

**TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE
MILLENNIALS' AND GENERATION XERS'
WELL-BEING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

by

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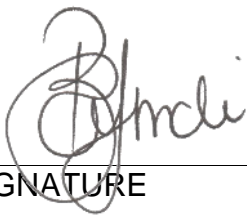
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Towards a framework to enhance Millennials' and Generation Xers' well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Date: 29 January 2021

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TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE MILLENNIALS' AND GENERATION XERS' WELL-BEING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

by

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ABSTRACT

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Orientation: While adversity causes devastation, it can also cause individuals to assume a new and positive perspective on life. Positive emotions can assist individuals in overcoming adversity, safeguard them against negative experiences and help them to focus on the positive experiences.

Research purpose: This research investigated the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to develop a framework to enhance their well-being.

Research method: An investigation was conducted with 37 research participants from Germany and South Africa who were selected using purposive and volunteer sampling. Of these, 29 individuals (representing six organisations) participated in focus group discussions and eight independent individuals participated in computer-mediated one-on-one interviews.

Main findings: The findings revealed that, despite Millennials and Generation Xers experiencing several incidences of anxiety and fear during the COVID-19 pandemic, both generational cohorts applied similar coping mechanisms such as social support (nurturing relationships and spirituality) and positive psychology (acceptance, positive thinking, educating oneself, self-care, keeping to normal routines and mindfulness) to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. The coping mechanisms adopted not only enabled

the participants to deal with the challenges of the pandemic but also initiated positive lifestyle changes that led to enhanced well-being. Both generational cohorts identified four key elements (social support, spirituality, sense of security, and meaningful life) as aspects that contribute to achieving fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the most significant findings of the study is that, while South Africans, particularly Millennials, needed meaningful and purposeful lives to achieve fulfilment, Generation Xers needed spirituality and a sense of security to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Neither German Millennials nor Generations Xers needed spirituality to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Contribution/value-add: The findings of the study support the development of the framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers. In addition, the findings were consistent with other research studies that propose adversity to be a catalyst for creating more meaningful lives through a re-appraisal of life. The theoretical framework of the experiences of the two generational cohorts regarding the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates that although Millennials and Generation Xers were born in different eras, they experience adversity and uncertainty similarly when circumstances are unknown, unfamiliar and unexpected.

Keywords: adversity, anxiety, COVID-19, coping mechanism, fulfilment, Generation X, Millennial, positive emotion, positive psychology, social support, well-being

ABSTRAK

Oriëntasie: Hoewel teëspoed verwoesting veroorsaak, kan dit ook daartoe lei dat individue 'n nuwe en positiewe perspektief op die lewe kry. Positiewe emosies kan individue help om teëspoed te oorkom, hulle teen negatiewe ervarings te beskerm en hulle help om op die positiewe ervarings te konsentreer.

Doel van die navorsing: Hierdie navorsing het die ervarings van twee generasiegroepe (Millenniërs en Generasie X'ers) uit Duitsland en Suid-Afrika tydens die COVID-19-pandemie ondersoek om 'n raamwerk te ontwikkel om hul welstand te verbeter.

Navorsingsmetode: 'n Ondersoek is gedoen met 37 deelnemers uit Duitsland en Suid-Afrika. Hulle is gekies is met behulp van doelgerigte en vrywillige steekproewe.

Uit die totaal van 37 het 29 individue, wat ses organisasies verteenwoordig, aan fokusgroepbesprekings deelgeneem terwyl die oorblywende agt aan rekenaargesteunde een-tot-een-onderhoude deelgeneem het.

Belangrikste bevindings: Die bevindings het getoon dat, alhoewel Millienniërs en Generasie X'ers verskeie episodes van angs en vrees tydens die COVID-19-pandemie ervaar het, het beide groepe soortgelyke hanteringsmeganismes soos gemeenskapsondersteuning (koestering van verhoudings en spiritualiteit) en positiewe sielkunde (aanvaarding, positiewe denke, selfopvoeding, selfversorging, instandhouding van normale roetines en bewustheid) ingespan om die COVID-19-pandemie te hanteer. Die hanteringsmeganismes wat benut is, het die deelnemers in staat gestel om die uitdagings van die pandemie die hoof te bied asook positiewe lewensstylveranderinge wat welstand verbeter het, geïnisieer. Beide generasie-kohorte het vier sleutelemente geïdentifiseer (gemeenskapsondersteuning, spiritualiteit, gevoel van veiligheid en betekenisvolle lewe) wat bydra tot die verwesenlikking van doelwitte tydens die COVID-19-pandemie.

Een van die belangrikste bevindings van die studie is dat Suid-Afrikaners, veral Millienniërs, sinvolle en doelgerigte lewens nodig gehad het om die verwesenlikking van doelwitte te bereik. Daarteenoor het Generasie X'ers geestelikeid en 'n gevoel van veiligheid nodig gehad om tydens die COVID-19-pandemie dieselfde te bereik. Nóg Duitse Millienniërs nóg Generasie X'ers het spiritualiteit nodig gehad om tydens die COVID-19-pandemie hul doelwitte te bereik.

Bydrae/waardetoevoeging: Die bevindinge van die studie ondersteun die ontwikkeling van die raamwerk om die welstand van Millienniërs en Generasie X'ers te verbeter. Daarbenewens was die bevindinge in ooreenstemming met ander navorsing wat voorstel dat teenspoed 'n katalisator is vir die skep van sinvoller lewens deur 'n nuwe lewensbeskouing. Die teoretiese raamwerk van die ervarings van die twee generasiegroepe met betrekking tot die COVID-19-pandemie illustreer dat, hoewel Millienniërs en Generasie X'ers in verskillende tydperke gebore is, hulle teëspoed en onsekerheid op dieselfde manier ervaar wanneer omstandighede onbekend en onverwags is.

Trefwoorde: teëspoed, angs, COVID-19, hanteringsmeganisme, verwesenlikking, Generasie X, Millienniër, positiewe emosie, positiewe sielkunde, gemeenskapsondersteuning, welstand

ISIFINYEZO

Umumo: Nanxa ubunzima buletha inhlupheko, bungaphinde futhi bube nembangela kubantu ukuba babe nemibono emisha nemihle ngezimpilo zabo. Imizwa emihle ingasiza abantu ukuba bakwazi ukunqoba ubunzima, ibavikele ezimeni ezingezinhle futhi ibasize bakwazi ukugxila ezimeni ezinhle ngezimpilo zabo.

Injongo yalolu cwaningo: Lolu cwaningo luphenye izimo abantu abaphila ngaphansi kwazo zezizukulwane ezimbili (ezazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1981 nonyaka ka-1996 nalezo ezazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1980) zaseJalimane nezaseNingizimu Afrika ngesikhathi sobhubhane iCovid-19, ukuze lukwazi ukuthuthukisa uhloko lokudlondlobalisa ukuphatheka kahle kwalezi zizukulwane.

Indlela yokwenza ucwaningo: Kwenziwa ucwaningo kusetshenziswa abantu ababamba iqhaza abangu-37 baseJalimane nabaseNingizimu Afrika ababekhethe kusetshenziswa indlela yenhloso kanye neyokuvolontiya. Kulabo bantu, abangu-29 (ababemele izinhlangothini eziyisithupha) babamba iqhaza ezingxoxweni zamaqembu ezigxile esihlokwini esithize; abayisishiyagalombili abazimele baxoxa besebenzisa amakhompyutha uma benza inhlolovo ngababili.

Imiphumela ebalulekile etholakele: Imiphumela yaveza ukuthi, nanxa labo abazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1980 nalabo abazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1981 nonyaka ka-1996 behlangabezana nezigameko zokukhathazeka eziningi nokwesaba ngesikhathi sobhubhane iCovid-19, zozimbili lezi zizukulwane zisebenzise izindlela zokubhekana nalesi simo ezifanayo. Lezi zindlela yilezo ezifaka phakathi ukwesekelwa umphakathi (ukudlondlobalisa ubudlelwane nezikamoya) nokusebenzisa ingqondo ngendlela enemiphumela emihle (ukwamukela, ukucabanga okuhle kuphela, ukuzifundisa ezinto ezintsha, ukuzinakekela, ukulandela izindlela ezejwayelekile nokuhlala unomqondo okhaliphile) ukuze bakwazi ukubhekana nobhubhane iCovid-19. Izindlela zokubhekana nalesi simo eziqokwe yilezi zizukulwane ezimbili azisizanga laba ababebambe iqhaza ukubhekana nezimo ezingezinhle zobhubhane kuphela, kodwa zaphinde zaqala izindlela zokuphila ezintsha, ezinhle, ezathuthukisa ukuphatheka kahle okungcono. Zozimbili lezi zizukulwane zakhomba izinto ezine ezibalulekile (ukwesekelwa uhulumeni, ezikamoya, ukuzizwa uphephile, nokuphila impilo enempokophelo) eziholela ekutheni umuntu azizwe enokunqoba ngalesi sikhathi sobhubhane iCovid-19.

Enye yezinto ezibalulekile ezatholakala kulolu cwaningo ukuthi, nanxa izakhamuzi zaseNingizimu Afrika, ikakhulukazi labo abazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1980, zidinga ukuphila impilo egculisayo nenempokophelo ukuze zizizwe zeneme, labo abazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1981 nonyaka ka-1996 bona bathi badinga ezikamoya nokuzizwa bephephile ukuze bakwazi ukuphila impilo engcono ngesikhathi sobhubhane iCovid-19. AmaJamane azalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1980 nalabo abazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1996 lapha eNingizimu Afrika bona abaludingi usizo kwezikamoya ukuze bakwazi ukuzizwa beneme ngesikhathi sobhubhane iCovid-19.

Ukwengeza ulwazi: Okutholakele kulolu cwaningo kweseka ukuthuthukiswa kohlaka lokudlondlobalisa impilo yezizukulwane ezazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1980 nalezo ezazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1981 nonyaka ka-1996. Ngaphezu kwalokho, le miphumela yocwaningo ihambisana nolunye ucwaningo lwangaphambilini olwathola ukuthi uma kukhona ubunzima, buba nesandla ekuthuthukiseni indlela abantu abaphila ngayo. Uhlaka lwethiyori lwempilo yalezi zizukulwane ezimbili, ngokuphathelene nobhubhane iCovid-19, luveza ukuthi nanxa izizukulwane ezazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1980 nalezo ezazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1981 nonyaka ka-1996 zazalwa ngeminyaka eyehlukene, lezi zizukulwane zithola ukuthi ubunzima nokungabi nesiqiniseko kuyefana uma kukhona izinto eziqala ukwenzeka futhi kuyizinto ezingaziwa nezingalindelwe.

Amagama abalulekile: ubunzima, ukukhathazeka emoyeni, iCOVID-19, izindlela zokubhekana nesimo esinzima, ukugcwaliseka, abazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1965 nonyaka ka-1980, abazalwa phakathi konyaka ka-1981 nonyaka ka-1996, imizwa emihle, indlela yokucabanga enhle, ukuxhaswa uhulumeni, inhlalakahle

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
CAQDAS	Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
FTF	Face-to-face
H-R-W	Health, relationships and work
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LMS	Learner management system
MRT	Media Richness Theory
POB	Positive organisational behaviour
POS	Positive organisational scholarship
PsyCap	Psychological capital
PWB	Psychological well-being
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
SRRS	Social Readjustment Rating Scale
WEF	World Economic Forum
WEL	Wellness Evaluation of Lifestyle
WHO	World Health Organization

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CHAPTER 1: RESEARCH CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

“Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way”
(Frankl, 2004, p. 75)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the context in which the study was undertaken and the rationale for investigating the COVID-19 experiences of two generational cohorts from Germany and South Africa. The German cohorts were represented by three of the German federal states: Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, and Baden-Württemberg and the South African cohorts were represented by the Gauteng region. Initially, the chapter introduces the background to the study (Section 1.2) and elaborates on the context in which the research and consequent interviews took place. Due to the relevance of COVID-19 to the background and motivation for this study (Section 1.3), some aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic are briefly explained in this chapter. An in-depth discussion and a literature review of the COVID-19 pandemic follows in Chapter 4.

The rationale for the study culminated in the description of the research problem (Section 1.4) and the research questions (Section 1.6). Ultimately, the research questions led to an in-depth investigation on how the two generational cohorts (i.e. Millennials and Generation Xers) (Section 1.2.6) from South Africa and Germany experienced the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, Chapter 1 introduces the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data and indicates the ethical considerations (Section 1.7) that protected research participants from harm. The researcher discusses the research assumptions (Section 1.8) on which the findings were grounded and presents the potential contribution of the study to the body of knowledge (Section 1.9). This is followed by the thesis statement (Section 1.10).

The researcher continues by explaining the key terms used in this research study (Section 1.11) to ensure universal understanding of the key concepts on which the interpretations of the data are based. Finally, the theory-building process is discussed

(Section 1.12) and the chapter concludes with a concise layout of all the chapters (Section 1.14).

Figure 1.1 presents a graphical representation of the layout of Chapter 1 and the topics that are under discussion.

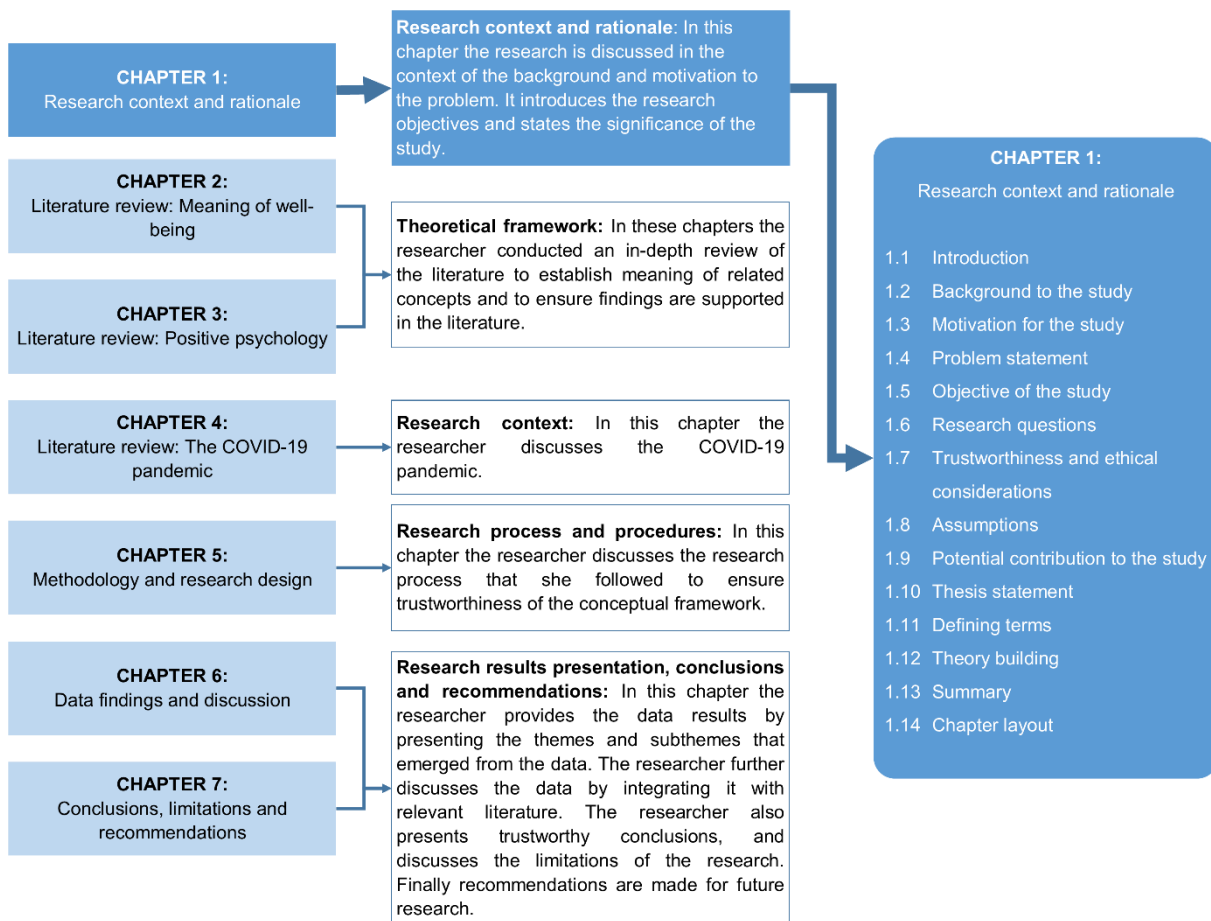


Figure 1.1: Structure of Chapter 1

Source: Author's own compilation

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Adversity and uncertainty are unavoidable. The negative effects can cause devastation and destruction for some individuals (Makwana, 2019), but the positive effects can lead individuals to experience more meaningful lives (Frederickson, 2013; Joseph, 2011; Joseph & Butler, 2010; Victoriano, 2014). A black swan event is an unpredictable and unexpected event that has an extreme impact on society, and its occurrence can often be argued in hindsight (Krupa & Jones, 2013; Taleb, 2010; Warner, 2020). Labelled a

black swan event (Mishra, 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive disruptions to people's lives and livelihoods, which has negatively affected individuals' mental health (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Khoo & Lantos, 2020; Pancani et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020) contributing to depression, anxiety (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020), psychological distress and post-traumatic stress (Chaix et al., 2020; Hamadani et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020). Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic is significantly affecting global socioeconomic conditions (Ananat & Gassman-Pines, 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Mahler et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2020) such as food insecurity (Hamadani et al., 2020), poverty, unemployment (Ozili, 2020; Stats.SA, 2020d), increased alcohol and substance abuse, and family violence (Bertogg & Koos, 2021; Burstrom & Tao, 2020; Hamadani et al., 2020; UNWomen, 2020b).

Brandley-Bell and Talbot (2020) found that measures to limit the spread of the virus caused significant disruptions to daily life and thus negatively affected individuals' mental health and well-being. According to their findings, individuals experience negative effects due to disruptions in "regular routine, living situations, time spent with friends and family, engagement in physical activity, relationship with food and use of technology" (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020, p. 2).

