology is the one most pertinent to this study of attraction within the talent management cycle. Industrial and Organisational Psychology is defined as:

... [that] branch of applied psychology covering organizational, military, economic and personnel psychology and including such areas as tests and measurements, the study of organizations and organizational behaviour, personnel practices, human engineering, human factors, the effects of work, fatigue, pay and efficiency, consumer surveys and market research. (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 349)

Personnel Psychology as a subfield within Industrial and Organisational Psychology is defined by Cascio and Aguinis (2005) as:

... [that field which] focuses on individual differences in behaviour and job performance and on methods of measuring and predicting such differences. Some of the major areas of interest to personnel psychologists include job analysis and job evaluation; recruitment, screening and selection; training and development; and performance management. (p. 4)

Career Psychology, another sub-discipline within Industrial and Organisational Psychology, delves into generating models and explanations on aspects such as employability, occupational, organisational and job choice, career orientations and career mobility (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). It is therefore also relevant to this study insomuch as it directly relates to an individual's employability, career and organisational choice (Sheu et al., 2010; Tracey, 2010) and the war for talent (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). The concept of attraction can then arguably be linked to various concepts within this sub-discipline, for example career decision-making, career maturity and career adaptability (Coetzee & Roythorne-Jacobs, 2007). Understanding the motivating factors within an individual's life circumstances remains within the sphere of Career Psychology and generates a further appreciation for that which influences career construction.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research approach, strategy and method require careful consideration and planning in order to appropriately answer the research questions and address the aims of the study (Durrheim, 2006). These aspects make up the research design and are described in the following sections. Ethical considerations relating to this research are also given attention.

1.6.1 Research approach

A generic qualitative-exploratory research approach has been selected for this study largely due to the exploratory objective of the research topic and the deliberation that the topic is not guided by any one explicit and established set of philosophic assumptions (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). The characteristics identified by Merriam (1998, p. 12) namely that generic qualitative research "... includes description, interpretation, and understanding" and that it "... identifies recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories" likewise render this approach apt. Notwithstanding the debate that surrounds generic qualitative approaches, the trend of adopting this approach remains on the increase, especially in applied disciplines (Caelli et al., 2003). The caution in taking this approach, as with all approaches claiming to adhere to scientific rigour, is that it is carefully considered by the research community. Caelli et al. (2003) offer four key issues for attention in generic qualitative research, namely:

- that the researcher's position be declared;
- that the researcher's analytic lens is explained;
- that methodology and method are congruent; and lastly
- that clarity is provided of the researcher's approach to rigour and quality.

These issues are attended to within some of the following sections pertaining to the design of the research study in the pursuit of a quality research project where knowledge is developed in a manner that stands up to scientific review and is useful.

First contextualising the research topic may be useful in providing further understanding of the rationale for selecting this approach. The research topic is focussed on exploring the attraction phenomenon as experienced by nurses and therefore their present perspectives and realities as concerning it. Exploratory research, which is open and flexible, adopting an inductive approach as described by Durrheim (2006), is particularly fitting to such an investigation. The researcher accordingly adopted an open-ended investigative perspective to explore the attraction of qualified nurses to the study organisation. Despite there being a number of research studies in the field of attraction, which explicitly identify research variables, there is also a call to approach this topic from a qualitative standpoint (Rynes & Barber, 1990). This research design has the potential to bring to light factors previously not considered, which may then open up additional opportunities for research in the field of attraction and the way organisations can develop or modify attraction strategies to best suit their situation and more specifically where the sought-after skill is scarce or specialised. It is also notable that the research is of an applied nature because of its immediate practical application (Durrheim, 2006). The research findings may thus make possible the development of an attraction strategy, which could be employed by the organisation in understanding and improving the attraction of nurses.

1.6.2 Research strategy

The research strategy in this study involved employing a qualitative-exploratory research approach in which rich descriptive data was gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with key individuals meeting required criteria, who were attracted to the selected organisation. Their attraction to the organisation was deemed evident due to their application having been submitted to the organisation. These individuals were primarily applicants whose curriculum vitae have been screened by the organisation to determine if they are qualified nursing professionals, who may thus meet the minimum criteria of specific clinical positions available in the organisation. Such individuals could have been introduced to the organisation in various ways, for example through recruitment agencies, internet searches, word of mouth or referrals. Additionally, an interview with the recruiting line manager who is very involved in the recruiting of these applicants would be included in this process as a means to incorporate data from a different perspective. This additional approach would be taken as a means to include triangulation of data into the process, in order to promote the

confirmability of findings through the convergence of another perspective (Jack & Raturi, 2006).

Table 1.1 provides clarity and the specific action plan with regard to the research undertaken. Even though the design appears linear, it involved a continual re-examination of theoretical assumptions and ideas throughout the process, as suggested by Berg (1995) who argues for an iterative approach whereby each stage of the research is never actually completely left behind but is rather in a state of on-going refinement.

Table 1.1

Research design: The action plan

Method	What/Who	Required result	Motivation
Literature review	Social artefacts: Previous research as published in scientific journals and books.	Identification of factors impacting on applicant, scarce skill and talent attraction.	The identified factors may lead to probing in the interview setting and may provide guidance in terms of data collection.
Semi-structured interviews: Interview guide with pre-determined, open-ended questions. Reference will also be made to the methodology employed by Rynes, Bretz, and Gerhart (1991).	Individuals: Qualified nurses who have submitted their application to the organisation (includes only individuals external to the organisation).	Rich descriptive information about what attracted them to the organisation.	This data may provide insights into applicants' perceptions about the organisation and why they want to work there; therefore, addressing the research aims. It is also necessary to identify links to the literature review and any disparate information.
Data triangulation interview: Interview guide with pre-determined, open-ended questions, aligned to main interviews.	Recruiting line manager: Qualified nurse who has been extensively involved in the recruiting of nurses to a managed care organisation.	Rich descriptive information about the factors perceived to attract applicants to a managed care organisation.	This data may assist in providing additional insights related to attraction factors from a different perspective and based on the extensive relevant recruiting experience of the interviewee. It may also enhance the trustworthiness of findings.

1.6.3 Research methodology

Research methodology includes a clear understanding of the setting in which the research takes place. It also involves providing the reader with an understanding of how the researcher accessed the research setting and established his or her researcher role. Sampling, data collection methods and the recording of data additionally require attention. The following sections clarify the research design in terms of these methodology aspects, including an explanation of how the data was analysed, which strategies were employed to ensure quality and how reporting took place.

1.6.3.1 Research setting

The research was set in the South African environment using a medium-sized organisation in the managed care industry as the basis from which the attraction of nurses was investigated. This organisation consisted of the following three distinct business units:

- (1) Firstly, the unit where the healthcare administration activities take place, and which is especially characterised by its operational outputs, incorporating a number of contact centres for the medical schemes administered, including specific clinical contact centres.
- (2) The second unit is distinguished by its core medical focus, being mainly involved in managed healthcare initiatives and dedicated healthcare programmes.
- (3) The third unit comprises the support functions, including the information technology, finance, legal, risk management, marketing and communications and human resources departments.

This organisation seeks to employ South African citizens before any other individuals are considered in order to contribute to the employment of South Africans, which additionally enforces employment equity. Though nationally based, the Gauteng-based branch was the attention of this study, due to logistical considerations of meeting with research participants.

1.6.3.2 Entrée and establishing researcher roles

Access to the research setting was obtained as the researcher was an employee within the human resources department of the organisation and within this role focussed on process improvement and best practice aspects in the field of talent acquisition. Opportunities to contact the human resources business partners and line managers involved with staffing in

the organisation were thus also made available. In addition to being known by and having formed a sustainable working relationship with these key individuals through whom participants to this research could be accessed, the researcher was also able to tap into recruitment agency networks who supplied the organisation with applications during the time of the research to assist in obtaining access to prospective participants. These various options, including access to the internal human resources information technology system, made the process more practicable.

The researcher furthermore received guidance in the selection of the research topic from the director and general manager in the relevant human resources reporting structure, which provided further impetus to complete the research. Within this capacity and by means of this network structure, the researcher assuredly embarked on the research process to provide research information which would not only add to the body of knowledge but also benefit the research organisation.

1.6.3.3 Sampling

Curtis, Gesler, Smith, and Washburn (2000) provide some key features of qualitative samples based on their literature review. Specifically, they highlight that:

- qualitative sampling is not based on statistical probability of selection;
- samples are small but tend to generate much information;
- samples are not completely pre-specified;
- sample selection is driven from a conceptual stance;
- the rationale for case selection is explicit; and
- generalisations are analytical rather than statistical.

It is with these aspects in mind that a sampling approach was formulated for this study. In particular, a purposeful sampling strategy was adopted, which implies that participants with certain traits or qualities were sought for the study (Koerber & McMichael, 2008) as motivated by the research questions. Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommend selecting knowledgeable and experienced interviewees and also indicate that interviewing individuals who reflect a variety of perspectives is recommended to enhance the credibility of findings and to reflect the complexity that is reality.

The population of the study included all individuals registered as nursing practitioners within South Africa who have submitted an application for a position at the Gauteng branch of the

organisation, thereby demonstrating intent to pursue employment at the organisation. It bears mentioning that these nurses included all three identified categories as indicated by the South African Nursing Council (SANC) (n.d.[b]), namely registered nurses, enrolled nurses and auxiliaries, although the qualification requirements vary for each of the types. This population was numbered at 238,196 individuals by the SANC (n.d.[b]) as at the end of 2011. The members of this population varied in terms of gender, age, the years' experience that they have accumulated, educational background and cultural background. They also demonstrated differences in personality and personal priorities, influencing the content of responses. Additionally, differences in career status and understanding of the organisation were evident in this group, such that some individuals were employed within the same industry or type of organisation, some were employed in other industries or types of organisations, such as hospitals or clinics and still others were employed previously by the study organisation. Given the potential differences explained, the criterion of diversity as often proposed for sampling in qualitative studies (King & Horrocks, 2010) became a viable one. The researcher who subscribes to this criterion seeks out participants who are expected to elucidate meaningful differences in experience by representing a variety of positions as relating to the research topic (King & Horrocks, 2010). In denoting the accessible population, one then incorporated those individual applicants from this larger group who were available during the time of the research.

The organisation employs the strategy that internal employees receive preference for all vacancies that become available to encourage internal staff development and so the ad hoc nature of external recruitment was also accepted as a limiting factor to the availability of potential participants for this study. The approach of purposeful sampling was however particularly suitable due to the clear purpose guiding the choice of participants (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). Specifically only individuals attracted to the company by virtue of their application and identified as nurses upon closer review of their application were eligible to participate. These factors were therefore critical in guiding sample selection and facilitated that the voices heard were those inherently able to answer the research questions.

In this study, suitable participants were actively identified by means of continual and close liaison with recruiting managers, human resources staff members in the organisation and recruitment agencies. Applicants' curriculum vitae and the job specification of the positions for which the individuals had applied were reviewed in order to further identify suitability of participation. The inclusion of participants continued to the point of theoretical saturation which served as an indication of that point where additional cases no longer provided new

information (Kelly, 2006). Sample size was additionally guided by the principle that quality is more important than quantity (Koerber & McMichael, 2008).

1.6.3.4 Data collection methods

In view of the research question and overarching paradigm, data collection in this research study was undertaken by means of semi-structured interviews held with the participants and through the keeping of field notes. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the flow of conversation about a topic, while still ensuring that certain key points were covered in order to gather appropriate data. Kelly (2006, p. 297) depicts semi-structured interviews as a "... more natural form of interacting with people". Berg (1995) refers to the semi-standardised interview, describing it as including a number of predetermined questions and special topics, which are posed in a systematic and consistent order, although the interview also allows the freedom to probe beyond the answers to these questions. Moreover, the continuous nature of qualitative interviewing means that questioning could be redesigned throughout the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This process could assist with enhancing the quality of the study. A general question posed to participants prior to the conclusion of each interview aided in ensuring that any information in addition to what had been asked was not excluded from the data collection process. Following this approach worked to highlight the need for additional probes in later interviews.

It is important to ensure that the interview questions and approach provide a means to address the research questions and that they are conducive to creating an atmosphere where participants feel at ease and willing to be honest. To this end, the researcher's supervisors provided useful information and input on the questions included in the interview schedule prior to the commencement of the first interview. This served to assist the researcher in formulating a better quality data collection process. These measures were also employed to increase the quality and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003; Shah & Corley, 2006) of the data collected.

In the spirit of consistency and quality data collection, the interviews conducted with applicants took place prior to their job interviews with the organisation in all instances. This assisted in keeping a check on mediating factors that could result from the job interview process and therefore in potential changes in the factors influencing their attraction.

Preceding these data collection interviews, participants were required to complete a consent form, which was accepted after explanation of the study and any questions had been

appropriately addressed. The consent form was used for multiple purposes, namely for candidates to acknowledge their understanding of the research process, to confirm their willingness to participate and to provide their consent to the use of the data for the research.

1.6.3.5 Recording of data

Data was recorded using a digital voice-recorder and through a note-taking process during the interviews and thereafter when personal reflections and field notes were taken. These reflections occurred directly after each interview by means of recorded dictation in order to take into account the role of the researcher as a tool in the process and general observations of the process. As soon as possible after each interview, the more comprehensive verbatim transcribing of interview data took place onto a word processor in order to facilitate the moving of data and searching for specific words (Kelly, 2006). Process notes were also made to capture unspoken details such as body language, pauses, laughs and sighs. The systematic recording of data in order to facilitate analysis was acknowledged as crucial in ensuring an effective research process (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

1.6.3.6 Data analyses

From an interpretive paradigm stance, data is seen not to exist independently and before the research is conducted, but rather as being produced by the researcher and research subject at the time of their encounter, making the project a collaborative effort (Banks, 2007). Banks (2007) indicates that, if the research subject's role in this data construction process is disregarded then there is the possibility of misinterpretation during analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) also make reference to the interview as a co-elaborated act on the part of the researcher and the research subject, as applicable from the viewpoint of interpretivists. An interesting idea embraced in this research was that the research subject's opinions on the research itself provided a means to access their thoughts, words and actions better (Banks, 2007).

The task of analysing data was therefore broached with this understanding and the purpose of reducing the possibility of misinterpretation. A sequence of analytic moves that lend themselves to most types of qualitative research types was also seen to be of value in identifying findings and coming to conclusions during this study. These steps are outlined in Miles and Huberman (1994), and have been tailored to this study as follows:

- (1) attaching codes to the interview transcriptions in terms of key data points;

- (2) noting reflections and other observations or comments in the margins;
- (3) sorting through data to identify common and uncommon concepts, phrases, patterns and themes;
- (4) isolating the commonalities and differences to use in further data collection or to provide recommendations for further research;
- (5) elaborating a small set of generalisations covering the consistencies identified; and
- (6) confronting these with a body of knowledge in terms of constructs or theories.

The steps in interpretive data analysis as described by Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006) reveal similarities to the approach described above. These steps are firstly, familiarisation and immersion; secondly, inducing themes; thirdly, coding which they indicate as useful to categorise and order information; fourthly, elaboration; and, finally, interpretation and checking. Systematically analysing content to identify themes for structuring findings is likewise aligned to the generic qualitative research approach (Kelly, 2010). The review of data in terms of the syntactic units (Du Plooy, 2001) which appear most frequently, that is, specifically the words and phrases used, furthermore assists in deciphering what the trends as relevant to each aspect are. This is similar to content analysis, a historically quantitative method of analysis in which the frequency of messages is noted (Merriam, 1998). This aspect of data analysis is adopted as supplementary to the process of analysing the data interpretively for theme identification. Choosing an appropriate approach is important as data analysis findings are instrumental in answering the research questions and providing conclusions (Durrheim, 2006).

1.6.3.7 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Terms such as validity and reliability are commonplace as quality criteria in quantitative research approaches (Golafshani, 2003; Maxwell, 1992; Seale, 1999). Their definitions however become inadequate when applied within a qualitative research paradigm, where instead the ability and efforts put in by the researcher, as a research tool, are pertinent to the quality or credibility of qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003). In a qualitative research process, reliability and validity are sometimes not viewed individually but are replaced by inclusive terms such as credibility, transferability and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) add the criteria of dependability and confirmability to credibility and transferability as necessary to ensure rigour in qualitative research. Otherwise referred to as trustworthiness criteria, the role of the researcher is key in ensuring that the appropriate strategies are employed to produce research that is judged to be of high quality and which meets standards of rigour.

Based on this understanding, a number of techniques were used to enhance the quality and trustworthiness of data as indicated in Table 1.2 below, which includes techniques suggested in literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijgaard, 2002; Tracy, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

Table 1.2

Techniques used to enhance data quality

Technique	Quality criteria addressed
Interview questions checked with supervisors	Credibility
Purposeful sampling	Dependability
Confidentiality of participants protected	Dependability
Verbatim transcriptions of interviews, including detailed reflections, process notes and observation records	Confirmability
Iterative process of listening to recording and reading notes	Dependability
Iterative process of data analysis	Dependability
Detailed description of concepts and categories during data analysis	Transferability
Member reflections to allow for "... sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study's findings, and providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration" (Tracy, 2010, p.844)	Credibility
Analysis findings checked with supervisors	Credibility
Triangulation by data source (providing perspective from a different angle)	Confirmability

1.6.3.8 Reporting

A qualitative writing style was primarily used to report not only the findings of this study but also the analysis and thinking processes that occurred during the process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher's impact on the findings and any contextual factors which could provide a different understanding of the data were therefore also included. The role of participants requires emphasis, and verbatim quotations were accordingly selected and incorporated in the report as a means of illustrating findings and purporting the trustworthiness of the research. Diagrammatical representations of the data offered a useful

way of illustrating the findings and allow an additional means of addressing the research questions.

The paradigm and the anticipated audience of the research play a role in the report writing style adopted (Marvasti, 2011). The report is consequently written from a scientific perspective and with the purpose of deepening understanding, expanding on current information in the body of knowledge and persuading the reader of the value and credibility of the research process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Fundamentally, the criteria of meaningful coherence whereby theory, research questions, findings and interpretations should be meaningfully interrelated are considered central to the reporting style as a means of promoting excellent qualitative research (Tracy, 2010).

1.6.4 Ethical considerations

Ethics can be described as that "... branch of philosophy concerned with that which is deemed acceptable in human behaviour, with what is good or bad, right or wrong in human conduct in pursuit of goals and aims" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 251). The challenge in this regard is that one cannot mechanically apply moral prescriptions to resolve dilemmas (Cascio & Aguinis, 2005). One should thus be concerned with maintaining high standards and personal values that represent key ethical principles, even in the absence of a universally agreed set of ethical criteria (Curtis et al., 2000).

According to Tracy (2010), qualitative research in particular should take into account various ethical aspects, namely procedural ethics, situational and culturally specific ethics, relational ethics and exiting ethics. Careful consideration was accordingly given to these aspects during the research process as the following paragraphs seek to explain.

Procedural ethics is concerned with those actions deemed necessary by larger governing bodies and would, for example, include the principles of doing no harm, avoiding deception, fraud and omission, ensuring privacy, confidentiality and ensuring that there are informed consent and voluntary participation (Tracy, 2010). These fundamental ethical requirements were considered highly important during the current study, especially as individual persons were involved as opposed to artefacts. Accordingly, all networks involved in the research process, in terms of those individuals who provided leads as to potential participants, were given the context of the study and the process that the researcher sought to follow, with specific emphasis on the rights of the potential participants as pertaining to informed consent and confidentiality. The prospective participants themselves were each contacted personally

by the researcher and after context was provided, including information on the objectives and procedures of the study, were given the option to participate as a voluntary decision. They were also assured that their involvement or even their decision not to be involved in the research was not in any way linked to the organisation's selection process and would therefore not have any consequences from a selection decision-making point of view.

Participant concerns in this respect were given high priority, given the sensitive stage of the recruitment process in which they were. Concerns were thus addressed immediately and the researcher's own responsibility to behave ethically was highlighted with evidence of this undertaking demonstrated by the researcher's affiliation to an accredited tertiary institution. Participants were also encouraged to feel comfortable in being honest during the interview as the information they provided would not be linked to their personal identities in the research report and would certainly not be used in their application with the organisation. The aspects of privacy and confidentiality of participant information were also emphasised in discussions with the participants both prior to and during the interviews. Written consent was then obtained by the researcher from each participant on meeting and after clarification was provided, prior to the data collection interview commencing. Interviews were scheduled at the times and venues that suited both the participant and researcher. Particular attention was also given to the atmosphere and privacy of the venue and permission was requested prior to using the digital voice-recorder. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw at any point of the process, again without fear of consequences and with the assurance that the research would have no bearing at all on their application with the organisation.

The interpersonal skills of the researcher were of particular relevance during this initial contact point with each participant and care was necessary to ensure that the participants felt respected and that their wellbeing was important to the researcher. In this sense, relational ethics were involved, namely that researchers should be mindful of their words and actions and the consequences of these on others and that they should engage in reciprocity with participants, rather than engaging with only the end in mind (Tracy, 2010). Collaboration, respect and connectedness are thus key words in the concept of relational ethics.

Situational and culturally specific ethics are more subtle and unpredictable than procedural ethics and require of the researcher to consider circumstances while constantly reflecting on the methods employed and data worth exposing (Tracy, 2010). During the interviews and later in the data analyses, the researcher continually confronted information from a contextual viewpoint and in relation to the patterns of communication that took place in the interview situation.

Exiting ethics as the final ethical consideration is about the way in which the researcher leaves the scene and then shares results (Tracy, 2010). This is particularly significant in terms of the written report and how narratives and findings are presented. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that care is taken to present information in such a way so as to anticipate the misunderstandings of prospective readers and actively interrogate oneself in one's writing. This responsibility is one of which the researcher takes careful cognisance during the report writing process.

These ideas on ethics shared by Tracy (2010) are however not unique. Davies and Dodd (2002), for example, report about how ethics are interwoven in the research approach, in how questions are asked and responses are given and in the reflection on material. Berg (1995) goes into detail on the procedural ethical considerations including informed consent and confidentiality. Wassenaar (2006) elaborates on four basic ethical principles, namely autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons, nonmaleficence or the no-harm requisite, beneficence, where the participant benefits are prioritised, and justice referring to the fairness and equity with which participants need to be treated. Collaborative partnership and the element of informed consent are also highlighted in the aforementioned text. Miles and Huberman (1994) similarly delve into ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality, the anticipated benefits and costs of research, the relationship with participants in terms of honesty and trust, and eventually how results are reached and used.

Ethics in research is an inextricable component of research and it required careful deliberation throughout this research project in order not only to meet governing body standards but also to consciously increase the quality and benefit of the study to those involved and interested.

1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT

The chapters which follow are presented in the following manner.

- Chapter 2: Literature review to identify and conceptualise factors that have an influence on the attraction of individuals to organisations and those that have an influence on the attraction of nurses to organisations
- Chapter 3: Exploring nurses' attraction to a managed care organisation
- Chapter 4: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter one discussed the scientific orientation to this research study. This comprised the background and motivation underpinning the study after which the research problem and aims were articulated. This was followed by the paradigm perspective which facilitated an understanding of the perspective from which this research was undertaken and how it was positioned. The research design and method were then discussed and the chapter concluded with the chapter layout for the rest of this research report.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

An extensive literature review of all the prominent factors that influence the attraction of individuals to organisations was considered for this study. This review provided a detailed illustration of the factors that affect the attraction of individuals to organisations and more specifically, those that affect the attraction of nurses to organisations, especially managed care organisations, also commonly known as medical aid companies. This process therefore served to explore and develop the understanding of attraction factors from a broader and a more specific context and to also inform the advancement of a contextually appropriate attraction strategy for organisations that recognise the need for proactive talent management to achieve sustained excellence (L. A. Berger, 2004). Essentially one should also appreciate the setting, being one where the resource one wants to attract is not readily available.

The path charted in the following sections consequently seeks to assist the reader in understanding nursing as a profession facing many challenges, in particular the current nursing skills shortage and the implications of this in a managed healthcare context. A number of theories forming the foundations for this study or influencing it are then mapped out to underpin and enable navigation. This is followed by a detailed exploration of distinguishing clusters or themes of factors that affect attraction and the reorganisation of these into a framework to facilitate understanding. This approach aims towards a sense-making process that forms the foundation for the chapters that follow.

2.2 NURSING ISSUES IN CONTEXT

Nursing is arguably more than just a job or even a profession. It appears instead to be a calling or vocation, as demonstrated by pioneers in the field, such as Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole. It is a dynamic field that has evolved tremendously since its more formal inception in the 18th century and despite its many challenges and bumpy evolution is considered critical to the health of a nation (Williams-Evans, 2008). According to Williams-Evans (2008, p. 24), the nursing profession faces many challenges that are particularly prevalent in the 21st century, including the issues of "... access, cost, quality, safety and accountability in health care". Additionally, these authors raise the issues of a dire nursing shortage, aging population, workplace conflict and the ever-increasing prominence of technology. These points are resonated in research collated by Huston (2010) who similarly

addresses technological, ethical, workplace and workforce matters, which encompass the current nursing shortage. The current acute nursing shortage is in particular, in the current study, described as a challenge facing the nursing profession, given the understandable impact this has on the availability of this skill to organisations requiring it to ensure their sustainability.

2.2.1 An overview of the nursing shortage

According to Breier (2009, p. 1), South Africa's skills shortages are "... widely regarded as key factors preventing the achievement of the country's targeted six per cent growth rate", a statement which is supported by the goals of the second tabled National Skills Development Strategy in an effort to halve unemployment and poverty by 2014 (South African National Department of Labour, 2007). In the same breath, one may then also highlight the need to address the shortage of nurses or suitably qualified healthcare human resources as a requirement to promote and maintain the health of the country's population (Hall & Erasmus, 2003).

Internationally, cyclic shortages of nurses are not uncommon when reviewing history (Green, Hatmaker, & Tabone, 2008). Roman (2008) indicated that it was in the late 1990s that the public became more aware of the importance of a sufficient nursing workforce as it relates to patient safety. This was as a result of the new emphasis on healthcare quality and safety and research demonstrating the relationship between nurse staffing and patient outcomes. The pronounced nursing shortage of the late 1990s and early 2000s is attributed directly to the implementation of managed health care, which was the means employed to control the escalating cost of health care (Green et al., 2008). The current nursing shortage is thus accentuated. This shortage has also been going on for longer than any other shortage before it and it is more severe than any previous nursing shortage (Huston, 2010). Green et al. (2008) remark how nurses themselves are plagued by the issues of insufficient staffing, amongst other apprehensions such as inadequate salaries, stress, overwork, lack of participation in decision-making and dissatisfaction with the quality of their own nursing care. This then highlights the specific problem that the nursing shortage has to cope with in terms of compromised standards of practice and the related moral distress emanating from such shortfalls (Ludwick & Silva, 2003). Aiken, Clarke, Sloane, Sochalski, and Silber (2002) emphasise these concerns as demonstrated in their study of the association between staffing and patient mortality, nurse burnout and job dissatisfaction.