Conversely, various authors, but mostly Joseph and colleagues (e.g. Joseph, 2011; Joseph & Butler, 2010; Linley & Joseph, 2004) argue that adversity can also have positive effects on individuals, causing them to take advantage of opportunities and to become more authentic, resilient, open-minded and tolerant (Joseph, 2011). Moreover, adversity can cause people to embrace new perspectives on life (Maslow, 1955) and/or to experience more meaningful lives (Frederickson, 2013; Joseph, 2011).

Literature abounds with evidence indicating that during times of adversity, uncertainty and unprecedented crisis, positively orientated human strengths and psychological capabilities are needed as antidotes to negative emotions and unfavourable circumstances to maintain positive psychological well-being (PWB) (Allen et al., 2007; Chetna & Sharma, 2019; Joseph, 2011; Joseph & Butler, 2010; Kimhi et al., 2020; Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, et al., 2015; Peterson & Bossio, 2001; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004). Although workplaces are often blamed for contributing to the stress and ill-health of employees (Capper, 2019; Ivancevich et al., 1985; Metlife, 2016), they can become a primary source of well-being (Day & Nielsen, 2017;

Guest, 2017). Moreover, some studies (e.g. Danna & Griffin, 1999; Day et al., 2016) have found that when organisations make attempts to acknowledge employees' needs and engage in practices that are supportive and sustainable, they can reap the benefits of "psychologically healthy workplaces" (Day & Nielsen, 2017, p. 298). This can be achieved by applying lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic (Forman et al., 2020; Khoo & Lantos, 2020), which include the importance of transparency, solidarity, coordination, decisiveness, clarity and accountability to create unique opportunities for employees and to steer organisations in a new sustainable direction.

A cross-cultural research study focusing on the conceptions of subjective-well-being in Germany and South Africa found that the participants described the concept in terms of "(1) satisfaction; (2) contentment; (3) positive effect; (4) social relationships; (5) freedom; and; (6) the opposite of unhappiness, and (7) surprising events" (Pflug, 2009, p. 555). The findings of this study revealed that Germans advocated a "goal-orientated and hedonic version of happiness" while South Africans favoured "calm and balanced mental or affective states, such as contentment and peace of mind" (p. 559). The German respondents stated that "strong positive feelings are not the core of well-being, but a certain degree of hedonic stimulation that is necessary to uphold happiness" (p. 556). The South African respondents also cited blissful moments as critical to happiness. Interestingly, both cohorts described "feelings of freedom" as a source of subjective-well-being (Pflug, 2009, p. 557).

From the above, it is evident that positive emotions assist individuals to adapt to the new lifestyle changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop the capabilities that are needed during times of adversity to envision a brighter future despite living with COVID-19 as the 'new normal' (National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020b; Wan & Johnson, 2020).

1.2.1 The COVID-19 pandemic

In late November 2019, a highly contagious novel virus was reported (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020c). The virus was initially believed to have originated in the Huanan Seafood Wholesale livestock market in Wuhan, China (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Nabi, 2020; WHO, 2020c). However, later research revealed this market was only the first identified site from which the virus started to

spread (Letzter, 2020). This novel virus causes the coronavirus disease that is referred to as COVID-19. The virus started spreading so rapidly worldwide that on 11 March 2020, the WHO declared it a pandemic of unprecedented magnitude (Brandswell, 2020; Nabi, 2020; WHO, 2020c).

Figure 1.2 illustrates the total number of infections and the daily new infections (in brackets) that were reported in Germany and South Africa from 1 March to 1 August 2020. The figure shows that although South Africa reported no infections as of 1 March, daily infections increased rapidly from the beginning of June (1 674 cases) when compared with the daily infections of Germany in June (271 cases). In addition, towards mid-July, South Africa experienced its peak in daily infections, whereas Germany, although reporting 211 0777 accumulative infections, only reported 412 daily infections in August 2020. In addition, there currently seems to be no link between seasonal changes, climate and weather and the rate of COVID-19 infections (WHO, 2020e).

It is worth noting that by August 2020, Germany had conducted over 11.2 million COVID-19 tests. The country was admired for their testing program besides having a relatively low mortality rate in comparison to other countries (Stats.SA, 2020b). On the other hand, during the period 1st of March to the 29th of August 2020, South Africa only conducted 3.2 million COVID-19 tests (National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020a). It is important to consider these statistics when evaluating the number of daily identified infections indicated in Figure 1.2.

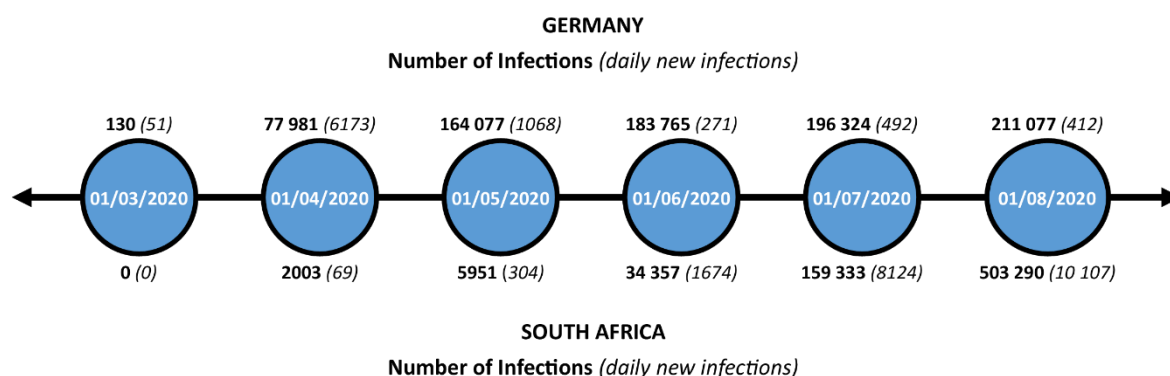


Figure 1.2: Timeline COVID-19 infections South Africa and Germany

Source: Statistics from www.worldometers.info and www.sacoronavirus.co.za (Anon., 2020; Department of Health, 2020b)

Figure 1.3 illustrates the key events since the first infections were reported in Germany and South Africa. Furthermore, the figure shows that both countries experienced a contact ban or lockdown measures at approximately the same time, although Germany lifted severe lockdown measures much sooner than South Africa. The focus group discussions and one-on-one individual interviews were conducted during the peak period of infections in South Africa (see Figure 1.3).

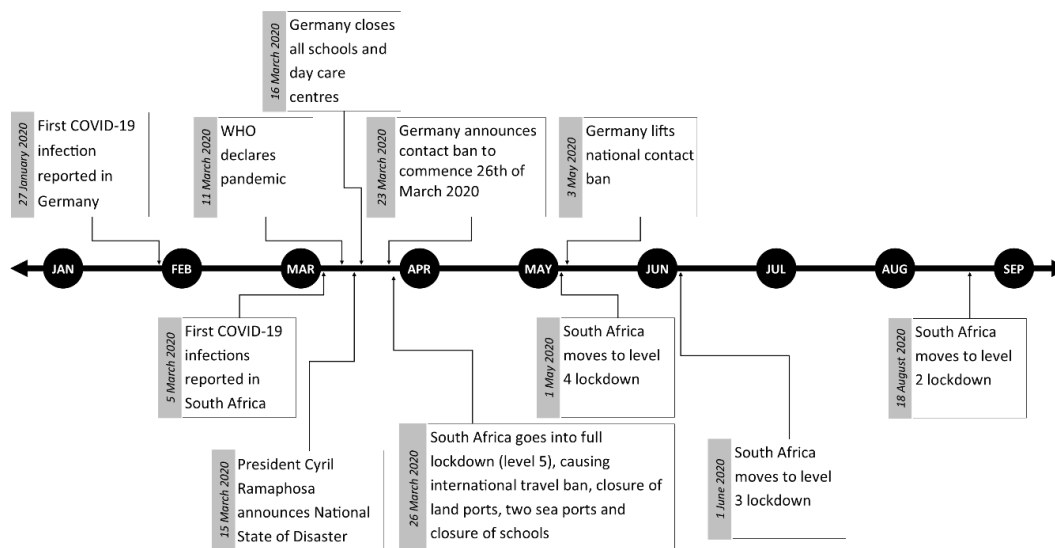


Figure 1.3: Key events of the Covid-19 pandemic in Germany and South Africa

Source: Department of Health (2020c); Marcus (2020); President Cyril Ramaphosa (2020); Statistisches Bundesamt (2020)

Experts in the field of contagious diseases believe the virus spreads mainly through droplets, saliva or discharge from the nose or mouth when an infected person coughs or sneezes (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020a; WHO, 2020c). To curb the spread of the virus, the WHO (2020a) recommended that each country responds to the crisis by implementing preventative measures, which may include: “(i) school closures, (ii) workplace closures, (iii) cancellation of public events, (iv) restrictions on the size of gatherings, (v) closure of public transport, (vi) stay-at-home orders, (vii) restrictions on internal movement, and (viii) restrictions on international travel” (Deb et al., 2020, p. 54). The most drastic measure to contain the virus was a type of lockdown or quarantine that was enforced by April 2020 for approximately 2.6 billion people worldwide (Buchholz, 2020; Van Hoof, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting preventative measures caused severe disruption to people's daily routines, leading to unemployment, economic and political instability (Jaspal et al., 2020; Mimoun & Ari, 2020); and loss of focus in daily patterns (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Chaix et al., 2020; Joska et al., 2020; Pancani et al., 2020; Polakovic, 2020) with a detrimental impact on individuals' mental health and well-being (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Munck et al., 2020), especially in vulnerable people (Di Renzo et al., 2020; Joska et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020). Although a multitude of preventative measures were implemented globally to address the physical health risks of people at work and home, little attention was given to the mental health risks of the population (Khoo & Lantos, 2020; United Nations [UN], 2020b; Van Hoof, 2020; Wiederhold, 2020). Authorities worldwide, (UN, 2020b; WHO, 2020c) including Li et al. (2020), expressed great concern for the impact that the crisis was having on the socio-economic status of societies and will continue to have on people's mental health and well-being long after the initial responses to the COVID-19 pandemic are over. The COVID-19 pandemic not only resulted in many behavioural and lifestyle changes, but also reshaped people's working lives significantly and affected the income and finances of many individuals (Ananat & Gassman-Pines, 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Mahler et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Polakovic, 2020).

This worldwide virus-induced pandemic produced not only social consequences (Del Boca et al., 2020) but also economic consequences, causing the greatest financial disaster and the worst decline in the global gross domestic product (GDP) since the Great Depression in the late 1920s to early 1930s (BBC News, 2020b; Bulbulia, 2020; Rappepoer & Smialek, 2020; Wallace & Rees, 2020). This global economic decline is the result of the complete shutdown of most countries through lockdown measures implemented to limit the spread of the virus. The COVID-19 pandemic is forecast to become not only the greatest health disaster in history, but also the greatest humanitarian disaster (Economist.com, 2020c; WHO, 2020c) as thousands of breadwinners are dying of the disease and millions of people are becoming unemployed worldwide (United Nations, 2020a). The International Labour Organisation [ILO] predicts as many as 25 million job losses as a result of the pandemic (ILO, 2020), while the United Nation (UN) predicts nearly 195 million job losses between the months of April and June 2020 (United Nations, 2020a).

Furthermore, the World Bank estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic will push 49 million people into poverty (Mahler et al., 2020).

In a country, such as South Africa that is plagued with crime (Cilliers, 2020; Cilliers & Aucoin, 2016; Minister Bheki Cele, 2020; Overseas Security Advisory Council [OSAC], 2020), inequality (Gelb, 2004; Keeton, 2014; Sulla & Zikhali, 2018) and massive unemployment (Statistics South Africa, 2020a, 2020b) and where millions of people are already living in poverty (Cilliers, 2020; Hurlbut, 2018; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2020), the pandemic has caused the greatest human catastrophe since apartheid for the already vulnerable and marginalised country.

The COVID-19 pandemic also affected Germans' social and economic lives (Czymara et al., 2020). Prior to the pandemic substantial state welfare support was readily available to citizens. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, with the necessary interventions, has created financial needs among individuals who were not previously dependent on these support systems (Bertogg & Koos, 2021). Bertogg and Koos (2021) investigated the emergence of these new support arrangement in Germany during the pandemic. The research study found that the closure of 'kindergartens' (childcare facilities) and schools left parents without childcare facilities. Moreover, people with underlying medical conditions, chronic diseases and the elderly were ordered to self-isolate causing a new demand for assistance in performing basic chores. The study also revealed that millions of employees and self-employed individuals had to reduce working hours, lost employment, or their organisations went into liquidation also causing an increase in demand for public and private monetary support. A similar study conducted by Czymara et al. (2020) highlighted the impact of gender relations due to the emergence of care needs in Germans and revealed that the pandemic is affecting women more than men. According to this study the participating woman were more concerned about childcare, thus reducing more work hours, while the participating men showed more concern for paid work and the economy.

1.2.2 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa

In South Africa, the government implemented "severe and unprecedented" measures including a nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of the virus (South African

Government, 2020). Preventative measures were referred to as “flattening of the curve”, which means to “decrease the number of infected individuals at the height of the epidemic” (Block et al., 2020, para. 4). The ‘curve’ referred to the projected number of people who could contract COVID-19 over a period of time (Specktor, 2020). The purpose of the measures was to change the fundamental behaviours of people to ensure a lower risk infection rate, which would ultimately mean fewer people needing treatment at one time and thus placing less strain on the country’s already vulnerable healthcare system (Department of Health, 2020a). The latest available statistics show that in 2017, South Africa had 1.308 nurses and 0.905 physicians per 1 000 people (World Bank, 2020).

The measures implemented by the South African government to limit the spread of the virus included mandatory face-covering, travel restrictions, restrictions on certain business operations, school closures, lockdowns and curfews, and cancellation of public gatherings (Block et al., 2020; Department of Health, 2020b; Stephany et al., 2020). According to the Department of Health (2020a), behavioural changes needed to be made in terms of hygiene and sanitisation (regularly washing hands, sanitising surfaces, disinfecting workplaces) and social behaviours such as social distancing and no handshakes and hugging. However, the primary preventative efforts were physical restrictions (to reduce the unknown spread), quarantine (to reduce the potential spread) and isolation (to reduce spread) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020a; Saltzman et al., 2020). These primary measures significantly affected the schooling in South Africa.

In August 2020, South African school children missed between 30 and 59 days of school, depending on the grade (Van der Berg, 2020). According to the author, these children also lost a significant number of additional school days in the second half of the year due to school closures. The situation placed a significant responsibility on working parents to home-school their children. Hence, many children from poor families were being left behind because they do not have the required technological infrastructure in place at home (Goldschmidt, 2020). A greater concern is that almost one million children in South Africa, below the age of six years, have no adult caregiver except for a parent who needs to work to provide for the family (Van der Berg, 2020).

When the first cases of people infected with COVID-19 were reported in South Africa, the government and organisations encouraged people to practice social distancing,

which refers to keeping at least 1.5 m from other people (Shukman, 2020), to limit public gatherings, to wash one's hands regularly and to cover one's mouth when coughing or sneezing. However, as the number of infections began to increase daily towards mid-March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a National State of Disaster on 15 March that included a nationwide full lockdown to enable the government to prepare the national healthcare system for the evolving health crisis. On 23 May 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the introduction of a five-level COVID-19 alert system to "manage the gradual easing of the lockdown" (South African Government, 2020). However, in the absence of a vaccine against COVID-19, the country faced severe economic and social pressures to move from Level 5 during March 2020 to Level 1 during October 2020 while ensuring the safe opening up of the economy (Block et al., 2020).

South Africa suffered significant job losses during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the quarterly Labour Force Survey (Stats SA, 2020c), 2.2 million people became unemployed during the pandemic, notably 25% fewer domestic workers were employed during the second quarter of 2020 (April 2020 to June 2020) when compared with the second quarter of 2019. Although 11.5 million employees in South Africa continued to receive a salary during the lockdown, one in every five employees received a reduction in their wages or salary during lockdown (Stats SA, 2020d). According to economist, Mike Schussler (Bulbulia, 2020), it will take six to nine years for South Africa to recover from the devastation caused by this pandemic. In addition, the economist noted that South Africa had the highest unemployment rate in the world at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, double that of the second-highest country, which was Greece with a 14.5% unemployment rate. Additionally, South Africa has experienced an unemployment rate above 20% during the past two decades, which has not been evident in any other country in the world for such a prolonged period. Furthermore, with fewer buildings being occupied due to the working from home options, less work opportunities are available to manual and unskilled employees (Bulbulia, 2020).

While the COVID-19 pandemic affected the global economy, the pandemic mostly had an adverse effect on the tourism sector due to the imposed lockdown and travel restrictions (Stats.SA, 2021). The World Tourism Organization and the WEF reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the global tourism sector (Richter, 2020; World Tourism Organization, 2020), causing a loss of 30 billion to 50

billion US dollars in spending by international visitors. The pandemic has not spared the South African tourism sector (Stats.SA, 2021; Tralac.org, 2020) whose economy strongly relies on the annual 10.23 million international visitors (Tralac.org, 2020). According to the Tourism, 2020 report released by Statistics South Africa (2021), international arrivals declined by 71% from 15.8 million in 2019 to less than 5 million arrivals in 2020. The tourism Sector Recovery Plan (Tralac.org, 2020) published in August 2020, reported that the tourism sector accounts for 2.9% of the country's GDP and supports about 1.49 million direct and indirect jobs. Since the Level 5 national lockdown was implemented on 26 March, all tourism activities were halted, borders were closed and all international flights were suspended (Stats.SA, 2021). Limited domestic flights resumed at Level 3, and most international flights resumed from 1 October 2020 (African Travel and Tourism Association [ATTA], 2020) subject to various preventative measures. The tourism sector faced a 75% revenue reduction in 2020 (Tralac.org, 2020) and is continuously guided by the country's Risk Adjustment Strategy to facilitate a gradual reopening of the sector. The Risk Adjustment Strategy is guided by the prevalence of COVID-19 infections.

1.2.3 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Germany

Germany was identified as one of the 'success story' countries in terms of its response framework to prevent, detect, contain and treat the COVID-19 pandemic (Wieler et al. 2020). The country not only has one of the best healthcare systems in the world but it also has the most "restriction-free and consumer-orientated" healthcare system in Europe (Wieler et al., 2020, para. 2). The country allocates close to 11% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to its healthcare system annually (Wieler et al., 2020). Furthermore, in 2017, Germany ranked amongst the top five countries in the European Union for the number of nurses (13.2) and physicians (4.2) available per 1 000 people (World Bank, 2020).

On 16 March 2020, the state of Bavaria in Germany declared a state of disaster, which included the banning of all major events (Marcus, 2020). As a result, Chancellor Angela Merkel announced several measures such as the closure of shops, churches, casinos and sports clubs to contain the spread of the virus (Marcus, 2020). On 22 March 2020, Merkel announced a 'contact ban' for all 16 federal states of Germany but on 20 April 2020, she announced the relaxation of certain measures by lifting certain restrictions

for the retail and education sectors (Brandon, 2020). Although the national contact ban and lockdown restrictions in Germany were lifted on 3 May, the federal states continued to implement individual restrictions for each state. The banning of major events had dire consequences for the federal states (Studemann, 2020). For example, the Oktoberfest, the world's largest and oldest folk festival dating back 210 years and with an estimated economic value of between 1.2 and 1.3 billion euros was cancelled in the state of Bavaria (Muenchen.de, 2020).

Although the long-term consequences of the COVID-19 are not yet visible in Germany and most other countries, the measures that were taken to contain the COVID-19 pandemic severely affected employment in terms of reduced working hours, the provision of services and the production of goods in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2020). In an article, "School closures, lack of apprentices, no jobs: Generation without a future?" by Anger et al. (2020), the authors investigated the impact of home schooling on the country's already inequitable education system. According to the Anger et al. (2020), Germany might be facing the threat of a "coronavirus generation" that is "economically and socially disconnected" (p. 3). Conversely, a study conducted by Germany's Bertelsmann Foundation (Follmer et al., 2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a greater sense of social cohesion amongst the German people. Interestingly, social cohesion is understood as strong social relations and positive experiences of social cooperation and togetherness in a community (Follmer et al., 2020). According to Delhey et al. (2018), a highly cohesive society is characterised by three elements, "social relations, positive emotional connectedness as well as a focus on the common good", which support positive life experiences and emotions (p. 431). Furthermore, according to the study, subjective well-being is assumed a positive consequence of a cohesive society.

1.2.4 Psychological distress during COVID-19

Various studies (e.g. Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Hamm et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Mahler et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020; Singh & Singh, 2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively influenced individuals' mental health, causing depression and anxiety (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Chaix et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020) and several other psychological issues such as decreased

feelings of control, increased feelings of isolation and low feelings of social support (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Saltzman et al., 2020). According to Usher et al. (2020), changes to day-to-day functioning and normal routines often make people feel anxious and fearful. Similarly, the preventative measures taken to slow the spread of the virus that included lockdown and social distancing posed significant challenges to mental health, well-being (Benke et al., 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Chaix et al., 2020; Cherry, 2020; Galea et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020) and social relations, leading to enhanced levels of distress (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020) due to social isolation, economic consequences and uncertainty about the future (Petzold et al., 2020).

According to a UN report and policy titled *COVID-19 and the need for action on mental health* that was released 13 May 2020, people were becoming distressed due to “the immediate health impact of the virus and the consequences of physical isolation” (United Nations, 2020, p. 2). Organisations implemented various measures to deal with the changing health conditions, which included engaging in activities such as remote working conditions. These activities required employees to demonstrate significant commitment and work ethic, to complete tasks that emphasised individual strengths, and to show capabilities that foster vitality and extraordinary positive thinking (July & Mathebula, 2020; Linde, 2020; "COVID-19 has forced a radical shift in working habits", 2020; Nelson & Cooper, 2007) to overcome the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, when lockdown was announced, employees were unexpectedly required to manage their time without the constant presence of a supervisor or manager (MacArthur, 2020), to struggle with new and advanced technology to enable remote working (Goldschmidt, 2020; Graham, 2020) and to cope with the risk of feeling isolated (Sangoni, 2020). Moreover, while employees were experiencing heightened levels of distress due to concerns and new challenges regarding health, family, job, children’s education, and finances, organisations were expecting more from their employees ("All the level 3 lockdown changes for South African workers this week", 2020). Many of the new workplace procedures and health protocols caused employees to become fearful and anxious, making them less productive ("All the level 3 lockdown changes for South African workers this week", 2020; Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Another source of psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic was the “frequent misinformation and rumours” (United Nations, 2020, p. 2) on news and social

media platforms worldwide that were contaminated with negative headlines causing fear, panic, and speculation. During January 2020, 15 million Twitter feeds mentioned the new coronavirus (Marr, 2020). The situation escalated drastically and by March 2020, the New York Governor noted that the level of fear and panic amongst people in the United States was presenting a greater challenge than the actual virus (Besheer, 2020). People's fear and anxiety caused them to engage in panic buying of food and essential items to overcome the fear of experiencing food shortages and to cope with the uncertainties of the future. This irrational behaviour often accompanies people when they become fearful and anxious, resulting in the loss of hope and less optimism about the future.

Rumours thrive in times of uncertainty, causing anxiety, fear and often distrust in society (Wiederhold, 2020). With media attention devoted to volatile economic environments and food and job insecurities (BBC.com, 2020; Cele, 2020; "Coronavirus: Worst Economic Crisis since 1930s Depression, IMF Says," 2020; Marr, 2020; Whitley, 2020; Wilbers, 2016) and people being bombarded by inaccurate and fake news (Marr, 2020; Wiederhold, 2020), causing populations to become fearful, less hopeful and optimistic about the future (Ornell et al., 2020; Van Hoof, 2020). Moreover, governments were losing control of the health risk and were distorting the facts further to compel citizens to follow draconic restrictions (Ntuli, 2020).

"Good mental health is critical to the functioning of society at the best of times" (United Nations, 2020, p. 2). It thus makes sense that not only individuals but also organisations have a responsibility to protect themselves against the debilitating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes taking care of not only one's physical health but also one's mental health (Khoo & Lantos, 2020), both of which can be severely affected by the health crisis. Although psychological distress in organisations was widespread due to the increased tension of job losses (United Nations, 2020), COVID-19 also severely affected individuals because of social isolation (Hamm et al., 2020). It should be noted that the term distress does not hold the same meaning as stress. Stress is "the body's reaction to demands and changes that require it to adapt physically, mentally and emotionally" (Bagram et al., 2016, p. 266). According to Bagram et al. (2016), stress is triggered by a threat or challenge. However, when an individual is exposed to everyday stress responses that affect their sense of well-being, this is referred to as distress. While some people may develop

post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) following adversity, most individuals only experience some emotional instability (Joseph, 2011).

A Google search for 'optimism COVID-19' on the 16 April 2020 revealed 122 000 000 internet news headlines such as "JSE (Johannesburg Stock Exchange) gains on **optimism** about COVID-19 reaching peak soon", "COVID-19 why **optimism** is key", "Analysis: There is a reason for cautious **optimism** about SA", "COVID-19: The case for **optimism**", "COVID-19: 3 Reasons for some **optimism**" and many more similar headlines. However, the Google search for "hope COVID-19" revealed 1 810 000 000 news headlines ranging from "Amid the devastation wrought by COVID-19 lies a glimmer for **hope** for the planet" and "COVID-19 and **hope** for a compassionate future" to "Glimmers of **hope** for SA through COVID-19 cloud". The abundance of headlines highlight the importance of the psychological capital (PsyCap) elements 'hope and optimism' during a time of adversity and people's need to experience positive emotions to envision a brighter future.

According to the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) of Holmes and Rahe (1967), people rank 'detention in jail or other institution' as the fourth most stressful experience in their lifetime (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), and this may be compared with what some people experienced during lockdown or quarantine (Benke et al., 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020). In April 2020, approximately 2.6 billion people worldwide were in some type of lockdown or quarantine (Buchholz, 2020; Van Hoof, 2020). On 9 April 2020, the World Economic Forum (WEF) declared that "lockdown is the world's biggest psychological experiment of which we will pay the price" (Van Hoof, 2020, para. 6). According to Van Hoof (2020), the toxic effects of lockdowns will result in a "secondary epidemic" such as post-traumatic stress that will affect people in the next few years (para. 13).

The UN (2020b) and the WHO (2020c) caution societies that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic such as lifestyle changes (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020), limitation on freedom of movement (Khoo & Lantos, 2020) and economic turmoil (Cele, 2020) may leave citizens scarred for generations to come (Wiederhold, 2020). According to Khoo and Lantos (2020), the restriction on freedom of movement can cause "loneliness, confusion, anger, frustration, boredom and constant feelings of inadequate information". Khoo and Lantos (2020), highlight that

although these restrictions are justified to limit the spread of the virus, the measures significantly impose on an individual's right to freedom of movement (p. 2).

According to Danieli (1998), intergenerational transmission of trauma examines the impact of traumatic historical events such as the Holocaust – “the murder of almost six million European Jews by Nazi Germany and its allies” (Eder, 2016, p. 1), the Second World War (WWII) and many other traumatic historical events on future generations. This has caused a renewed interest in academics and psychologists to investigate the impact of the current traumatic event on future generations (Cherry, 2020b; Kim et al., 2020). An intergenerational research study focusing on the impact of trauma on three generations caused by the man-made famine-genocide between 1932 and 1933 and referred to as the Holodomor found that there is transmission of trauma from one generation to the next (Bezo & Maggi, 2015). The findings of this study revealed that “emotions, inner states of trauma-based coping strategies” were transmitted to second and third generations (Bezo & Maggi, 2015, p. 92). Kim et al. (2020) point out that the “psychological, economic, and structural legacies of apartheid violence” in South Africa may persist and continue to affect the mental well-being of certain individuals and their infectious disease risk. Hocoy (1998) agrees with this view by stating that racism caused decreased mental health and psychological damage in oppressed individuals which provoked responses of resilience, coping and strength in the post-apartheid black South Africans. The above traumatic events demonstrate that generational trauma had already been experienced by Germans and South Africans.

Given the findings above, the current research study can serve as a benchmark for future studies to move from the investigation of descriptive aspects of experiences of generational cohorts during the COVID-19 pandemic to the effect of COVID-19 trauma on future generations.

1.2.5 Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant changes to normal daily routines (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Polakovic, 2020; Roelf, 2020; Singh & Singh, 2020; The Economist, 2020e), which not only added to psychosocial stress but also initiated coping mechanisms to deal with the experiences of the pandemic. A survey conducted by Di Renzo et al. (2020) with 4 500 participants

during the COVID-19 lockdown supports the argument that the pandemic presents an unprecedented impact on human health, causing sudden lifestyle changes due to social distancing and isolation with severe economic and social consequences. Although the study found that 16.7% of the participants made positive lifestyle changes, the data revealed that 37.2% of the participants made negative lifestyle changes to cope with the pandemic, which included indulging in unhealthy foods and overeating. Various other studies on lifestyle change (e.g. Brandley- Bell & Talbot, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020) conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic support the negative findings, showing evidence of increased domestic violence (Hamadani et al., 2020) and even alcohol abuse during quarantine (Brooks et al., 2020).

Although working from home was not a common practice in South Africa prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, research by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) found that of the working population of South African who worked during the lockdown, 17.6% worked from home (Stats SA, 2020d). However, 50% of employees in America (Morgan Stanley, 2020) and in European countries (The Economist, 2020e) worked from home during the COVID- 19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces and working conditions were rapidly changing to deal with the global health crisis (Brownlee, 2020; Linde, 2020; Meister, 2020; Salanova, 2014; Slotnick, 2020). Organisations were suddenly finding themselves in unfamiliar situations and having to implement a remote working solution without sufficient warning and with limited time to prepare (Sangoni, 2020). Despite the South African laws not making provision for such circumstances (July & Mathebula, 2020), most organisations made every effort to continue their operations remotely and ensure the health and safety of their multi-generational workforces. However, many employees, particularly from the aviation, construction, transport, logistics and manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, textile and entertainment industries (Nkaiseng et al., 2020) could not fulfil their work obligations or provide a service to their employers (Botes et al., 2020). According to the authors, the crisis caused many employment relationships to become suspended due to *vis major*, a Latin phrase for an Act of God. Moreover, the restrictions imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic not only caused significant disruptions in employment relationships globally but also changed simple aspects of daily life dramatically (Brandley- Bell & Talbot, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020), causing individuals to find coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges.

To overcome disasters, traumatic circumstances or experiences, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) highlight the importance of focusing on both individuals' strengths and positive institutions. Nelson and Cooper (2007) add to the argument by stating that positive emotions safeguard individuals against negative experiences because of the focus on positive experiences and memories. Joseph (2011) agrees with this viewpoint by stating positive emotions enable an individual to view oneself more positively.

Linde (2020) states that well-being can be promoted through initiatives, for example, creating safe workplace protocols and procedures, social distancing and working from home during COVID-19 and interventions such as discussing with employees ways in which work can be organised, designed, and managed to promote employee well-being. These initiatives are designed to create "psychologically healthy workplaces" (Day & Nielsen, 2017).

Organisations have the responsibility not only to limit negative workplace factors such as stress, work overload and toxic environments but also to increase positive factors such as healthy workplace relationships, remote and flexible working conditions, and the nurturing of respectful behaviour towards other cultures. According to Knani and Fournier (2013), people need considerable talent, motivation, and perseverance to survive in volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environments (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019).

Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, employees were exposed to additional uncertain circumstances and environments as organisations unexpectedly required employees to continue operations from home and in some instances, without providing the necessary technical and emotional support that is vital to psychological well-being (Kimhi et al., 2020; Saltzman et al., 2020). In addition, changes in the macro-environment further affected the PWB of individuals. For example, during Level 5 of the national lockdown in South Africa, the country's economic status was further downgraded by Fitch and Moody's, which had a significant influence on the overall state of the economy and led to unprecedented uncertainty about the future (Arndt et al., 2020; Bulbulia, 2020; Stats.SA, 2020e; Tswanya, 2020; Wasserman, 2020). This was amplified by attention-seeking headlines on social media, the internet and news channels, often citing fake news articles and causing more fear and anxiety amongst people (United Nations, 2020a).

Employees do not only represent a diverse workforce, but they also hold different perceptions and have different coping styles when facing uncertainty and adversity. Elaborating on the work of Jonck et al. (2017) that supports understanding generational work values to ensure harmonious workplace relationships, this study expounds the research by investigating the contribution of generational attributes in dealing with adversity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, by considering generational differences and similarities, the study aims to demonstrate that generational cohorts can develop pathways to limit the impact of adversity and use adversity to achieve positive change, which according to Joseph (2011) enhances well-being.

1.2.6 Generational cohorts

Johnson and Johnson (2010) define a generation as “a group of individuals born and living contemporaneously who have common knowledge and experiences that affect their thoughts, attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviours” (p. 6). Napoli (2014) defines individuals from the same generation as generation cohorts with overt behaviours and a shared milieu.

The generations theory is recognised for its contribution to understanding the differences between generational attitudes (Howe & Strauss, 1999). The theory maintains that individuals born in a particular period share certain worldviews. According to the theory, an individual’s worldview largely influences how they perceive life and interact with the world around them due to the circumstances in which they were born. Naturally, as individuals grow up in these different environments, their value systems differ according to the period in which they were born (Howe & Strauss, 1999).

Four generational cohorts can be identified, namely Traditionalists (1930–1949), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation Xers (1965–1981) and Millennials, also known as Generation Y (1982–2000) (Jonck et al., 2017). The purpose of this research was to conduct a comparative study between the experiences of Germans and South Africans during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, the researcher selected to investigate the experiences of Generation Xers and Millennials in particular because there are vast differences and similarities between the work values of these two generational cohorts (Heyns & Kerr, 2018; Jonck et al., 2017; Twenge et al., 2012).

According to the Harris Poll Survey (Swant, 2020) conducted with 2 000 adults in America between 5 March and 9 March 2020, Millennials were only moderately concerned with contracting the virus while Baby Boomers, the most vulnerable group, were amongst the least concerned and least informed about the virus. The survey found that Millennials, referred to as the 'worry generation', experienced more stress during the pandemic, while Generation X was found to be the most prepared generation to live in isolation. A poll conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research, a division of the University of Chicago, also found differences in the way generational cohorts cope with the COVID-19 pandemic (Cherry, 2020b). According to Cherry (2020), while Generation Xers seem to be more prepared in coping with social distancing and quarantine, Millennials are mostly concerned about their family and friends, finances and health. Interestingly, a study conducted by Bernstein et al. (2008) depicted Generation Xers as "self-centred, loafers, impatient and pessimistic" and Millennials as "spoiled, technologically dependent, disrespectful, and with a short concentration span" (p. 18).

In South Africa, a research study titled, "A generational perspective on work values in a South African sample" by Jonck et al. (2017) found that there are significant differences and similarities between the various generational cohorts in terms of work values. The authors identified authority, creativity, risk and social interaction as the main elements leading to differences and similarities in the work context. Furthermore, another study conducted by Twenge et al. (2012) found that both Generation Xers and Millennials value financial stability and social support and do not rank finding purpose and meaning and staying informed of political affairs as important. A study conducted by Heyns and Kerr (2018) found that there was a notable difference between Millennials and the Generation X cohort regarding the degree of satisfaction of the basic psychological need for autonomy. Due the vast differences and similarities identified in previous studies, as discussed above, the researcher was curious to investigate the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic of these two generational cohorts.