To localise the problem, it is notable that the nursing shortage in South Africa can in large part be attributed to inadequate working conditions in the health sector (Breier, 2009), especially in the public health sector and in rural facilities. In addition to poor conditions, nurses are faced with a huge disease burden. The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which results in the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), and other communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) weigh heavily on health workers in terms of not only patient numbers but also with regard to risk to their own health. Nurses are furthermore faced with increased loads due to the country's increased access to free health care (Hall & Erasmus, 2003). The demand for nurses does not end there, and natural attrition factors also play a key role in the new and replacement demand for nurses. This includes voluntary movement out of the profession or out of the labour force, retirement, death and emigration (Hall & Erasmus, 2003).

The statistics to quantify emigration of nurses are few, but evidence most definitely points to huge losses for South Africa, with better earning power indicated as a major reason (Breier, 2009). According to Aiken, Buchan, Sochalski, Nichols, and Powell (2004, p. 71) "... poor wages, economic instability, poorly funded health care systems, the burdens and risks of AIDS, and safety concerns" are among the factors pushing nurses to leave developing countries. These authors make reference to push and pull factors in their explanation of migration trends, as does Pillay (2007), who also suggests that a more sustainable way to decrease emigration is by addressing the push factors. Stanz and Greyling (2010) acknowledge the crisis in which the South African nursing profession is, given the fact that nurses are leaving for other countries. These authors have determined that nurses leaving a hospital group in Gauteng have done so due to discontent with salaries, nursing practices, work environment, physical–emotional costs and employment opportunities outside of the hospital. It consequently stands to reason that the number of new recruits is also affected, given that the general image and status of the profession appears to have declined and is perceived as such by those in the profession (South African National Department of Health, 2008). The movement of nurses is however also within the borders of countries into non-hospital jobs, such as for example, insurance companies or managed care organisations, outpatient and home care services referred to as the exodus to non-acute care settings (Huston, 2010). Schaffner and Ludwig-Beymer (2003) similarly highlight the point that nurses are opting to work outside of hospitals, where they are offered more flexibility in working hours, lower stress and further development of skill.

In considering the factors influencing the demand for nurses, in the climate of a nursing shortage, Huston (2010) enriches the discussion from a North American perspective. The

multiple factors raised by this author include the consideration of a growing population of which the elderly increasingly form a large part, medical and technological advances, which influence the educational requirements of nurses, the greater focus on healthcare prevention and the progressively serious nature of hospital patients. Green et al. (2008) view the nursing shortage as a continued important issue in the healthcare industry with the demand resulting from the need to replace experienced nurses leaving the occupation, technological advances in patient care meaning that more patients will access the system with more specialised requirements, the growing importance on preventative care and the growth of the older population who more likely requires nursing care. The congruencies are not difficult to pinpoint and in review of this information, one can deduce that demand is influenced not only by the decisions made by the nurses themselves but also by external political, social, environmental and technological dynamics which affect those decisions directly, indirectly or separately.

Given these ongoing challenges and development of the profession in a changing society, it seems natural that the role of the nurse has also changed. This too has been emphasised by the nursing shortage, which has forced nations to review the way in which they educate and use nurses (Green et al., 2008). Wildschut and Mgqolozana (2009) indicate that the government and healthcare industry in South Africa have taken initiatives with short-, medium- and long-term focuses in order to try and address the nursing shortage. These include long-term initiatives such as increasing training capacity and making more bursaries available in order to nurture growth of this much-needed skill in the country (Wildschut & Mgqolozana, 2009). Nurses are also being trained to be more critical thinkers, where they can deal with the realities faced in resource-deprived environments, as a medium-term initiative to assist in retaining them (Wildschut & Mgqolozana, 2009). The Human Resources for Health Task Team similarly put recommendations forward such as providing financial assistance and creating additional entry and exit points in the education and training system for nurses (Pick, Nevhutalu, Cornwall & Masuku, 2001). At a later date, the National Human Resources Health Plan, which was published in 2006, set the foundation for the development of the 2008 nursing strategy for South Africa, where the primary goal was to "... achieve and maintain an adequate supply of nursing professionals who are appropriately educated, distributed and deployed to meet the health needs of all South Africans" (South African National Department of Health, 2008, p. 8). In light of this goal, six strategic focus areas were identified, namely nursing practice, education and training, leadership, regulation, the social positioning of nursing and resources for nursing (South African National Department of Health, 2008).

The approaches discussed are not unique to the South African context as can be seen in the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations put forward in an attempt to combat the nursing shortage in Vermont, a state in the New England region of the north-eastern United States of America (Cohen, Palumbo, & Rambur, 2003). This commission was created with the mandate to "... develop recommendations that can be used by public policy makers, educators and providers, to ensure an adequate nursing work force to meet the health care needs of Vermont" (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 6). Recommendations include, unsurprisingly, that scholarship support be raised and that nursing education programmes be extended to allow more capacity.

Policy and retention factors, aiming to promote workplace satisfaction, as can be seen by the outline put forward by Feldman (2003) in her efforts to broach the nursing shortage topic, furthermore bear mentioning as important initiatives. A report put forward by the International Council of Nurses (2006) also identifies priority areas for intervention with regard to the global nursing shortage, taking into account policy components. More specifically, macroeconomic, health sector funding and workforce policy are noted as areas for intervention. Recruitment and retention factors are also broached as is the need for positive practice environments, organisational performance and nursing leadership (International Council of Nurses, 2006).

Future proposed changes to the South African healthcare model from one in which quality health care is not necessarily available to all due to affordability to a National Health Insurance (NHI) model are likewise set to affect both the demand and supply of healthcare workers. This approach aims to impact directly on health sector funding through changing national policy and as with the initiatives noted thus far, also seeks to play in the arena of education, training and capacity building. The NHI model is particularly significant to the future of the South African healthcare landscape. It is forecast that the model will be phased in over a period of 14 years after related legislation has been promulgated and estimates a requirement of 80,000 extra healthcare workers (Bonitas Medical Fund, 2011). The redistribution of workers between the private and public sector and between urban and rural areas is called for (South African National Department of Health, 2011). Government accordingly has the urgent task of substantially boosting the number of healthcare workers in the country and have started or intend doing so by increasing the number of relevant graduates, encouraging the return of South African health professionals who have emigrated, investigating how retired workers can be used to train new workers and recruiting qualified healthcare workers from other countries, also making it easier for them to register to enable

them to practice their profession in South Africa (South African National Department of Health, 2011).

As can be noted, there is a broad spectrum of aspects affecting the demand and supply and also the push and pull of nurses. There are also multiple ways to address these issues in an attempt to curb the challenge at hand. These all provide an interesting milieu in which the shortage problem was understood and in which solutions or attraction strategies, to be aligned to the purpose of the current study, were more easily determined. Within the South African situation, one however needs to recognise explicitly any related concepts and terminology, so as to ensure relevance and application within this context. To facilitate this endeavour, the following section seeks to provide a definition of *talent* and recognise its relation to the South African understanding of scarcity of skill, or shortage, identified as a crux to this endeavour.

2.2.2 Scarcity of skills

Davies and Kourdi (2010) see talent as a special ability or capacity for achievement, specifying that in the organisational context, it describes those people with the ability to generate value and improvement by having the right knowledge and skills in the context of scarcity, and that it is then these people who are the most capable of generating value. Scarcity may thus be considered a useful and required condition in the creation of value for organisations and an understanding of the term is therefore necessary. In South Africa, the Department of Labour is the government authority assigned to review the employment and unemployment situation of the country and, accordingly, also to review available skills. In seeking to clarify terminology relating to scarcity, a process was undertaken in 2005 by this government unit in conjunction with the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and the National Skills Authority (NSA) (South African National Department of Labour, 2007). Four main concepts appear to have arisen from the discussion of scarcity, namely *scarce skills*, *absolute scarcity*, *relative scarcity* and *critical skills*.

According to the definition provided by the Department of Labour, scarce skills are generally measured in terms of occupation or qualification, with the advantage that both these aspects are fairly readily understood and measured (South African National Department of Labour, 2007). Scarce skill denotes the "... inability to find suitably qualified and experienced people to fill occupational vacancies" and may occur at either an absolute level or a relative level (South African National Department of Labour, 2007, p. 10). This same source provides the definition of absolute scarcity as referring to the unavailability of suitably skilled or qualified

people in the labour market, which may be as a result of the occupation still being new or undeveloped but it may also be due to deficient numbers of people who are enrolled in programmes in order to meet the required demands. Relative scarcity similarly refers to unavailable resources to meet the need, though in this instance, there are however suitably skilled people who do not have enough work experience, who are not available in specific geographical locations or who do not fulfil equity considerations (South African National Department of Labour, 2007). Critical skills on the other hand are defined by the department as referring to certain competencies or skill elements that one would need within an occupation.

When one then seeks to obtain understanding of scarcity as it relates to the nursing shortage, it may be postulated that nursing personnel constitute a scarce skill of relative scarcity due to the level of attrition of nurses resulting in an incongruence between supply and demand, and the geographical scarcity evident in terms of the higher population to nurse ratio indicated in various provinces within the country, of which Mpumalanga, the Eastern Cape and the Northern Cape are the provinces most affected as illustrated in Table 2.1 (South African Nursing Council, n.d.[b]). Reports of both relative and absolute scarcity are however identifiable in terms of the types of initiatives that have been put in place to alleviate the nursing shortage (Wildschut & Mqgqolozana, 2008).

Table 2.1

Population per qualified nurse (South African Nursing Council, n.d.[b])

PROVINCE	Registered	Enrolled	Auxiliaries	Total
Limpopo	591:1	1186:1	639:1	244:1
North West	408:1	1209:1	673:1	210:1
Mpumalanga*	617:1	1440:1	923:1	294:1
Gauteng	368:1	831:1	685:1	186:1
Free State	362:1	1439:1	899:1	219:1
KwaZulu-Natal	425:1	547:1	936:1	191:1
Northern Cape*	498:1	2437:1	852:1	278:1
Western Cape	357:1	918:1	641:1	184:1
Eastern Cape*	484:1	1723:1	1079:1	280:1
TOTAL	428:1	913:1	784:1	212:1

Note. * refers to provinces with highest population to nurse ratios.

The positive side in a nonetheless serious situation, is that over a nine-year period from 2002 to 2011, the growth in qualified nurses has exceeded the population growth with the former at +37,8% and the latter noted at +12% (South African Nursing Council, n.d.[c]). The fact remains however that a scarcity in this occupation is recognised by the Department of Labour, as documented in the National Scarce Skills List of 2008 which covers the period 2008 to 2010 (South African National Department of Labour, n.d.). This is partially supported by Wildschut and Mqgqolozana (2009) in their critical review of the nursing shortage in South Africa, which includes a thorough examination of data available reporting shortages, including the Department of Labour's National Scarce Skills List. In their conclusion, they report a low fill rate of vacancies in the profession and the aging nursing workforce as real contributing factors to the dilemma, though also indicate that incongruities in estimations of the shortage are of concern and require much further attention by the relevant government bodies (Wildschut & Mqgqolozana, 2009). In Psychology, the cliché resonates that the first step on the road to recovery is admitting the problem and so having done so, the next step in the path of this study is to explore this acknowledgement in a managed healthcare setting.

2.2.3 Nurses in managed care organisations

As previously discussed, one of the factors that adds to the overall nursing shortage is the movement of nurses outside of the profession itself into, for example, less conventional nursing roles in non-hospital organisations. This choice in career path by nurses can be attributed, at least in a large part, to economic and social factors and the resulting evolution of nursing, in which the career options for nurses have increased quite substantially (Koch, 2008). Within the spectrum of non-hospital organisations into which a nurse's career can divert, are managed care organisations. These organisations employ nurses of different registration categories into their workforce as case managers. The terms *managed care* and *case management* are thus explored.

2.2.3.1 Managed care and case management

Various definitions of the term managed care may be identified within the literature. For the purposes of this interpretive study with the aim of facilitating shared meaning, a limited number of these definitions are highlighted. Person (1996, Managed care and case management section, para. 1), as a start, refers to managed care as "... the processes of care that promote efficient, effective use of resources to achieve quality outcomes". A second understanding of managed care refers to it as a general term, which denotes any organisation that directs access to healthcare services with the aim of promoting quality and

cost-effective care for their clients (Hagen, 1999). Rickel and Wise (2000, p. 34) then describe managed care and the organisations facilitating managed care as that "... system of health care delivery that attempts to manage the cost and quality as well as the access to health care". Wagner and Kongstvedt (2007, p. 40) highlight "... access to care, cost, quality control, benefit design and flexibility" as those aspects of managed care that vary in terms of how they are balanced amongst managed care plans.

One can accordingly identify the common themes of these definitions as quality care, resource efficiency and access. It appears that the objective is to manage care in a manner that uses available resources, such as funding, efficiently, without compromising quality or access. The next question, arguably, is who would take responsibility for this objective within the given context, and the answer, at ground level, is that the case managers do. It therefore stands to reason, that managed care organisations predominantly, though not solely, employ nurses in their business as case managers to move towards fulfilling this function. Case management roles are however not only important to managed care organisations and are also found within hospitals and clinical environments. The case management model, from which these roles emanate, in fact originated in insurance companies in the 1970s as a means to control expensive claims which resulted from a patient's serious health situation (Cherry & Bridges, 2008). According to Cherry and Bridges (2008, p. 435), "... case management is a model of care delivery in which a registered nurse case manager coordinates the patient's care throughout the course of an illness". This is intended to ensure quality care while promoting efficiency and managing costs. The role purpose of the case manager as provided by this research study's selected managed care organisation also becomes applicable at this point. From this perspective, the case manager is specifically required to ensure that members receive clinically appropriate care at the least possible cost without compromising the quality of care. This purpose is clearly consistent with the theoretical descriptions provided. The association between managed care and case management is accordingly evident, with the themes of quality and efficiency, as indicated earlier, recurring. Another interpretation deduced from this definition is that the role does not involve direct patient care responsibilities, which are traditionally a nurse's core function.

The critical learning to take forward is however that case managers first qualify as nurses, most often come from clinical environments and are then tasked with the objective of coordinating quality patient outcomes while ensuring cost-effectiveness. These individuals understand care, by virtue of having chosen the nursing profession in which to have been qualified and they have been attracted into a non-hospital environment, specifically a managed care organisation. It can also be noted that a main reason for employing nurses as

case managers is "... that nurses are specialists in holistic bio-assessment and functional health planning, and are ideally best suited as case managers" (Kgasi, 2010, p. 15). For this reason and as qualified, knowledgeable and scarce skills with the potential to add value, one can now explore theories relevant to the career decisions of these individuals.

2.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AFFECTING THIS STUDY

In facilitating the understanding of the current study, one first needs to identify the theories, frameworks, models and concepts that bear relevance to and guide it. As such there are a number of theories that require defining and contextualising. A useful theory framework for understanding attraction which includes three central meta-theories has been published by Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005). These meta-theories focus on the environmental processing aspects of attraction, the person to environment interactional facets of attraction or interactionist processing meta-theory and a self-processing meta-theory of attraction as relates to views and attitudes of one's self in terms of fit and attraction (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). A number of theories are grouped under each meta-theory as depicted in Figure 2.1.

Environment processing meta-theory	Interactionist processing meta-theory	Self-processing meta-theory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual & perceived environment • Signaling theory • Image theory • Heuristic-systematic model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived environment & attraction • Exposure-attitude hypothesis • Expectancy theory • Generalisable decision processing model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective fit • Need-press theory • Interactional psychology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjective fit • Theory of work adjustment • Attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social learning theory (self-efficacy component) • Consistency theory • Social identity theory

Figure 2.1 Meta-theories of attraction according to Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005).

A cross-section of these theories has been selected for inclusion in this study according to whether the theory has been applied in attraction research in a more frequent and a more recent manner, enhancing the theory's perception of utility in the field. The relevance of the

theory to the stage of the applicant attraction process was also given due consideration, specifically as this study had its focus on the pre-interview phase of attraction. According to these criteria, the designated theories in this study were signalling, expectancy and social identity theory, which can be directly understood to influence applicant decisions and motivations in the job search process. In conjunction with these theories, the paradigm or manner of thinking that promulgates similarity as a means to elicit attraction warrants attention. The Attraction-Selection-Attrition theory resides within this paradigm, as will be explored in this section. Interactional psychology and its premise that the interaction between person and environment results in behaviour, though not discussed separately in this study, also provides a broader, overarching perspective of the similarity attraction mindset (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Interactional psychology as such, is not pertinent here due to the limited interaction that was present between the applicant and the environment or organisation in this study, where the tenets of the study prescribed continual, multidirectional interaction (Terborg, 1981). It is however by means of delving into these differing theoretical stances that one can attempt to explore applicant attraction as a holistic and psychologically based concept. This approach is supported by Herriot and Ecob (1979), who conclude that various models instead of only one better facilitate occupational choice research.

2.3.1 Signalling theory

Signalling theory denotes that applicants may interpret working conditions of an organisation and what it would be like to work at the organisation through their perceptions of *signals* such as rules, values and other information that they gather about the organisation (Rynes, 1991; Turban & Greening, 1996). Perceptions are essentially the mental processes by which individuals receive information about their environment and then organise, interpret and understand it (Cunningham, 2011). This manner of information interpretation occurs because applicants do not have complete information and so revert to interpreting available information. This alludes to the important role of information asymmetry as a key concept of signalling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011).

Individuals are influenced by their own cognitive and affective processes to determine the kinds of information that they will perceive as signals and whether they will perceive those signals as a negative or positive reflection on the organisation (Celani & Singh, 2011). This probably ties in with the manner in which the applicant perceives and identifies with characteristics associated with the organisation, as understood from social identity theory and the similarity-attraction paradigm to be discussed later, and may result in increased attraction to the organisation, should the cues received from the organisation be perceived

as positive or congruent to the individual in question. Organisations who are seen to be socially responsible could, for example, be sending out signals of what they value, which job seekers may then use as heuristics or information-processing shortcuts in their decision-making about the organisation (Jones & Murrell, 2001), especially where these values are ones with which they identify. Another notable point by Celani and Singh (2011) is that applicants are likely to receive information or signals from individual and organisational levels of activity, for example word-of-mouth information at individual level and corporate advertising information at organisational level. The behaviour of recruiters, supervisors and potential peers could accordingly be interpreted by applicants as information signals from the individual level, perhaps relating to organisational climate (Larsen & Phillips, 2002).

Though signalling theory is called on in recruitment literature to provide an understanding of applicant attraction, it remains less investigated as indicated by Breugh (2008). This has however been addressed in part by Celani and Singh (2011), who have taken the initiative of integrating signalling theory with other theoretical positions such as social identity theory. It also appears to be gaining momentum in Management literature (Connelly et al., 2011). Signalling theory remains useful in this study, especially as pertaining to its focus from the applicant's perspective.

2.3.2 Expectancy theory

Expectancy theory, a motivation theory first proposed by Vroom (1964), explains the processes that a person goes through when making choices. This process theory of motivation seems particularly appropriate in the occupational or organisational choice process due to the context involving voluntary behaviour with fewer constraints and implicating factors than an on-the-job context (Wanous, Keon, & Latack, 1983). As a process theory, the focus is one of describing and analysing how individuals are motivated rather than what motivates them (Bagraim, 2011). Vroom's (1964) model is based on the concepts of *valence*, *instrumentality* and *expectancy*. Valence refers to the strength of a person's preference for an outcome, instrumentality, to the degree which one believes that one outcome will lead to a second outcome, and expectancy refers to the belief that one has of the probability that an action will actually lead to an outcome. The theory accordingly predicts that prospective employees who have a strong desire to work for an organisation, thereby demonstrating attraction to that organisation, and who expect that their choice to participate in the recruitment process of that organisation will have a high likelihood of their being hired, will be more motivated to take the action to get the desired outcome. Expectancy thus pertains to how attainable the job is seen to be, and a high valence refers to how positively

the job is perceived (Rynes, 1989). Vroom (2005) furthermore shows that people choose an organisation in which to work that they believe will be most instrumental in obtaining their valued outcomes. An additional factor to consider with expectancy theory is the number of jobs on offer, working to increase expectancy where more jobs are available and which may thus result in the attraction of more applicants (Turban & Cable, 2003).

This theory is accordingly seen to have bearing on job search decision-making and provides context on what motivates a person during such a decision-making process at intention, choice or acceptance stages. By understanding the concepts of valence, instrumentality and expectancy, one can claim further understanding of the motivational intents of individuals who have applied thinking processes and supported these with the action of applying for a job within a selected organisation. Expectancy theory is also appropriate to this study from a humanistic point of reference, as it is a cognitive and rational thinking-based theory where choice is understood to be made from a place of awareness.

2.3.3 Social identity theory

Tajfel (1974, p. 69) describes social identity as "... that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership". In this view, group membership is seen to be intricately connected to the individual, and the decisions the individual makes concerning membership to a group will depend on the contribution that the membership has on the positive aspects of his or her social identity (Tajfel, 1974). Tajfel also indicates that a person will remain within a group depending on this aspect, unless leaving is seen to be in conflict with the individual's values, which also comprise his or her social identity or if there is a more objective reason that the person has identified to stay. Additionally, it is noted that groups exist in a multi-group society and meaning is likewise determined in comparison to other groups (Tajfel, 1974).

Henri Tajfel and his colleague John Turner were the primary originators of social identity theory, which indicates how people have an inclination to group themselves and others into various social categories, such as in this context, organisations (Postmes & Branscombe, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A major function of this classification process is to enable people to identify themselves in a social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), which then acts to motivate people to join groups or in fact organisations that they can see an opportunity to identify with. Social identity theory indicates that employees can obtain self-enhancement and social approval when they have a favourable perception of the

organisation for which they work or want to work for (Tsai & Yang, 2010). Celani and Singh (2011) support this notion, saying that applicants who believe that becoming a part of an organisation is pertinent to their identity, known as identity salience, will also have a greater susceptibility to making positive assumptions about the organisation and to feel optimistic about it. In this manner, they would tend towards increased identification with the company.

Ashforth and Mael (1989) similarly recognise that organisations promote their distinctiveness as compared with other organisations as a means for them to attract acknowledgement from various key stakeholders, including potential job incumbents, who are seeking to identify with a unique, positive group. Turban and Greening (1996) also draw on social identity theory in their study, identifying that higher corporate social performance results in better reputation and therefore increased organisational attractiveness, given that applicants would expect to have more positive self-concepts should they work for the organisation.

Subsequently, social identity theory and various research studies drawn from this theory bear relevance to the field of attraction to organisations as groups. It contributes to the understanding of the field of attraction, where individuals seek to belong within social groups as paying tribute to their personal identities.

2.3.4 Similarity attraction paradigm

In Psychology, or more specifically Vocational Psychology, one of the more constant findings is that people are attracted to careers depending on their interests and personality (Schneider, 1987). Holland (1973) provides a dominant theoretical position as found in the literature in this regard, indicating the grouping of careers according to these personality and interest areas. He furthermore indicates that this grouping can be extended to environments, such that people join career environments that are similar to themselves. Schneider's Attraction-Selection-Attrition (or ASA) model is pertinent in this regard, proposing that organisations are functions of the people within them (Schneider, 1987). In particular, Schneider's attraction proposition, which can be seen as the understanding that organisations draw similar kinds of people (Billsberry, 2007), becomes relevant. This is reinforced by the well-documented *similarity leads to attraction* phenomenon (Billsberry, 2007) in the arena of Social Psychology and Sociology. Similarity does not work in isolation to attract people though, as demonstrated by Billsberry (2007), whose study demonstrated that vocational choice was of greater concern than organisational choice to the applicants. Additionally, a need for exposure and familiarity to the organisation is indicated as being necessary to create the opportunity for individuals to assess the recruiting organisation's

values and their similarity to them (Saegert, Swap, & Zajonc, 1973; Turban, Lau, Ngo, Chow, & Si, 2001).

The similarity leads to attraction effect was thus deemed to be a consideration in this study, to the extent that it aided in the exploration of attraction factors. Those attraction factors may accordingly be similar for similar groups of people or career types, under this school of thought. Nonetheless, the study of attraction and making sense of the factors categorised under the umbrella of this concept remains a suitable prerequisite to advancing the study of what people, similar or otherwise, are appealed by, in their quest for optimal functioning. The following section accordingly addresses this purpose.

2.4 ATTRACTION

Attraction research and more specifically interpersonal attraction, has, for the last half a century been considered a durable subject in the field of Social Psychology (Reis, 1996). The concept and study of *attraction* might also be considered quite appealing within the field of Psychology, with the database of psychological articles, Proquest Psychology journals (http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalogs/databases/detail/pq_psychology_journ.shtml), for example, attending to the topic about 300 times, dating back to 1971 and the PsycARTICLES database (<http://www.apa.org/pubs/databases/psycarticles/index.aspx>) carrying articles dating back to 1904. In the field of Social Psychology, attraction is defined as the cognitive, affectionate and behavioural pre-dispositional attitudes towards any specific person (Reis, 1996). In contrast, the field of Psychology defines attraction as "... a characteristic of an object, activity or person such that it evokes approach responses from other objects or persons" and secondly as "... a tendency to approach an object, activity or person" (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 64). It thus implies a certain appeal or drawing towards something, for which the reasons are not always easily understood.

One can draw commonalities from these definitions, more specifically, in respect of how behaviour is affected and activated by the object of attraction. The overall feel to the concept is maintained in the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology, even though the context changes to that of an organisational or work environment. Chapman et al. (2005) as an illustration of this work context, indicate that attraction is a term often seen as synonymous with the procurement or recruiting of talent, although Rynes and Barber (1990) distinguish between recruitment and attraction, indicating recruitment as a means or as one potential strategy for attracting applicants. Rynes and Barber (1990) accordingly describe attraction as a focus on activities designed to increase the number of persons with the

relevant characteristics willing to consider applying for or accepting a job. Jobs or organisations may thus be considered the objects of attraction by which people's behaviours or intentions are affected and activated, that is, by which people's approach responses are evoked, such that they apply for the job or want to join the organisation. Another complementary definition describes attraction as that "...favourable interaction between potential applicants and the images, values and information about an organization" (Bratton & Gold, 2003, p. 484). A central notion, which may be highlighted from these definitions, is that both the organisation and the individual are making choices (Ployhart et al., 2006). In support of this point, it is also noted that people select themselves into and out of organisations (Cooper-Thomas, Van Vianen, & Anderson, 2004).

Perspective of this topic may be further improved by understanding the concept of strategic resourcing, which is seen to be at the core of human resource management practice and includes the attraction of a workforce that maximises the possibility of reaching organisational objectives (Davis & Scully, 2008). According to Davis and Scully (2008, p. 103), the recruitment process "... represents the opening exchanges in the development of the relationship between employee and employer". These authors also recognise the role that both parties play in making choices where the dialogue is not one-sided and that this is especially important in an economy of high skill, technological innovation and environmental attentiveness. Davis and Scully (2008) then indicate that providing an attractive environment is one response to the scarcity of suitable candidates.