This research study and the consequent focus group discussions and individual interviews took place during the COVID-19 pandemic when both Germany and South Africa were in some form of lockdown. During the lockdown period, many organisations allowed their employees to work from home where possible and in many instances, organisations were operating with reduced hours (Morgan Stanley, 2020). Although it

was very challenging to gain access to willing participants during July 2020 for this research, the researcher aimed to conduct the data-gathering process during the peak period of COVID-19 infections. This was to coincide with the researcher's investigation of people's experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and particularly to understand what the participants did to cope with the uncertainty and unknown nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because the COVID-19 pandemic was a new experience for everyone, the researcher sought to determine if everyone experienced the pandemic in the same way and if they used the same coping mechanisms to enhance their well-being. For this reason, it was important to conduct a comparative study between the experiences of German Millennials and Generation Xers and South African Millennials and Generation Xers. The researcher was able to connect with various German organisations and individual participants from Germany because the researcher's sons are German residents and thus, many acquaintances have been made by the researcher over the years.

Finally, the researcher sought to understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa. Based on the above background, the purpose of this research was to conduct a comparative study between the experiences of Germans and South Africans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because there are vast differences between the social norms, cultures and standards of living (Snelgar et al., 2017) between the two countries, this may affect the types of coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic. For example, in terms of coping with the health aspects of the pandemic, Germany has 4.2 physicians per 1 000 people whereas South Africa has 0.77 (NationMaster, 2021; World Bank, 2020) and in terms of dealing with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Germany had an unemployment rate of 4.4% in July 2020 while South Africa's official unemployment rate was confirmed to be 23.3% in the second quarter of 2020 (Stats SA, 2020c). However, the true unemployment rate in South Africa is argued to be 52.7% if the people who could not look for a job during the lockdown and the people who gave up looking for a job were included in the 'unemployed' definition (Wasserman, 2020).

The researcher selected only Millennials and Generation Xers due to limited resources. Although one Baby Boomer participated in a focus group discussion, the data were not reported on as the participant did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Therefore, only Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa were interviewed from the perspective of the Generational Cohort Theory (Wolf et al., 2005) to investigate generational experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Life is full of the unforeseen. We live in a “changing, complex and stressful world” (Abkowitz, 2008, p. 28) and no matter how much we plan and attempt to predict our future, we remain vulnerable to life’s disasters and blessings. Efklides and Moraitou (2013) state that true to human nature, “we plan and anticipate; assume and expect” better things for the future (p. 33). Thus, when people are unexpectedly faced with an unprecedented crisis or prolonged uncertainty such as the COVID-19 pandemic, they effectively believe they cannot plan and anticipate or assume anything positive for the near future.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been great interest amongst psychologists, academia and businesses to understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on individuals’ mental health (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Bryant, 2003; Galea et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Pancani et al., 2020; WHO, 2020d) and the coping mechanisms (Chaix et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Saltzman et al., 2020) that individuals used to deal with the adversity caused by the pandemic. As explained in the previous section, the researcher was interested in the differences between the experiences of South African Millennials and Generation Xers and the experiences of German Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic because of the vast differences in social norms, culture and standards of living (Snelgar et al., 2017) between the two countries. The researcher was particularly curious if these differences in social norms, culture and standards of living may influence the type of coping mechanisms adopted by Millennials and Generation Xers.

Furthermore, there is growing interest in individuals, organisations and governments worldwide to measure (Huppert & So, 2013; Weziak-Bialowolska et al., 2019) and promote well-being. Moreover, there is substantial evidence in literature that suggests that not only positive emotions (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Frederickson, 2013; Frederickson et al., 2008; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004) but also various other positive constructs of well-being can lead to flourishing

citizens (Butler & Kern, 2016; Hone et al., 2014; Huppert & So, 2013; Seligman, 2011; VanderWeele, 2020; Weziak-Bialowolska et al., 2019) with lower divorce rates, greater educational and occupational success, stronger relationships, improved physical health (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Hone et al., 2014) and improved mental health. According to the findings of these studies, improved well-being ultimately leads to lower health costs, performance improvements in organisations (Day & Nielsen, 2017) and an improved socioeconomic status (SES) for the country (Hone et al., 2014).

Hackbart et al. (2015) found that positive emotions are a necessity to experience positive attitudes towards work, to be appreciative (Luthans, Youssef- Morgan, et al., 2015) and to flourish (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2011). Moreover, Cooper and Hesketh (2019) and Day and Nielsen (2017) argue that well-being can contribute to increased performance, lower absenteeism and improved employee engagement.

Jonck et al. (2017) investigated the work values of the different generational cohorts in South Africa to enhance workplace relationships. According to the findings of the study, significant differences and similarities exist between the various generational cohorts in terms of work values, and these values can be used to strengthen workplace relationships. The current study fills some of the methodological gaps identified in the study conducted by Jonck et al. (2017) in that the latter was conducted quantitatively in one regional area and the sample only consisted of African respondents, making it subject to cultural bias, as noted by the authors.

Day and Nielsen (2017) and Day and Randell (2014) investigated the type of interventions and initiatives that organisations can implement to promote employees' well-being. Day and Nielsen (2017) developed a reflective framework of the various healthy workplace models to demonstrate the benefits of a healthy workplace for employees' health. Aydede and Robbins (2009) and Brown et al. (1989) theorised that the way people think (and behave) and thus experience life is influenced by the current situation in which people find themselves. Napoli (2014) further argues that generational differences influence how each generation reacts to change and shared experiences.

A cross-cultural comparison study conducted by Pflug (2009) on students from Germany and South Africa to uncover the nature of subjective well-being showed that German respondents described it in terms of "freedom, autonomy and hedonic

pleasure”, whereas the Black South African respondents explained subjective well-being as rather dependent on “contentment, social harmony and tight family relationships” (Pflug, 2009, p. 560). Although the study by Pflug (2009) did not focus on methods to enhance subjective well-being it did conclude that “existing findings on the meaning of well-being can be extended to Germany and South Africa” (p. 560). This was particularly significant in the light of the current research study’s context.

There are several knowledge gaps to bear in mind. First, the current research addresses the shortcoming of previous studies by investigating the unique experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, the current study examined the various coping mechanisms adopted by the participants to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and required clarification to determine the impact of the pandemic on the well-being of the generational cohorts. The experiences and coping mechanisms were then analysed to develop a framework to enhance generational cohorts’ well-being during times of adversity. Although several studies investigated the impact of COVID-19 on mental well-being (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Bryant, 2003; Galea et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Pancani et al., 2020; WHO, 2020d) only one study (Chew et al., 2020) investigated the coping mechanisms adopted to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the reflective framework developed by Day and Nielsen (2017) did not address the elements needed to achieve fulfilment during times of adversity such as the CoVID-19 pandemic.

Considering the research findings of Day and Nielsen (2017), Aydede and Robbins (2009), Jonck et al. (2017), Napoli (2014), and Pflug (2009), the researcher was curious if it were possible for generational cohorts from South Africa and Germany to experience flourishing and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The various research studies captivated the interest of the researcher because she understood the issue not only from her personal perspective but also from a scholarly perspective. In addition, the researcher was motivated to investigate this topic using a qualitative research approach since similar studies had been previously conducted using a quantitative approach.

Moreover, the researcher was particularly interested in the contribution of positive emotions to well-being, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is well known that people need gratitude (Davis et al., 2016; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006),

appreciation (Sutarjo, 2011), acceptance (Bond & Bunce, 2003), hope (Feldman & Kubota, 2015), optimism (Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019) and other positive emotions (Frederickson, 2013) not only to protect against negative situations or circumstances but also to bring about positive change (Joseph & Butler, 2010).

A number of studies (e.g. Carver et al., 1993; Frederickson & Joiner, 2002) reported on people's ability to flourish despite adversity (Joseph, 2011). Moreover, the four PsyCap constructs namely hope, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience (Grobler & Joubert, 2018; Kimhi et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2017) have been found to have positive effects on people's well-being (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Huppert & So, 2013; Papantoniou et al., 2013; Rius-Ottenheim et al., 2013) despite adversity. Nelson and Cooper (2007) suggest applying PsyCap to "buffer individuals from negative consequences of traumatic experiences" (p. 1). Resilience is considered not only a powerful construct that enables individuals to adapt to adversity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) but also a construct that enables individuals to cope better with adversity (Kimhi et al., 2020). Snyder and Lopez (2002) argue that optimism is about expecting good things to happen without regard for one's actions as opposed to hope, which is explicitly about planning (pathways) and motivation (agency) to attain a positive outcome for the future (Grobler & Joubert, 2018). Snyder et al. (2000) assert that hopeful thinking can be used as a secondary intervention to cope with challenges (and uncertainty) by affirming "self-talk messages" as a way to reinforce pathway thinking (p. 250). Self-efficacy relates to one's belief to achieve goals under certain conditions. Lopez and Snyder (2009, p. 338) state self-efficacy is needed to overcome challenges and "for implementing self-control strategies in specific challenging situations".

Hope is significant in the current context of COVID-19 because it consists of two significant components (pathways and agency) that can assist individuals in attaining a positive outcome for the future, particularly after experiencing prolonged uncertainty. The pathways component (way power) relates to the planning needed to reach the desired goals, and the agency component (willpower) relates to the motivation needed to reach those goals (Grobler & Joubert, 2018; Lopez & Snyder, 2009). Furthermore, these two components enable individuals to become more self-motivated and focused when dealing with adversity and the social challenges that may affect future plans (Luthans, Youssef- Morgan, et al., 2015).

Optimism is also significant because it has been validated as a measure of confidence and hopefulness that is associated with positive thinking (Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019; Grobler & Joubert, 2018), problem-focused coping ability and acceptance of unchangeable situations (Lopez & Snyder, 2009), which are much needed competencies in uncertain environments. Furthermore, optimism is also regarded as a feature of well-being that is needed for individuals to flourish (Huppert & So, 2013; Seligman, 2011). Moreover, learnt optimism is recognised as a method to minimise health risks (Lopez & Snyder, 2009) and to enhance employee well-being (Frederickson & Joiner, 2002; Seligman, 2007).

Hope and optimism are important positive emotions; various research studies found that hope and optimism are state-like and open to development (Frederickson, 2013; Luthans et al., 2006, 2007; Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015; Peterson & Bossio, 2001) through interventions such as encouraging individuals to realise achievable goals, to determine ways to reach the outcomes and to engage in positive-self-talk (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Although some authors argue that dispositional optimism is a personality trait (e.g. Rius-Ottenheim et al., 2013), Snyder (2000) strongly contests that hope is in no way hereditary but entirely learnt through goal-directed thinking.

Although various studies have been conducted to investigate hope, optimism and positive emotion (Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019; Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2008; Frederickson, 2013; Papantoniou et al., 2013; Ringeisen & Buchwald, 2010), limited studies have been conducted to investigate psychological experiences of generational cohorts during the COVID-19 pandemic and particularly the coping mechanisms that these cohorts use to deal with adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the impact of COVID-19 on mental health has only been explored using a rather limited range of sampled cultures in regard to South Africa (Joska et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020) and Germany (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020) and the various approaches to dealing with uncertainty and adversity (being exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic). The current study fills the gap in the literature by exploring the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) of the COVID-19 pandemic on two different continents (Africa and Europe) in order to develop an understanding of the coping mechanisms and the impact on the well-being of the generational cohorts during times of uncertainty and adversity.

Considering that the global pandemic will continue to influence the world of work for several years (Hamm et al., 2020; National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020b; Wan & Johnson, 2020) and given that Millennials and Generation Xers will continue to work together during several waves of the pandemic, it makes sense that generational differences should be studied within the African continent, particularly in South Africa, to assist organisations in managing the impact of uncertainty, adversity and changing times on employees. Moreover, evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic will eventually stabilise and present itself globally at a predictable rate as an endemic disease (BBC News, 2020c; Ghai, 2021; Heesterbeek, 2020; Shaman & Galanti, 2020; Wan & Johnson, 2020).

The focus of this study was, therefore, on the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from Germany and South Africa to understand their ability to handle the stresses during adversity, to maintain a positive outlook on life and to deal with adversity to enhance their well-being. Thereafter the researcher developed a framework for well-being by exploring the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from Germany and South Africa in terms of their experiences and the coping mechanisms that they adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Understanding the experiences of the two generational cohorts could assist organisations in managing and retaining human resources in increasingly fragile circumstances. Furthermore, the findings from this study may assist organisations in developing a sympathetic understanding of employees' psychological needs during times of change, uncertainty and adversity, which could assist them in overcoming reported workplace conflict particularly due to generational differences.

The research is based on the premise that positive emotions can assist Millennials and Generation Xers in coping with adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic and enhancing the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during uncertain times.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many people worldwide to experience heightened levels of fear and anxiety. Consequently, individuals needed to find ways to cope with the unknown in order to maintain their well-being.

“Positive emotions predict health and longevity” (Seligman, 2003). Moreover, positive psychology presents a unique perspective to explore how people coped with uncertainty and adversity during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on their mental health and well-being. Only limited research was found on the experiences of South African (Joska et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020) and German individuals (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020) of the COVID-19 pandemic and particularly regarding the coping mechanisms used to deal with the preventative measures and the prolonged nature of uncertainty and adversity. Although research has shown that there are several differences and similarities between the perception of subjective-well-being in Germans and South Africans (Pflug, 2009) and in terms of their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Joska et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020), the current study aims to address these shortcomings by also investigating individual similarities and differences in psychological constructs such as hope and optimism.

The core problem statement of this study underpins the need to understand the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to foster an understanding of the coping mechanisms used to deal with adversity and enhance generational well-being.

On completion of the investigation, the data analysis and the interpretation, the researcher will develop a framework to assist the two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) in improving their well-being during adversity. The framework aimed to provide guidance for individuals and organisations regarding the mechanisms to implement in order to enhance well-being during times of uncertainty and adversity.

The researcher believes that positive emotions following adversity can contribute to generational well-being and assist generations (particular Millennials and Generation Xers) to experience more meaningful lives during the COVID-19 pandemic, which will globally become part of people’s lives (Ghai, 2020; Heesterbeek, 2020; National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020; Shaman & Galanti, 2020; Wan & Johnson, 2020).

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research study was conducted to meet the primary and secondary research objectives.

1.5.1 Primary research objective

Given the problem statement outlined above, the primary objective of this study was to develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during adversity.

1.5.2 Secondary research objectives

Objective One: To investigate the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective Two: To determine the coping mechanisms of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance their well-being.

Objective Three: To develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic will be investigated and based on their experiences (positive and negative) and adopted coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic, a framework will be developed to enhance generational well-being during adversity.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Question One: What were the experiences of German and South African Millennials during lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question Two: What were the experiences of German and South African Generation Xers during lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Question Three: What coping mechanisms did German and South African Millennials use to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and to enhance their well-being?

Research Question Four: What coping mechanisms did German and South African Generation Xers use to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and to enhance their well-being?

1.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Trustworthiness and ethical considerations are critical to the quality assurance of research. Trustworthiness relates to the reliability of the results and whether the research study is scientifically sound (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2016; Struwig et al., 2013; Terreblanche et al., 2011). The trustworthiness of this study largely depended on the truthfulness of research participants, the ethical conduct of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and accountable interpretations made by the researcher to develop the theory. The research applied “rigorous” thinking as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 260) to ensure that the overall research conforms to ethical standards not only in terms of the methods and analysis but also in terms of the research participants. Trustworthiness of the research design is discussed in depth in Section 5.8 while ethical considerations are elaborated upon in Section 5.9.

The researcher strived to uphold certain research virtues throughout the study, namely (i) trustworthiness, (ii) discernment, (iii) conscientiousness, (iv) compassion, and (v) integrity.

Accordingly, the researcher

- ensured trustworthiness by believing in and relying on her moral character;
- used her discerning ability to be sensitive to her research participants and to gain insight into their lived experiences. In addition, she used her wise judgement to reach conclusions about the experiences of participants;
- was conscientious and conducted due diligence when determining what was valid and acceptable in every situation;
- showed compassion and regard for participants' emotions when needed; and

- was faithful to her norms and values and acted in a moral and ethical manner throughout the research study.

1.8 ASSUMPTIONS

Saunders et al. (2016) identify three types of research assumptions to distinguish research philosophies: ontology, epistemology and axiology.

1.8.1 Epistemology assumption

The researcher's epistemological assumptions refer to the theory of knowledge construction based on the researcher's worldviews. The researcher's epistemology assumption is grounded in her interpretivist and social constructivist approach, which concerns knowledge, its possibility and scope and includes what constitutes acceptable, valid and legitimate knowledge and how she can communicate this knowledge to others. The assumption specifies the nature of the relationship between the knower and what can be known and learnt about the social world (Maree et al., 2016; Terreblanche et al., 2011). Maynard (1994) highlights the importance of providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what type of knowledge is possible and ways to ensure that the knowledge is adequate and legitimate. The researcher recognises that 'the knower and the known' are inseparable and, therefore, perceptions, facts, values and interpretations are intricately linked (Dieronitou, 2014). For this reason, the researcher guarded against posing questions in a way that could lead participants in a specific direction or influence their thinking. The three main research questions posed per day were extremely open to allow participants the opportunity to decide in which direction the discussion should go.

In addition, the researcher is of the opinion that concepts and theories are too one-dimensional to capture the entirety of the participants' social worlds (Saunders et al., 2016). Thus, the researcher acknowledges that there is "no objective truth" (Maynard, 1994, p. 8) but that 'truth' comes from engagement with research participants in their social realities to create new understandings of their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and their coping mechanisms to deal with adversity. Moreover, people construct meaning in diverse ways, particularly in relation to how

they experience situations. For example, some employees in one organisation felt completely hopeless and pessimistic about the future of the organisation while others in the same organisation experienced opposite emotions. This occurs because experiences not only depend on the environment in which participants (employees) find themselves but can also be influenced by various other factors such as personality type (being more resilient, open to new experiences, etc.), religion, culture, values and norms. Therefore, the researcher gathered demographical data prior to the interviews and asked some contextual questions during the interviews to ensure that her interpretations of participants' experiences and constructed realities considered the participants' context, environments and backgrounds.

The researcher selected computer-mediated focus groups to enable participants to engage 'facelessly' with the researcher and other research participants and because of the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place at the time. This method enabled participants to 'speak out' freely about their experiences, emotions and feelings regarding the coping mechanisms adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher is of the opinion that participants are more likely to voice their true feelings and opinions when they feel confident that their identity is protected and that no harm can be inflicted on them because of their truthfulness.

The inclusion criteria ensured that a suitable sample was selected and that the selected participants enjoyed sharing their experiences about the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they adopted. The research participants understood the importance of the research, and because they knew that their participation would not in any way interfere, influence or disrupt their status in their institution (anonymous participation), they recognised that they could make a valuable contribution to the research.

Crotty (1998) is of the opinion that epistemological and ontological issues tend to merge since ontology embodies a certain way of understanding "what is" while epistemology is about understanding "what it means to know" (p. 10).

1.8.2 Ontological assumption

Ontological assumptions refer to the nature of the experience that exists and what can be learnt about the experience (Dieronitou, 2014; Terreblanche et al., 2011). Bryman

(2004) identifies two types of ontological positions in social research, namely 'objectivism' and 'constructionism'. The researcher believes that reality cannot be separated from human practices and, therefore, applies a social constructivist worldview to explain how she makes sense of the complex, rich and multiple realities constructed by the research participants and how she creates her perceptions and forms her interpretations of the participants' world through language (Saldana, 2011).

The researcher further acknowledges that the participants' social worlds are changing environments that have multiple meanings, interpretations and realities because the research participants are unique and have different personal experiences in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, because the "living systems" are not only active but also, their activity is directed towards self-organisation—"toward experiencing, maintaining, and elaborating a patterned order in their experience" (Snyder & Lopez, 2002, p. 747), the researcher was able to find meaning in the participants' version of events. The researcher was guided by the participants' self-organisation processes to determine which data were significant and which data were less important. Snyder and Lopez (2002) further argue that emotional processes are amongst the most "powerful and primitive" human self-organising processes (p. 747).

Bergh and Theron (2003) state "that people not only react to physical realities which are perceived, but also to how subjectively they interpret events and phenomenon" (p. 357). For this reason, the researcher applied a subjective approach when interpreting the various realities that was grounded on a relativist (constructionism) ontology that rejects the existence of true reality (Dieronitou, 2014) and recognises that reality is a construction of participants' ideas, experiences and opinions. In addition, the researcher recognised the value of her subjectivity in contributing her views, perspectives, frameworks and passion for people, thus enabling interpretation of the data in a trustworthy manner.

1.8.3 Axiological assumption

Axiological assumptions refer to the role of values and ethics within the research process. Researchers are part of what is being researched and their interpretation of the data is part of the contribution they make to the research (Saunders et al., 2016).

Therefore, the researcher's values and beliefs are key to the interpretations of the participants' social worlds. Furthermore, it is not considered ethical for any person in a professional environment to discuss their organisation in a negative manner with a third party. The researcher considered this assumption in her interpretation of the data. In addition, it is also part of human nature to present oneself positively to 'the outside world' and, therefore, the researcher was mindful of inflated 'self-image' responses in the data.

1.9 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

Worldwide, uncertainty in the macro environment poses massive challenges for organisations not only to compete but also to survive during turbulent times (Guest, 2017). In South Africa, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in combination with prolonged low economic growth figures (Mo, 2018; Wessels, 2019; Wilbers, 2016), high incidences of crime, high unemployment rates (Stats SA, 2019b), high wage inequality (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018) and the crisis in the education system (Stapelberg, 2017) are leaving people feeling less hopeful and less optimistic about the future.

While Meister (2020) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic will accelerate many future initiatives and that "the future of work is the future of worker well-being" (para. 12), Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) reiterate the importance of hope and optimism to recover from traumatic experiences.

History is filled with narratives of 'approach copers' (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) who used hope and optimism to overcome adversity and to achieve their goals. Luthans et al. (2015) define 'approach copers' as people who avoid focusing on the negatives when they find themselves in challenging situations and rather make concentrated efforts to put contingency plans in place to prepare themselves for brighter futures.

For example, in 2014, Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani female education activist, became the youngest co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize at the tender age of 17 years for her struggle against the suppression of young girls and their rights to education. She became known for an attempted assassination on her life at the age of 15 years by the Taliban. Throughout her autobiography titled, *I am Malala* (Yousafzai, 2013), Malala

consistently reiterates her hopes for the future and explains how she managed to stay optimistic because she envisioned a better future where all girls will be able to attend school in her lifetime without fear of prosecution.

In Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Mandela, 1994), Mandela provides another powerful testimony of how he depended on hope and optimism to live through 27 years of unjustified imprisonment. Mandela said, "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear" (p. 622).

Various research studies have suggested that PsyCap (e.g. Du Plessis & Barkhuizen, 2012; Grobler & Joubert, 2018; Luthans et al. 2007) may be responsible for coping with uncertainty and adversity (Joseph & Butler, 2010). There has been more interest in hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the world health crisis and because these constructs have been closely associated with overcoming adversity (Joseph, 2011; Kimhi et al., 2020). In addition, various studies have been conducted globally and nationally to establish a link between hope and optimism, two constructs of PsyCap, and employee well-being (Cooper & Leiter, 2017; Global Wellness Institute, 2016).

Optimism is recognised as an emotional, intellectual and motivational construct (Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019) that could have the potential to lead employees and organisations to a more positive state of development during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, optimism has been linked to proactive coping mechanisms (Carr, 2004) that are known to assist individuals in experiencing better psychological health, less depression and a greater sense of well-being (Bauld & Brown, 2009). Various studies have established that optimism can be built and is positively associated with healthy behaviour, overall well-being (Peterson & Bossio, 2001; Seligman, 2003) and positive expectancies about the future (Rius-Ottenheim et al., 2013). Only limited current research (Hamm et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020) could be found on the experiences of individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic and particularly the coping mechanisms adopted to deal with the prolonged nature of uncertainty and adversity. Therefore, a need exists for this study.

At an empirical level, this study has the potential to make a modest contribution to the body of knowledge on South African and German generational cohorts, particularly Millennials and Generation Xers, and the importance of positive emotions to overcome

adversity. The current study also contributes to the broader body of knowledge given the comparison between an African and a European country.

The study further contributes on a theoretical level by addressing a novel occurrence, the COVID-19 pandemic, and by developing a framework that was previously non-existent to improve employees' well-being after experiencing adversity. On a practical level the findings and recommendations may serve as a basis for future decision-making regarding well-being initiatives, particularly during times of adversity.

1.10 THESIS STATEMENT

Positive emotion linked with personal resources such as hope and optimism must be developed during times of adversity to maintain or enhance Millennials and Generation Xers' well-being.

1.11 DEFINING KEY TERMS

The following concepts formed the foundation of this research:

- **A platform** refers to “a collection of tools and technologies that provide for a virtual space to conduct online research on various forms and modalities” (Dale & Abbott, 2014, para. 1).
- **Asynchronous** refers to “research events where the participants do not have to be present at the same time” (Dale & Abbott, 2014, para. 1). Extended time and asynchronous are often used interchangeably.
- **Bulletin boards** refer to a threaded discussion where the moderator poses a question and the participants type a response. The moderator may ask probing questions and the participants are requested to respond to comments made by other participants in the group (Dale & Abbott, 2014, para. 1). Also see discussion forum.
- **Coronaviruses:** “Sometimes coronaviruses infecting animals can evolve to cause diseases in humans and become a novel coronavirus for humans such as the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)” (National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020a, para. 1).

- **COVID-19** is the abbreviation for coronavirus disease 2019 (National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020a, para. 2).
- **Discussion forum** and bulletin board are used interchangeably (Dale & Abbott, 2014). The discussion forum is the instrument where the researcher posts questions and participants respond in a secure online threaded discussion area.
- **Extended time** is used to describe an asynchronous approach as it refers to things happening over an extended period opposed to in real time when everyone participates simultaneously (Dale & Abbott, 2014).
- **Flourishing refers to** “a state in which all aspects of a person’s life are good” (Weziak-Bialowolska et al., 2019, p. 2).
- **Generational cohorts refer** to individuals who are from the same generation with overt behaviour and cognitions (Napoli, 2014).
- **Generations** are discernible groups that share similar birth years (Kupperschmidt, 2000) and common collective character (Drago, 2006).
- **Generation X** refers to individuals born between 1965 and 1981 (Jonck et al., 2017).
- **Goals** are internal representations of desired states, where states are broadly construed as outcomes, events or processes (J. T. Austin & Vancouver, 1996).
- **Hope** is a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (i) agency (goal-directed energy or motivation), and (ii) pathways (planning to meet goals) (Snyder, 2000; Carr, 2004) despite obstacles.
- **Isolation** refers to “the separation of people who have been diagnosed with a contagious disease from people who are not sick” (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 912). Isolation and quarantine are often used interchangeably.
- **Job resources** refer to those “characteristics, energies, conditions, objects or conditions” that are valued by employees and are used by employees to achieve desired work outcomes (Day & Nielsen, 2017. p. 302).
- **Lockdown** can refer to “anything from mandatory geographic quarantines to non-mandatory recommendations to stay at home, closures of certain types of businesses or bans on events and gatherings” (Kaplan, 2020, para. 8).

- **Millennials** refers to individuals born between 1982 and 2000 (Jonck et al., 2017).
- **Optimism** is a “global expectation that more good things than bad things will happen in the future” (Carr, 2004, p. 106).
- **Optimism** is a measure of confidence and enthusiasm associated with positive thinking, relative advantage (Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019) and positive expectancies about one's future (Efklides & Moraitou, 2013).
- **Ostensibly synchronous** refers to the opposite of an in-depth exchange or productive dialogue (Salmons, 2012).
- **Positive institutions** include positive families, schools, businesses, communities and societies (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).
- **Positive organisational behaviour (POB)** is "the study and application of positively orientated human resources strengths and psychological capabilities that can be measured, developed and effectively managed for performance improvement in contemporary workplaces" (Luthans, 2002).
- **Positive psychology** "revisits the 'average person' with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving" (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216).
- **Positive subjective experiences** include happiness, well-being, flow, pleasure, hope, optimism and positive emotions (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).
- **Positive traits** include talents, creativity, wisdom, values, character strengths, meaning, purpose, growth and courage (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).
- **Psychological capital (PsyCap)** is as follows:

[A]n individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterised by: having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success. (Luthans et al., 2007)
- **Quarantine** is “the separation and restriction of movement of people who have potentially been exposed to a contagious disease to ascertain if they

become unwell, so reducing the risk of them infecting others” (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 912).

- **Salutogenesis** is a medical approach to human health that focuses on factors that support human health and well-being rather than on disease with emphasis on the coping mechanisms to preserve health despite stressful conditions (Anon., n.d.).
- **Social distancing** refers to maintaining a physical distance between people. The WHO (2020a) recommends keeping a physical distance of at least one metre although there are regional variations in many countries. For example, in Germany and South Africa, the recommended guidance is to keep a physical distance of 1.5 m (Shukman, 2020).
- **Subjective well-being** refers to “people’s cognitive as well as affective (moods and emotions) evaluation of their lives” (Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015).
- **Synchronicity** refers to focused real-time dialogue (Salmons, 2012).
- **Well-being initiatives** refer to wide-ranging actions and ideas (both informal and formal) implemented through organisational practices, policies and procedures to promote employee well-being (Day & Nielsen, 2017).
- **Well-being interventions** refer to the “planned, behavioural and theory-based actions” taken by employers to improve the health and well-being of employees (Day & Nielsen, 2017, p. 302).
- **Well-being** is about how people feel and think about their lives (Efklides & Moraitou, 2013).
- **Wellness** is an interactive process of becoming aware of and practising healthy choices to create a successful and balanced lifestyle. It is a dynamic process that involves learning new life skills and becoming aware of and making conscious choices for a more balanced and healthy lifestyle across seven dimensions, namely the social, physical, emotional, career, intellectual, environmental and spiritual dimensions (Grobler et al., 2006).

1.11.1 Terms used interchangeably

The highly infectious coronavirus disease, universally referred to as COVID-19, is a disease caused by a novel coronavirus. The virus responsible for COVID-19 caused a

pandemic (Nabi, 2020). As such, in this study, 'COVID-19' is used interchangeably with 'the COVID-19 pandemic' and 'the pandemic', although preference is given to 'the COVID-19 pandemic'. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, people worldwide started using the term COVID-19 to refer to all matters relating to the pandemic.

The terms isolation and quarantine are also used interchangeably (Brooks et al., 2020). Quarantine is "the separation and restriction of movement of people who have potentially been exposed to a contagious disease to ascertain if they become unwell, so reducing the risk of them infecting others", while isolation refers to "the separation of people who have been diagnosed with a contagious disease from people who are not sick" (Brooks et al., 2020, p. 912).

1.12 THEORY BUILDING

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) define theory as "an organised body of concepts and principles intended to explain a particular phenomenon" (p. 39) while Langdrige and Hagger-Johnson (2013) define theory as consisting of proposed plausible relationships amongst concepts and sets of concepts. Thus, the main idea behind theory building is to understand the relationship between concepts (and sets of concepts) in the data. Hence, the researcher used theory building to gain an understanding of the two generational cohorts' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the coping mechanisms that were applied and the impact of the experiences on the generational cohorts' well-being.

The researcher began by making use of the inductive reasoning process (a bottom-up approach) to collect data from Millennials and Generation Xers about their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they adopted to deal with the pandemic. Thereafter, conclusions were drawn from their experiences.

During the process of theory building the researcher used the themes, categories and subcategories to develop a framework that demonstrates the relationships between the themes and categories in addition to identifying anomalies. This was done in stages using Carlile and Christensen's (2005) three-step approach (observation, categorisation and association).

The last step involved making associations between existing models of well-being and their constructs and the observed, described and measured constructs from the interviews (data collected). Thereafter, the researcher made predictions using the generated theory and tested the predictions using a deductive approach.

The researcher conducted a descriptive study that aimed to observe and describe the experiences of the participants accurately through narrative-type descriptions (computer-mediated focus group discussions) in order to gain an accurate understanding of the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Theory-building models are discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, Section 5.4.4.

1.13 SUMMARY

This chapter provided the problem statement, motivation and rationale for the study. The definitions of terms that applied to the study were clarified in this chapter and the research objectives were explicitly stated.

An overview of the nature of the different generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) was also provided.

The methodological assumptions were discussed in the context of the research, followed by an explanation of the potential contributions of the study.

In Chapter 2, the literature on well-being is reviewed.

1.14 CHAPTER LAYOUT

This research report comprises seven chapters. The chapter layouts are summarised below.

Chapter 1: Research Context and Rationale

This chapter introduces the purpose of the study. The following topics are discussed:

- The background to the study
- The motivation for the study
- The problem statement

- The objectives of the study
- The research questions
- Trustworthiness and ethical considerations
- Assumptions
- Potential contribution of the study
- Theory building
- The chapter layout of the thesis

Chapter 2: Literature Review – Meaning of Well-Being

The literature review examines the existing literature on well-being and existing wellness models to support the research problem statement. The literature review was used to build a conceptual framework for well-being to enable reliable research findings.

Chapter 3: Literature Review – Positive Psychology

This chapter includes the literature review and a discussion about positive psychology, psychological capital and in particular, the literature that support the constructs of hope and optimism.

Chapter 4: Literature Review – The Covid-19 Pandemic

This chapter includes a literature review and discussion about the COVID-19 pandemic. The nature and the spread of the virus are discussed in addition to the measures implemented to limit the spread of the virus. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the effects of COVID-19 on individuals and the workplace and the possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees' well-being.

Chapter 5: Methodology and Research Design

This chapter discusses the research philosophy and qualitative nature of the research design. The following aspects are discussed:

- The research design (philosophy, method and strategy)
- The research methods and instruments applied in the research study

- The population, sampling and data collection techniques
- The research process, explanations for the data collected, data analyses and theoretical data saturation process
- The ethical considerations and measures to ensure trustworthiness

Chapter 6: Data Findings and Discussion

The research results chapter presents the data, discusses the responses and comments on the responses made by the participants. An explanation is provided for the inclusion of the various elements in the framework.

Chapter 7: Précis, Limitations and Recommendations

The concluding chapter provides the conclusion of the research. The research questions are answered in this chapter, and a discussion is provided about the significant findings and their practical implications of the research. Recommendations are formulated for the implementation of the framework in organisations. The limitations of the research are listed, and suggestions are made for future studies.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW – MEANING OF WELL-BEING

“The way in which man accepts his fate and all the suffering it entails, the way in which he takes up his cross, gives him ample opportunity – even under the most difficult circumstances – to add a deeper meaning to his life” (Frankl, 2004, p. 76)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher provides an in-depth discussion on the meaning of well-being, the interventions and initiatives that enhance well-being, the forces that increase and decrease well-being, workplace well-being, the challenges associated with unhealthy environments and the benefits of healthy environments. The researcher continues with a discussion about early and current models of workplace wellness. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the importance of workplace well-being.

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 contain the literature review of the concepts of well-being, positive psychology and a discussion about the COVID-19 pandemic respectively. Chapter 4 also provides the research context. Figure 2.1 is a graphical representation of the layout of Chapter 2, indicating the research and the topics under discussion in the chapter.