In terms of the study at hand, a straightforward and pragmatic view of the concept was adopted, taking into account the activities and interaction necessary to encourage the interest of potential applicants (Bratton & Gold, 2003; Rynes & Barber, 1990). In understanding attraction and approach responses, the cognitive and emotional aspects were however also considered with the aim of creating a holistic picture and exploring the topic meaningfully within the qualitative research methodology employed. As a starting point, more-often researched individual aspects affecting attraction were considered. The concept of *fit* was also explored, specifically in terms of its importance in attracting employees. These aspects of the attraction discussion were followed by a review of the instrumental-symbolic framework which categorises attraction factors into two main groups, covering the cognitive and the more emotive or psychologically motivated facets. This then led into a further exploration of attraction factors according to the employee value proposition as another manner of grouping. Having gained a greater understanding of attraction and those factors that influence attraction, a discussion of the themes of attraction factors identified is provided.

In concluding this chapter, a representation of attraction factors more specific to nurses will be discussed.

2.4.1 Individual aspects affecting attraction factors

Individual differences, such as demographic factors, ability, personality, value and attitude are some of the aspects that make people unique from or similar to each other. This uniqueness or similarity can also result in peculiarities in the types of work, jobs and organisations that individuals or similar groups of people are drawn to. Schneider's (1987) ASA model as an example and as explained earlier, looks into personality, interests and values as those components of similarity said to have an effect on organisational attraction and the attraction to people within organisations (Jackson et al., 1991). The study by Judge and Cable (1997) also provided data to support the view that applicants' personality traits, specifically those of neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness, as described in the Big-Five factor structure (Goldberg, 1990) are related to different dimensions of culture preferences, such as innovative, decisive, detail-oriented, aggressive, supportive, outcome-oriented, team-oriented and rewards cultures. Correspondingly, personality traits according to the same five-factor structure were found to be related to organisational attractiveness according to the four organisational characteristics of size, level of internationalisation, pay mix and level of centralisation (Lievens et al., 2001). Ehrhart (2006) also conducted a study that looked into the effect of personality according to the five-factor structure, with an additional link to people's beliefs about job characteristics, such as job complexity, in predicting people's perceptions of fit to jobs. In this study, significant interactions amongst these variables were identified within the customer service environment (Ehrhart, 2006).

In addition to personality variables, the demographic aspects of race and gender may also influence attraction differences as demonstrated in the study by Thomas and Wise (1999) who identified race and gender differences in the way individuals perceived the importance of job characteristics, recruiter characteristics and diversity factors. Bretz and Judge (1994) provide supporting views in their study of the interaction between individual characteristics and applicant decision-making processes. Characteristics such as personal preference for working alone or in a team, locus of control, the dominance of fairness as a work value, and personal circumstances in work and family life conflict were considered by these researchers, who also reported on demographical aspects of findings (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Cable and Judge (1994) likewise considered dispositional characteristics and the way these affect job seekers' preferences for different forms of pay systems, finding support for the fact

that the attractiveness of the different compensation systems may be strengthened by personal traits. The traits under examination in their study were materialism, self-efficacy, individualism or collectivism, risk aversion, locus of control and demographic features (age, race, gender, amount of relevant work experience, education level, study major and academic average). Risk aversion, self-efficacy, need for pay and need for achievement are also described as individual differences that act as moderators of the effects of company attributes on organisational attractiveness (Turban et al., 2001). Self-esteem is similarly looked upon as a personality characteristic and has received attention in the attraction literature, together with the attribute of need for achievement (Turban & Koen, 1993). These characteristics interacted with organisational characteristics, thereby having an influence on individuals' attraction to firms (Turban & Koen, 1993).

The work done by Judge and Bretz (1992) further enhanced the notion that personal aspects influence attraction, with evidence of a connection between work value orientations and job choice decisions. Consequently, similarity of personal work or moral values and job value content indicate a greater likelihood that the individual will select the job than if these were dissimilar (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Scott, 2000). There is also a link between work values and career development and choice as introduced by career theorist Donald Super and highlighted by Zytowski (1994). Work values as defined by Berings, De Fruyt and Bouwen (2004, p. 349) are those "... broad tendencies to prefer general job characteristics" and are said to play a role in such individual level work related aspects as job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, performance and vocational choices. A thorough investigation into three prevalent work value measures is done by Leuty and Hansen (2011) in an effort to investigate the construct validity of work values. The Minnesota Importance Questionnaire (MIQ), the revised edition of Super's Work Values Inventory (SWVI-R) and Manhardt's Work Values Inventory (MWVI) were selected for the study, due to their psychometric properties and recognition in scientific literature and the findings identified six work value components from the data. These are "... the working environment, having challenging work, opportunities for status and income, autonomy, organizational support, and relationships" (Leuty & Hansen, 2011, p. 379).

The roles of individual interests as these pertain to career choice and development also warrant mention in this section. Holland (1959), a dominant theorist in the field of vocational behaviour, offers a theory of vocational choice, which describes six major occupational environments as they pertain to people's interests. The environments identified by Holland which relate to individual interests, comprise the realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional environments (Winchell, 1984). A robust association between

personality dispositions and vocational interests is demonstrated in the study by Costa, McCrae, and Holland (1984). Hansen and Dik (2005) similarly provide evidence of a longitudinal nature supporting the view that interests are predictive of career choice. The role of interests in the choices people make in determining their career paths is thus highlighted. The study by Song and Chon (2012) also directs us to the effect of vocational interests, additionally considering self-efficacy and person–job fit perceptions and the way these constructs have a bearing on career choice goals.

Attraction may furthermore be affected by the individual attitudes which people have as relating to work and organisations. Cunningham (2011) specifically identifies four attitudes, namely job satisfaction, job involvement, organisational commitment and occupational commitment. It is interesting, though perhaps not surprising, to take note that personal attitudes to work and work values appear to share similarities in certain touch points, such as commitment and job satisfaction. The aspects of job satisfaction and organisational commitment are also echoed as job-related attitudes by Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, and De Chermont (2003), though these authors additionally include turnover intentions and certain facets of job burnout as relevant constructs. Attitudes as relating to the job are denoted as being either positive or negative, where “Some individuals like their jobs and experience a sense of connection or commitment to their work and the organization, whereas others dislike their jobs and experience a sense of disdain for their organizations and their working lives” (Thoresen et al., 2003). Work-related attitudes, as described here, may therefore not be seen to be linked to attraction as a precursor to joining a work environment, although the significant link that has been identified by means of a meta-analytic study is that of various types of fit, a concept to be attended to in the next section, and the influence these have on the attitudes, decisions and behaviours of applicants (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

This review of those more-often studied individual characteristics and their effects provides background to the topic of applicant attraction. These types of factors are frequently measured by means of surveys and questionnaires and so tend to remain the domain of quantitative research. The value of this review to a qualitative study cannot however be precluded, especially from a literature focus perspective, where thoroughness may come to fruition in the review of the data that is collected. The next area of focus will be that of fit, as briefly highlighted in this section, in order to provide further relatable literature and research in this study of attraction.

2.4.2 Fit and attraction

The concept of fit in its simplest form relates to a state of suitability or harmonising (Fit, 2012) and may accordingly be seen as the matching of one thing to something else in order to determine compatibility. It is currently a prevalent research topic in the Industrial and Organisational Psychology and Management literature, especially as it relates to the fit between person and environment, organisation or job (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Morley, 2007; Schneider, 2001; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Person–organisation fit has been defined by Kristof (1996, p. 3) in her extensive review of its conceptualisations as the “... compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both”. She indicates that this definition also allows for the inclusion of other types of fit perspectives, namely complementary and supplementary fit (Kristof, 1996). Complementary fit may mean that an organisation offers something that an individual would like, or the other way around, that is, something which is perhaps missing (Cable & Edwards, 2004). Supplementary fit, described by these latter authors, is instead the scenario where both the individual and the organisation have matching or similar characteristics that supplement what there is currently. The inclusion of these components in the definition provided is accordingly evident.

Even though fit has been studied generally within the work situation where an individual is an existing employee, there has also been research in the applicant attraction or pre-employment domain, being the domain of the current research. A number of studies specifically delved into fit and the relationships between attraction and the applicant search and decision-making processes (Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006; Backhaus, 2003; Cable & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005; Coldwell et al., 2008; Ehrhart, 2006; Lievens et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Turban et al., 2001). It is notable that the study of fit is not an isolated one in the field of attraction. It provides a context in which individual differences, for example, can be studied in terms of their moderating effects on organisational attractiveness (Turban et al., 2001). The focus at this juncture relates to some of the findings and germane learnings that can be extracted in order to broaden the understanding of attraction.

The role of person–organisation fit is noted by Cable and Judge (1996) who indicate that perceived fit is predicted by a match between the values of the job seeker and the applicable organisation’s values. Perceptions of person–organisation fit then also predict job choice intentions (Cable & Judge, 1996). Data collected by Backhaus (2003) indicates that certain

job seekers prioritise the importance of fit to an organisation quite highly, more specifically being those job seekers who have a high need for control and those who have previously had negative experiences with respect to person–organisation fit. The specific notion of perceived fit and actual fit also requires some clarification at this stage. According to Judge and Cable (1997), both objective or actual fit and subjective or perceived fit of applicants were found to be related to organisational attractiveness. Objective fit has been identified as the “... congruence between applicant culture preferences and recruiting organisation’s reputed culture” while subjective fit is the “... applicant's direct perception of fit” (Judge & Cable, 1997, p. 359). The definition of objective fit is provided from a different angle by Ehrhart (2006) who posits that this kind of fit between person and job refers to the extent of the match between reported personal preferences or characteristics and the applicant’s evaluations of job characteristics. Perceived or subjective fit is, however, that which influences whether or not someone pursues work with a company (Carless, 2005). In this respect, perceived fit to job and organisation has been found to play an important part in eventual employment quality, including job satisfaction and organisational commitment, with a preceding link to job search behaviour, such as career planning (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Various links between perceptions of person–job fit and career choice, self-efficacy and vocational interests have also been empirically supported (Song & Chon, 2012).

Perceptions of job and organisation fit have been indicated to influence attraction at different stages of the selection process, with attraction mediating the relationship between perceived person–job fit and job acceptance intentions (Carless, 2005). In terms of fit, Carless (2005) specifically paid attention to the perceptions applicants had of the fit of their own skills, knowledge and abilities to that of the job, and of their values, needs and goals to that of the organisation. Ehrhart (2006) is another researcher who has placed the focus on subjective person–job fit in her study finding support for the interaction between personality and job characteristic beliefs in predicting fit. A key understanding therefore is that the interaction between person and the environment results in perceptions of fit, which then predict attraction (Ehrhart, 2006). Attraction is furthermore linked to fit perceptions by Coldwell et al. (2008) from an ethical perspective, specifically in terms of the match between ethical expectations and corporate social performance. Rynes et al. (1991) provide peripheral data from their study of the importance of recruitment in job choice, demonstrating that job characteristics are important elements in positively evaluating perceptions of their initial fit. Job characteristics in this respect comprise such aspects as “... general company reputation, attitude toward the product or industry, perceived status of the subject's particular functional area (for example marketing, design, human resources) in the company, perceived training or advancement opportunities, and geographic location” (Rynes et al., 1991, p. 497).

As can be acknowledged from these studies, the link between attraction and fit, specifically perceived fit, of persons to organisations and persons to jobs is a real factor in this research field. One should therefore keep it in mind, when considering the processes which affect how individuals are attracted to organisations. It is an additional piece in the proverbial puzzle, which facilitates a better understanding and review of the attraction literature. The following section aims to provide a similar benefit, though the focus turns to an applicable framework for the advance of this study of attraction factors.

2.4.3 Instrumental–symbolic framework

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) applied the instrumental–symbolic framework, as derived from the marketing field, to contend that applicant attraction is initially a function of instrumental attributes and symbolic meanings. This approach therefore serves to group the factors affecting attraction into two broad categories, namely the so-called instrumental attributes, which can be likened to job and organisational factors (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), and symbolic-meaning attributes, which are subjective associations to a job or organisation. Reframed to signalling theory, these groupings are prone to serving different purposes. Instrumental attributes consequently function to attract initial interest, and symbolic meanings contribute to the finalisation of the transaction (Celani & Singh, 2011). Each category merits an explanation for further clarity.

Instrumental attributes are simplistically described as those qualities about jobs or organisations, which denote factual or utilitarian information (Turban & Koen, 1993). This includes tangibles like pay, working hours, location and training programmes. Organisational attributes are said to influence the attractiveness of an organisation as an employer, as for example shown by Turban and Koen (1993), who found that applicants were more attracted to firms that based remuneration on performance than seniority and were decentralised in decision-making. These attraction factors are also likely to be linked to the organisation's vision and strategy. Pinola (2004) relays the view that careful planning and strategy implementation forms the basis from which an organisation can attract talented people and in which these persons will thrive, contributing to the business's sustained growth. They thus argue a synergy between strategy and talent management (Pinola, 2004).

Symbolic meanings, on the other hand, may refer to such abstract things as organisational culture, which is inferred and less tangible. The symbols and the processes embraced by the organisation together with the way in which people behave within the organisation reflect the organisational culture, by representing the shared assumptions, beliefs or values of members

(Werner, 2011). Organisational culture may additionally be a manifestation of strategy and the leadership execution thereof is therefore also seen as a key attraction attribute.

Symbolic features are connected with social-identity and self-expression concerns, and in this respect, an appreciation of that which motivates the job seeker as the perceiver is central (Highhouse, Thornbury, & Little, 2007). The symbolic meanings that are associated with organisations include person-like trait descriptions, such as innovative or competent, that applicants identify with an organisation's image (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Sincerity and prestige are further examples (Van Hove & Saks, 2011). The image or personality of an organisation has previously been linked to the applicant's initial attraction or decisions to pursue employment (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009). The findings of Bauer and Aiman-Smith (1996) emphasise the point, indicating that a pro-environmental company stance as part of the corporate image is positively related to the perception of that organisation's attractiveness. In expressing attraction to the organisation, applicants may then also be expressing parts of their own personality or self-image, which is a thought that readily transfers to the tenets of social identity theory. Symbolic meanings are said to tie to psychological motives and would more probably play an important role in job seekers' motivation, regardless of their work experience or the profession, should other factors be more or less comparable in different organisations (Highhouse et al., 2007). In this respect, trait inferences act as differentiators, especially amongst organisations in the same industry (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

The instrumental-symbolic framework, however, provides a single mode in which to review the factors involved in attraction and it is notable that there is an overlap between this approach and several other categorisation methodologies for attraction factors. The distinction between job and organisational factors, for example, indicates another tactic (Feldman & Arnold, 1978; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Turban et al., 1998), with the instrumental-symbolic framework taking account of these factors under its instrumental component. This does not necessarily appear to be a rule one can follow without dissent as certain identified job and organisational factors, classified so by Thomas and Wise (1999) can be more appropriately listed as symbolic attributes. Another means of factor grouping is that of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Bipp, 2010), which is also comparable to the job and organisational distinction of attraction factors.

An illustration of this framework is provided in Figure 2.2, taking into account some of these overlaps. This represents a first attempt to providing a clear and simplified categorisation format to identify and conceptualise a segment of the factors that affect the attraction of

individuals to organisations.

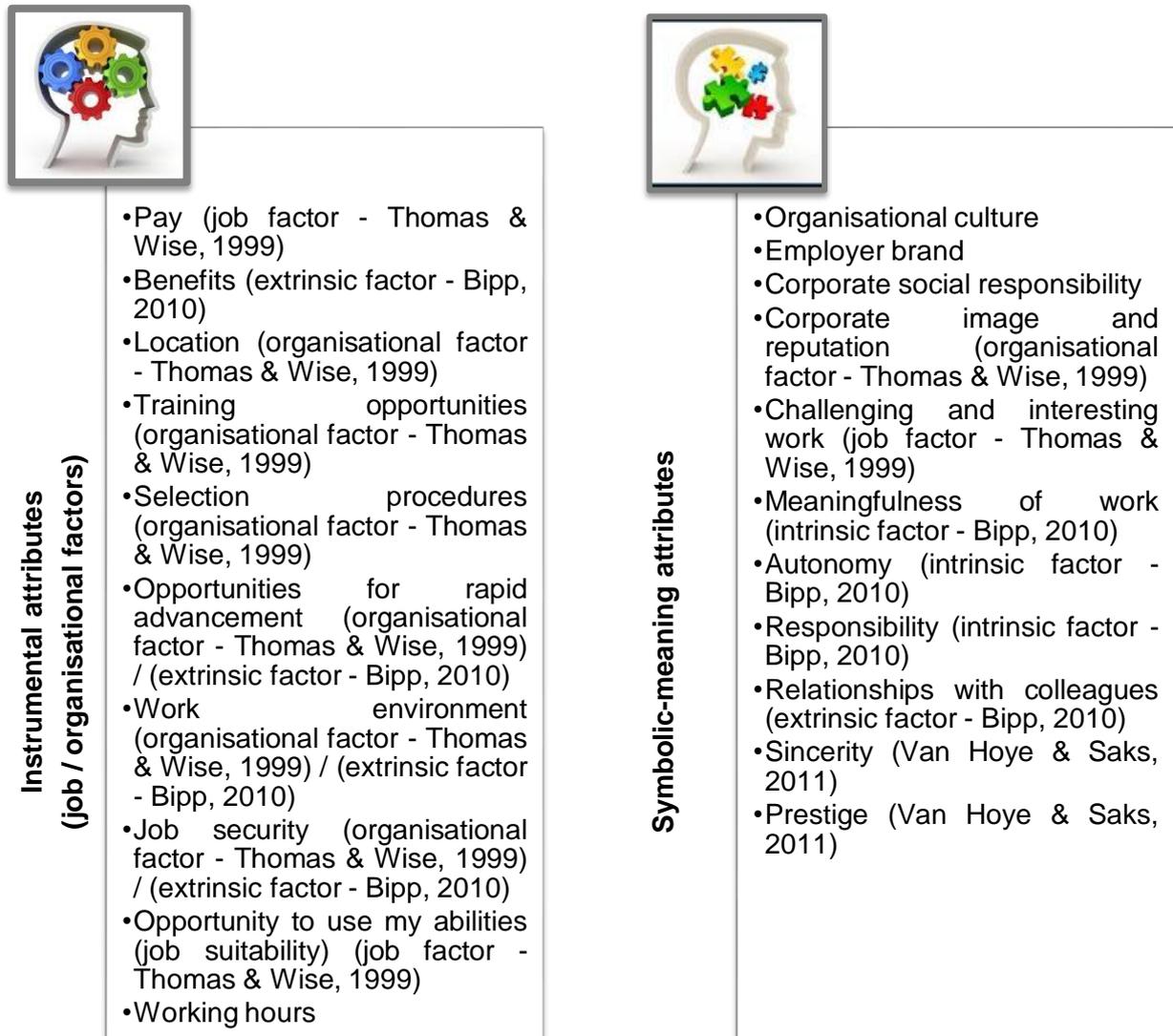


Figure 2.2 Instrumental and symbolic attraction factors.

One can then likewise consider attraction from other perspectives, one of which is the employee value proposition, which is discussed in the section that follows. This will provide a more in-depth understanding of the topic inasmuch as it offers a different view of the collation of attraction factors.

2.4.4 Employee value proposition

Organisational image and portraying a positive impression on the labour market's perception of the employment value proposition are often being accepted as essential in the attraction of prospective employees (D. R. Berger, 2004). The employee value proposition is also

identified as a key differentiator of organisational success, where it can help in the competition to recruit suited employees (Bell, 2005). Organisations who invest effort into creating a value proposition for employees or prospective employees provide a reply to the question why people would want to work for or are attracted to the organisation (Chambers et al., 1998; McKinsey & Company, 2001).

Lowe and Schellenberg (2002, p. 18) propose that the employee understanding of the value proposition is that of a "... job and a work environment that meets expectations". A British management consulting organisation (Talentsmoothie, 2010, p. 1) describes the employee value proposition as the "... characteristics and appeal of working for an organisation" and indicates that where this proposition is clearly differentiated it acts to attract and retain people. The employment value proposition has also been defined as including those attributes that current and prospective employees see to be the value that they achieve by being linked to an organisation, thereby increasing the accessible talent pool and increasing the fit between candidate and organisation (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). The value proposition is thus said to be critical to talent attraction with five categories identified, namely work, rewards, people, opportunity and organisation (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). According to this research, these categories are made up of further attributes which have been measured for impact across a broad range of stakeholders and countries, five of which have been determined as core to the employment value proposition as it relates to attraction. These attributes are compensation, organisational stability, development opportunities, future career opportunities and respect (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). Work-life balance, location, ethics and integrity and vacation are further attributes that are recognised globally as being important to attraction (Corporate Leadership Council, 2012).

Within the employment value proposition, it is an interesting consideration that many drivers of attraction are also seen to be drivers of attrition (Corporate Leadership Council, 2012), a point substantiated by Barber and Bretz (2000, p. 33), who highlight the finding that a significant similarity exists in the "... psychological processes underlying attraction and retention". Factors contributing to employee retention, also a part of the talent management process, might thus also be considered relevant to this discussion. Employee engagement has, for example, been linked to employee satisfaction and employee turnover as a business unit outcome (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). The highest ranked drivers of employee engagement as indicated by the Best Company to Work For survey (Deloitte, 2010), which provides evidence from employees working at 85 participating Southern African organisations, suggest confirmation of some overlap. In this survey, employees indicate that they are more engaged when: (a) they have the skills and resources to do their work

effectively; (b) there is good communication; (c) there is the opportunity to add value; (d) remuneration, rewards and benefits are deemed suitable; and (e) work–life balance is present. In terms of retention, a global employee report, namely *Talent Edge 2020* (Deloitte, 2012), specifically highlights retention initiatives to which employers should pay attention, indicating that promotions or job advancement and additional compensation are perceived to be important by all generations of employees surveyed. Numerous additional studies on employee engagement and retention are available in the Industrial and Organisational Psychology literature as is evident from a targeted search on Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.co.za>) conducted on 09 November 2012 where more than 2,000 hits were returned on each concept and, although it is important to note that there are connections and overlaps between the employee value proposition, attraction and these facets, a detailed review is less pertinent to the focus of this study.

In further considering the key ingredients of the employee value proposition specifically, Bell (2005) includes the financial factor of remuneration, and indicates that other important aspects to focus on are company attractiveness, corporate responsibility, respect for others, embracing work–life balance and the creation of prospects for professional and personal growth. Britton, Chadwick and Walker (1999) provide an additional indication that the value proposition is about rewards that are both tangible and intangible, with a greater emphasis on the importance of intrinsic elements. In their Canadian study, Britton et al. (1999) identified five reward groupings, namely direct financial rewards, indirect financial rewards, affiliation, work content and career opportunities. Lowe and Schellenberg (2002) also provide a Canadian worker perspective, finding that differences existed between male and female expectations, with female workers placing more significance on issues relating to a people-supportive climate, including respect, communication, recognition, work–family balance and co-worker relations. Chambers et al. (1998) refer to the company, the jobs and compensation and lifestyle aspects as the essential categories that require attention and tailoring in the employee value proposition.

Notably, however, emerging economies such as South Africa, unlike developed economies, do not yet have a universal employment value proposition, which is necessary for the prioritisation of employment value proposition preferences (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). This is notable in particular as geographic differences were found to be the main driver of variation in the employment value proposition (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006).

A motif is detectable in the review of attraction literature in the sections covered thus far,

namely that people's approach responses or behaviours in terms of attraction are evoked by tangible and by symbolic personal factors about the organisation and about the job. Although the factors described thus far are grouped in different ways by different authors, they appear to remain substantially similar, with considerable overlap. It thus becomes the objective of the next section to relay a discussion of attraction factor themes taking into account that which has been illuminated to this point and any additional considerations not yet noted.

2.4.5 Themes of attraction factors identified

Those aspects influencing the number of applicants to jobs and organisations appear to be numerous, as identified in this study so far. One would however not consider the volume unusual when realising, for example, how people often describe more than one aspect to validate their preferences and explain the various factors involved in the eventual choices they make. It further appears fitting to work towards providing a generally comprehensive framework of attraction factors based on the identified research and by so doing to permit the inclusion of a great deal of relevant subject material. As would have been noted, the topic has been broached from a number of different angles and so the factors included are attended to in a similar manner. Specifically, organisational factors and characteristics, job factors and characteristics, extrinsic and intrinsic factors, work values, employee value proposition aspects and drivers of employee engagement and retention are considered. Although not specified explicitly, instrumental attributes and symbolic-meaning attributes are an inherent part of the information. Schein's (1996) eight career anchors, or those values, motives and needs relating to occupational choice, will furthermore be integrated into this section in order to elicit enriched understanding, as will an applied version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Bagraim, 2011).

The axiomatic factor to consider when people are choosing to make career moves and enter into application processes is that of remuneration. This factor has been the focus of quite a few studies as they relate to application and attraction (Barber & Bretz, 2000; Cable & Judge, 1994; Li & Roloff, 2007; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman III, 1983) though more often it has been a factor highlighted within broader studies covering various aspects. It is, for example, indicated as a work value by Leuty and Hansen (2011), as a job factor by Thomas and Wise (1999), a concretely measurable job dimension in the study by Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert and Shipp (2006) and as an organisational characteristic in the sense of the organisational pay system by Lievens et al. (2001). Chambers et al. (1998) describe compensation, specifically referring to differentiated and high total compensation as employee value proposition dimensions, and indicate compensation as important in the war

for talent. Additional compensation is furthermore considered critical in the plight to keep employees (Deloitte, 2012). In some instances, the importance of pay, though it cannot be omitted, receives limited emphasis as compared with the less tangible, intrinsic elements (Bell, 2005; Britton et al., 1999). A further interesting note about pay is its appearance in an application of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, indicating attractive pay as a physiological need and merit-based pay as an esteem need (Bagraim, 2011).

Akin to pay is the point of benefits, being indirect financial rewards as they are referred to by Britton et al. (1999). Bipp (2010) refers to benefits, including the number of holiday days and pension as extrinsic or job environment features. Bagraim (2011) includes pension plans, medical cover, disability insurance and subsidies into the applied version of Maslow's needs hierarchy, with pension plans, medical cover and disability insurance included as safety needs and subsidies titled to be physiological needs. Edwards et al. (2006) include vacation time as a job dimension.

Another aspect considered to be an extrinsic factor by Bipp (2010) are work conditions, which are similarly positioned as a safety need in Maslow's applied hierarchy (Bagraim, 2011). Working environment ascends in the domain of work values too (Leuty & Hansen, 2011) and as an organisational factor in the study of organisational attractiveness by Thomas and Wise (1999). The environment in which the work takes place is therefore a factor that comes into play a number of times in the literature, as does the point of geographic location. Rynes et al. (1991) specify geographic location as being a job characteristic. Interestingly, the study done by Lieb (2003, p. 182) also indicates geographic location as a job attribute, however the attribute of *easy commute* is further included in this study, noting that the job attributes included are based on a pilot study and on literature. One may however also argue the idea that these are similar attributes in terms of easy commute being the primary reason for considering location to be important, especially in a South African urban context. In coming from a different angle, Thomas and Wise (1999) point to location as an organisational factor. Chambers et al. (1998) include geographic location under the heading of compensation and lifestyle.