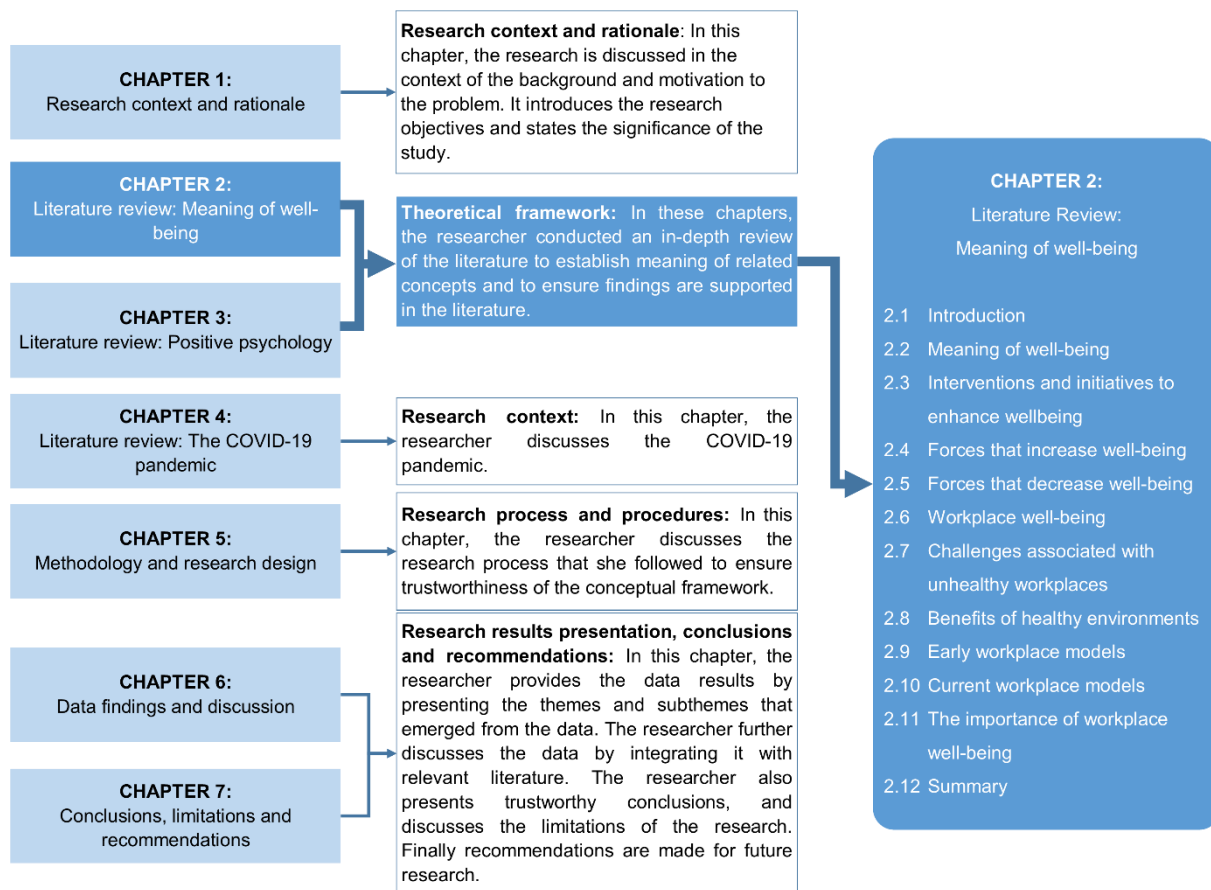


Figure 2.1: Structure of Chapter 2

Source: Author’s own compilation

2.2 MEANING OF WELL-BEING

Windle et al. (2010) state that PWB is “positive psychological functioning encompassing life satisfaction, happiness, resilience, being in control and coping with life” (p. 652). Seligman (2011) proposes flourishing as a means to measure well-being while Weziak-Bialowolska et al. (2019) describe flourishing as going beyond psychosocial well-being to a state in which all aspects of a person’s life are well. Therefore, subjective well-being or happiness refers to a state in which people experience positive emotions most of the time.

Various research studies have confirmed that subjective well-being has a predominantly hereditary component (Carr, 2004; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Lopez & Snyder, 2009) that causes some people to be happy naturally. Lyubomirsky and Sheldon (2005) proposed in their study, “Pursuing happiness: The architecture of

sustainable change” that a person’s happiness is determined by a genetically set point for happiness (50%), circumstantial factors (10%) and intentional activities and practices (40%) to enhance well-being. Seligman (2011) maintains that happiness is a mechanism while well-being is a construct made up of five elements: positive emotion, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishments. Furthermore, well-being develops as a consequence of doing well in life (eudaimonic well-being) or as a result of “liking one’s life” (hedonic well-being) (Lopez & Snyder, 2009), and well-being is not happiness (Seligman, 2011, p. 23) but the topic of positive psychology.

Some people may question their quality of life (Lopez & Snyder, 2009) while others regularly evaluate their own success and well-being by comparing their successes and well-being with those around them. These appraisals cause either negative emotional reactions such as fear, disappointment and resentment or positive emotions such as satisfaction, contentment, joy, happiness, hope and optimism.

Positive emotions are a key aspect of people’s overall well-being or happiness (Frederickson, 2005; S. J. Lopez & Snyder, 2009; Pflug, 2009; Seligman, 2007) and may significantly differ due to individual factors such as personality (Shiota et al., 2006) and even cultural differences (Huppert & So, 2013; Pflug, 2009; Tsai et al., 2006). In addition, positive emotions lead to expanded and more adaptive response trends (Lopez & Snyder, 2009), also known as “broaden[ing] thought-action repertoires and building personal resources” (Frederickson, 2002, p. 1372). For example, the constructs of hope and optimism, which are combinations of several positive emotions, create inclinations to feel positive about the future, count blessings, visualise one’s best possible self (BPS), develop plans to achieve goals, view relationships positively and create meaningful relationships.

Pam (2013) defines negative emotions “as an unpleasant or unhappy emotion which is evoked in individuals to express a negative effect towards an event or person” (para. 1). Mead (2020) points out that negative emotions provide individuals with a strong indication that something needs to change. According to Mead (2020) the author, negative emotions such as anger can, for example, motivate individuals to make changes while anxiety can assist individuals to approach challenges in new ways.

Seligman's (2003) original theory of happiness presented positive psychology as happiness and stated that the gold standard for measuring happiness was life satisfaction and, therefore, the goal of positive psychology was to increase life

satisfaction. In his book, *Flourish*, Seligman (2011) presented a new theory known as the Well-Being Theory in which he declares that positive psychology is well-being, and the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing. Seligman (2011) rejected his original theory of happiness because he believed the connection of mood to positive psychology was overstated which does not reflect the true sense of positive psychology. According to Seligman (2011), although people may be 'low' on feelings of happiness, they may still be high on engagement and meaning, which are sometimes lacking in 'happy' people.

A significant number of articles are available in the literature that describe well-being as a holistic approach aimed at promoting the optimal physical, psychological and social health of individuals (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019a; Cooper & Leiter, 2017; Day & Nielsen, 2017). In addition, the word well-being is also used to describe the various life and non-work satisfactions enjoyed by individuals (Day & Nielsen, 2017), including general health (Danna & Griffin, 1999) and psychological health that are indicative of a flourishing life (Hone et al., 2014; Seligman, 2011; Weziak-Bialowolska et al., 2019). Furthermore, well-being involves achieving a balance between the various dimensions of wellness, which includes taking responsibility for one's own health and choosing to focus on positive factors and health rather than illness (Burton, 2010).

Some authors argue that people will be able to create a more meaningful and purposeful life if they understand the meaning of health and well-being and are aware of the health risks associated with their behaviour (Botha & Brand, 2009; Day & Nielsen, 2017; Guest, 2017). The WHO defines health as "[a] state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease" (WHO, 2010, p. 06), while Day and Nielsen (2017) define healthy employees as

those who have low physical symptoms, stress, burnout, and negative symptoms and who possess positive indicators of physical health, satisfaction, engagement, energy, professional efficacy, integrity and respect towards others, their environment, and themselves. Healthy employees are employees who feel good at work, have positive work attitudes, and feel passionate about their contributions to their work, and generally enjoy the people whom they interact with at work on a daily basis. (p. 296)

Well-being is also closely associated with growth and human fulfilment and thus has significant consequences for human health and a prosperous future (Guest, 2017; Ryff, 1989b; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Although various authors have endeavoured to provide an all-encompassing definition for well-being, a solitary definition remains elusive due to the following: (i) there are various factors that are considered part of the well-being construct (Diener et al., 2008; Henn, 2013), (ii) there are various disciplines investigating well-being such as economics, sociology and anthropology (De Chavez et al., 2005; Roodt, 1991), and (iii) there are immeasurable labels ascribed to the various well-being-related factors (Roodt, 1991). De Chavez et al. (2005) caution researchers to be explicit in delineating well-being, particularly in terms of context and measurement.

Cooper and Leiter (2017) attempt to provide some broad and narrow concepts associated with well-being, as shown in Figure 2.2. The figure includes broad and inclusive and narrow and focused concepts of well-being.

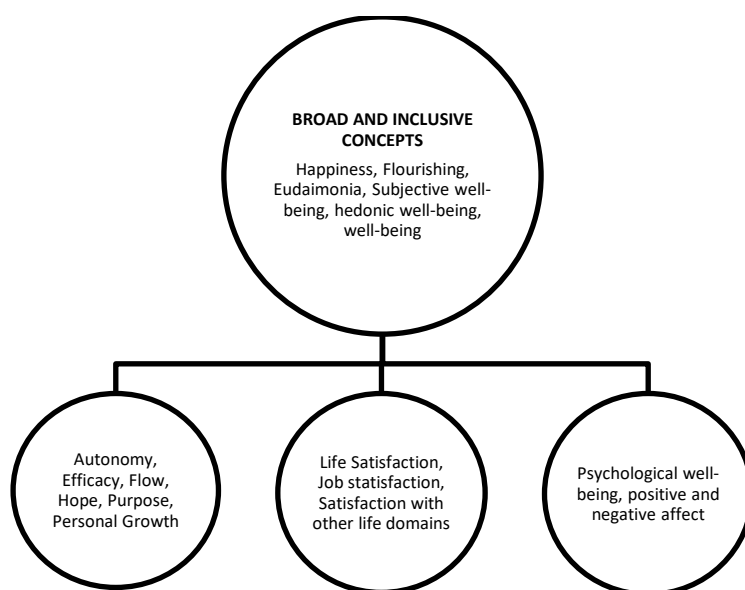


Figure 2.2: Broad and narrow concepts of well-being

Source: Cooper & Leiter, 2017, p. 90

The top layer (Figure 2.2) of the hierarchy displays the broad and inclusive concepts such as happiness, flourishing, eudaimonia, subjective well-being and hedonic well-being.

The bottom layer of Figure 2.2 displays the narrow and more focused concepts of well-being, which include autonomy, flow, life satisfaction, purpose, personal growth, hope and PWB.

Nielsen et al. (2017) define well-being as "the state of individuals' mental, physical, and general health, as well as their experiences of satisfaction both at work and outside of work" (p. 104) by adopting aspects of the broad definition of well-being developed by Danna and Griffin (1999).

Overall well-being (see Figure 2.3) encompasses three main components: physical, social and psychological (mental) well-being (Guest, 2017; Johnson et al., 2018). However, Robertson and Cooper (2011) are of the opinion that a fourth component can be added, namely fiscal well-being. Fiscal well-being refers to how well an individual's financial position provides financial security and freedom of choice. The fiscal component is not included in Figure 2.3 because it falls outside the boundaries of this study.

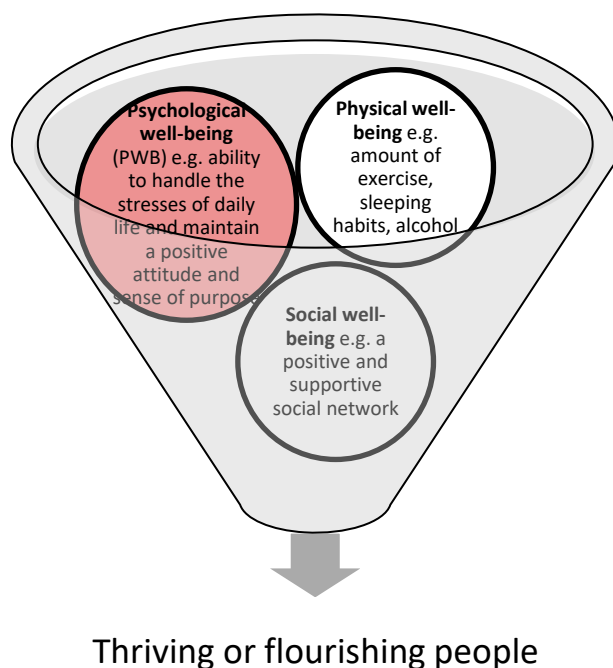


Figure 2.3: Overall well-being

Source: Adapted from Johnson et al., 2018, p. 218

Figure 2.3 depicts the three dimensions of overall well-being that lead to the thriving of individuals. Although physical well-being is important dimensions of well-being, this study focuses on the PWB and social well-being dimensions of employees' health because it relates to the ability of how employees manage the stresses in life, maintain a positive outlook on life and apply coping mechanisms to deal with adversity (Chaix et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Saltzman et al., 2020).

Social well-being

Carr (2004) states that social well-being refers to the positive states associated with optimal functioning within one's social network and community. The dictionary of the National Cancer Institute defines social support as: "A network of family, friends, neighbours, and community members that is available in times of need to give psychological, physical and financial help" (National Institute of Health [NIH], 2020, para. 1).

According to Bergh and Theron (2003, p. 197), social support relates to how people are nurtured and assisted through their affiliation with individuals and groups. According to the authors, social support includes emotional concerns (liking, loving, understanding, sympathising, etc.), material or instrumental assistance (providing services, goods, finances and information such as advice, knowledge and training), and appraisal (feedback, praise to improve self-esteem). A study conducted by Brandley-Bell and Talbot (2020) to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individuals with experiences of eating disorders found that particularly social support from friends and family had a "buffering effect from stressful events" and that this protective effect could be useful during times of adversity such as lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. Saltzman et al. (2020) investigated the potential impact of COVID-19 on loneliness and well-being and found that social support plays a key role in enhancing well-being, especially during times of crisis when it acts as a coping mechanism (p. 11).

Physical well-being

Physical well-being relates to the absence of illness. However, it is also an indication of an individual's lifestyle behaviour and health status such as being free from injury or physical ailments, keeping in good health, being physically active (Werner et al., 2016)

and avoiding preventable diseases. Physical fitness, size and weight, body mass index (BMI), cholesterol levels and blood pressure are all indicators of physical well-being (Cooper & Leiter, 2017).

A recent study conducted by Burstrom and Tao (2020) found that inequalities in social determinants of health play a significant role in differential exposure to the coronavirus, the vulnerability to the infection, and consequences of the disease. According to the study there is an increased risk of severe disease and death related to COVID-19 among individuals who maintain poor general health and nutrition and in those individuals with underlying chronic conditions such as “cardiovascular diseases, lung diseases, diabetes and cancer” (Burstrom & Tao, 2020, p. 617).

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being refers to the absence of psychopathology (Werner et al., 2016) and the realisation of one’s full psychological potential (Carr, 2004). This has an impact on physical health, productivity and career success (Johnson et al., 2018) through initiating a positive attitude towards life and showing resilience (Werner et al., 2016).

Johnson et al. (2018) are of the opinion that PWB is linked to “life success, better health, mortality, career success and better relationships with others”. Although PWB and subjective well-being are associated constructs, they are divergent constructs that increase with “age, education, emotional stability extraversion and consciousness” (p. 455).

Bergh and Theron (2003) point out that well-adjusted individuals examine their personal constructs against reality in rational ways, confirm or disregard the predictive accuracy of these constructs and revise them appropriately. For example, individuals often evaluate how positive, hopeful, happy or content they are in comparison with their family, friends or colleagues.

According to Ewen (1998), this evaluation cycle comprises three stages:

- **Circumspection:** Considering several constructs that can be used to interpret a particular situation
- **Pre-emption:** Deciding on a single construct to deal with the issue at hand

- **Control or choice:** Selecting a grounding contrast that promises to improve the accuracy of one's predictions

Cooper and Hesketh (2019) state that to experience PWB, human beings need to experience purpose and meaning in their lives in addition to positive emotions. Thus, two significant elements of PWB include “hedonic” well-being that refers to the subjective feelings of happiness and “eudaimonic” well-being that refers to purposeful aspects of well-being (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 260). Guest (2017) opine that hedonic well-being is naturally represented by job satisfaction and eudemonic well-being is concerned with “fulfilment of potential and finding meaning and purpose in work” (p. 26).

Robertson and Cooper (2011) and Guest (2017) maintain that by taking care of employees' well-being, many workplace crises can be avoided. According to Johnson et al. (2018), organisations can either negatively affect employees' health and well-being or contribute to developing thriving individuals, subject to employees' personality or temperament (Kahneman et al., 2003). Johnson et al. (2018) argue that well-implemented initiatives and interventions can reduce absenteeism, increase discretionary effort and improve trust and loyalty.

Various other authors, such as Cooper and Hesketh (2019), Cooper and Leiter (2017), Johnson et al. (2018), Frederickson (2005), and Seligman (2011), argue that well-being cannot be isolated from positivity and that PWB has an impact on an individual's “physical health, productivity and career success” (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 232) because it relates to people's experiences of positive emotions, life's satisfaction and feelings of happiness (Seligman, 2003).

A study conducted by Chew et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of providing psychological assistance to individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic in particularly in relation to work arrangements, quarantine orders, stay-at-home orders, leave of absence during isolation periods, medical leave, and hospitalisation for treatment as these factors have a significant impact on the psychological well-being of individuals. According to the authors it is critical to maintain “a spirit of perseverance and optimism to weather the pandemic” (p. 355).

In the following section, the researcher discusses various interventions that can be implemented to enhance well-being.

2.3 INTERVENTIONS AND INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING

Recent studies have found that well-being can be enhanced through habitual commitment (Seligman, 1998), intentional activity and behaviour (Lyubomirsky & Sheldon, 2005); and practising certain virtues such as gratitude (Davis et al., 2016; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). In addition, well-being can be strengthened by committing acts of kindness and volunteering (Frederickson et al., 2008; Snyder & Omoto, 2001), by reframing situations positively (Lyubomirsky & Sheldon, 2005) and by engaging in thoughtful self-reflection (King, 2001). Imagining one's BPS (Meevissen et al., 2011; Oyserman et al., 2015; Peters et al., 2010), striving for significant personal goals (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001) and being goal-directed (MacLeod, 2013; Seligman, 2011) will also increase well-being.

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) state that positive subjective experiences such as well-being relate to contentment and satisfaction (in the past), flow and happiness (in the present) and hope and optimism (for the future). According to Van der Weele (2020), cognitive exercises are useful to align people's minds to what is either good in the past (gratitude), good in the present (savouring) or good in the future (envisaging).

2.3.1 Gratitude

Gratitude activities enable people to elicit emotional responses when recalling deeply meaningful memories (Davis et al., 2016); these often improve well-being when individuals reflect on meaningful experiences and are able to view themselves as more privileged than others. Fessell and Cherniss (2020) maintain that extending gratitude enables individuals not only to experience positive emotions but also to enhance relationships. In addition, gratitude plays an important role as a coping mechanism to deal with negative stressors (Tugade & Frederickson, 2004). Gratitude activities include listing things or people for which one is grateful and journaling one's experiences (Davis et al., 2016,). Frederickson's (2005) broaden-and-build theory suggests that by thinking positive thoughts, people can experience the benefits of gratefulness and avoid underlying factors that lead to depression, anxiety and various other mental health issues. Moreover, feelings of gratitude can reduce negative emotions such as anger and resentment, which are detrimental to one's well-being.

2.3.2 Savouring positive experiences

The capacity to savour positive experiences has important implications for interpreting positive well-being (Bryant, 2003). According to Bryant (2003), variances in people's capacity to value and savour positive experiences often lead to differences in positive well-being. Smith et al. (2014) argue that the ability to savour positive experiences requires individuals to regulate their positive feelings by (i) reminiscing about past positive experiences; (ii) savouring present positive experiences; or (iii) anticipating future positive experiences. According to these authors, the ability to savour positive experiences has been linked to higher levels of happiness, life satisfaction and perceived control. Furthermore, Bryant (2003) found that higher levels of optimism and lower levels of hopelessness are often associated with the perceived capacity to savour the moment.

2.3.3 Best possible self

Imagining one's BPS is a process that requires individuals to envision themselves in imaginary future contexts where everything will turn out in the best conceivable way. Various studies have proved that this method increases individual's well-being including these authors, Peters et al. (2010) and Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006). Moreover, Peters et al. (2010) found that journalling and imagining one's BPS can lead to increased optimism because BPS relates to individuals expecting favourable outcomes in the future.

2.3.4 Acceptance

Acceptance is an important construct for coping with adversity (Bond & Bunce, 2003). Bond and Bunce (2003) define acceptance as "the willingness to experience thoughts, feelings, and physiological sensations without having to control them, or let them determine one's actions" (p. 3), which is a key element of well-being. According to these authors, acceptance relates to individuals' ability to experience not only positive but also negative and unfavourable emotions such as fear and anxiety without dismissing the emotions and without compromising one's future actions. In addition, acceptance is a two-part approach, which involves an acknowledgement to experience

thoughts, feelings and sensations and to proceed in a manner that achieves desired outcomes. There is a shortcoming in recent literature to support this construct.

2.4 FORCES THAT INCREASE WELL-BEING

Several forces that increase well-being at an individual level have been identified:

- “good health,
- enough education,
- fit between personality and culture,
- personality open to new experiences,
- extroversion,
- conscientiousness,
- environmental mastery,
- personal growth,
- purpose in life,
- self-acceptance,
- sense of self-determination,
- opportunities to compare oneself favourable to other,
- having many acquaintances,
- receiving social support from close friends,
- less stress, and
- belonging to a liked group”. (Triandis, 2000, p. 32)

2.5 FORCES THAT DECREASE WELL-BEING

According to Triandis (2000), the following forces decrease well-being at an individual level: “Idiocentrism which relates to loneliness, social disruption (frequent divorce, job insecurity, high crime rates), stress, unemployment, poor health, and poor personality-to-culture fit” (p. 32). Guest (2017) argue that changes at work and in work circumstances may significantly affect work-related well-being and lead to harmful consequences for individuals and organisations.

2.6 WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

The ILO states that workplace well-being refers to "all aspects of working life, from the quality and safety of the physical environment, to how workers feel about their work, their working environment, the climate at work and work organisation" (ILO, 2018, p. 6).

Day and Randell (2014) cited in Day and Nielsen (2017) define healthy workplaces as

workplaces in which workers are treated with respect, and organisational members engage in activities that foster psychological and physical health of all its workers. These workplaces are dedicated to promoting and supporting the physical and psychological health and well-being of their employees while simultaneously incorporating solid business practices to remain an efficient and productive business entity and having a positive impact on their clients and community (p. 297).

In the Healthy and Resilient Organization (HERO) model of Day and Nielsen (2017), the emphasis is on healthy organisational resources and practices, healthy employees and healthy organisational outcomes (Salanova et al. 2012). Grant and Campbell (2007) state that workplace well-being refers to "the quality of subjective experiences at work" (p. 668), while Burton (2010) argues it is about a holistic understanding of employees' physical, emotional, mental and social states.

2.6.1 Psychologically healthy workplaces

Day and Nielsen (2017) assert that the term 'psychological healthy workplace' refers to a workplace that encourages employees to participate and to use organisational resources that enhance well-being and discourages activities that promote stress and negative behaviours that jeopardise employees' health. Day and Randell (2014) developed the following working definition of psychologically healthy workplaces:

[W]orkplaces that are dedicated to promoting and supporting the physical and psychological health and well-being of their employees while simultaneously incorporating solid business practices to remain as an efficient and productive business entity and having a positive impact on their clients and community (p. 10).

The working definition not only highlights the importance of having healthy employees but also the importance of having a healthy business that is financially sustainable to protect stakeholders' interests. Thus, healthy workplaces should aim to provide employees with a supportive network where they can produce meaningful work and receive meaningful outcomes from their contribution (Guest, 2017).

The healthy workplace model of Day and Nielsen (2017) is discussed in more detail in Section 2.10.7.

2.7 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH UNHEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

According to the WHO, an estimated 12.6 million deaths occur annually as a result of unhealthy environments (WHO, 2016). The WHO focuses on external factors in the environment when defining environmental risks to people's health: "[A]ll the physical, chemical and biological factors external to a person, and all related behaviour, but excluding those natural environments that cannot reasonably be modified" (para. 1). Taylor and Repetii (1997) focus on internal factors when describing unhealthy environments as environments that jeopardise safety, demoralise healthy working relationships and manifest in toxic relationships. In contrast to the above definitions, a healthy environment provides for a safe atmosphere with capacity for integration within a predictable and controlled environment. The similarity in the provided definitions is the ability to play a pivotal role in human beings' capacity to thrive and experience health and well-being (Wright & Godfrey, 2010).

Healthy lives and well-being build prosperous societies (UN, 2020c), which are particularly needed to recover from disease outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. These ideologies highlight the importance of providing efficient funding to improve healthcare systems, sanitation and hygiene and to gain access to trained doctors to improve people's health and well-being. Moreover, the eradication of poverty and inequality (Burstrom & Tao, 2020; Mahler et al., 2020; Sulla & Zikhali, 2018) should be an overriding concern to improve the health and well-being of societies.

Burstrom and Tao (2020) point out that disparities in social factors of health have contributed to early detection and results in "differential exposure to the virus, different vulnerability to the infection, and differential consequences of the disease" (p. 617). According to the findings of the study, poor living conditions, overcrowding and

multigenerational households may increase the risk of being infected by COVID-19. Furthermore, the risk of severe disease and death due to COVID-19 is increased in families suffering from poor health and nutritional status.

The quality of the public healthcare system in South Africa has been of real concern for many years, particularly because the majority of the population depends on the public system for their healthcare needs (Maphumulo & Bhengu, 2019). Long waiting times, poorly maintained infrastructure, poor disease prevention and control and shortages of resources in regard to medicine and equipment are some of the shortcomings raised in a report by Maphumulo and Bhengu (2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was large-scale corruption reported in the procurement of personal protective equipment, causing massive delays to health departments and hospitals (Businessstech, 2020b). At the time of submitting this thesis for ratification, President Cyril Ramaphosa appointed Cabinet to investigate the allegation of personal protective equipment tender fraud and corruption committed during the COVID-19 pandemic that involved in excess of R80 million (Cox, 2020; Scrap Cabinet committee appointed to probe PPE tender fraud and let SIU do its job, 2020)

According to a report titled, *How unequal is South Africa?* released in February 2020 by Stats SA, the country ranked as one of the most unequal countries in the world (Stats SA, 2020a). The report highlighted four key aspects of South Africa's inequality: (i) the South African labour market is extremely racialised and gender-biased, (ii) the Eastern Cape was the most unequal province in 2015, (iii) the bottom 60% of households depend more on social grants than on income from the labour market, and (iv) black Africans reported the largest increase in the average number of assets owned. The study conducted by Burstrom and Tao (2020) highlights the need for governments to protect vulnerable people and to develop disaster preparedness plans to assist vulnerable communities during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2019, approximately 49.2% of the adult population was living below the upper-bound poverty line (Stats SA, 2019a). These alarming statistics show that there is an increasing burden on the heads of families and carers to gain access to the most basic needs such as medical care, housing, running water, electricity, sanitation and refuse removal to provide a safe and healthy environment for their families.

According to the WHO report, *Preventing diseases through healthy environments*, 23% of all deaths worldwide are caused by unhealthy environments (Pruss-Ustun et al., 2015) such as air pollution, water pollution, chemical exposure and climate change. In 2017, the top ten underlying causes of death in South Africa were tuberculosis, diabetes, several forms of heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, HIV, hypertensive disease, influenza and pneumonia, other viral diseases, ischaemic heart disease and chronic lower respiratory diseases (Stats.SA, 2017). In 2018, the top ten underlying cause of death in Germany were ischaemic heart disease, acute heart attack, malignant neoplasm of the bronchi and lungs, unspecified dementia, heart failure, other chronic respiratory disease, hypertensive heart disease, arterial flutter and arterial fibrillation, pneumonia, and breast cancer (Radtke, 2020).

In 2010, a report published by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research found that many of the diseases in South Africa are the result of avoidable environmental hazards such as contaminated water, poor hygiene, inadequate sanitation, poor water resource management, use of unsafe fuels and poor infrastructure (Wright & Godfrey, 2010). According to health experts, environmental hazards tend to affect mainly the poor and most vulnerable groups (UNICEF, 2020; Hurlbut, 2018). A study conducted by Bilal et al. (2020) found that Germany's successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic can be attributed to their environmental legislation and medical care system. Germany introduced policies to reduce air and environmental pollution "which has contributed significantly to combat the coronavirus pandemic" (p. 9). In addition the country invested in medical care facilities to facilitate unforeseen medical emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Bilal et al., 2020).

In 2015, the WHO released a report titled, *Preventing disease through healthy environments: A global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks* (Pruss-Ustun et al., 2015) that maintains countries should limit the use of solid fuels for cooking and increase their access to low carbon energy technologies to create healthier environments and populations. According to this report, these initiatives can reduce cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, injuries and cancers, leading to immediate cost saving in healthcare.

According to a study by Taylor and Repetii (1997) titled "Health psychology: What is an unhealthy environment and how does it get under your skin?", the following factors were found to contribute to health disorders: chronic stress, mental stress, lack of

copied skills and resources, and unhealthy habits and behaviours. In addition, the research highlighted the role of the environment as the largest contributor to chronic and acute health disorders. Using SES and race as 'contextual factors', the study examined various characteristics of the environment such as community, work, family and peer interaction to determine the impact on people's health outcomes across life spans. According to the research evidence, people from poor communities are more susceptible to chronic stress than people from high- to middle-class communities due to the unavailability of resources, exposure to community violence, and limited access to transportation and recreational facilities. The study further suggests that community characteristics significantly influence the degree to which certain health habits are formed and practised. For example, people living in poor communities with limited water supplies and poor sanitation find it challenging to maintain stringent hygienic conditions compared with people from affluent communities who can afford drinking mineral water, frequent refuse removal and regular use of sanitiser and cleaning products (Arndt et al., 2020; Pruss-Ustun et al., 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of sanitation, hygiene and adequate health resources (Arndt et al., 2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020; Newham & Du Plessis, 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Van der Berg, 2020) in addition to access to running water to prevent and contain disease; therefore, greater priority should be given to creating healthy environments.

2.8 BENEFITS OF HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

"A healthy environment underpins a healthy population" (WHO, 2016). The WHO describes a healthy environment as one in which disease, injury and disability can be prevented or controlled as a result of interaction between people and the environment. Thus, a healthy environment is a clean environment free of germs and other harmful microorganisms. According to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, a healthy environment is integral to the full enjoyment of "basic human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation, and quality of life" (United Nations, 2016, para. 2). In addition, according to a UN, there is growing evidence to suggest that exposure to natural environments such as clean air, good sanitation, and green spaces can improve people's mental health and well-

being due to lower levels of stress and reduced depression and anxiety (United Nations, 2016).

The WHO (2016) suggests that the various environmental interventions such as limitation of air and transportation pollution, the supply of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation are of significant benefit in preventing multiple diseases such as chronic respiratory diseases and cardiovascular diseases. Moreover, a healthy population places less strain on the country's healthcare system, thus resulting in lower healthcare costs, lower workplace absenteeism and a more productive workforce.

2.9 EARLY MODELS OF WORKPLACE WELLNESS

During the past four decades, various wellness models have been proposed, with the earliest models focusing on the physical health profession (Ardel, 1977; Hettler, 1984). The most recent models are grounded in the positive psychology movement and focus on PWB (Seligman & Csikszentmihali, 2000; Snyder & Lopez, 2002), although another well-accepted model, the 'Wheel of Wellness' (Myers et al. 2000) is regularly applied as a counselling-based model. Butler and Kern (2016) argue that there is no single best model of well-being but using different conceptualisations of well-being can be helpful in developing a framework to improve well-being. For this reason, the researcher investigated various wellness models and adopted the various conceptualisations of well-being into a new generational well-being framework for Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa to enhance their well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.9.1 Dimensions of wellness

The hexagon wellness model comprising six dimensions of wellness was developed in 1976 by Bill Hettler (Hettler, 1984; National Wellness Institute, 2018) to establish a holistic approach to wellness. Hettler, a leading figure and co-founder of the National Wellness Institute described wellness as deliberate efforts directed towards staying healthy and making informed choices to achieve utmost well-being (Hettler, 1984).

The model was developed to understand how each dimension of wellness is connected to wellness.

Figure 2.4 depicts the six dimensions of wellness, namely the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational and social dimensions. The NWI developed two paper-and-pencil assessment instruments, namely the Lifestyle Assessment Questionnaire and the TestWell Wellness Inventory on which the Dimensions of Wellness model of Hettler (1984) was based (Hattie et al., 2004).

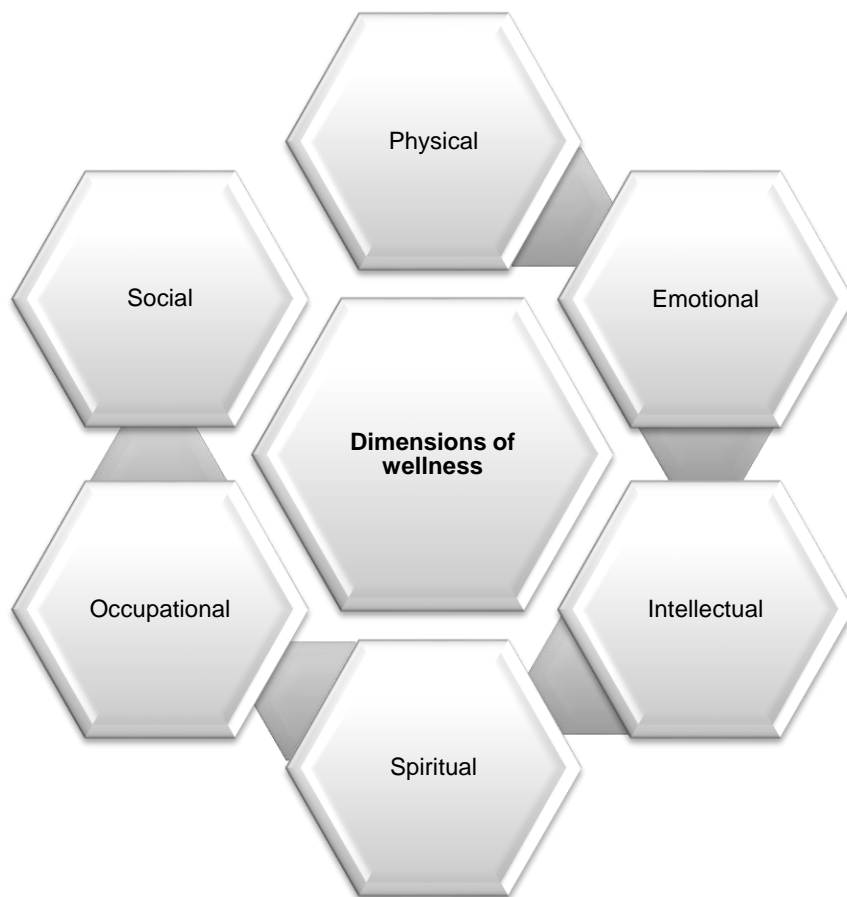


Figure 2.4: The six dimensions of wellness

Source: National Wellness Institute, 2018, p. 2

Various authors including Botha and Brand (2009); and Hettler (1984) suggest adopting the six dimensions of wellness to build a holistic sense of wellness and fulfilment:

- **Social wellness** refers to how individuals interact with others. According to Botha and Brand (2009), social wellness consists of two sub-dimensions, namely environmental wellness and social wellness. The social dimension encourages individuals to contribute to the human and physical environment

for the common welfare of the community (Hoffmann et al., 2007). It involves recognising one's circumstances and functioning in society. The most significant aspect of social wellness includes "integration, acceptance, contribution, actualisation and coherence" (Botha & Brand, 2009, p. 3). Botha and Brand (2009) argue that socially excluded groups share experiences of pessimism and hopelessness, which is particularly important to this study. Saltzman et al. (2020) found that social support plays a key role during the COVID-19 pandemic as it enhances well-being and contributes to psychological recovery.