The working hours linked to a job are furthermore listed as an extrinsic factor by Bipp (2010). This factor may operate alone or it may perhaps be connected with the issue of work-life balance. Work-life balance, otherwise referred to as respect for lifestyle, is important in the conversation relating to the employee value proposition (Bell, 2005; Chambers et al., 1998). The aspect of lifestyle is also one of Schein's (1996) career anchors referring to that need which individuals may have to be more able to integrate their career, family and personal

needs in a flexible way. In this respect, flexible working hours may be helpful, although other work–life balance options such as flexible career paths were certainly also found to be attractive to applicants (Carless & Wintle, 2007). Work–life balance is additionally accredited as a driver of employee engagement (Deloitte, 2010), which aids in the retention and attraction of desirable applicants.

In addition to these factors, there is also the contemplation of opportunities, which applicants may generally be looking for when deciding on a move. According to D. R. Berger (2004), a well-balanced mix of traditional, quantifiable elements such as competitive salary and benefits and more intangible rewards such as providing learning and development opportunities is essential to motivate, engage and retain top talent. More specifically, it appears that applicants actively search for opportunities for development and growth and opportunities for advancement and change. Thomas and Wise (1999) grade both these aspects under the heading of organisational factors whereas Rynes et al. (1991) regard perceived training or advancement opportunities as job characteristics. Bipp (2010) instead indicates opportunities for promotion and opportunities for personal growth and development as intrinsic factors. Chambers et al. (1998) likewise rate these two aspects as important motivators for employees or prospective employees, reflecting the need for companies great at development and jobs that offer career advancement and growth. Career opportunities is certainly also emphasised as a reward of work by Britton et al. (1999), with the concept encompassing both personal growth and career renewal and challenge. Opportunity and prospects for development are additionally incorporated as important components of the employee value proposition (Bell, 2005; Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). In emphasis of these aspects, Bagraim (2011) includes promotion opportunities and merit-based promotions in the top tiers of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, representing self-actualisation and esteem needs respectively. Although available opportunities appear to be important to candidates, the job itself for which interest is shown also requires attention.

There are a number of job or work features which assist in making jobs more attractive to individuals. The literature presents facets such as the job content, which includes the meaningfulness and challenge offered by the job, the autonomy and responsibility offered within the job and the variety that comes with a job, in support of this statement (Bipp, 2010; Britton et al., 1999; Chambers et al., 1998; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Leuty & Hansen, 2011). Job-characteristics theory, which seeks to identify those conditions that allow people to be motivated from within to perform their jobs well and as proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1976), includes a number of core job dimensions pertinent to this topic, as an example. In the job-characteristics model, skill variety, task identity and task significance are

said to influence how meaningfully work is experienced. Autonomy in one's work and feedback of the results of the work to increase knowledge of how one is performing are also considered core job dimensions in this model. Great jobs that offer autonomy and exciting challenges are certainly not mislaid from the employee value proposition either (Britton et al., 1999; Chambers et al., 1998) or as self-actualisation needs in Maslow's applied hierarchy (Bagram, 2011). Also quite appropriate is the inclusion of challenging and interesting work as a job factor, job factors of which are evidenced to be highly important in organisational attraction (Thomas & Wise, 1999). Work autonomy and variety are also factored into the work done by Edwards et al. (2006), although in this case, they are regarded as abstract, more subjectively measured job dimensions. Autonomy and challenging work are furthermore characterised as work values (Leuty & Hansen, 2011) and career anchors (Schein, 1996). Another two related career anchors are those of service or dedication to a cause and general managerial competence (Schein, 1996), which also tell of the type of work which appeals to people to differing degrees. Bipp (2010) classifies a number of highly comparable intrinsic work motivation elements, namely autonomy, responsibility, meaningful work, task variety, the execution of whole tasks and the possibility of wielding influence. It stands to reason that for some, having the opportunity to manage others is a key attraction factor, as is also represented by the concrete job dimension, span of control (Edwards et al., 2006), though for many, work content should be sure to offer richness and depth. In this respect, one can perhaps refer to that resultant feeling of accomplishment, a job attribute included in the study by Lieb (2003).

Closely associated with the contents of a job is the opportunity to use one's abilities and knowledge in performing a job and the resultant recognition received for work done. Bipp (2010) drives the point that having the opportunity to use one's abilities at work is an intrinsic factor, as is the concomitant recognition for performing a job well. The related career anchor of technical or functional competence, which allows for the application of expertise (Schein, 1996), supports the view that this has been identified as an appealing characteristic of jobs and careers. Prestige or status of jobs, departments or industries is an added item of appeal. Prestige is considered an abstract job dimension by Edwards et al. (2006) and is seen to fulfil an esteem need, especially in terms of how the job's title is perceived (Bagram, 2011).

This section has thus far covered environmental or tangibly founded aspects, opportunity-related components and, more specific, job factors that impact on attraction. Organisational factors can however also increase attraction as certainly referred to before and these will therefore also receive attention. Thomas and Wise (1999) represent job security as an organisational factor, while Bipp (2010) identifies job security as an extrinsic factor. Security

or stability is also a career anchor (Schein, 1996). Chambers et al. (1998) also take cognisance of job security, especially inasmuch as it denotes a great company brand. Corporate brand, image and reputation have been studied in the field of attraction quite recurrently (Allen et al., 2007; Botha, Bussin, & De Swardt, 2011; Gatewood et al., 1993; Jiang & Iles, 2011; Tsai & Yang, 2010; Turban & Cable, 2003; Turban et al., 1998) and therefore also seem likely attraction factors for inclusion in this study. Corporate image and reputation is considered an organisational factor by Thomas and Wise (1999), and general company reputation was briefly noted as a job characteristic in the study instrumented by Rynes et al. (1991). Indicators of organisational reputation, such as the organisation's size, performance, management, mission statement and industry reputation are also notable at this stage, particularly as highlighted by Chambers et al. (1998) in the employee value proposition discussion. Corporate social performance or responsibility is another aspect that cannot be ignored as relating to attraction, having been identified as providing a competitive advantage in applicant attraction (Greening & Turban, 2000; Turban & Greening, 1996). Bell (2005) notes the important role of corporate responsibility in the employee value proposition. The issue of pro-environmental stance, as found to be relevant to organisational attractiveness and intent to pursue work (Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996), is also worth mentioning when discussing corporate responsibility and image.

Accompanying company functioning is the previously deliberated factor of organisational culture. Organisational culture is largely a representation of the values of its constituents and an important component of the employee value proposition (Chambers et al., 1998). There are numerous types of cultures, which can, for instance, be effected by company processes, policies and communication flows. Corporate policy and administration and involvement in company processes are viewed as extrinsic and intrinsic factors respectively by Bipp (2010). Communication when done well is considered a driver of employee engagement (Deloitte, 2010). Cultures which allow access to opportunities for creativity are seen to promote the fulfilment of a self-actualisation need (Bagraim, 2011). Organisational culture is an intricate topic that has a following in its own right, beyond the scope of this study. Its impact on attraction will therefore be considered in broad terms with due importance nevertheless attached to its relevance.

Organisations could not exist without people, who were the focus of this study and the focus of Psychology in all its forms. According to Rynes et al. (1991), social factors certainly play a role in job choice, with the information received from friends or acquaintances working at an organisation an unmistakable influence on organisational attractiveness. Whilst taking an internal organisational view, work relationships are even agreed to be a work value (Leuty &

Hansen, 2011). Relationships with colleagues, subordinates and supervisors are essentially features of the job environment or extrinsic factors (Bipp, 2010). As part of the employee value proposition, people may strive to work for organisations where talented people work and where employees fit in with their boss (Chambers et al., 1998). Affiliation on the one hand, or people on the other, and showing respect in terms of those people are thus described as being part of the employee value proposition by these authors and others (Bell, 2005; Britton et al., 1999; Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). A manager's leadership style is certainly also put under the spotlight. Closeness of supervision, for example, as an abstract, difficult to measure construct, still forms part of the dimensions of a job affecting fit (Edwards et al., 2006). Weiss and MacKay (2009) argue that strong leadership that sets an enviable example attracts people to follow. Relationships from all angles therefore come under observation and the social needs people have, according to Maslow, can be satisfied at the workplace (Bagraim, 2011).

Though not an exhaustive list, a fair number of prominent attraction factors have been identified and conceptualised from the literature. Others not included due to the infrequency of their mention in the literature are, for example, a desire for travel (Edwards et al., 2006) and the lifestyle value component of acceptable pace and stress (Chambers et al., 1998). In addition, recruiter factors, such as recruiter diversity and behaviour are not applicable to the current study, which focussed on the attraction process prior to selection or interviews and are thus also not taken into account. Those factors that are however conspicuous and fitting are depicted in Figure 2.3, in an attempt to provide a simple graphical embodiment of this research at a literature study level. Influencing theoretical perspectives have been incorporated into this depiction to add depth. Categorisation and components of this framework are presented as an initial basis for further work in this field and indeed also within this study.

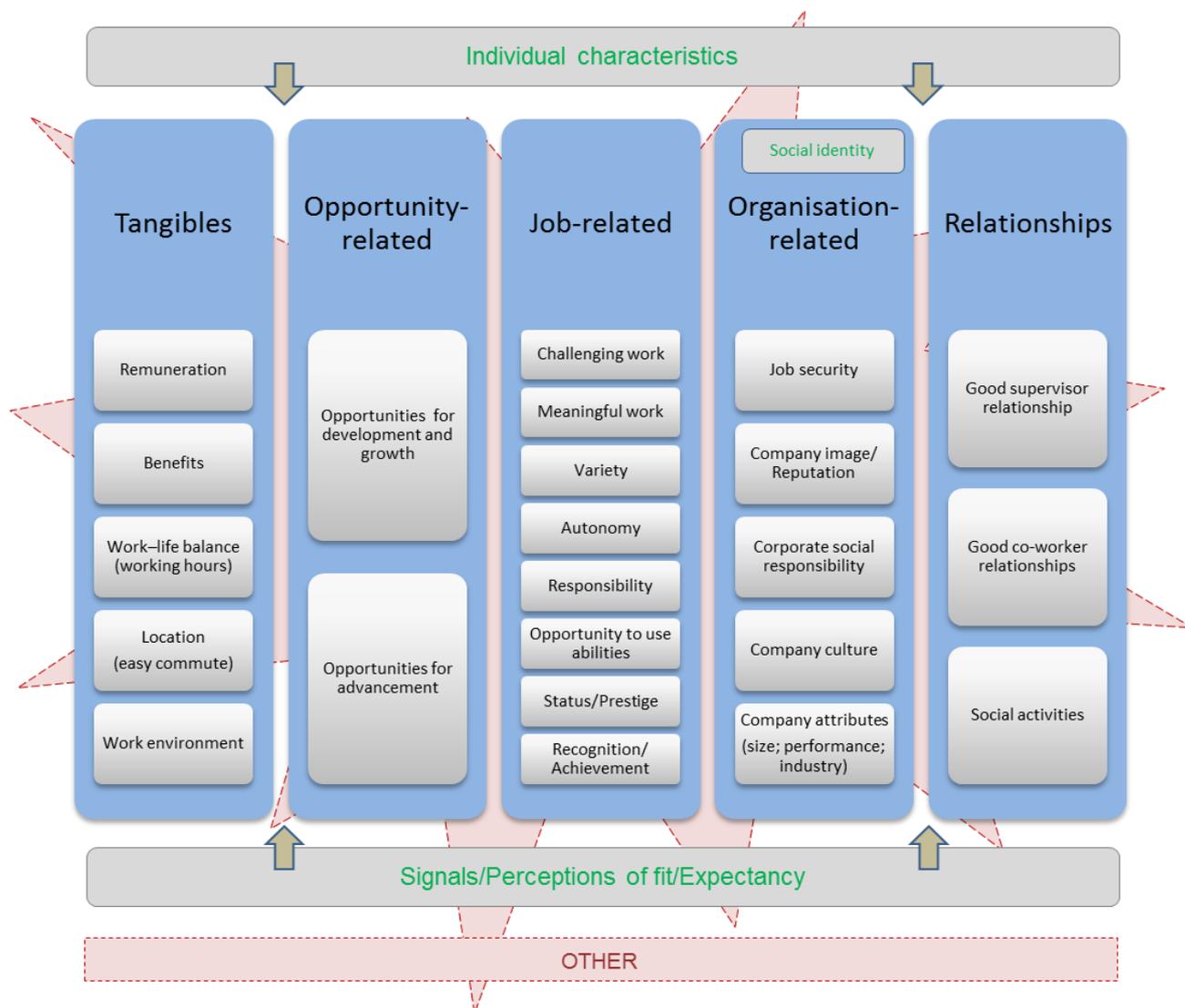


Figure 2.3 Framework of attraction factors (Author's own).

2.4.6 A refocus on nurses

This study aimed not only to look into attraction factors that are generally identifiable from the literature but also aimed to determine whether there are attraction factors that one should review specifically as they pertain to nursing professionals. In refocussing on this aim, the interpretation of research data findings may be facilitated and new discoveries highlighted. One approach in reviewing the literature is to not only evaluate that which nurses are drawn to but also to look beyond, taking cognisance of those aspects which nurses are drawn away from. This approach was helpful during this research, as there appeared to be a very limited body of knowledge, if any, on the factors that attract nurses to managed care organisations in particular. Barber and Bretz (2000) are amongst the authors who refer to the concept of push factors and pull factors. The push factors referred to are those motivators of turnover from one's current job, with the pull factors being the evaluation of external alternatives in

terms of their attractiveness. Shultz, Morton, and Weckerle (1998) provide research into push and pull factors, with reference to the influence of these on adjusting to voluntary and involuntary retirement. Beehr, Glazer, Nielson, and Farmer (2000) discuss push factors as those unfavourable job conditions that can coerce someone to look for a better job opportunity at a different company if possible. Push and pull factors are identified as an ordering method in the job withdrawal literature by Salminen (2012), whose study focussed on the job withdrawal intentions of nurses in a Finnish hospital. Push and pull factors are also denoted in literature relating to the migration of health professionals and nurses (Kline, 2003; Pillay, 2007). In the push–pull theory of migration, it is noted that both push and pull forces need to be present for migration to occur (Kline, 2003).

In the nursing profession, there are a number of reasons which could be considered push factors, including the long or inconvenient working hours, difficult working environment, stressful nature of the occupation, lack of professional development opportunities and deficit of suitable, motivating rewards or uncompetitive salaries (Mokoka, Oosthuizen, & Ehlers, 2010; Stoskopf, 2004). Stanz and Greyling (2010) resonate these issues, including also nursing practices, physical–emotional costs and employment prospects (a pull factor) as reasons for leaving. Aiken et al. (2004) assign push factors such as safety concerns, HIV/AIDS burdens and risks, economic instability and underfunded national healthcare systems to the equation. Kingma (2001) provides a helpful summary of three generally agreed categories for nurse migration, namely that nurses (a) seek opportunities for better learning and practice, (b) seek better wages and working conditions, and (c) strive for personal safety. In this respect, educational factors for migration are considered a pull factor. Given the raised points, it is not astonishing that burnout and job dissatisfaction of nurses is then a topic that also receives attention, as emphasised and researched by Aiken et al. (2002).

In addressing this situation where many push factors exist, Stoskopf (2004) suggests a total reward strategy approach, which aims to shift the drivers for attraction to something more than the constant increasing of wages, which he indicates does little to influence the supply of this scarce resource. Interestingly, the factors proposed by Stoskopf (2004) are reminiscent of those already highlighted in the section above, namely compensation, benefits, career and training opportunities, work environment, including work–life balance and organisational culture. An intriguing concept from the nursing literature that specifically underscores the work environment aspect is that of workplace advocacy, since redefined as workforce advocacy (Green et al., 2008). It has been highlighted as a negative push factor, although it is also a potential positive or pull factor. According to Green et al. (2008, p. 256)

workforce advocacy refers to “...a process in which nurses are supported with a program of services and tools designated to help them self-advocate in the workplace and in their professional and personal development”. Green et al. (2008) then go on to list elements of workforce advocacy such as staffing, workflow design, physical environment, personal and social factors (such as stress management) and organisational factors (such as embracing a team culture). It thus appears that attention is certainly being given to various attraction components and these are thus understood to be factors that can surely influence why people choose to join or leave organisations.

In further review of the rewards that are pertinent to nurses, therefore acting as attraction or pull factors, the qualitative study conducted in Belgium by De Gieter et al. (2006) is helpful. It explicitly identifies what nurses consider rewards and how these can be categorised. A representation of their findings is displayed in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Nurse reward categories and subcategories (De Gieter et al., 2006)

Financial rewards	Non-financial rewards	Psychological rewards
- Monthly pay	- Presents	- Recognition
- Other remuneration	- Human relations support	- Patient contact
	- General services	- Compliments
	- Individualised advantages	- Social utility of the work
		- Gratitude
		- Social support
		- Work climate
		- Confidence (to work autonomously)

Data retrieved from a survey of nurses in South Africa (Pillay, 2009) that formed part of a broader study of attraction, work satisfaction and retention issues, furthermore enriches the current study. The satisfaction factors that were analysed include autonomy, resources, career opportunities, relationships with other nurses, management or doctors, patient care, safety, the context of the community, pay, career, workload and personal time. Pay, workload, resources and career opportunities were the significant points of dissatisfaction, or the otherwise so-called push factors. These same factors can be associated with factors in the attraction framework of Figure 2.3 as pull factors.

Factors important to nurses who have left contributes interesting knowledge to the field of

nurse retention, which as noted earlier, is also relevant to attraction. Professional practice reasons, such as having an influence in policy development, autonomy in decision-making, using one's skills fully and how one's workload is selected were considered amongst the most important reasons for leaving (O'Brien-Pallas, Duffield, & Hayes, 2006). This was followed by external values and beliefs that others may have about nursing, legal and general employer issues, work to home-life reasons, including shift work and lastly, contractual requirements, for example contract duration, contract conditions and a work environment that is gender-sensitive (O'Brien-Pallas et al., 2006). These matters in the world of nursing may then possibly also be reflected on positively as attraction components in view of the prospects they provide.

Once again, an overlap is identifiable to the general attraction literature, though there are instances where the reasons raised become more specific to nursing personnel and the environment, therefore requiring separate mention. The issue of how the profession is perceived in a greater community is, for example, captured by the aspect of prestige or status as a job-related component of attraction. Gender issues in the workplace may also be related back to work environment or organisational culture aspects of attraction. There however remains openness to the possibility that this and other points, such as legal issues, merit separate attention. Indeed, the intention is to review new data and the literature presented in this section, so as to present an attraction factor framework that specifically represents the allure of a managed healthcare setting for nurses.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

When there is a race for candidates due to scarcity, a regained importance and understanding is necessary to ensure an organisation's competitiveness. Understanding by means of exploration was the crux of this study, which had been initiated by firstly providing an approach to answering certain research questions, as indicated in the first chapter and secondly by extensively exploring what is already available to know as has been the ambition of this chapter. The various sections within this chapter have consequently sought to understand more about nursing, nurses and scarcity, what the pertinent theories are informing scholars in the field of attraction and by and large what the attraction literature is communicating. An attraction framework has also been presented with a view of illustrating the key attraction factors identified and in order to create a point of reference for this research study going forward. Consideration of attraction in the nursing environment has been included in order to expedite a more global view of the topic and to determine if there are any more unique attraction considerations. In the formulation of a good attraction

strategy, it is important for organisations to understand an applicant's perspective and to accommodate that in the way those organisations operate (Davis & Scully, 2008). The literature reviewed has purposefully sought to contribute to this required understanding; however, beyond the absorption of available knowledge is also the listening to new knowledge. This research embraces both, and so progresses to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH ARTICLE¹

Exploring nurses' attraction to a managed care organisation

ABSTRACT

Orientation: This study explored which factors influence the attraction of nurses to a South African organisation in the managed care industry. This is acute in the midst of a world-wide shortage of nursing professionals.

Research purpose: The main research aim was to explore attraction factors as they pertain to the literature and to the occupational context of qualified nurses who have exhibited employment interest in a managed care organisation.

Motivation for the study: A gap exists in the literature for contextually appropriate qualitative studies in the field of applicant attraction. First-hand information of what attracts nurses in the context of a war for talent provides a basis for organisations to take relevant action.

Research design, approach and method: A generic qualitative exploratory approach was adopted to collect descriptive data from the purposeful sample of nine applicants with nursing qualifications. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these participants who demonstrated intent to pursue employment by having submitted their application with the organisation.

Main findings: Several themes were identified as being important attraction factors. The highest ranking of these were identified to be opportunities for professional and personal growth and the relationship with the managed care client, followed by salary and working hours.

Practical/managerial implications: Valuable input for the development of an attraction strategy is provided to organisations recruiting nurses, including recommendations for the formulation of contextually appropriate approaches that attend to key attraction factors.

Contribution/value-add: The results of this study contribute knowledge of attraction factors for nurses, specifically to the unexplored context of a managed care organisation in South Africa.

Key words: attraction factors; nursing profession; scarce skills; member/patient relationships; opportunities for growth.

¹ The guidelines provided by the South African Journal of Industrial Psychology have been broadly followed in compiling this research article.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The “war for talent” which is an aggressive competition to attract and retain the best people (Knez & Ruse, 2004), remains acute within the field of nursing. It is crucial to have sufficient capable nurses in South Africa to enable high-level medical support and care in all fields and focus areas. The nursing profession is acknowledged globally as a scarce skill (Dal Poz et al., 2006; World Health Organisation, 2006). Though cyclic nursing shortages are not an uncommon occurrence (Green, Hatmaker, & Tabone, 2008), the present shortage is said to have continued for longer than any other shortage before it and to have been more severe (Huston, 2010). Scarcity in nursing is recognised in the National Scarce Skills List (South African National Department of Labour, n.d.) and supported by Wildschut and Mgqolozana (2009) in their critical review of the nursing shortage in South Africa, which includes a thorough examination of data available reporting shortages. In their conclusion, Wildschut and Mgqolozana (2009) report a low fill rate of vacancies in the profession and an aging nursing workforce as real contributing factors to the crisis.

Companies that differentiate themselves to become more attractive are well placed to acquire those people with the scarce skills that they need to thrive. This is pertinent in the current global context of talent scarcity, as illustrated in the often-referred to war for talent (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998; Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2008; Knez & Ruse, 2004; McDonnell, 2011; McKinsey & Company, 2001; Schreurs & Syed, 2011). This points to a high demand for people with the ability to generate value and improvement for organisations by having the right knowledge and skills in the context of scarcity (Davies & Kourdi, 2010). The continued need for such individuals is likewise emphasised by business leaders as a major challenge and preoccupation (Cappelli, 2008; Guthridge et al., 2008). The concern remains that, even though unemployment has risen in many countries resulting from the global financial crisis, critical skills shortages persist (McDonnell, 2011).

Contributing to the current nursing shortage are various natural attrition factors, including the voluntary movement of nurses out of the profession or out of the labour force, retirement, death and emigration (Hall & Erasmus, 2003; Pillay, 2007). According to Aiken, Buchan, Sochalski, Nichols, and Powell (2004, p. 71) “... poor wages, economic instability, poorly funded health care systems, the burdens and risks of AIDS, and safety concerns” are among the factors pushing nurses to leave developing countries. This bears truth in the South African context where the nursing shortage has in large part been attributed to undesirable working conditions in the health sector (Breier, 2009). South African nurses are faced with

greater loads due to the country's increased access to free health care (Hall & Erasmus, 2003). Stanz and Greyling (2010) have determined that nurses leaving do so due to various reasons, including discontent with salaries, nursing practices, work environment, physical–emotional costs and employment opportunities outside of the hospital.

The voluntary movement of nurses is of particular significance to this study. Huston (2010) refers to an exodus of nurses moving to non-acute care settings or non-hospital jobs, such as outpatient and home care services and insurance companies or managed care organisations, commonly known as medical aid companies. Nurses are opting to work outside of hospitals, where they are offered more flexibility in working hours, lower stress and further development of skill (Schaffner & Ludwig-Beymer, 2003). Moreover, this choice in career path by nurses can be attributed to economic and social factors and the resulting evolution of nursing, in which the career options for nurses have increased substantially (Koch, 2008).

The movement of nurses into managed care organisations is therefore a reality that bears understanding. A number of common themes are incorporated into the term *managed care*, including the provision of quality care, the ensuring of resource efficiency and to a lesser extent, ensuring access to health care (Hagen, 1999; Person, 1996; Rickel & Wise, 2000; Wagner and Kongstvedt, 2007). Case management roles within managed care organisations are specifically crucial to attaining these managed care objectives. According to Cherry and Bridges (2008, p. 435) "... case management is a model of care delivery in which a registered nurse case manager coordinates the patient's care throughout the course of an illness" and is intended to ensure quality care while promoting efficiency and managing costs. The association between managed care and case management is accordingly evident, with the themes of quality and efficiency re-appearing. Another deduction from this definition is that the role does not involve direct patient care responsibilities, which are traditionally a nurse's core function. Notably, individuals aspiring to be case managers are first required to qualify as nurses before becoming eligible to take on the task of coordinating quality patient outcomes while ensuring cost-effectiveness. Nurses are considered "... specialists in holistic bio-assessment and functional health planning, and are ideally best suited as case managers" (Kgasi, 2010, p. 15).

Based on this discussion, the question put forth pertains to what causes nurses to move into managed care organisations. What is the attraction? The literature does not appear to have yielded a study in this specific arena of attraction, though there is room for it. Space in the body of knowledge exists in terms of the variables that impact on applicant attraction strategy

formulation for different types of employers (Rynes & Barber, 1990). These authors also state that a valuable approach to gain better understanding in this respect could be to conduct qualitative research, in the form of intensive interview-based case studies, of how attraction strategies are formulated across different business units of the same corporation. Horwitz, Heng, and Quazi (2003), who completed a study on the attracting, motivating and retaining of knowledge workers in Singapore, point out the need for identifying contextually appropriate and effective human resource practices for attracting talent. Horwitz et al. (2003) also specify that qualitative studies with focus groups and semi-structured interviews could be helpful in providing elucidation on this topic. According to Thomas and Wise (1999), the recruiting literature still leaves room for focussing on the perceptions and desires of applicants for professional positions rather than those traditionally studied, being undergraduates and non-professionals. Cognisance is given to the identified gaps in the understanding of the health workforce crisis in sub-Saharan Africa as identified by Ogilvie, Mill, Astle, Fanning, and Opare (2007). These authors note one of these gaps as the lack of documented policies and practices, which improve attraction and retention of health professionals in all contexts. The current study aimed to provide a starting point for organisations where there is an absence of a formalised attraction strategy, and the findings may subsequently be beneficial to organisations by providing a more thorough understanding of the dynamics of the attraction behaviour of this specific subset of the population, whilst contributing to this identified need.

It is subsequently in line with these appeals for contextually based qualitative research in the field of applicant attraction and the identified gaps in the literature that the current study has been undertaken. The selected context was that of a managed care organisation, where the scarce skill sought, is that of qualified nurses. These kinds of organisations have a need to explore and understand nurse attraction factors as relevant to their unique context and then to apply this knowledge as the basis for relevant action to safeguard their future sustainability. These organisations recognise that without talent and certain skills they may lose their prime source of competitive edge (Chambers et al., 1998; Oosthuizen & Nienaber, 2010; Ployhart, Schneider, & Schmitt, 2006). Such organisations are aware that providing an attractive environment is one response to the scarcity of suitable candidates (Davis & Scully, 2008).

3.1.1 Research aims

The general research aim was consequently to conduct an exploratory study of the attraction of nurses that may guide the development of an attraction strategy for a medium-sized South

African organisation in the managed care industry. To this end, the specific aims required articulation.

The specific aims relating to the literature review were:

- (1) to identify and conceptualise factors that impact on the attraction of individuals to organisations; and
- (2) to identify and conceptualise factors that more specifically impact on the attraction of nurses to managed care and other organisations.

The specific aims relating to the empirical study were:

- (1) to explore which factors attract nurses to the selected managed care organisation;
- (2) to formulate recommendations in terms of how managed care or other organisations can better facilitate the attraction of nurses; and
- (3) to make recommendations regarding further research in this regard within the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

The discourse which follows will accordingly address these aims by considering relevant theoretical perspectives to frame the scene. The attraction landscape will be considered from a number of viewpoints. Thereafter, the research design will be clarified and findings on the attraction factors for nurses will be shared. A discussion to elaborate on these findings as they relate to the study's aims will then precede the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this explorative learning process.

3.2 LITERATURE REVIEW: ATTRACTION

Attraction is classically recorded as a facet of talent management. Talent management typically involves people management activities such as the identification, attraction, integration, development, motivation, retention and redeployment of people (Heinen & O'Neill, 2004; Iles, Chaui & Preece, 2010). Fittingly, the starting point of talent management is to recruit the right people (Aghina, De Jong, & Simon, 2011). Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, and Jones (2005) indicate that *attraction* is a term often seen as synonymous with the procurement or recruiting of talent, although Rynes and Barber (1990) distinguish between *recruitment* and attraction indicating recruitment as one potential strategy for attracting applicants. Rynes and Barber (1990) therefore describe attraction as a focus on activities designed to increase the number of persons with the relevant

characteristics willing to consider applying for or accepting a job. This is important as reducing the number of highly qualified applicants may decrease the effectiveness of a selection system (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998). Another complementary definition describes attraction as that "... favourable interaction between potential applicants and the images, values and information about an organization" (Bratton & Gold, 2003, p. 484).

3.2.1 Theoretical perspectives

A number of theories and theoretical perspectives that bear relevance to and facilitate understanding of this study of attraction have been selected for inclusion in this study according to whether the theory has been applied in attraction research in a frequent and recent manner, enhancing the theory's perception of utility in the field. The relevance of the theory to the stage of the applicant attraction process has also been given due merit, specifically as the current study had its focus on the pre-interview phase of attraction. The theories discussed here additionally cover a cross-section of the three broad meta-theories proposed by Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) in their framework for attraction research. These meta-theories are grouped into environmental, person to environment or interactionist and self-processing theories (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005).

Accordingly, signalling, expectancy and social identity theory, which can be directly understood to influence applicant decisions and motivations in the job search process, are highlighted. Signalling theory denotes that applicants may interpret working conditions of an organisation and what it would be like to work at that organisation through their perceptions of signals such as rules, values and other information that they gather about the organisation (Rynes, 1991; Turban & Greening, 1996). Expectancy theory, a motivation theory first proposed by Vroom (1964) explains the processes that a person goes through to make choices and is based on the concepts of *valence*, *instrumentality* and *expectancy*. Valence refers to the strength of a person's preference for an outcome, instrumentality to the degree which one believes that one outcome will lead to a second outcome, and expectancy is the belief that one has of the probability that an action will actually lead to an outcome. People thus tend to choose an organisation in which to work that they believe will be most instrumental in obtaining their valued outcomes (Vroom, 2005). Social identity theory describes how people have an inclination to group themselves and others into various social categories, such as in this context, organisations (Tajfel, 1974). People are thus motivated to join organisations that they are able to identify with, attaining self-enhancement and social approval when they have a favourable perception of the organisation for which they work or want to work (Tsai & Yang, 2010).

In conjunction with these theories is the paradigm or manner of thinking portrayed in the *similarity leads to attraction* phenomenon (Billsberry, 2007). Schneider's Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model proposes that organisations are functions of the people within them (Schneider, 1987) and his attraction proposition relays that organisations attract similar kinds of people (Billsberry, 2007). A need for exposure and familiarity to the organisation is, however, indicated as being necessary to create the opportunity for individuals to assess the recruiting organisation's values and their similarity to them (Saegert, Swap, & Zajonc, 1973; Turban, Lau, Ngo, Chow, & Si, 2001). Similarity in isolation is not enough though, especially where vocational choice may be of greater concern than organisational choice to applicants (Billsberry, 2007).

3.2.2 The attraction landscape

In addition to theoretical outlooks, some of the research avenues into attraction warrant understanding to better situate the actual identification of attraction factors. As such, attraction in terms of individual aspects affecting attraction, fit, the instrumental-symbolic framework and the employee value proposition are given attention.

Individual differences influence the types of work, jobs and organisations that people are drawn to. In the first instance, personality can influence attraction. Personality traits as described by the Big-Five factor structure (Goldberg, 1990) link to culture preferences (Judge & Cable, 1997), to organisational attractiveness according to organisational characteristics (Lievens, Decaestecker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001) and to people's beliefs about job characteristics in predicting their perceptions of fit to jobs (Ehrhart, 2006). Individual characteristics, such as personal preference for working alone or in a team, locus of control, the dominance of fairness as a work value, and personal circumstances in work and family life conflict affect applicant decision-making processes (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Attractiveness of different compensation systems may also be strengthened by personal traits, including such personal idiosyncrasies as materialism, self-efficacy, individualism or collectivism, risk aversion, locus of control and demographic features (age, race, gender, amount of relevant work experience, education level, study major and academic average) (Cable & Judge, 1994). Demographics have therefore also been studied in relation to attraction. Thomas and Wise (1999) identified race and gender differences in the way individuals perceived the importance of job characteristics, recruiter characteristics and diversity factors. Risk aversion, self-efficacy, need for pay and need for achievement are additionally described as individual differences that act as moderators of the effects of company attributes on organisational attractiveness (Turban et al., 2001).

Then there is the consideration of individual differences in work values. Similarity of personal work or moral values and job value content indicate a greater likelihood that the individual will select the job (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Scott, 2000). Work values play a role in vocational choices as introduced by career theorist Donald Super and highlighted by Zytowski (1994), and reinforced by Berings, De Fruyt and Bouwen (2004). In the same realm of vocational choice, there is the matter of personal interests and the link between occupational environments and people's interests (Holland, 1959). A robust association between personality dispositions and vocational interests is demonstrated in the study by Costa, McCrae, and Holland (1984). Hansen and Dik (2005) provide evidence of a longitudinal nature, supporting the view that interests are predictive of career choice. The study by Song and Chon (2012) also directs us to the effect of vocational interests, additionally considering self-efficacy and person–job fit perceptions and the way these constructs have a bearing on career choice goals. Underlying some of these studies, one can identify Schneider's (1987) ASA model, which considers similarity in personality, interests and values as effecting organisational attraction and the attraction to people within organisations (Jackson et al., 1991).

In the attraction literature, one finds much work around the concept of fit. Though generally studied within the work situation with existing employees, there has also been research in the applicant attraction or pre-employment domain. A number of studies specifically delve into fit and the relationships between attraction and the applicant search and decision-making processes (Backhaus, 2003; Cable & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005; Coldwell, Billsberry, Van Meurs, & Marsh, 2008; Ehrhart, 2006; Lievens et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Turban et al., 2001; Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006). The concept of fit in its simplest form may be seen as the matching of oneself to something else in order to determine compatibility and is often researched in terms of fit between person and environment, organisation or job (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Morley, 2007; Schneider, 2001; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Perceptions of person–organisation fit are noted to predict job choice intentions (Cable & Judge, 1996). Data collected by Backhaus (2003) indicates that certain job seekers prioritise the importance of fit to an organisation quite highly, more specifically being those job seekers who have a high need for control and those who have previously had negative experiences with respect to person–organisation fit. It is notable that the study of fit is not isolated in that it provides a context in which individual differences, for example, can be studied in terms of their moderating effects on organisational attractiveness (Turban et al., 2001).

Fit has moreover been considered in terms of perceived or subjective fit and actual or

objective fit (Ehrhart, 2006; Judge & Cable, 1997), with perceived fit identified as the influencer of whether or not someone pursues work with a company (Carless, 2005). Similarly, the interaction between person and the environment results in perceptions of fit that then predict attraction (Ehrhart, 2006). Rynes, Bretz, and Gerhart (1991) provide peripheral data from their study demonstrating that job characteristics, such as company reputation, geographic location and perceived development opportunities, are important elements in positively evaluating perceptions of their initial fit. Perception thus trumps objective fit, which refers to the congruence or matched applicant preferences to job or organisational characteristics (Judge & Cable, 1997). Perceived fit to job and organisation has been found to play an important part in the eventual quality of employment, including job satisfaction and organisational commitment, with a preceding link to job search behaviour, such as career planning (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). The link between attraction and fit, specifically perceived fit, of persons to organisations and persons to jobs therefore appears to be an important additional piece of the proverbial attraction puzzle.

An understanding of the instrumental–symbolic framework adds deeper meaning to this review. This framework has been applied to contend that applicant attraction is initially a function of instrumental attribute and symbolic-meaning information (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). It therefore serves to group the factors affecting attraction into two broad categories, the so-called instrumental attributes, which can be likened to job and organisational factors (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), and symbolic-meaning attributes, which are subjective associations to a job or organisation. Reframed to signalling theory, these groupings are prone to serving different purposes. Instrumental attributes consequently function to attract initial interest, and symbolic meanings contribute to the finalisation of the transaction (Celani & Singh, 2011).

Instrumental attributes are simplistically described as those qualities about jobs or organisations, which denote factual or utilitarian information (Turban & Koen, 1993). Symbolic meanings, on the other hand, may refer to such abstract things as organisational culture, which is inferred and less tangible. Symbolic features are connected with social-identity and self-expression concerns and in this respect, an appreciation of that which motivates the job seeker as the perceiver is central (Highhouse, Thornbury, & Little, 2007). The symbolic meanings that are associated with organisations include person-like trait descriptions, such as innovative, competent or sincere that applicants identify to an organisation's image (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Van Hoye & Saks, 2011). The image or personality of an organisation has previously been linked to applicants' initial attraction or decisions to pursue employment (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993; Slaughter &

Greguras, 2009). In expressing attraction to the organisation, applicants may then also be expressing parts of their own personality or self-image, which is a thought that readily transfers to the tenets of social identity theory. Symbolic meanings are said to tie to psychological motives and would probably play an important role in job seekers' motivation, regardless of their work experience or the profession, should other factors be more or less comparable in different organisations (Highhouse et al., 2007). In this respect, trait inferences act as differentiators, especially amongst organisations in the same industry (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

The instrumental–symbolic framework, however, provides a single mode in which to review the factors involved in attraction and it is notable that there is an overlap between this approach and several other categorisation methodologies for attraction factors. The distinction between job and organisational factors, for example, indicates another tactic (Feldman & Arnold, 1978; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Turban et al., 1998), with the instrumental–symbolic framework taking account of these factors under its instrumental component. This does not necessarily appear to be a rule one can follow without dissent as certain identified job and organisational factors, classified so by Thomas and Wise (1999) can otherwise be listed as symbolic-meaning attributes. Another means of factor grouping is that of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Bipp, 2010), which is also comparable to the job and organisational distinction of attraction factors. One can then likewise consider attraction from the perspective of the employee value proposition, which offers a different view of the collation of attraction factors.

Organisations with a value proposition for employees or prospective employees provide a reply to the question of why people would want to work for or are attracted to them (Chambers et al., 1998; McKinsey & Company, 2001). Lowe and Schellenberg (2002, p. 18) propose that the employee understanding of the value proposition is that of a "... job and a work environment that meets expectations". It has also been described as the "... characteristics and appeal of working for an organisation" and indicates that where this proposition is clearly differentiated it acts to attract and retain people (Talentsmoothie, 2010, p. 1). Five categories of the employee value proposition have been proposed, namely work, rewards, people, opportunity and organisation (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). In further considering the key ingredients of the employee value proposition, Bell (2005) includes financial factors such as remuneration, and indicates that other important aspects to focus on are company attractiveness, corporate responsibility, respect for others, the embracing of work–life balance and the creation of prospects for professional and personal growth. Britton, Chadwick, and Walker (1999) provide an additional indication that the value

proposition is about rewards that are both tangible and intangible, with a greater emphasis on the importance of intrinsic elements. In their study, five reward groupings were identified, namely direct financial rewards, indirect financial rewards, affiliation, work content and career opportunities (Britton et al., 1999). Chambers et al. (1998) refer to the company, the jobs and compensation and lifestyle aspects as the essential categories that require attention and tailoring in the employee value proposition.

A motif is detectable in the review of attraction literature in the sections covered thus far, namely that people's behaviours in terms of attraction are evoked by tangible and by symbolic personal factors about the organisation and about the job. Though the factors described thus far are grouped in different ways by different authors, they appear to remain substantially similar, with considerable overlap. It thus is the objective of the next section to consider the attraction factor themes taking into account that which has been illuminated to this point and any additional considerations not yet noted.

3.2.2.1 Attraction factor themes

The multiplicity of elements noted thus far appears feasible when realising, for example, how people often describe more than one aspect to validate their preferences and to explain the various factors involved in the eventual choices they make. The consideration of these multiple attraction factors from different literature perspectives is accordingly presented here in a tabular format to provide the exoskeleton to this study (see Table 3.1). Figure 3.1 follows with a representation of these attraction factors categorised and contextualized in terms of influencing theoretical perspectives.

Though not an exhaustive list, a fair number of prominent attraction factors have been identified and conceptualised from the literature. Instrumental attributes and symbolic-meaning attributes are not included separately; they remain an inherent part of the information. Other factors not included due to the infrequency of their mention in the literature are, for example, a desire for travel (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006) and the lifestyle value component of acceptable pace and stress (Chambers et al., 1998). In addition, recruiter factors, such as recruiter diversity and behaviour are not applicable to the current study, which focussed on the attraction process prior to selection or interviews and are thus also not taken into account. The particulars pertaining to each of the perspectives and literature themes identified are deliberated during the empirical study discussion.

Table 3.1

Attraction factors according to different literature perspectives

		Different perspectives enriching the study							
		Organisational factors/ characteristics	Job factors/ characteristics	Intrinsic factors	Extrinsic factors	Work values	Employee value proposition (EVP)	Career anchors (Schein, 1996)	Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Bagram, 2011)
Identified themes	Remuneration	Lievens et al. (2001)	Edwards et al. (2006) – concrete job dimension; Thomas and Wise (1999)			Leuty and Hansen (2011)	Chambers et al. (1998)		Physiological need; esteem need
	Benefits		Edwards et al. (2006)		Bipp (2010)				Physiological need; safety need
	Work environment	Thomas and Wise (1999)			Bipp (2010)	Leuty and Hansen (2011)			Safety need
	Location (easy commute)	Thomas and Wise (1999)	Lieb (2003); Rynes et al. (1991)						
	Work-life balance (working hours)				Bipp (2010)		Bell (2005); Chambers et al. (1998)	Lifestyle	
	Opportunities for development and growth	Thomas and Wise (1999)	Rynes et al. (1991)	Bipp (2010)			Bell (2005); Britton et al. (1999); Chambers et al. (1998); Corporate Leadership Council(2006)		
	Opportunities for advancement	Thomas and Wise (1999)	Rynes et al. (1991)	Bipp (2010)			Bell (2005); Britton et al. (1999); Chambers et al. (1998); Corporate Leadership Council(2006)		Esteem need; self-actualisation need

		Different perspectives enriching the study							
		Organisational factors/ characteristics	Job factors/ characteristics	Intrinsic factors	Extrinsic factors	Work values	Employee value proposition EVP	Career anchors (Schein, 1996)	Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Bagram, 2011)
Identified themes	Job features (including meaningfulness, challenge, variety, autonomy, responsibility/ span of control)		Edwards et al. (2006) –abstract job dimensions (span of control – concrete); Hackman and Oldham (1976); Lieb (2003)	Bipp (2010)		Leuty and Hansen (2011)	Britton et al. (1999); Chambers et al. (1998)	Pure challenge; service/ dedication to a cause; general managerial competence	Self-actualisation need
	Opportunity to use one's abilities (and resulting recognition)			Bipp (2010)				Technical/ functional competence	
	Status/Prestige		Edwards et al. (2006) – abstract job dimension						Esteem need
	Job security	Thomas and Wise (1999)			Bipp (2010)		Chambers et al. (1998)	Security/ stability	
	Corporate image or reputation	Thomas and Wise (1999)	Rynes et al. (1991)				Chambers et al. (1998)		
	Corporate social responsibility						Bell (2005)		
	Organisational culture			Involvement in company processes (Bipp, 2010)	Corporate policy and administration (Bipp, 2010)		Chambers et al. (1998)		
	Working relationships		Edwards et al. (2006) – abstract job dimension			Leuty and Hansen (2011)	Bell (2005); Britton et al. (1999); Chambers et al. (1998); Corporate Leadership Council(2006)		Social need

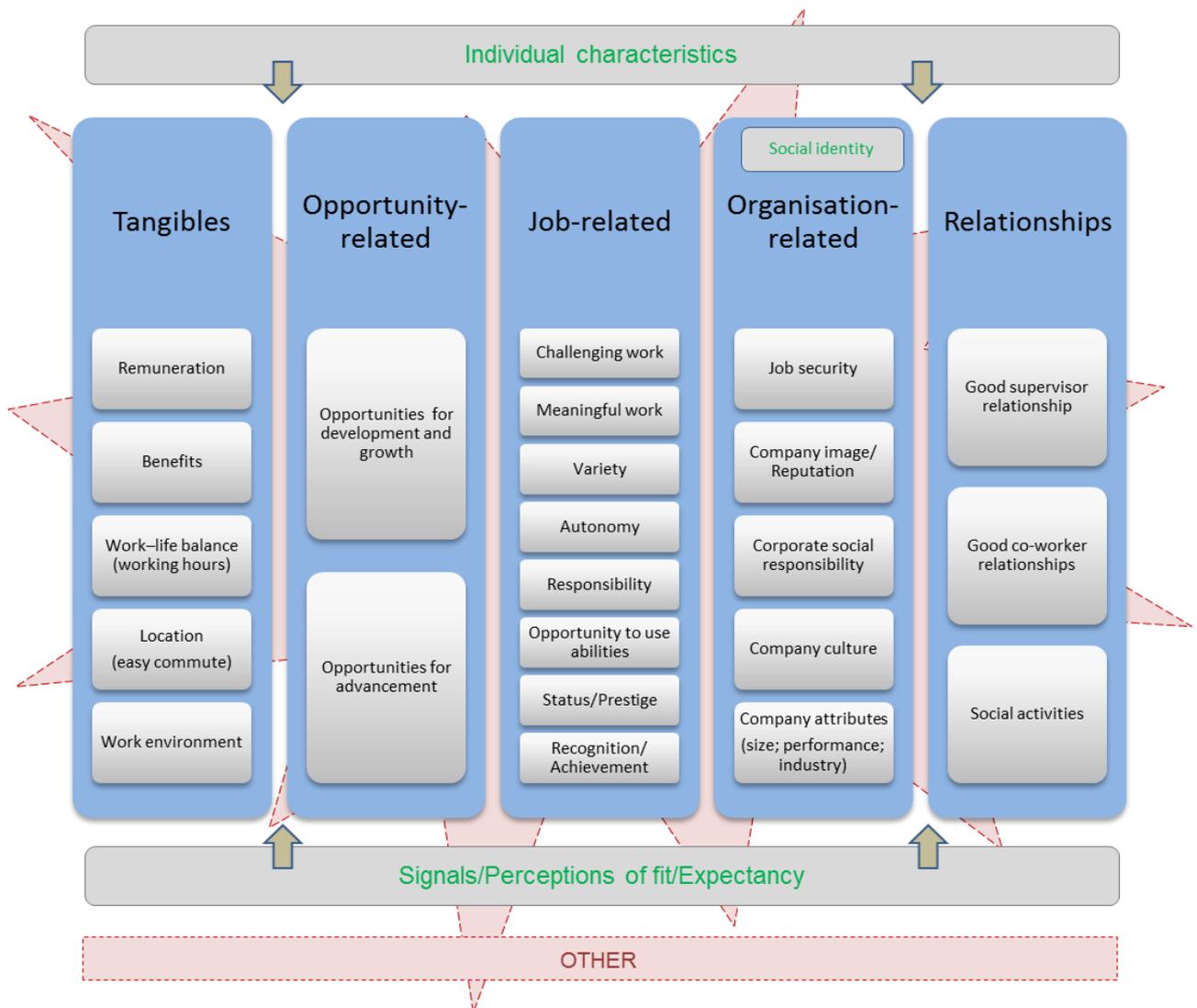


Figure 3.1 Framework of attraction factors (Author's own).

3.2.2.2 A refocus on nurses

Determining those attraction factors applicable to nursing professionals, in addition to general attraction factors, was a further aim of this study. Evaluating that which nurses are generally drawn to but also taking cognisance of those aspects which nurses are drawn away from may be a helpful approach in this regard, as there appears to be a very limited body of knowledge, if any, on the factors that attract nurses to managed care organisations in particular. Barber and Bretz (2000) refer to the concept of push factors and pull factors. The push factors are those motivators of turnover from one's current job, while the pull factors comprise the evaluation of external alternatives in terms of their attractiveness. Beehr, Glazer, Nielson and Farmer (2000) discuss push factors as those unfavourable job conditions that can coerce people to look for better job opportunities at different companies. The factors important to nurses who leave also provide input to retention, which is relevant

given that a significant similarity exists in the "... psychological processes underlying attraction and retention" (Barber & Bretz, 2000, p. 33). Notably, in the push–pull theory of migration, it is indicated that both push and pull forces need to be present for migration to occur (Kline, 2003).

In the nursing profession, push factors may include long or inconvenient working hours, difficult working environment, stressful nature of the occupation, lack of professional development opportunities and a deficit of suitable, motivating rewards or uncompetitive salaries (Mokoka, Oosthuizen & Ehlers, 2010; Stoskopf, 2004). Stanz and Greyling (2010) resonate these issues, including nursing practices, physical–emotional costs and employment prospects (a pull factor) as reasons for leaving. Aiken et al. (2004) assign push factors such as safety concerns, HIV/AIDS burdens and risks, economic instability and underfunded national health care systems to the equation. Kingma (2001) provides a helpful summary of three generally agreed categories for nurse migration, namely that nurses seek opportunities for better learning and practice, better wages and working conditions and thirdly, they strive for personal safety. In this respect, educational factors for migration are considered a pull factor. Professional practice reasons, such as having an influence in policy development, autonomy in decision-making, using one's skills fully and the way one's workload is selected are considered amongst the most important reasons that nurses leave (O'Brien-Pallas, Duffield & Hayes, 2006). This is followed by external values and beliefs that others may have about nursing, legal and general employer issues, work to home life reasons, including shift work and lastly, contractual requirements, for example contract duration, contract conditions and a work environment that is gender-sensitive (O'Brien-Pallas et al., 2006).

In addressing this situation where many push factors exist, Stoskopf (2004) suggests a total reward strategy approach, which aims to shift the drivers for attraction to something more than the continual increasing of wages. The factors proposed by Stoskopf (2004) are reminiscent of those already highlighted in the section above, namely compensation, benefits, career and training opportunities, work environment, including work–life balance and organisational culture. Underscoring the work environment aspect is the nursing-related concept of workforce advocacy referring to "... a process in which nurses are supported with a program of services and tools designated to help them self-advocate in the workplace and in their professional and personal development" (Green et al., 2008, p. 256). Elements of workforce advocacy include staffing, workflow design, physical environment, personal and social factors such as stress management and organisational factors like team culture (Green et al., 2008).

Honing into rewards, that therefore act as attraction or pull factors for nurses, the qualitative study conducted in Belgium by De Gieter et al. (2006) identifies three categories, namely financial, non-financial and psychological rewards. Psychological rewards include such aspects as recognition, patient contact, gratitude, work climate, social support and the confidence to work autonomously. Satisfaction factors for South African nurses provide similar themes, including autonomy, resources, career opportunities, relationships with other nurses, management or doctors, patient care, safety, the context of community, pay, career, workload and personal time (Pillay, 2009). Pay, workload, resources and career opportunities were the significant points of dissatisfaction or push factors; though these same factors can be related with factors in the attraction framework of Figure 3.1 as pull factors.

A diagrammatic representation of the factors discussed in this section and referred to by various authors is offered in Figure 3.2. A more conspicuous depiction of the overlap is notable in this format. Overlap to the general attraction literature is also identifiable, for example, gender issues in the workplace which may be related back to work environment or organisational culture aspects of attraction. Nursing-specific factors, such as legal issues, however may require separate attention. As such, an attraction factor framework to specifically represent the allure of a managed care setting for nurses based on new data and this literature is facilitated.

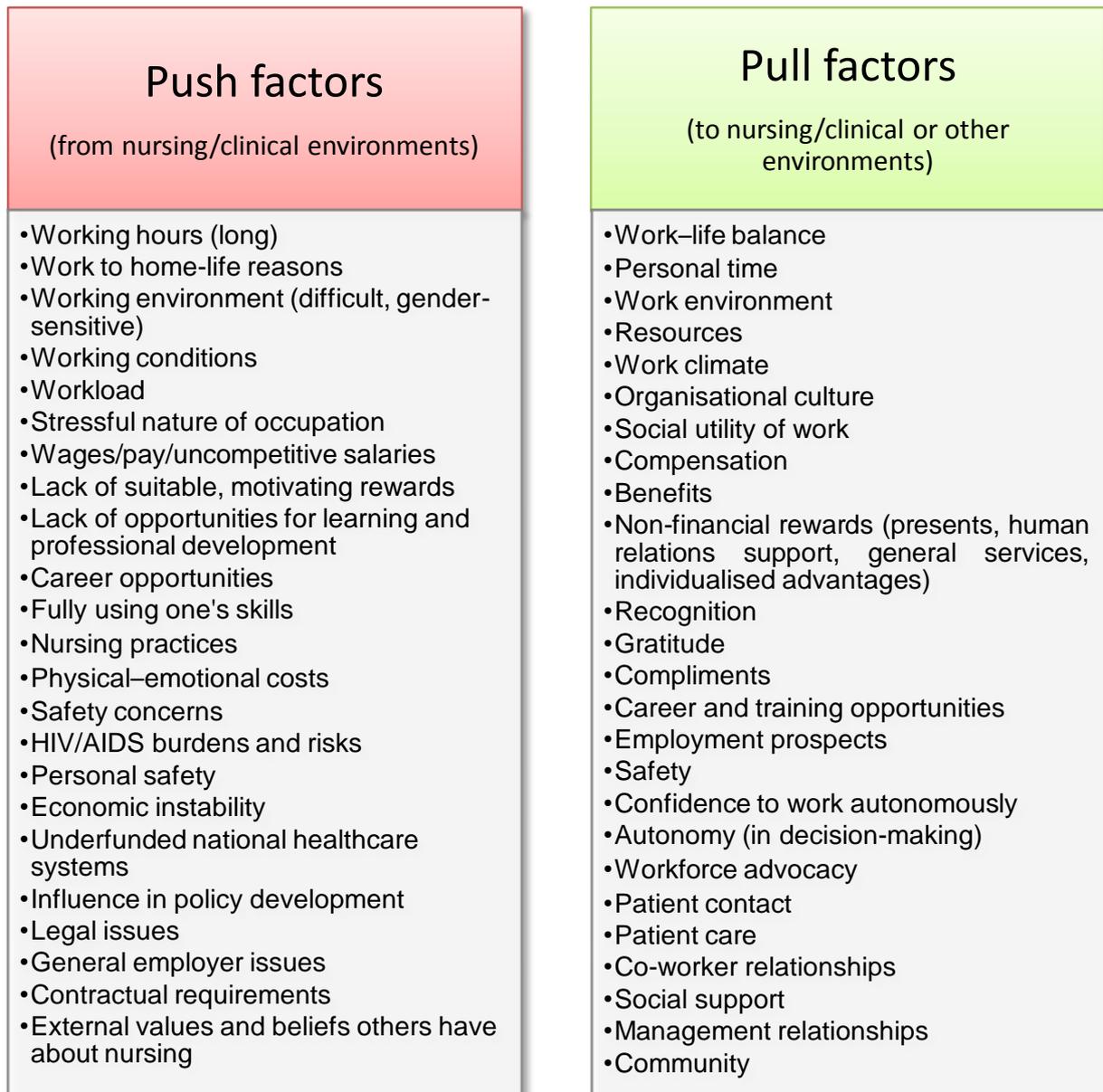


Figure 3.2 Factors influencing nurses' attraction (Author's own).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.3.1 Research approach

A generic qualitative-exploratory research approach has been selected for this study largely due to the exploratory objective of this research topic and the deliberation that the topic is not guided by any one explicit and established set of philosophic assumptions (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). The characteristics identified by Merriam (1998, p. 12), namely that generic qualitative research "... includes description, interpretation, and understanding" and that it

“... identifies recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories” likewise render this approach suitable. Exploratory research, which is open and flexible, adopting an inductive approach as described by Durrheim (2006), is particularly fitting to such an investigation which is focussed on exploring attraction as experienced by nurses and therefore their present perspectives and realities concerning it. Despite there being a number of research studies in the field of attraction, which explicitly identify research variables, there is also a call to approach this topic from a qualitative standpoint (Rynes & Barber, 1990). This research design had the potential to bring to light factors previously not considered, which may open up additional opportunities for research in the field of attraction and the way organisations can develop or modify attraction strategies to best suit their situation and more specifically where the sought-after skill is a scarce or specialised one. It is also notable that the research was of an applied nature because of its immediate practical application (Durrheim, 2006).

Table 3.2 provides clarity and the specific action plan with regard to the research undertaken. Though the design appears linear, it involved a continual re-examination of theoretical assumptions and ideas throughout the process, as suggested by Berg (1995), who argues for an iterative approach whereby each stage of the research is never actually completely left behind but is rather in a state of on-going refinement.

Table 3.2
Research design: The action plan

	Method	What/Who	Required result
Literature review	In-depth review of the available literature on the topic of attraction and attraction factors. Factors researched will be both general to everyone and more specific to nursing	Social artefacts: Previous research as published in scientific journals and books	Identification of factors impacting on applicant, scarce skill, talent and nurses' attraction
Empirical study	Semi-structured interviews: Interview guide with pre-determined, open-ended questions, also referring to the methodology employed by Rynes et al. (1991)	Individuals: Qualified nurses who have submitted their application to the organisation (includes only individuals external to the organisation)	Rich descriptive information about what attracted them to the organisation

	Method	What/Who	Required result
	Data triangulation interview: Interview guide with pre-determined, open-ended questions, aligned to main interviews.	Recruiting line manager: Qualified nurse who has been extensively involved in the recruiting of nurses to a managed care organisation.	Rich descriptive information about the factors perceived to attract applicants to the organisation.

3.3.2 Research method

According to Tracy (2010), qualitative research should in particular be cognisant of various ethical aspects, namely procedural ethics, situational and culturally specific ethics, relational ethics and exiting ethics. Careful consideration was accordingly given to these aspects during the research process to assist participants in understanding the process, feeling safe and respected in the data gathering situation and in terms of how the information they provide is presented and reported in a careful and thoughtful manner. The following sections provide more context in terms of the actual research methodology applied during this study, whilst ensuring ethical aspects are not neglected.

3.3.2.1 Research setting

This research was limited to one medium-sized managed care organisation set in the South African environment. Though nationally based, the Gauteng-based branch was the attention of this study. This organisation specialises in the provision of medical aid administration and health risk management services and is a part of the managed healthcare industry. Nurses are primarily employed into the organisation's workforce in order to facilitate the clinical and financial risk management of cases on a daily basis for both medical aid members and medical aid funds.

3.3.2.2 Sampling

The population of the study included all individuals registered with the South African Nursing Council (SANC) as nursing practitioners in any category who have submitted an application for available clinical positions at the Gauteng branch of the organisation, thereby demonstrating intent to pursue employment at the organisation. Their attraction to the organisation was thus also deemed evident. Such individuals could have been introduced to

the organisation in various ways, for example through recruitment agencies, internet searches, word of mouth or referrals.

This population excluded current employees of the organisation and any of the applicants who have been through selection processes, such as interviews or assessments, at the organisation. According to Anderson (2001), the selection procedure influences decision-making, having an effect on expectation, attitudes and, down the line, on behaviours in the job. In addition, pre-interview attraction has been identified as the strongest predictor of post-interview attraction (Powell, 1991), which consequently supported this phase as a suitable point of departure for this study. Delineating the stage of the applicant attraction process was additionally considered necessary to facilitate the trustworthiness of the results. A purposeful sampling strategy was therefore adopted, indicating that participants with certain traits or qualities were sought for the study (Koerber & McMichael, 2008) as motivated by the research issue.

The members of this population varied in terms of demographic characteristics as portrayed in Table 3.3. In addition, the fields in which the participants had gained expertise were also spread across the board, including for example psychiatry, midwifery and intensive care unit experience. Differences in career status and history were furthermore evident, such that some individuals were employed within the same industry or type of organisation, some were employed in other industries or types of organisations, such as hospitals or clinics and still others were previous employees of the organisation of the study, reapplying to join. Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommend selecting knowledgeable and experienced interviewees and also indicate that interviewing individuals who reflect a variety of perspectives is recommended to enhance the credibility of findings and to reflect the complexity that is reality. Including participants who are expected to offer meaningful differences in experience by representing a variety of positions is related to the criterion of diversity often proposed for sampling in qualitative studies (King & Horrocks, 2010). In denoting the accessible population, only those applicants from this larger group who were available during the time of the research were incorporated.

Subsequently, nine interviews took place over the period June to August 2010, guided by the principle that quality is more important than quantity in sample size (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). One additional interview was held with the recruiting manager, also a registered nurse, who had been extensively and keenly involved with the recruiting of nurses on an ongoing basis in the organisation. This is referred to as triangulation by data source, where data is collected from a different person (Denzin, 1978; Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2002;

Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach is a means of cross-checking data (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009) and was thus arranged with the aim of gathering insights for comparison to the findings generated by the sampled participants. It was furthermore useful to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings and to present any glaring differences for additional discussion. In ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, this individual was not given any identifying information of the participants.

Table 3.3

Participant characteristics

Item	Category	Frequency
Age	20–29 years	3
	30–39 years	2
	40–49 years	3
	50–59 years	1
	60 years or older	-
Gender	Female	8
	Male	1
Race	Asian	2
	Black	5
	Coloured	-
	White	2
Marital status	Single	4
	Married or living with a partner	2
	Divorced	3
Number of dependants	0	3
	1	1
	2	4
	3	1
	4 or more	-
Home language	Afrikaans	2
	English	1
	IsiZulu	1
	Setswana	4
	Xitsonga	1
Education	Diploma	8
	Post-graduate	1
Employment status	Temporary	1
	Permanent	8

Item	Category	Frequency
Years of service	Fewer than 5 years	-
	6 to 10 years	3
	11 to 15 years	1
	More than 15 years	5
SANC registration	Registered nurse	7
	Enrolled nurse	2
	Auxiliary nurse	-
Employed in managed health care before	Yes	7
	No	2
Previous employee at the research company	Yes	3
	No	6

3.3.2.3 Data collection and recording

Data collection took place by means of semi-structured interviews held with the participants and through the keeping of field notes. Kelly (2006, p. 297) depict semi-structured interviews as a "... more natural form of interacting with people". Berg (1995) refers to the semi-standardised interview, describing it as including a number of predetermined questions and special topics, which are posed in a systematic and consistent order, though the interview also allows the freedom to probe beyond the answers to these questions. Moreover, the continuous nature of qualitative interviewing meant that questioning could be redesigned throughout the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), which aimed to assist with enhancing the quality of the study. Preceding the data collection interviews, participants were asked to complete a consent form, which was necessary to acknowledge their understanding of the research process, confirm willingness to participate and provide their consent to the use of the data for the research. This approach accordingly ensured adherence to ethical requirements.

Pre-determined questions were asked to participants to address the empirical research aims. These questions were decided in conjunction with input from more seasoned researchers in the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology to assist in increasing the quality and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003; Shah & Corley, 2006) of the data collected.

The questions were as follows:

- (1) How did you get to know about the organisation?
- (2) What attracts you to the organisation?
- (3) What do you find attractive about the job for which you have applied?

(4) Is there anything the company can do to be more attractive to you?

A last general question posed to participants prior to the conclusion of each interview aided in ensuring that any information in addition to what had been asked was not excluded from the data collection process. As the interviews progressed, the process was found to work better when the participants were initially asked about their career history. This generated a great deal of additional insights and information to the research process, besides also assisting in putting the participants more at ease. Probing questions were also included in certain instances to determine the influence of push factors, which nonetheless were evident in all interviews.

In the data triangulation interview, similar questions to those posed to participants were included:

- (1) Please briefly take me through your career path
- (2) Why do you think nurses are attracted to the organisation, including:
 - nurses from clinical environments
 - nurses from other managed care companies
 - nurses previously employed by the organisation who are interested in re-joining?
- (3) Do people join mostly because of the job or the organisation?
- (4) Is there anything else that you think they would find attractive?
- (5) Is there anything else that you think is relevant to the topic that you have not yet mentioned?

Data was recorded using a digital voice-recorder and through a note-taking process during the interviews and thereafter when personal reflections were documented. As soon as possible after each interview, the more comprehensive verbatim transcribing of interview data took place onto a word processor in order to facilitate the moving of data and the search for specific words (Kelly, 2006). The systematic recording of data in order to facilitate analysis was acknowledged as crucial in ensuring an effective research process (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

3.3.2.4 Data analyses

Banks (2007) indicates that, if the research subject's role in the data construction process is disregarded, then there is the possibility of misinterpretation during analysis. With this

understanding and purpose in mind, a sequence of analytic moves outlined in Miles and Huberman (1994) were tailored to this study as follows:

- attaching codes to the interview transcriptions in terms of key data points;
- noting reflections and other observations or comments in the margins;
- sorting through data to identify common and uncommon concepts, phrases, patterns and themes;
- elaborating a set of generalisations covering the consistencies identified; and
- confronting these with a body of knowledge in terms of constructs or theories.

The steps in interpretive data analysis as described by Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006) reveal similarities to the approach described above. These steps are firstly, familiarisation and immersion; secondly, inducing themes; thirdly, coding which they indicate as useful to categorise and order information; fourthly, elaboration; and, finally, interpretation and checking. The review of data in terms of the syntactic units (Du Plooy, 2001) which appear most frequently, that is, specifically the words and phrases used, furthermore assisted in deciphering what the trends as relevant to each aspect were. This is similar to content analysis, a historically quantitative method of analysis in which the frequency of messages is noted (Merriam, 1998). This aspect of data analysis was adopted as supplementary to the process of analysing the data interpretively for theme identification. Participant responses to all attraction related questions were combined when analysing the data to identify themes. Moreover, if a participant repeated the same theme during the interview, this was counted once during the analysis process. The data analysis findings were specifically instrumental in answering the research questions and providing conclusions, and this approach was seen to be of value with this goal in mind.

3.3.2.5 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

In a qualitative research process, reliability and validity are often replaced by inclusive terms such as credibility, transferability and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1985) add the criteria of dependability and confirmability to credibility and transferability as necessary to ensure rigour in qualitative research. Based on this understanding, a number of techniques were used to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of data as indicated in Table 3.4, which includes techniques suggested in literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010; Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006).

Table 3.4

Techniques used to enhance data quality

Technique	Quality criteria addressed
Interview questions checked with supervisors	Credibility
Purposeful sampling	Dependability
Confidentiality of participants protected	Dependability
Verbatim transcriptions of interviews, including detailed reflections, process notes and observation records	Confirmability
Iterative process of listening to recording and reading notes	Dependability
Iterative process of data analysis	Dependability
Detailed description of concepts and categories during data analysis	Transferability
Member reflections to allow for "... sharing and dialoguing with participants about the study's findings, and providing opportunities for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, and even collaboration" (Tracy, 2010, p.844)	Credibility
Analysis findings checked with supervisors	Credibility
Triangulation by data source (providing perspective from a different angle)	Confirmability

3.3.2.6 Reporting

A qualitative writing style was primarily used to report not only the findings of this study but also the analysis and thinking processes that occurred through the process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The role of participants required emphasis and direct quotations were accordingly selected and incorporated in the report as a means of illustrating findings and purporting the trustworthiness of the research. Diagrammatical representations of the data offered a useful way of illustrating the findings and an additional means of addressing research questions.

3.4 FINDINGS

Based on the interviews held with nurses applying for positions within a managed care organisation, a number of relevant attraction themes could be crystallised. These findings are presented according to the themes that have emerged in order of prevalence. A graphical

representation of these themes, together with a ranking order, indicating the frequency of themes occurring across participants is provided in Table 3.5. Verbatim quotations in the words of the participants are included to illustrate findings and support theme conceptualisation. Data extracted from the triangulation interview is included later in this section in order to increase the confirmability of the study.

Table 3.5
Factors affecting nurses' attraction to a managed care organisation

Theme		Rank	Frequency								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Opportunities for professional and personal growth	1	9								
2	Member/patient relationships	1	9								
3	Salary	2	8								
4	Working hours	2	8								
5	Working environment	3	7								
6	Interesting job	3	7								
7	Job activities	4	6								
8	Challenging job	4	6								
9	Fulfilling work	4	6								
10	Company stability	4	6								
11	Company reputation	4	6								
12	Co-worker relationships	4	6								
13	Nursing conditions*	4	6								
14	Benefits	5	5								
15	Location	5	5								
16	Opportunities for career advancement	5	5								
17	Autonomy in decision-making	5	5								
18	Opportunity to use abilities	5	5								
19	Company culture	5	5								
20	Management relationship	5	5								
21	Appreciation	6	4								
22	Emotional–physical costs*	6	4								
23	Risk of being struck off register*	6	4								
24	Uniform	7	1								
25	Risk of infection*	7	1								

Note.* refers to push factors.

Theme 1: Opportunities for professional and personal growth (Rank = 1)

All of the nine participants clearly indicated a strong inclination to want to learn and grow in their professional and personal capacities. Specifically growth included aspects such as learning about new conditions, medications and treatments in the field in order to keep

abreast of developments. This appeared to be important not only to ensure they do not stagnate or become bored but also to improve interactions with doctors, with whom they deal as co-workers. This is illustrated with the quotations, "... if you keep yourself up to date it's helping with the doctors definitely" and "... you get the chance to make sure you [are] like a step ahead before the doctor asks, you already know about it". Further quotes endorsing the importance of professional and personal growth were –

- "I think I've got the potential to go out there and learn as much as I can and I can be able to use that knowledge";
- "I guess the position, I found it ... to be very challenging and interesting I think it would keep me on my toes and it would keep me wanting to update myself with the conditions so that I wouldn't do things, wrong things because I understand as a case [manager] I'm entirely responsible for approving funds for the patient";
- "... because it gives me space to grow and it gives me the space to learn new things so instead of it being like a mundane job";
- "... there's limited opportunities to nurses. You can study yes, like specialising in neonates but then you would stay in neonatal forever you won't go past ... and I felt like I'm not that kind of a person"; and
- "I think in a way you are getting educated you know sitting there in that position".

Theme 2: Member/patient relationships (Rank = 1)

In addition to growth opportunities, all of the participants expressed particular concern for the wellbeing of the patients or, in managed care, the medical aid scheme members, for whom they were or would be responsible. In many instances, this concern related to how the participant perceived whether there was just management and protection of the patient or member's interests. Patient advocacy was also highlighted in this regard, as noted in the following comment. "Remember when we train we are trained also to be the advocate of the patient and you cannot practice patient advocacy it's very difficult because ... in a private sector even, your hands are tied". In various other cases, the relationship was considered from a direct interaction perspective, where the participants indicated a keen interest in providing education to patients or members or to the dealings that they were able to have with patients over a longer period of time, when managing their cases. Comments in support of this theme included –

- "... you still ensure that the member gets the best possible treatment";
- "I need to educate my people, that's the kind of the life that I want, the kind of a job that I want ..."; and

- “... to me that’s important because I think exactly that is what we are, make a difference in somebody else’s life ...”.

As an interesting contrast, one of the participants found the change from face-to-face interaction in the hospitals to telephonic interaction with patients in a managed care setting to be an adjustment. Another also indicated that the telephonic nature of an entry-level managed care job was problematic in the sense of reducing the ability one has to connect with the patient. It was understood that this could be alleviated through more specialised positions offered in the managed care environment.

Theme 3: Salary (Rank = 2)

All but one participant indicated salary was an important aspect in terms of their reason for being interested in the managed care environment. This factor can thus be regarded as a very important reason for the nurses’ attraction to the managed care organisation. Salary as referred to in this theme did not include benefits, such as pension and medical plans, as the sentiment portrayed by the participants was specifically focussed on the monetary component of the remuneration package. Comments by participants that confirmed the importance of this theme included –

- “When I heard about the money I was like wow”;
- “... because that’s also the reason why I would like to come to managed health care, to revise my salary if I can”; and
- “... a bit more salary, get to do, you are able to afford life you know I mean basic things I’m not talking about luxuries”.

Theme 4: Working hours (Rank = 2)

Working hours were considered a key attraction factor by eight participants. There was also an interesting interplay evident in the data with regard to working hours and salary. In particular, there was dissatisfaction with the amount of overtime that had to be worked in a hospital environment with the goal of earning enough income to survive. It appeared to be a vicious cycle, where one had to work overtime to earn enough, therefore sacrificing time for home and family life even further. One of the participants indicated that there was a better way to do it, “I believe that if you can make money but then in a smarter way, you know I mean there’s a way to make money but not working yourselves to death ...”. The working hours were however the overarching theme as described in the following comments –

- “I think most people want to move over to corporate because the hours are nice”;
- “I don’t have a stress over the weekend and the holidays I’m home ...”; and
- “... the official, the office hours I would really love now to get into a job that works office hours”.

Theme 5: Working environment (Rank = 3)

Seven of the nine participants indicated that they wanted to work in an environment that was conducive to functioning. This was apparent in terms of different aspects, such as lower stress levels, resources to do the work and being located in a pleasant vicinity with canteen access. The discipline of the environment was also important to one participant who referred to aspects such as time consciousness and the manner in which disputes were handled. In addition, the familiarity of the work environment was incorporated into this theme, whereby a number of comments related to comfort levels and being familiar with the processes, the guiding rules and the background necessary for functioning. One individual indicated that a process of getting exposure to relevant aspects was important in order to feel more prepared for the environment and work context. Participants’ remarks relating to this factor included –

- “I would like to come out of that environment now because we always live on the edge”;
- “I would also love to work in a cool, in a calm environment”; and
- “I feel more comfortable being this side of the fence than the other side being at the hospital. I think comfortable because I know the environment”.

Theme 6: Interesting job (Rank = 3)

Similarly, seven participants expressed an attraction to the interesting aspects that are concomitant to the job. This included learning about new or current medical conditions that are interesting. Being able to deal with different cases, new diseases and to interact with different people were also of interest to participants. The statements regarding an interesting job were as follows –

- “... you not doing one thing the whole time, you get to interact with people, you get different cases and obviously we were dealing with them differently so it's not a boring thing ...”;
- “... so it also spins it off a different angle”; and
- “... some conditions are really interesting ...”.

Theme 7: Job activities (Rank = 4)

This theme was mentioned by six participants who indicated various aspects of the job as being attraction factors for them. Two participants in particular noted that they were very much administratively orientated rather than having a preference for dealing with people in a more direct manner. The managed care environment thus offered this opportunity to them. Other responses indicated a partiality to managing medical funds as what the job entails. This was contrasted to the type of job that includes potential misdiagnoses and which might therefore be threatening to people's lives. Managing and reducing risk for the company and being responsible for the company in terms of fund management and maintaining standards were incorporated into job activities and what these individuals were therefore concerned with doing. Remarks around this theme included –

- “I love admin and [the organisation] is admin, although you still have your contact with your patients it's admin”; and
- “... protecting as much as you can but again, you know, you not jeopardising the patient, that was also important and again guarding the company ... that was nice”.

Theme 8: Challenging job (Rank = 4)

Six participants indicated that they wanted a job that would provide them with challenge. In most instances, this was due to a feeling of stagnation or repetition in their current roles. Supporting statements included –

- “When you do the same thing over and over for fifteen years, you sort of feel stagnant and you feel like you are going, wish I could go somewhere and do something different, so I found that this could be different from what I'm doing every day”;
- “I want something that will challenge me, something that will make me think”; and
- “I'm a bit edgy as a person and I like challenges so I think I'm not challenged enough”.

Theme 9: Fulfilling work (Rank = 4)

This theme was conveyed by six participants who spoke about their passion in health care, and their need to be in a job that they found enjoyment in, so as to be productive. The comments included –

- “... so it's not like I'm going to leave what I'm enjoying doing now and go do something else because just of the office hours”;

- “... when you not happy at work you don’t give what you believe in, ... you don’t become yourself”;
- “It’s all about making a difference with me”; and
- “... to love your job, not to be miserable when we wake up in the morning thinking ooh I’m going to work”.

Theme 10: Company stability (Rank = 4)

Six participants considered the company’s position in the market in terms of stability an important factor. This was especially the case insomuch as it would influence job security or the likelihood of retrenchments. Company size was closely linked to this theme, as far as it contributed to stability in a highly competitive environment where smaller companies are more likely to suffer job losses. Participants confirmed the importance of company stability with the following comments –

- “I’m not going to sit down here and think what’s going, where’s my salary going to come from next month ...”;
- “I see it as a strong company”; and
- “It’s more stability ... you know that tomorrow they not going to close down the doors”.

Theme 11: Company reputation (Rank = 4)

In this study, the reputation of the company depicts how it was perceived in terms of its image and status. Six participants provided input into the company’s reputation as an attraction factor, with comments such as –

- “They just on the same benchmark so it’s not like I’m leaving a well-recognised company and going somewhere smaller”;
- “... I thought yew, if I can get in there ...”; and
- “I think they would still be able to maintain a good reputation and a lot of members as well”.

Theme 12: Co-worker relationships (Rank = 4)

Interestingly, co-worker relationships in this study took into account not only colleagues within the organisation but also those with whom the nurses would interact outside of the organisation, more specifically referring to other healthcare professionals such as doctors. The data provided input to investigate the notion that these relationships would be improved

where the nurse could interact with doctors from the managed care organisation rather than directly with these individuals in a hospital environment. In some instances, conversations were facilitated by increased confidence levels as a result of improved knowledge within the managed care environment. One participant noted that "... when you meet another healthcare professional you know that you can have a conversation confidently because you will personally research the case, you know what they talking about and you can be a part of that conversation" and another mentioned that "... sometimes you sit down at the doctor and educate them about HIV". Further comments on this theme were as follows –

- "... there isn't much friction I would say between us and the doctors. You know the doctors there are very relaxed and the relationship ... with the nurses is good because there is something in place or which is a protocol which you have to follow you know unlike the doctor who likes his patient to have this and that's all whether the dispensary has the medication or not, it's not his problem"; and
- "... doctors are more easy, easier to talk to if you talking from a scheme point of view".

From an internal company perspective, the following statement was quite pertinent to this theme "[The organisation] still has the best people to work with".

Theme 13: Nursing conditions (Rank = 4)

This theme is the first that was markedly more of a push factor than one of attraction. Six participants highlighted the current concerns as related to nursing, with statements like "it has lost its touch ... by the time when we were doing the nursing it was more about patient care, but now it's not. It has lost its meaning". The nursing shortage and South African situation highlighted in this study was also discussed –

- "... if they can improve maybe the amount of staff, nurses–patients ratio then things would get better"; and
- "I'm sure you understand the conditions in South Africa. Our medical care it's not the best in the world".

The issue of nurses' skill levels was also raised, "The bridging courses that are done in a private sector. That's not good enough training that they are doing for these nurses in the private sector".

Theme 14: Benefits (Rank = 5)

Five participants indicated the importance of benefits as their reason for being attracted to the managed care organisation. Benefits included such components of remuneration as pension and medical fund benefits, disability benefits and monetary-based incentives. Comments regarding this theme were as follows –

- “... as a contractor I don't have any benefits, if I were to get retrenched today, I won't have a salary next month, you know I don't have a pension fund, I don't have medical aid benefits. I'm currently actually paying a hundred per cent for my medical aid, I don't have pension fund”; and
- “... benefits, the portion that's paid you know towards your medical aid makes a difference”.

Theme 15: Location (Rank = 5)

Five of the nine participants confirmed the factor of location as an important one with regard to where they choose to work. One participant detailed this aspect in terms of commuting, saying “I feel at my age I don't need to drive too far, I don't need to sit in the traffic for an hour”. Other participants made the following related remarks –

- “[The organisation] is much closer to me as well ...”; and
- “... ever since I found out that it's this [the organisation] here, it's really gaining more of my attraction and interest because I'm really five minutes away from here so it will be a big convenience”.

Theme 16: Opportunities for career advancement (Rank = 5)

This theme was confirmed by five participants who indicated that they needed to move forward and grow in their careers. Moving from case management to an entry-level managed care job was, for example, not expressed to be an attractive option. One participant noted that an organisation would be very attractive to her if it offered the opportunity to employees to channel their own career paths according to their skills and interests. The comments regarding opportunities for career advancement included the following –

- “... everyone wants to go up in their career”;

- “I believe as a nurse you don’t belong in a hospital, there’s a lot of opportunities out there but it’s just for us people to just say what do I do with myself, where to go, who do I network with, who do I speak to, where do I apply to ...”; and
- “... because now remember I'm not moving backwards, I'm moving forward”.

Theme 17: Autonomy in decision-making (Rank = 5)

Five participants confirmed the importance of being able to make decisions in the job that they are in as an attraction factor. This theme also linked closely to a desire for independence and influence as it related to the job sphere. Remarks by participants communicating this theme were as follows –

- “... I need to be able to make a decision, you know I'm not just going to be like, I mean like I think that the point that they leave me with that case, it means they know that I'm capable of doing the right decision”;
- “... you get to apply your knowledge, you get to explore a little bit and play around with decision-making, let me put it that way”; and
- “... you get the chance like spread your wings and try and do your own thing”.

Theme 18: Opportunity to use abilities (Rank = 5)

Five participants confirmed their attraction to the managed care environment as it would enable them to use their abilities and apply their clinical and theoretical knowledge. It appeared to be a means to stay within a healthcare context as a nurse, although the perspective and outputs differed in some ways. Participants’ comments included –

- “I’m given the chance where I’m able to apply my knowledge and make the decision, I’m still able to do it, as much as I love hands-on, I’m still able to nurse the patient with the knowledge that I have”;
- “... as much as you not hands-on with the patients you still feel like you in a way you are still treating them”;
- “I’ll be rendering the service in a different manner”; and
- “... you can apply everything that you know or that you learning”.

Theme 19: Company culture (Rank = 5)

Five participants provided information relating to this theme, including the participants who had previously worked for the organisation, which may be an indication that participants with

first-hand experience of the company are more likely to mention this factor based on various premises of the earlier described theoretical perspectives, including the similarity attraction paradigm and signalling theory. Another participant also had inside information of the organisation through friends, and this entailed knowledge of individuals who had left and returned to the organisation. The sentiments expressed in terms of the organisational culture included –

- “... gives me the impression that people are happy and it's a good company and I know of people ... who resigned, went to other companies, they are back there”;
- “... people cannot just leave a company and want to go back”;
- “... it feels like home”; and
- “A company must be your second home, because you spend how many hours”.

A concern for employees and their wellness was also seen to be a view expressed as it related to what was needed from a company's culture.

Theme 20: Management relationship (Rank = 5)

Five participants mentioned aspects of management as important to them, thus creating the need for this theme. The kind of relationship with management that they favoured or disliked was described by the participants whose comments included –

- “They've got an open door policy”;
- “... senior who's approachable, you know, and you know that your company provides that sort of freedom to be able to say when you are not happy”;
- “... we were ignored, even the first time when we go for orientation, there's not somebody like who will guide you, hold your hand and say this is how we do this”;
- “... we don't want to be spoon-fed but guidance to be shown around, to be given the necessary information that we need so that when we get out of our closet we can explore, we can blossom”;
- “I need you to meet me halfway”; and
- “... micro-management, that's one thing I don't need in life”.

Theme 21: Appreciation (Rank = 6)

Three participants mentioned their need for appreciation, as it refers to feedback on the results of their work. A pertinent comment in this regard was –

- “... where I would be appreciated, where I’ll be treated with respect, with dignity ... where I’ll be more happier and while enjoying my life and work with people who enjoy having me around”.

Another comment relayed the notion that gratitude had been taken for granted before –

- “It didn’t seem like anything at the time when I were here, ag no it’s a pleasure it’s my job it’s fine”.

Theme 22: Emotional–physical costs (Rank = 6)

This theme is the second noted for its push characteristics, with the opposing picture depicting the attraction. Three participants conveyed this theme, indicating that from an emotional perspective, the nursing environment is one of many emotional ups and down and a great deal of stress. Comments included –

- “... it’s just living on the edge all the time when you are at work you must really have that extra eye”;
- “... extra eye at home, extra eye at work, I really would like to tone down”; and
- “I believe in doing something about something that affects me”.

From a physical costs outlook, comments included –

- “I mean you can die out of exhaustion, I mean exhaustion is the worst”; and
- “... draining ... physically, mentally as well”.

Theme 23: Risk of being struck off register (Rank = 6)

Three participants highlighted the risk of being struck off the nursing register and the associated risk to their career and livelihood as a particular concern. This is the third noted push factor in the series of factors described in this section. The participants’ comments referring to this factor included –

- “... unfortunately these days there’s a lot of suing going on with the industry”;
- “I don’t want anything bad to happen to my job that will compromise my children”; and
- “... I felt like ... I just started working now and I can’t be stricken off the rolls”.

Theme 24: Uniform (Rank = 7)

A very interesting theme that came up was that of uniform or dress code. Two participants mentioned this, although in one instance it was a push factor and in another it was an attraction factor for initially getting into nursing. One participant's view of this is thus taken into consideration specifically as a theme relevant to this study with comments in support of this as follows –

- “... they identify from which kind of, of work you are doing and all of that I also will, would like to have a job where I'm comfortable in what I'm wearing”; and
- “Just also a relaxed uniform”.

Theme 25: Risk of infection (Rank = 7)

One participant mentioned the risk of infection as a theme pertaining to this study, although notably this can be categorised more as a push factor. The participant reported that this was a concern in their current environment, stating –

- “... the infection that we work under, I'm not so happy with the new baby”; and
- “... exposing my baby to a risk and I've got two now”.

3.4.1 Findings: Data triangulation

A data triangulation interview was held with a manager in the research organisation who has been keenly and extensively involved in the recruiting of nurses to the relevant business unit, in order to evaluate and critically compare the findings as analysed from participant interviews. It was noted that the views provided by the interviewee were based on personal experience and numerous interviews with nurse applicants. The perspective provided was also manifested as one of an insider with a differently experienced reality as it pertained to certain of the attraction factors. As an illustration of this, it is notable that the triangulation interview supported the view of all participants that the opportunity for professional and personal growth is an important attraction factor. This was, however, contrasted by the manager's general experience of a gap in clinical skills of those nevertheless seeking growth and the limited time for research as a growth opportunity in the working environment. The interview, however, still yielded very similar findings to that which was highlighted by the participants, with only six of the 25 themes evident from the participants not mentioned in the data triangulation interview. The aspects not mentioned included member/patient relationships, working environment, interesting job and fulfilling work, which were those

ranked in the top four according to participant data. Opportunities for career advancement and the point of uniform were also not confirmed in the interview. At inspection, there did not necessarily appear to be any commonality in the factors not mentioned that would lend themselves to facilitating an explanation. It may merely be that people generally do not prioritise and thus voice all things. The main learning from this interview was, however, that a great deal of support was found in the relevance of these themes from a different perspective.

Figure 3.3 depicts the themes found in this study, incorporating also the researcher’s classification of these themes into six broad overarching groups according to the literature review. This figure provides a visual representation of factors supported by the data triangulation interview results and those not mentioned.

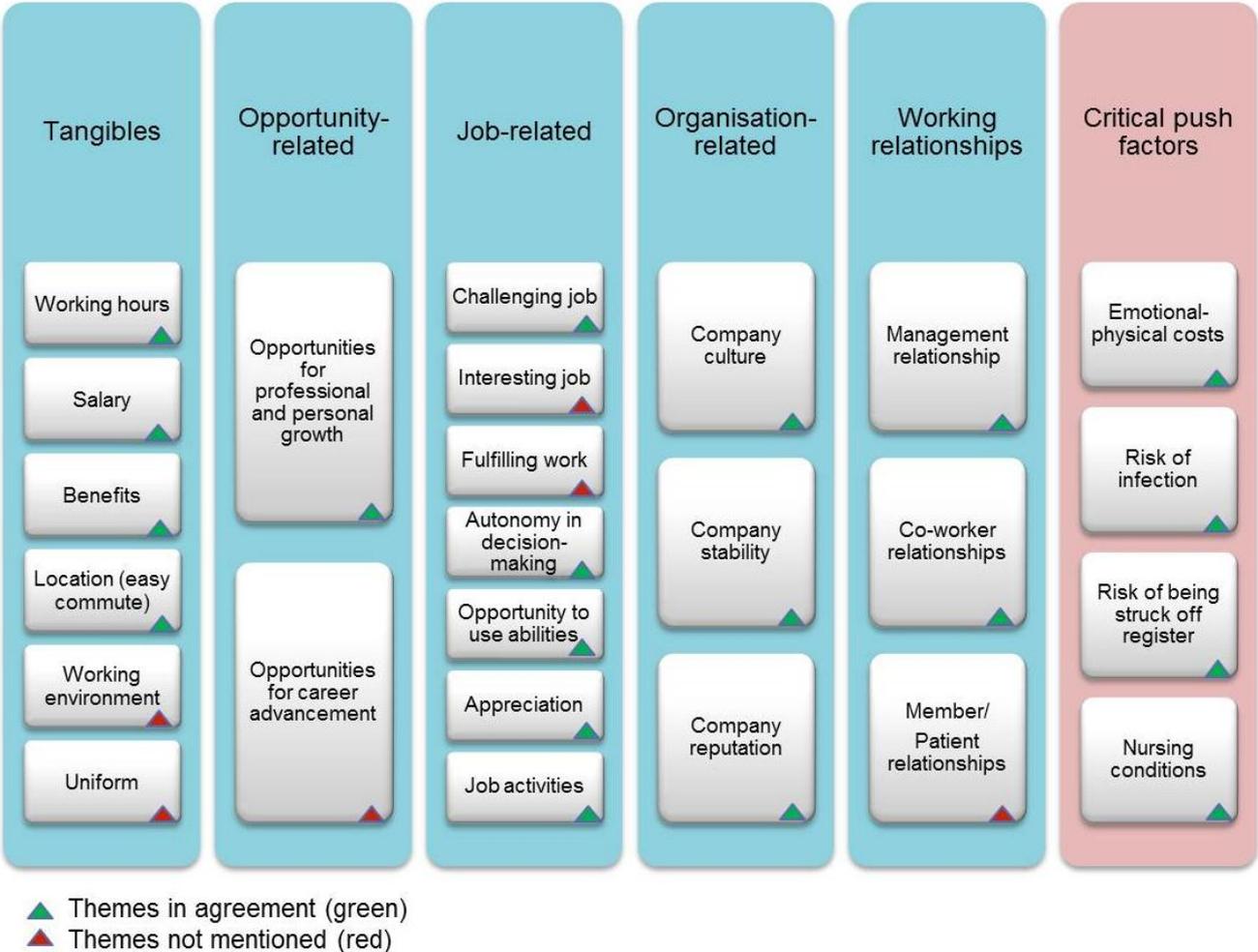


Figure 3.3 Framework of themes: Nurses’ attraction to a managed care organisation, supported by data triangulation results (Author’s own).

3.5 DISCUSSION

The current study was embarked on to establish the factors that attract nurses to a managed care organisation. This was an important undertaking on account of the current shortage of nurses and the ongoing war for nursing talent. The study also addressed a need for researching applicant attraction in a contextually appropriate qualitative manner and was unique in that the context selected was one not yet explored. The findings indicated that, within this context of a managed care organisation, opportunities for professional and personal growth and member or patient relationships, which included protecting member or patient interests, were the most important factors for nurses' attraction. These themes were amongst a group of 25 themes identified by one or more of the nine participants as important attraction factors. These themes are discussed in relation to the reviewed literature and in their own right to elevate understanding and depth.

3.5.1 Evaluation in relation to the reviewed literature

When comparing all the identified themes to those most often found in the general attraction literature, there were numerous matches and similarities. Member or patient relationships as a theme, was however one not found in this literature, which is of interest given that it was seen to be particularly pertinent to this context. One suggestion for this may be that, as attraction goes, not all jobs offer interaction with the client or end user. However, when reviewing attraction-related literature as it relates to nurses, patient care and contact are mentioned (De Gieter et al., 2006; Pillay, 2009). This is interesting although not directly transferable to the managed care context where patient or member interaction is less direct and contact as such is limited. The data nevertheless provided an indication that this factor is important for nurses who are considering changing environments.

Further themes found only in the nursing literature and not in the attraction literature are the push factors, namely nursing conditions, emotional–physical costs, risk of being struck off the register, and risk of infection. Little explanation was required to understand this, as these factors are particularly unique to occupations in a hospital environment. They were more negatively positioned than the general attraction literature and were amongst those that were causing the emigration or general turnover of nurses (Aiken et al., 2004; Kingma, 2001; Salminen, 2012; Stanz & Greyling, 2010; Stoskopf, 2004).

Themes that are only found in the attraction literature and not mentioned in the nursing literature are that individuals are attracted by an interesting job, a challenging job, company

stability, company reputation and location of the organisation, specifically in relation to themselves and the commute involved (Chambers et al., 1998; Edwards et al., 2006; Lieb, 2003; Rynes et al., 1991; Thomas & Wise, 1999). These factors appeared to be less dominant from a localised nursing perspective, although gained importance in the current study, in which a different environment was under discussion and the altered career aspirations of participants were at play.

Distinctively, the themes of uniform wearing and job activities were not recognised in any of the researched literature. Uniform was in particular an unexpected finding in this study, and it was only mentioned by one participant who was hoping to be able to move to an environment where dress code was less conspicuous and more relaxed. In their study, Spragley and Francis (2006) indicate that nurses' uniforms were viewed both positively and negatively by stakeholders, although uniform appears to be in nursing to stay, in particular as a means to elevate perceptions of the profession held by the public. Interestingly, in the aforementioned study, the negative side of uniforms referred to aspects such as lack of individuality, impracticality and perceived barriers created between the nurse and patient and did not therefore address the research participant's view relayed in the current study. Job activities was also unique to this study and may be understood to be this way as a result of the definition of the theme, which related to the specificity of the job and managed care setting. It was, accordingly, a contained theme to be understood in terms of the study.

On the other hand, a number of themes could correspond to both the nursing and general attraction literature and these are also mentioned. In order of ranking, these 13 themes are opportunities for growth, salary, working hours, working environment, fulfilling work, co-worker relationships, benefits, opportunities for career advancement, autonomy, opportunity to use abilities, company culture, management relationship and appreciation. The intersection between these themes in the nursing literature and general attraction literature surveyed in this study could indicate the more universal nature of these themes and the increased likelihood of their applicability to other contexts.

In reviewing all the established themes to the researched literature, one can identify themes that were found in the literature although it did not attain status in this study. These are corporate social responsibility, identified as providing a competitive advantage in applicant attraction (Greening & Turban, 2000; Turban & Greening, 1996) and important in the employee value proposition (Bell, 2005). The factor of status or prestige also lacked support in this study. From a specifically nursing perspective, the factors that did not receive attention from the participants were the external values and beliefs others have about nursing,

contractual requirements, workforce advocacy, community and the non-financial rewards of general services and individualised advantages raised by De Gieter et al. (2006). Workforce advocacy, although not separately mentioned by participants, links back to development opportunities and nursing conditions (Green et al., 2008) and might thus be accounted for. The other factors may indeed warrant consideration; however, as they were not highlighted in their own right by the participants in this study, are not attended to in more detail. One should nevertheless be aware of these factors in terms of a concern for completeness.

3.5.2 Overall evaluation of the themes

The 25 themes found during this study are not only analysable in terms of the literature study done but may also be reflected on in their own right and in comparison to each other. As indicated earlier, opportunities for professional and personal growth and member or patient relationships were found to be the most important factors of applicant attraction and were mentioned by all participants. Bipp (2010) indicates opportunities for personal growth and development as an intrinsic job factor that therefore refers to the work itself, rather than the job environment. Thomas and Wise (1999) instead grade this aspect under the heading of organisational factors, while Rynes et al. (1991) accept perceived training opportunities as a job characteristic, finding this to be important to a positive initial fit evaluation. Training opportunities is additionally highlighted as a factor required to attract nurses as part of a total reward strategy (Stoskopf, 2004). Chambers et al. (1998) likewise rate this aspect as an important motivator for employees or prospective employees, reflecting the need for companies that are great at development and jobs that offer growth. Career opportunities is also emphasised as a reward of work by Britton et al. (1999), with the concept encompassing both personal growth and career renewal and challenge. Opportunity and prospects for development are additionally incorporated as important components of the employee value proposition (Bell, 2005; Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). It appears that this factor was one that companies may really benefit from under many circumstances, should the offering be visible to potential applicants.

In conjunction with this aspect, it was also found that the relationship with patients or – in the case of medical aid schemes – members, is very important to nurses applying to a managed care company. Essentially, the relationship with individuals to whom a service is offered can be quite different for those moving directly out of a hospital or clinical environment to managed care. It can change from being a face-to-face interaction to one that is telephonically based with limited direct interaction as a result. The strength of this factor for the nurses in this study was of particular interest and might perhaps be linked back to

Holland (1959) who identifies occupational environments, including the supportive environment, where one would find individuals who tend to be responsible and socially orientated. Nurses might perhaps be classified into this group of individuals, given the typical job requirements of a nurse. This may also explain why this factor appears to be lacking in the attraction literature reviewed in this study. This is, however, not the case in terms of more specific nursing-related literature, as indicated earlier, where patient care is seen to relate to work satisfaction (Pillay, 2009) and patient contact is defined as a psychological reward by De Gieter et al. (2006). One may perhaps then extend the view of patient care and contact to beyond only direct means in understanding the relevance and importance of this factor to nurses.

The second-highest ranking factors were those of salary and working hours. These are evidently more tangible in nature and could be seen to influence a person's quality of life directly in important respects. In particular, the axiomatic factor to consider when people are choosing to make career moves and enter into application processes is that of remuneration. Pay makes its appearance in an application of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, indicating attractive pay as a physiological need and merit-based pay as an esteem need (Bagraim, 2011). Remuneration is the focus of quite a few studies as they relate to application and attraction (Barber & Bretz, 2000; Cable & Judge, 1994; Li & Roloff, 2007; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman III, 1983). The opportunity for income is indicated as a work value by Leuty and Hansen (2011), as a job factor by Thomas and Wise (1999), as a concretely measurable job dimension in the study by Edwards et al. (2006), and as an organisational characteristic in the sense of the organisational pay system by Lievens et al. (2001). Chambers et al. (1998) describe compensation, specifically referring to differentiated and high total compensation, as employee value proposition dimensions and indicate its importance in the war for talent. In some instances, the importance of pay, although it cannot be omitted, receives limited emphasis as compared with the less tangible, intrinsic elements (Bell, 2005; Britton et al., 1999). This is an interesting observation, given that this factor did not get ranked as the most important attraction factor within this study. This might be understood to a certain extent by the self-reporting nature of the study, in which applicants could have preferred to mention more self-flattering intrinsic outcomes over extrinsic outcomes such as salary (Rynes & Barber, 1990).

Working hours is a factor that may operate alone or it may perhaps be connected with the issue of work–life balance. Work–life balance, otherwise referred to as respect for lifestyle, was important in the conversation relating to the employee value proposition (Bell, 2005; Chambers et al., 1998). The aspect of lifestyle is also one of Schein's career anchors

referring to that need that individuals may have to be able to flexibly integrate their career, family and personal needs (Schein, 1996). This factor and that of salary are very important considerations for nurses, in specific those who indicate a particular dissatisfaction with the rewards of work and the imbalance in time spent at work (Stoskopf, 2004). Wages in particular need to be looked at in order to reduce the emigration of nurses to other countries (Kingma, 2001). It is interesting to note that even those nurses moving between managed care organisations confirmed the pertinence of these factors to their situations.

One might already be starting to see an underlying order in which the factors are presenting themselves unfolding. Firstly, there was a need for the personal growth and positive interpersonal relationships, which according to the humanistic and positive psychological principles, are considered core aspects of eudaemonic wellbeing (Robbins, 2008). Only then, but as a close second appear the more basic need and comfort requirements, which were those of salary and working hours, in the current research instance. Salary, for one, is stressed more highly in other instances (Lieb, 2003), though did not achieve this status within the current study. The more detail-driven aspects relating to where the job is performed and what it is all about have hereafter made their entrance.

Thus, the next factors found to be important were those ranked third in this study, namely working environment and interesting job. Work conditions are considered to be an extrinsic factor by Bipp (2010) and positioned as a safety need in Maslow's applied hierarchy (Bagraim, 2011). Working environment ascends in the domain of work values too (Leuty & Hansen, 2011) and as an organisational factor in the study of organisational attractiveness by Thomas and Wise (1999). The environment in which the work takes place is therefore a factor that comes into play a number of times in the literature, and can also be a push factor for nurses (Kingma, 2001; O'Brien-Pallas et al., 2006; Stoskopf, 2004). There is an additional, curious consideration in the factor of working environment in relation to the challenging work factor ranked fourth. Some participants might thus have simultaneously been searching for challenges in work and familiarity in the working environment, without realising the possible contrast between the factors.

Though having an interesting job is next in line for consideration, there are a number of other job or work features which assist in making jobs more attractive to individuals. These factors were identified in the study as the job activities, challenge offered by the job and how fulfilling or meaningful the job is. Autonomy, with a fifth place ranking, was also included. These were discussed as a collection according to the literature and are contextualised according to ranking, where applicable.

Great jobs are seen to offer exciting challenges and autonomy (Britton et al., 1999; Chambers et al., 1998) and help one realise self-actualisation needs according to Maslow's applied hierarchy (Bagraim, 2011). There is concurring data suggesting that nurses see the opportunity to work autonomously as a psychological reward (De Gieter et al., 2006) or satisfaction factor (Pillay, 2009). Challenging and interesting work have been classified as job factors evidenced to be highly important in organisational attraction (Thomas & Wise, 1999). For the participants, this was also the case and their attraction was frequently described in terms of how interesting, challenging and fulfilling the job attributes were seen to be. There was also agreement, though slightly less, that autonomy in decision-making offered by the job is an important attraction component. The job-characteristics model, which indicates that skill variety, task identity and task significance influence how meaningfully work is experienced (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) provides a pertinent perspective to support the importance of these factors. Autonomy in one's work and feedback of the results of the work to increase knowledge of how one is performing are similarly considered core job dimensions in this model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). These kinds of job-related elements, though less concretely measurable (Edwards et al., 2006) and more intrinsic (Bipp, 2010) appeared to be noteworthy for managed care organisations keen to attract nurses. When noting that autonomy and challenging work are also characterised as work values (Leuty & Hansen, 2011) and career anchors (Schein, 1996), their importance seems emphasised as these tend to be deep-seated drivers. The related career anchor of service or dedication to a cause (Schein, 1996) also seems to be compatible with nurses whose work entails taking care of others.

On par to autonomy as attraction factor, are company stability, reputation, co-worker relationships and nursing conditions. Not all participants recognised company attributes as being foremost to their application decision-making processes. Nonetheless, Thomas and Wise (1999) represent job security, arguably closely linked to company stability, as an organisational factor of attractiveness. Schein (1996) depicts that security or stability can also serve as a career anchor. Chambers et al. (1998) moreover take cognisance of job security, especially insomuch as it denotes a great company brand. Corporate brand, image and reputation have been studied in the field of attraction quite recurrently (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007; Botha, Bussin, & De Swardt, 2011; Gatewood et al., 1993; Jiang & Iles, 2011; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Tsai & Yang, 2010; Turban & Cable, 2003; Turban et al., 1998). Applicants in the early stages of the job choice process, however, tend to only have small amounts of information and so their application decisions may tend to be based on general impressions of the organisation's attractiveness or organisational image (Rynes, 1991), a view that may be related back to signalling theory. The issue of company stability and

reputation was nonetheless of particular interest and importance in the managed care industry, where the competition may be quite fierce and losing members or a scheme may result in retrenchments, especially in smaller organisations.

Co-worker and management relationships were ranked fourth and fifth respectively in this study. Relationships with colleagues, subordinates and supervisors are essentially features of the job environment or extrinsic factors (Bipp, 2010) and sound relationships with nurses, management or doctors are predictors of work satisfaction (Pillay, 2009). There is also consensus that work relationships constitute a work value (Leuty & Hansen, 2011). As part of the employee value proposition, people may strive to work for organisations where talented people work and where employees can fit in with their boss (Chambers et al., 1998). Affiliation, people relationships and respect for others are also part of the employee value proposition (Bell, 2005; Britton et al., 1999; Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). Management's leadership style was certainly also put under the spotlight. Weiss and MacKay (2009) argue that strong leadership that sets an enviable example attracts people to follow. Relationships from all angles therefore came under observation and the social needs people have can certainly also be satisfied at the workplace (Bagram, 2011). In managed care organisations, the concern should therefore perhaps also be focussed on improving co-worker relationships beyond internal co-workers, as the scope of the job extends to dealing with other healthcare professionals.

Before continuing onto further attraction factors, the first push factor appeared for review, namely nursing conditions. In this regard, one could give consideration to the underfunded national healthcare system (Aiken et al., 2004). In addition, the nursing shortage is a highly emotive aspect as relating to this specific factor. The inclusion of push factors into an attraction framework is not unusual in that it is reflective of an aspect previously pointed out, namely that applying to join a different organisation in a new job is not only about that which one seeks, but also about that which one seeks to leave, in an economy where there is a greater luxury of choice for scarce skills. Push factors were thus relevant in the study of attraction as highlighted by participants.

Five participants mentioned the factors of benefits, location, opportunities for career advancement, opportunities to use abilities and company culture, ranking these fifth in this study. Autonomy in decision-making and management relationship were also in this ranking, although these aspects have already received attention as job- or relationship-related factors. These seven factors were still considered fairly important as attraction factors in this study, given that more than half of the participants highlighted these points.

Stoskopf (2004) advises that benefits should form part of a total reward strategy to attract nurses, a sentiment shared by some participants in this study. Bagraim (2011) includes pension plans, medical cover, disability insurance and subsidies into the applied version of Maslow's needs hierarchy, with pension plans, medical cover and disability insurance included as safety needs and subsidies regarded physiological needs. It appears reasonable to expect that this factor should be ranked after the more pressing and core needs, such as salary, working hours and growth had been expressed.

Furthermore, the point of company location was also pitched at this stage of the attraction process. Interestingly the study done by Lieb (2003, p. 182) indicates geographic location as a job attribute and includes the attribute of *easy commute*. One may however also argue that these are similar attributes in terms of easy commute being the primary reason for considering location to be important, especially in a South African urban context where traffic can cause delays in getting to work. Chambers et al. (1998) include geographic location under the heading of compensation and lifestyle, which may imply that location might impact on home to work–life balance and thus be an important consideration when applying for a position. Working hours is however still priority, perhaps as a more direct indication of work–life balance.

It appeared that participants actively sought opportunities for career advancement though not before opportunities for development and growth had been considered. Bipp (2010) notes opportunities for promotion as intrinsic factors. Chambers et al. (1998) rates opportunities for career advancement as important motivators for employees or prospective employees, reflecting the need for jobs that offer career advancement. Career opportunities is then also emphasised as a reward of work (Britton et al., 1999) and a satisfaction factor for nurses (Pillay, 2009). Bagraim (2011) includes promotion opportunities and merit-based promotions in the top tiers of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, representing self-actualisation and esteem needs respectively.

Closely associated with the contents of a job discussed earlier is the opportunity to use one's abilities and knowledge in performing a job, and the resultant recognition received for work done, which might be catered for by the factor of appreciation. Bipp (2010) drives the point that having the opportunity to use one's abilities at work is an intrinsic factor, as is the concomitant recognition for performing a job well. The related career anchor of technical or functional competence, which allows for the application of expertise (Schein, 1996), as is required from nurses when they are employed as case managers within a managed care company, facilitates understanding of this factor. It is a factor which distinguishes individuals

for their talents and which is appealing as a result. Both this factor and the closely intertwined one of appreciation, which was ranked sixth, were surprising findings, as it was expected that they would be higher in ranking due to the nature of the work involved. This expectation was based on the reflection by participants that they were in particular satisfied to stay within the healthcare industry in order to be able to apply their abilities. The data analysis process, however, provided a reality check and a more accurate image of that which the data represents, within the context of an interpretive paradigm.

Organisational culture as an attraction factor is a broad one. It is largely a representation of the values of the company's employees and also an important component of the employee value proposition (Chambers et al., 1998). There are numerous types of cultures, which can for instance be shaped by company processes, policies, and communication flows. Cultures which allow access to opportunities for creativity, for example, are seen to promote the fulfilment of a self-actualisation need (Bagram, 2011). In the current study, it was particularly notable that three participants had first-hand experience of the organisational culture, having been previous employees of the company. Signalling theory may have played a large role in the consideration of this aspect for other participants, who thus gathered information about the company's culture from other sources, including their friends and acquaintances, which had an unmistakable influence on their perception of organisational attractiveness (Rynes et al., 1991; Van Hove & Saks, 2011). The factor may however feature less strongly for these participants than for those who were previously employed by the organisation as a result of this less direct association.

Three of the last five factors in this study, attaining ranks of either six or seven, imparted an interesting though gloomier picture. These were the push factors, namely the risk of being struck off the nursing council register, emotional-physical costs and the risk of infection. These factors may have only appeared at this level of importance as a result of the sampling method used, namely that working in a hospital, where these factors might be the most prevalent, was not a prerequisite for participants to be included. The nursing environment is however indeed a straining one both mentally and physically (Green et al., 2008; Van der Heijden, Demerouti, Bakker, & Hasselhorn, 2008) and acts as a motivator for nurses considering leaving. The circumstances in such an environment also increase the possibility of making mistakes, as highlighted by participants. One is thus prone to losing one's career status and associated income in a regulated profession as a result. In addition, there is the serious risk of infection, referring to personal safety concerns (Aiken et al., 2004; Kingma, 2001). The only participant mentioning this factor was principally concerned about the

wellbeing of family members. These factors highlighted the legal, social and ethical issues that impact on nurses.

In the study of these factors, the theories earlier defined bear additional mentioning in terms of their relevance to the different factors. Signalling theory, as an example, has already been considered in relation to the factor of company culture and reputation. It might in fact provide a general view from which participants process information relating to their job and organisational choice decisions, especially those who have never worked at the organisation before. That which participants then expect in terms of valued outcomes, such as a new career, also influences their interest or attraction levels, especially in terms of their status as a scarce skill (Vroom, 2005). The similarity attraction paradigm and social identity theory provided a departure point in terms of how the participants have viewed the organisation and job components and prioritised these, coming from their individual frames of reference and expectations of improved self-concepts. Commonalities amongst participants also featured in this consideration, identifiable even further when reviewing the great number of overlaps in factor rankings. It is thus that one cannot view attraction in isolation and the act of speaking with prospective employees provided a component of depth and context. The qualitative research experience itself was rewarding, which provides the opportunity to understand the situations of individuals in more detail whilst offering a listening ear to those making important life choices.

3.6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

According to D. R. Berger (2004) a well-balanced mix of traditional, quantifiable elements such as competitive salary and benefits and intangible rewards such as providing learning and development opportunities, is essential to motivate, engage and retain top talent. This sentiment is echoed in the findings of the current study, where 25 attraction factors were identified covering both quantifiable and non-quantifiable facets. The broad classification of themes subsequently refers to organisational and job aspects, opportunity-related aspects, working relationships and the tangible components of attraction. The literature yielded similar and mostly comparable, if not identical, themes. In addition, four critical push factors peculiar to the nursing profession were identified in the empirical study and included with the view that both push and pull factors are relevant to applicant decision-making and attraction, as concluded in the literature review.

In closer review of these themes, it could be established that opportunities for professional and personal growth and the relationship sustained with the member or patient mattered

most to the participant nurses who applied to join a managed care organisation. This was closely followed by the tangible issues of salary and the working hours, which were particularly strenuous for the nurses. This study accordingly provided valuable information to organisations recruiting nurses, in particular to managed care organisations. This information will allow such companies and their leadership to formulate contextually relevant attraction strategies or awareness campaigns which will provide a realistic organisation preview somewhat similar to the concept of a realistic job preview (Bretz & Judge, 1998), should these factors already be in place or at least to work towards this aim. Industrial and Organisational Psychologists are similarly provided with pertinent information that can be used to design appropriate interventions for the attraction of nurses. These findings may additionally provide confirmatory and supplementary input to the current knowledge of the nursing shortage in the South African context and the factors that require attention to improve the situation.

The next chapter provides more detail as to the conclusions of this study and implications for practice are then also discussed.

3.7 LIMITATIONS

This section concentrates on the central limitations only as the next chapter provides room for elaboration.

Being a qualitative study that was explorative in nature, the findings were limited and cannot be applied to other contexts. Additionally, the sampled participants were diverse in terms of employment background, some coming from hospitals or other clinical contexts, some coming from other managed care organisations or even other corporate contexts. This is limiting in terms of the possible dilution of certain identified attraction factors, based on the participants' broadly different current realities. On the other hand, this approach may be considered more representative of reality, catering for varied perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Another potential limitation was the position of the researcher as both the tool in this process and an employee of the organisation. Being at a pre-interview stage of the attraction process, participants might thus have been influenced to represent their attraction more highly than with a neutral researcher. This limitation was one to which the researcher was in particular sensitised and mitigated against by ensuring there was a clear understanding of the researcher's role and the purpose of the meeting.

3.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, only the central recommendations will be focussed on, as more detail will be provided in Chapter four.

Given the findings of this study, certain core recommendations can be made in terms of how managed care or other organisations can better facilitate the attraction of nurses. Firstly, it is recommended that organisations embrace the knowledge that there is great benefit to tailoring attraction efforts based on what one learns from the applicants directly. Managed care organisations may thus need to focus their efforts on customising their attraction strategy in order to attract nurses. To do so, such organisations should specifically expend time on creating both the opportunities and space for employees to develop themselves personally and professionally. This might be accomplished, for example, through a voluntary job rotation programme. There is also a focus required on the nurse–member or nurse–patient relationship. Opportunities to see the results of one’s efforts for improving member or patient care might be quite attractive to nurses, acting as a motivating factor.

Managed care organisations are ideally placed to attract nurses, given their basic office hours. This might be complemented by reviewing the salary packages for nurses to ensure that these are in line with expectations and market demand. Those aspects which the organisation already provides as part of its value proposition should ideally be positioned to prospective employees, especially those whose skills are scarce.

Future research is called for to confirm the generalisability of the attraction framework proposed in this study. This may, for example, be facilitated by the development of a tool to measure the attraction factors for nurses and the extent of their importance. Further studies addressing the core limitations of this study are also required.

3.9 REFERENCES

The references included in this article are located in the main reference list of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter centres on presenting the conclusions and limitations of this study, based on the research questions and aims posed at the start of this research endeavour. These will be addressed from both the literature review and empirical study perspectives to facilitate completeness at this closing juncture. In addition, the recommendations pertinent to this and for future studies will be provided. This chapter therefore essentially aims to reflect, in a summative manner, on that already done and on the way forward.

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

The current study provided an answer to the calls for contextually based qualitative research in the field of applicant attraction (Horwitz et al., 2003; Rynes & Barber, 1990). The sample group of nurses, who are considered a scarce skill, were additionally apt as professionals, a subsection not traditionally studied in applicant attraction research (Thomas & Wise, 1999). In offering research to address this gap and explore the attraction of nurses to the context of a managed care organisation, a literature review was thus undertaken and an empirical study done. A number of conclusions yielded from this process are articulated next.

4.1.1 Conclusions relating to the literature review

A literature review was specified as a critical part of this study in order to identify and conceptualise factors that have an impact on the attraction of individuals to organisations. Factors that then explicitly affect the attraction of nurses to organisations also required attention from a literature point of view. In determining the relevant factors, the literature study was steered from various angles, taking into account a cross-section of information. This approach delivered 23 attraction factors grouped into different categories for ease of reference and understanding. The groupings covered the tangible aspects of attraction, including, for example, remuneration and working environment. Opportunity-related factors of attraction were also found to be pertinent, for example referring to opportunities for development and growth. The job-related attraction factors included aspects specifically relating to work and feedback received from work, such as recognition and achievement and whether the work is challenging and meaningful and whether it offers autonomy. Organisation-related factors of attraction included such aspects as reputation of a company, its culture and whether it is seen to be socially responsible. The fifth and final category of attraction factors included the people component of relationships, referring for instance to co-

worker and management relationships. These attraction factors were thus identified to be those most prominent in the reviewed literature, appearing in various interconnected forms, such as work values, job factors, extrinsic or intrinsic factors and career anchors.

Although certainly not an exhaustive list, the attraction factors revealed provide a fairly comprehensive framework from which one can study the attraction phenomenon. These attraction factors were concurrently identified to function in a system of related theories and influencing conditions, especially as concerning attraction at the pre-interview stage. The signals provided by the environment, one's personal characteristics, values, social identity, expectancies and perceptions of fit are all important in this game of attraction that influences the choices people make in the employment arena. It is an interplay that cannot be deciphered simply even though it provides a useful backdrop to situational contexts such as the one in this study. The literature study thus facilitated the understanding of the attraction realm, and the framework identified also provided a useful basis from which to review the attraction factors applicable to nurses in specific, as was also a research aim of this study.

There was consequently a fair amount of overlap in the attraction factors found in the literature and those applicable especially to nurses, depicted in Figure 4.1. The nursing literature furthermore emphasised the view that not only factors that determine the attraction or pull of nurses are relevant to applicant decision-making and attraction but factors that affect the push of nurses from an organisation, profession or country are also very applicable. It is accordingly expressed that both push and pull factors must be present to create movement (Kline, 2003). This was an important realisation resulting from the literature review, which was accounted for in the empirical study, as is noted in the next section.

4.1.2 Conclusions relating to the empirical study

The aims relating to this empirical study comprised the exploration of factors attracting nurses to a selected managed care organisation and the resulting formulation of recommendations for how managed care or other organisations can better facilitate the attraction of nurses and pertinent future research. In order to achieve these aims, a qualitative study was embarked upon with a sample group of nine participant nurses to provide a platform from which in-depth information could be obtained. The process generated a framework in which 25 attraction factors applicable to the attraction of nurses were identified, which included four specifically denoted push factors exclusive to a nursing context.

Apart from these four attraction-opposed factors nonetheless speculated on in the nursing literature review, the attraction-specific factors that were identified were vastly similar to those identified in the literature study. This therefore permitted a similar categorisation process whereby tangible aspects, opportunity-related factors, job- and organisation-related factors and working relationships could be distinguished. A few slight variations within these parameters were however still notable. A new factor emerged under the tangible component, namely uniform. This aspect illustrated that dress code could be of interest in understanding the attraction of nurses to a managed care organisation. The job activities peculiar to jobs within a more administratively and risk management-orientated managed care environment was also a new factor, which warranted separate discussion under the job-related factors. A further factor that found its way to the attraction framework resulting from the empirical study and which additionally required highlighting in terms of its significance was that of member or patient relationships. This factor, grouped under working relationships, appeared unique to a nursing context, rather than to the broader population, as a result of the specific nature of the work which involves caring for people. This factor remains important to nurses, even where they leave a context in which more direct patient interaction is possible. The conclusion appeared to be that it is not necessarily the physical interaction that matters most, but rather the looking after others' interests, educating them and ensuring that their wellbeing is of foremost priority, sometimes over a lengthened period. The platform or perspective, that is, either personally nursing others or ensuring care as an employee of a managed care organisation, appeared then to be relevant in so far as it offers the greatest opportunity to do so.

The empirical study allowed the ranking of factors, from which further conclusions could be drawn. In particular the leading factors critical to the attraction of nurses to a managed care organisation were concluded to be this aforementioned relationship with the member or patient and, additionally, the opportunities for professional and personal growth in this environment. Salary and working hours were followed closely indicating the continued importance of getting the quantifiable and tangible basic employment needs right for people. Taking these top four points into account could however go amiss if the rest of the factors identified in the study are not given due consideration in order to elevate the organisational offering to those needed for the company's success. The mix of factors raised during the research process was indicative of the requirement to include different kinds of elements to motivate, engage and retain key skills (D. R. Berger, 2004).

A general consideration of these findings also presented the supposition that attraction is mostly an overarching phenomenon; however, one should not preclude the existence of a

few contextually based factors that have an effect and refine that which is attractive to a target audience. The subtleties in life might often be the differentiators. This research bid support of this perspective.

4.2 LIMITATIONS

Recognising limitations is said to help with the demonstration of data trustworthiness (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). It is also important for researchers to give thought to limitations of the process in order to assist others with improving future research endeavours. Limitations of this study will thus be attended to here, as these pertain to the literature review and to the empirical study.

4.2.1 Limitations of the literature review

The literature review was embarked on with the view of incorporating attraction factors from different literature perspectives. This could also be a limiting factor to the extent that additional perspectives that could otherwise have provided additional understanding to the topic were excluded. In conjunction with this, limited studies of the attraction factors pertaining to nurses were identified for this study, drawing therefore on other related constructs, such as retention and withdrawal to provide useful supplementary information. Studies relevant to the attraction of nurses to a managed care setting were similarly not found for inclusion and comparative analysis purposes, furthermore rendering the angle taken with this study unique, should that be the case.

4.2.2 Limitations of the empirical study

The limitations of this empirical study were in part elaborated on in Chapter three, given their significance, and in part presented as new additions. As mentioned before, this study was qualitative in nature and the findings are thus limited and not generalisable to other contexts. In addition, the participants included in the study emanated from differing employment backgrounds. Some were, for example, based in hospitals or other clinical environments and some had years of experience in managed care organisations, even having been employed previously by the research organisation. The experiences of these individuals thus impacted on that which they understood about managed care and the research organisation and therefore that which they might have been likely to mention. Should the sample group have included only hospital-based nurses who had no or very limited exposure to managed care, the picture might have been different in terms of the emphasis and ranking of factors.

Although mentioned as a limitation, the strategy adopted provided a representative view of reality taking into account varied perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In a similar consideration, the availability of potential participants to the study was a limiting factor, in particular due to the ad hoc nature of external recruitment and the preference given to internal employees applying for positions.

Another potential limitation for consideration is the question whether the role of the researcher influenced the attraction level of participants, as the researcher was simultaneously an employee of the organisation. The researcher might thus have been seen as a signal, according to signalling theory, denoting information about the organisation by virtue of the association of the researcher to the organisation. Participants might, for example, have shared a more positive picture of their attraction with the researcher, especially if they perceived that the interaction might have benefitted their application for employment. Being particularly sensitised to this limitation, the researcher ensured an understanding of the researcher's role prior to and on meeting with each participant to help in mitigating the situation. This was additionally stated in the consent form signed before the interviews commenced. These measures were taken not only to facilitate data trustworthiness but were also considered critical in terms of procedural and relational ethics (Tracy, 2010). Additional checks to facilitate the data trustworthiness were likewise put in place.

A further limitation to note is that the empirical study excluded market-related, behavioural or demographic factors which have an effect on attraction. This was outside of the scope of the study, though should remain an aspect of which those interested in the field of attraction should be aware.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This explorative study has been carried out within the applied discipline of Industrial and Organisational Psychology and as such is suited to the deliberation of functional recommendations to further the field. A number of recommendations in terms of how managed care or other organisations could enhance the attraction of nurses and further the body of knowledge in this arena are thus discussed in this section, based on the findings, conclusions and limitations of this study.

4.3.1 Recommendations in terms of an attraction strategy

A base recommendation learnt from this study is that organisations embrace the knowledge that there is great benefit to tailoring attraction efforts based on what one learns from applicants directly. This approach is supported by the view that the formulation of a good attraction strategy requires organisations to understand an applicant's perspective and then to incorporate that into their operating model (Davis & Scully, 2008). The following recommendations are accordingly based on what has been learnt from participants involved in the research.

- Organisations should afford employees both the opportunities and the space to develop themselves professionally and personally. Initiatives created by the employer might include relevant training programmes, workshops or seminars or even opportunities for lateral career movement that assist with development. Attention to individual development plans, creating a targeted and joint approach to each person's development is also recommended in this regard. A link to the factor of opportunities for career advancement is notable here, in which case the plotting of career paths, both lateral and vertical, is a complimentary recommendation.
- In addition to this, organisations might look into offering development opportunities to external persons in certain areas of expertise in which internal training is already offered. This approach may work to increase attraction by creating awareness of the importance of development to the organisation and providing general exposure to the organisation. At the same time it may assist in creating a talent pool of external persons who may later be more employable to the organisation.
- An emphasis is required on the nurse–member or nurse–patient relationship as this was found to be a very important attraction factor. Managed care organisations might thus be better positioned where they create opportunities for nurses to see the results of their efforts for improving member or patient care. This might even be accomplished through creating feedback avenues, which could concurrently harvest appreciation. One means of accomplishing this is by creating channels to get written, verbal or personal feedback from members. Opportunities to visit members who have been assisted may also permit better relationship building and may at the same time promote the organisation.
- Understanding the type of interaction that a nurse prefers, in terms of short-term or continuous longer-term interaction, may also assist in placing the person in a more suitable type of job that will be motivating to him or her. In some instances, joint

initiatives with hospitals may address the need for more direct patient care for those seeking this.

- Managed care organisations are ideally placed to attract nurses in terms of their normal working hours, compared to hospitals, for example, which was found to be an important attraction factor, alongside salary. Working hours that are long and irregular and which do not offer flexibility are seen negatively, especially in so far as they upset family dynamics (Pillay, 2009). Offering more flexibility in working hours or perhaps part-time employment may be another means of creating an attractive environment for nurses. Day care facilities might be one means to help parents juggle their time more efficiently. In addition, technology could change where work can be done, creating options for working from home.
- It is furthermore recommended that salary packages for nurses be reviewed regularly to ensure that these are aligned with expectation and that which the market is offering. Adequate financial recognition should be considered over the long term, ensuring that suitable remuneration and reward strategies are in place.
- Creating a framework in which remuneration and excess leave can be offered in lieu of each other or exchanged among team members may also aid in facilitating flexibility in this regard.
- The working environment in terms of facilities and resources is also important. One could consider offering job shadowing opportunities to external parties, in which they are likely to become familiar with the working environment, thereby creating a realistic job preview in real time for prospective employees.
- Job enrichment is another method recommended to be used by organisations seeking to recruit nurses. This can be implemented in various manners such as by means of offering cross-training, voluntary job rotation, coaching or mentoring opportunities. Another possibility is to offer leeway in a person's job, for example, making it possible for employees to partake in different projects required in the organisation, according to their interests and dependent on performance, thus promoting flexibility in one's work. Likewise, the understanding of what people attach personal meaning to serves to increase job alignment (Munsamy & Bosch Venter, 2009). These recommendations are more especially intended to address the job-related factors of attraction.
- Organisation-related factors of attraction, relating to stability, reputation and culture may also require fostering in order to increase attractiveness for desirable applicants. This would involve other bigger processes, which also require more in-depth understanding of the type of culture to which individuals are attracted. Although some hints to the preferred culture are provided in this study, for example the feeling of

homeliness and an orientation to people, this requires further investigation for more meaningful recommendations. The general wellbeing of a company is furthermore under the spotlight and public awareness of a well-established, performing company may be what is required in this regard. Targeted advertising to the nursing profession may thus be helpful.

- Organisations may furthermore benefit from benchmarking their reputation among potential applicants relative to competitors (Turban & Cable, 2003) if interested in attracting quality applicants.
- In managed care organisations, the concern should be focussed on improving co-worker relationships beyond internal co-workers, as the scope of the job extends to dealing with other healthcare professionals. This will have a ripple effect as a result of the increased prospects to generate awareness of the organisation.
- The role of management is also to be considered from an attraction point of view, though it might not be immediately visible to the outsider. Leadership should accordingly step up to take the lead role (Weiss & MacKay, 2009), create trust (Martins & Von der Ohe, 2002) and put people first in organisations that can then be seen to be more attractive. This essentially calls for a careful selection process in placing individuals with the right skills and attributes into leadership roles.
- The push factors do not require particular attention from a managed care organisation standpoint in this context, although they should be viewed in a serious light by hospitals or organisations in which these factors are evidenced to affect retention negatively.

The recommendations provided in this section have been selected for inclusion on the basis of the empirical study findings, in which some factors appeared to hold more weight than others. Certain individual factors, such as benefits, location and uniform did not receive separate mention although the recommendations have nonetheless addressed all the attraction factor groupings. Figure 4.1 provides an illustrative summary of these recommendations. Further suggestions supplementing and supporting those already mentioned are provided below:

- An organisation that already has competitive inducements in place addressing the attraction factors should position these to prospective employees they would like to attract. An effective way to do this is through existing employees, who are considered a credible channel and trusted information source (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006).
- Recruitment sources can be designed to include more specific information about the organisation, in order to create awareness and the potential for applicants to identify

with the organisational characteristics described, thereby raising the possibility of these candidates being attracted to the organisation. When targeting applicants from specific professions, such as nurses, information to help prospective applicants identify with the organisation based on their professional identity may also be beneficial (Celani & Singh, 2011).

- Human resources managers should continually monitor attraction by measuring the competitiveness of attraction factors and make adjustments to their value proposition as required to remain relevant. This information should also be filtered through to the relevant recruiting managers so that they remain aware of those aspects in the value proposition which they might otherwise not fully harness.
- It is recommended that hospitals, especially those most pressed by the nursing shortage, also find value and learn from these research findings.

4.3.2 Recommendations for future research

In order to advance the body of knowledge in this field, additional research is called for to investigate the generalisability of the attraction factor framework proposed in this study, in particular as it applies to nurses interested in altering their career paths. Researchers may use this information to develop a tool that measures the attraction factors for nurses and their relative importance. Such a tool may also be implemented to ensure that an organisation's attraction strategy remains current and relevant.

Replication studies to determine if similar factors are evident are accordingly also recommended. Of further interest is whether the themes overlapping to both the nursing and the general attraction literature are universally applicable themes that also bear relevance to other specialised contexts. A similar question raised, requiring further study, is whether the themes only applicable to the empirical study, such as uniform, are relevant in any other circumstances.

Further studies that examine the push factors in more detail, especially from a hospital point of view, are required. The implementation of recommendations from such studies may generally improve the shortage status of the nursing occupation.

Studies that examine attraction at different phases of the applicant attraction process, as pertaining to specific contexts in which there are skills shortages, may likewise provide beneficial information to this field. Some such fields pertain to managers, doctors, engineering professionals, social workers, educators, information technology professionals,

law professionals, artisans and city planners (Erasmus & Breier, 2009). Similarly, research into how organisations attract employees in the face of economic challenges or during a recession, especially when they lack the resources to compete in monetary terms, is recommended. Further studies should additionally take account of the limitations highlighted in this study in the quest for continual improvement in research.

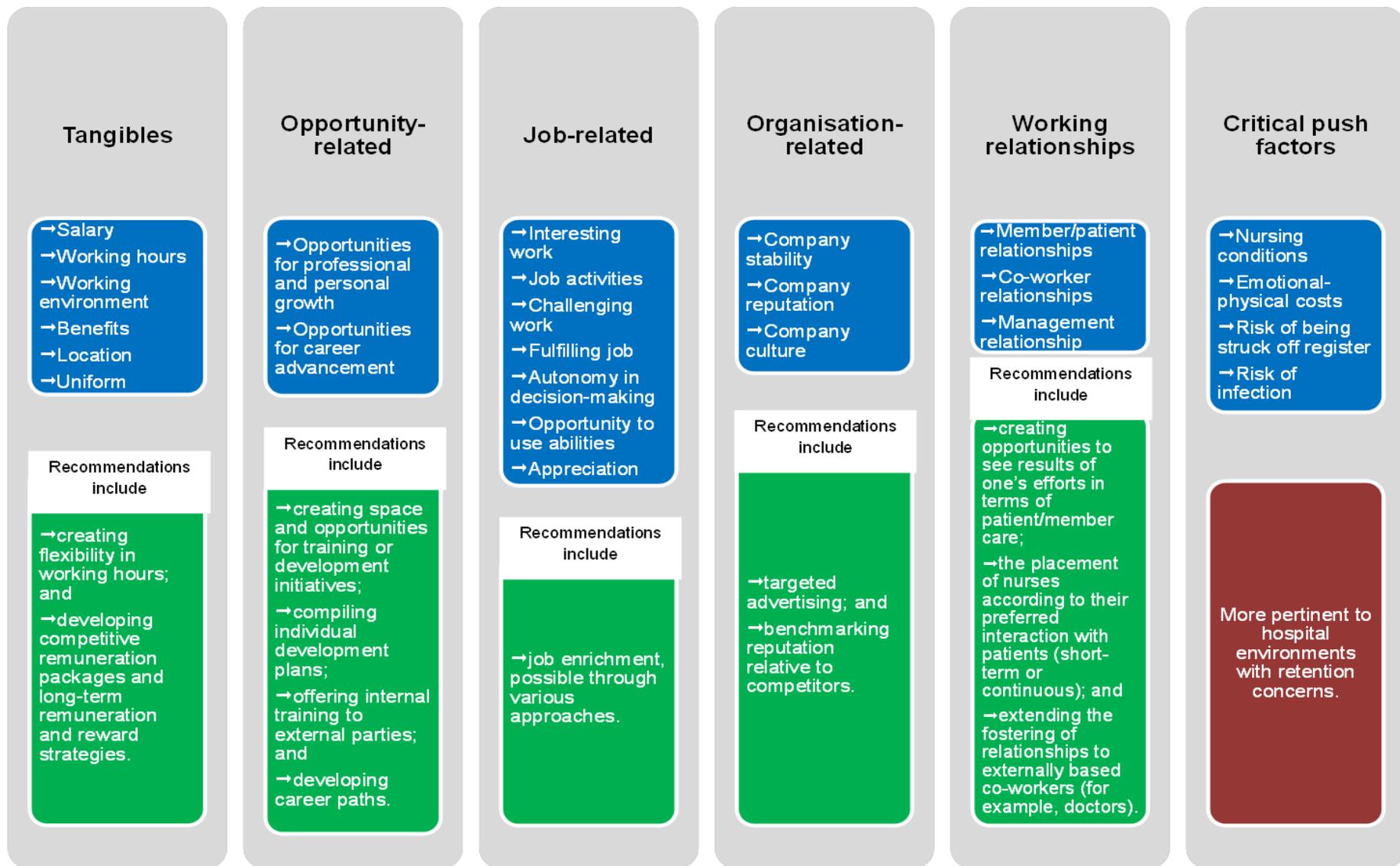


Figure 4.1 A summary of recommendations to increase nurses' attraction to managed care organisations (Author's own).

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This research process aimed to deliver a holistic picture of the factors that attract nurses to a managed care organisation, striving to understand this picture in relative and realistic terms. The importance of this enterprise resided not only in facilitating theoretical and empirical understanding but also in enabling application such that conscientious improvement in attraction practices would be possible. Having thus undergone the process to answer the research questions posed at the commencement of this study, this chapter presented final conclusions, offered a discussion of limitations and generated fitting recommendations. The purposes set out for this study thus attained culmination, although new questions and thoughts still invite the crafting of new pursuits towards meaning-making.

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