- **Physical wellness** refers to the need for regular physical activity. This dimension involves activities that improve cardiovascular circulation, physical activity, enhanced knowledge about healthy nutrition, taking measures to improve self-care and avoidance of substance abuse (Botha & Brand, 2009). Physical wellness includes individuals' ability to recognise healthy behaviours (routine check-ups, a balanced diet, exercise, etc.) and unhealthy behaviours (tobacco, drugs, alcohol, etc.) that have an impact on their physical wellness. Individuals should be encouraged to recognise destructive habits that can hamper their physical wellness (National Wellness Institute, 2018). A study conducted by Burstrom and Tao (2020) found that smoking and obesity aggravate the risk of severe disease and death in COVID-19. In addition, poor general health and nutrition, cardiovascular diseases, lung diseases, diabetes and cancer increase the risk of susceptibility to illnesses (Burstrom & Tao, 2020).
- **Emotional wellness** refers to the ability of individuals to understand themselves and to cope with work-life challenges. In addition, emotional wellness is enhanced by the ability to acknowledge and share feelings of happiness, anger, fear, sadness, stress, hope and love in a productive manner. Thus, emotional wellness relates to positive emotions, including individuals' ability to manage their behaviour and implement coping mechanisms (Botha & Brand, 2009). According to Fessell and Cherniss (2020), an important aspect of emotional wellness is to "name" one's emotions, especially challenging emotions (p. 746) particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the authors, naming emotions allows individuals to notice experiences of anxiety, anger or concern. Fessell and

Cherniss (2020) refer to this coping mechanism as the “name it to tame it” process (p. 746). This strategy is important to cope with the “demands and stresses” of the COVID-19 pandemic (p.746).

- **Occupational wellness** refers to individuals’ ability to achieve personal fulfilment through their jobs or chosen career fields while still maintaining work-life balance. Occupational wellness includes two important aspects, namely job satisfaction and work-life balance. Job satisfaction leads to a more meaningful life, longevity and greater productivity (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). A study conducted by Del Boca et al. (2020) with Italian women to investigate the effect of COVID-19 on work, housework and child care arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic found that it was particularly challenging for women to cope with child care responsibilities and to achieve work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The preventative measures that were implemented reduced the availability of assistance to working mothers, thus affecting their occupational wellness while fulfilling their family duties.
- **Intellectual wellness** refers to individuals’ ability to meet their desired level of intellectual stimulation. This type of wellness is enhanced by learning new concepts, improving skills and seeking challenges in pursuit of lifelong learning. Intellectual wellness is also about problem-solving and the creative ability that is required for healthy brain functioning (Myers, 1998). During the COVID-19 pandemic a “tsunami of online learning” (Goldschmidt, 2020, p. 89) occurred as many academic institutions offered online learning to continue educational practices for the remainder of the academic year. Goldschmidt (2020) argues that during the COVID-19 pandemic the digital divide became more apparent than before. However, according to the author, there is hope that new models of education will emerge as a result of the pandemic, to deliver uninterrupted online education during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Spiritual wellness** is the process of discovering meaning and purpose in life and demonstrating values through behaviours. It relates to the individual’s ability to establish peace and harmony, to develop congruency between values and actions and to realise a common purpose that binds people together. In addition, spirituality refers to having hope with a certain degree of confidence in the future (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) based on the belief in a

“higher power” that the individual holds sacred (Botha & Brand, 2009, p. 4). It is argued that individuals who maintain strong spirituality are more likely to be positive and optimistic and able to cope with adversities (Pargament et al., 1998; Ribeiro et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2017). Ribeiro et al. (2020) state that religion and spirituality can be used as a coping mechanism to deal with the stresses and negative consequences of life problems and illnesses experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.9.2 The Wheel of Wellness: A theoretical model

Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992) developed the earliest Wheel of Wellness model, which evolved from the theory of individual psychology developed by Adler (1954), a pioneer in the field of psychiatry. These researchers identified various tasks that relate positively to “healthy living, quality of life and longevity” (Myers & Sweeney, 2004, p. 234). Adler (1954) originally proposed three major life tasks, work, friendship and love, although two additional life tasks, self and spirit were later added by Mosak and Dreikurs (1967). The new Wheel of Wellness model proposed by Witmer et al. (1998) included the five life tasks that were depicted as a wheel with spokes, demonstrating their interrelatedness and interconnectivity. In 1999, the Wellness Evaluation of Lifestyle (WEL) model was developed to assess each of the five life tasks and the 12 sub-tasks of the WEL (see Figure 2.5), and the self-regulation life task was renamed self-direction. The tasks closest to the centre of the wheel (e.g. spirituality and self-direction) were considered as being more significant and having a greater influence on the longevity and quality of human life than the tasks located around the rim of the wheel (e.g. global events).

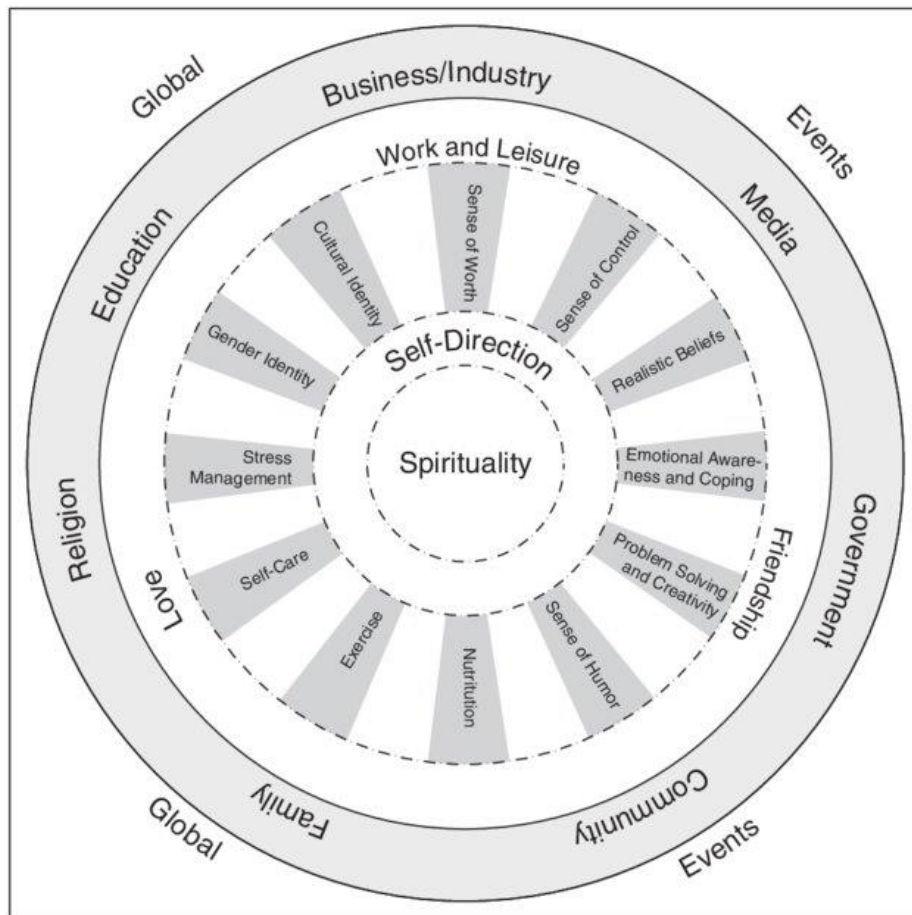


Figure 2.5: The Wheel of Wellness

Source: Myers & Sweeney, 2004, p. 235

Figure 2.5 depicts spirituality as the core and most significant life task of the wellness model. The 12 sub-tasks of the self-direction (previously self-regulation) life task are illustrated as spokes in a wheel. The figure further demonstrates the 12 sub-tasks, including the five life tasks (spirituality, self-direction, love, work and leisure, and friendship) that were developed from Adler's (1954) original three main life tasks: work, friendship and love. In addition, Figure 2.5 illustrates how the five life tasks interact with the various life forces such as a person's family, community, religion, education, government, the media and business/industry. The outer circle represents the global events (of either natural or human origin) that influence the life forces (family, religion, education, business/industry, media, government and community) and the life tasks of the individual's wellness. The model suggests that the further away the life tasks are from the centre of the wheel, the less influence they have on the individual's well-being.

- Life task 1 – Spirituality

Spirituality is a “living, dynamic” process that is positioned around whatever a person may hold sacred (Lopez et al., 2013, p. 928). Spirituality can be defined as a value and belief system that connects with the soul (inner self). It relates to the core characteristic of healthy people and is the source of all other dimensions of wellness (Myers et al., 2000). Sweeney and Witmer (1991) identify purpose and meaning in life, hope and optimism for the future, and values as key dimensions of spirituality, while Pfeffer (2018) identifies competence and mastery, meaning and purposeful work, positive interdependent relationships and the capacity to integrate personal and professional life as key components of spirituality.

Spirituality can thus be seen as one of the most powerful means for facing various adversities (Garg, 2017). Sharma et al. (2017) conducted research to determine if there is an association between religion, spirituality and mental health and functional outcomes; the results showed that individuals who enjoy high levels of religion and spirituality are at a lower risk for lifetime PTSDs, major depressive disorders and alcohol-use disorder. A strong correlation was also found between elevated levels of religion and spirituality and increased dispositional gratitude, purpose in life and post-traumatic growth. Pargament et al. (1998) concluded that religious coping is commonly used, particularly during times of distress and is associated with enhanced mental health and well-being. In addition, the authors identified the following religious coping mechanisms as helpful during times of adversity: seeking spiritual support, religious forgiveness, collaborative religious coping and spiritual connection.

A study conducted by Joubert and Grobler (2013) found that religion and spirituality contributes to enhanced well-being and plays a significant role at individual, organisational and community level. According to Joubert and Grobler (2013), religion is an important social dimension in South Africa and has an “ameliorative” effect on several indicators of well-being such as “morality, functional impairment, life satisfaction and depression” (p. 1).

- Life task 2 – Self-direction

Self-direction refers to the way in which individuals control and focus themselves in their daily activities in the pursuit of attaining strategic goals (Myers et al., 2000).

The 12 sub-tasks of self-direction are as follows:

1. **Sense of worth** is regularly referred to in the literature as self-concept, self-esteem and self-worth. It is widely accepted that personal worth depends largely on one's accomplishments (Covington, 1984). Furthermore, according to the research conducted by Covington (1984), ability is viewed as a critical aspect of success while inability is seen as a primary cause of failure that often leads to feelings of humiliation and guilt. Moreover, individuals seek success not for social and personal benefits but also to generate a reputation for having the ability to achieve things (Covington, 1984). Individuals with high levels of self-esteem are less likely to be depressed or anxious (Flett et al., 1994).
2. **Sense of control** seems to have an adaptative value, particularly during times of adversity or crisis because it provides individuals with the motivation to change their circumstances instead of experiencing hopelessness (Seligman, 1998). According to Witmer and Sweeney (1992), one factor that particularly describes individuals with a good internal locus of control is competence, which includes elements of "optimism, control and perceived ability to cope with stress" (p. 142). According to the authors, individuals who perceive life to be manageable are less likely to experience fear, anxiety and other physical symptoms.
3. **Realistic belief:** Individuals who experience well-being tend to be rational about events and situations, and such individuals rarely engage in wishful thinking (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).
4. **Emotional awareness** and **coping skills** are needed to deal with the demands that are beyond the reach of the individual. Such coping skills require individuals to deal with threatening or challenging situations. Part of emotional awareness includes understanding how to deal with stressful situations and how to create positive consequences when dealing with feelings and emotions. (Chew et al., 2020; Gurvich et al., 2020; Polakovic, 2020)
5. **Problem-solving and creativity:** Problem-solving skills are needed to remove the obstacles that are blocking an identified path, while creativity relates to an individual's ability to be flexible and imaginative when considering their well-being (Myers et al., 2000).

6. A **sense of humour** enables individuals to be light-hearted, which is an important aspect of PWB (Cann & Collette, 2014; Papousek, 2018). A sense of humour enables individuals to re-evaluate the extent of the perceived threat and to develop relevant coping mechanisms to deal with or recover from stressful situations. According to Papousek (2018), humour can be a managing factor for distress and can be the perfect antidote to stressful situations, especially if it becomes a “habitual response” to adversity (p. 313). According to Cann and Collette (2014), a sense of humour can lead to greater resilience.
7. **Nutrition and physical activity** (exercise) are major factors regarding health and diseases that are associated with the risk of premature mortality, heart disease, hypertension, strokes and Type 2 diabetes (McNaughton et al., 2012); these diseases can be prevented by eliminating shared risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diet, inactivity and alcohol abuse (Shisana et al., 2014). Good nutrition and activity have the potential to limit the prevalence of disease and improve a person’s quality of life and general well-being. In 2013, South Africa was found to be the country with the highest prevalence of obesity amongst woman in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ng et al., 2014).
8. **Exercise:** The WHO defines physical exercise as follows: “[I]t is a sub classification of physical activity that is planned structured, repetitive and has a final or an intermediate objective of improvement or maintenance of one or more component of physical fitness” (WHO, 2010a, para. 3). There is consistent and ample evidence in literature that supports the notion that exercise improves an individual’s PWB (Windle et al., 2010; Zubula et al., 2017).
9. **Self-care:** The WHO (2020b) describes self-care as activities that individuals, families and communities undertake to prevent and control diseases to improve health promotion and to restore health. In addition, self-care includes aspects of hygiene, nutrition, lifestyle, environmental factors, socioeconomic factors and self-medication (WHO, 2020b). Self-care has three dimensions: physical self-care, psychological or internal self-care, and social self-care (Vidal-Blanco et al., 2019). Physical self-care includes practising mindfulness (Fessell & Cherniss, 2020), engaging in physical activities, social

connectedness, nutrition, and recreational activities (Saltzman et al., 2020; Vidal-Blanco et al., 2019). Psychological self-care is about receiving counselling for emotional problems such as anxiety, stress and other disorders. According to Vidal-Blanco et al. (2019), psychological self-care also includes aspects of religion and spirituality, which they refer to as mindfulness. Mindfulness increases awareness of thoughts, emotions and unconstructive ways to deal with stressful situations and in this way, enables new and positive ways of coping with adversity (Wise et al., 2012). Social self-care includes support networks of personal and professional relationships. Saltzman et al. (2020) point out that social self-care reduces feelings of isolation and anxiety, which is important in enhancing well-being.

10. **Stress management** is an important element of self-direction in improving well-being because it significantly influences stress, job satisfaction, burnout, productivity and performance, and healthcare utilisation (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Chew et al., 2020; Fessell & Cherniss, 2020; Gurvich et al., 2020). Individuals should take responsibility for their health and well-being by controlling their stress levels and the factors that affect their quality of life, particularly during times of adversity (Linley & Joseph, 2004).
11. **Gender identity** needs to be considered as part of self-direction to understand one's self-worth and value in society. For this reason, it is important that women and men understand the contribution that their gender roles bring to society. Holmes (2006) argues that gender identity is fundamental to "how they are perceived, how their behaviour is interpreted and how they respond in every interaction throughout their life" (p. 2). Female empowerment has a significant impact on health and well-being.
12. **Cultural identity** is important for experiencing a sense of belonging. Triandis (2000) states that culture is part of a person's DNA because it relates to shared ideas conveyed through generations. It is about shared attitudes, beliefs and categorisation amongst people who belong to the same 'tribe'. Booyesen (2007) points out that a crisis in societal identity happens when individuals lose their boundaries and values within society. According to Booyesen (2007), during this crisis, the individual needs to "explore, reflect on, re-evaluate or make decisions concerning the identities that form part of their

self-concept” (p. 2). Social identity is becoming a major issue because the conflicts in broader society are transferring to the workplace.

- Life task 3 – Work and leisure

Austin (2016) states that “leisure is an openness towards a contemplation of the deepest truth of life” (para. 3). According to the author, leisure requires serenity and silence to experience reality. Furthermore, leisure allows the individual to experience harmony between oneself and the universe (Austin, 2016). Work, volunteering and paid activities (Hamm et al., 2020) give individuals a sense of purpose and accomplishment while leisure is needed to engage in activities that provide pleasure.

- Life task 4 – Friendship

Friendship integrates all of one’s social relationships that involve a connection with others. Humans are social species and born with the capacity and the need to be connected to each other (Levine, 2016). According to Levine (2016), close friends share each other’s life experiences. Friends often have similar viewpoints and values and may even share comparable backgrounds and traditions. They witness each other’s milestones and support each other through unexpected changes in life “the high and lows, celebrations and sadness” (para. 5). According to the author, individuals without close friends often experience feelings of loneliness.

- Life task 5 – Love

According to Myers et al. (2000), the feeling of being loved and appreciated by others is regarded as the foundation of all social relationships and support. Myers et al. (2000) point out that adjustments in one area of wellness may significantly affect other areas of wellness in either a positive or a negative way.

Reis and Aron (2008) opine that love plays a significant role in human activity and well-being. According to Reis and Aron (2008) love solves different adaptation problems. For example, passionate love solves attraction problems which allow individuals to enter potentially long-term relationships, select suitable partners, appeal to the other partner’s interest, engage in relationship building behaviour, and then reorganise one’s exciting activities to accommodate the new partner. On the other hand, passionate love is related to changes in “cognitive, emotion, and behaviour” (p. 82). According to the authors, for the most part, these changes are often associated with the disruption of

“exciting activities, routines and social networks to orient the individual’s attention and goal-directed behaviour towards a specific new partner” (p. 82). Thus, love leads to relatedness which may well be associated with health and well-being. (Reis & Aron, 2008)

2.9.3 The indivisible self: An evidence-based model of wellness

Further research findings did not support the hierarchal concept of the Wheel of Wellness and as a result, the Indivisible Self Model was developed. Myers and Sweeney (2004) developed the WEL (Myers, 1998) to assess each of the five life tasks and the twelve sub-tasks of the Wheel of Wellness (discussed in Section 2.9.2 above). The theoretical explanations of the characteristics of the Wheel of Wellness formed the foundation for the themes to be included in the WEL. The revised model highlights the integrated nature of human functioning and the interdependent-positive relationship between all areas of the model.

Figure 2.6 depicts the Indivisible Self Model, which demonstrates the relationship amongst the higher-order wellness factors, the five second-order factors: (i) physical self, (ii) creative self, (iii) coping self, (iv) social self, and (v) essential self-factors. The figure also shows the integration of the 17 third-order factors: thinking, emotions, control, work, positive humour, leisure, stress management, self-worth, realistic belief, friendship, love, spirituality, gender identity, cultural identity, self-care, exercise and nutrition.

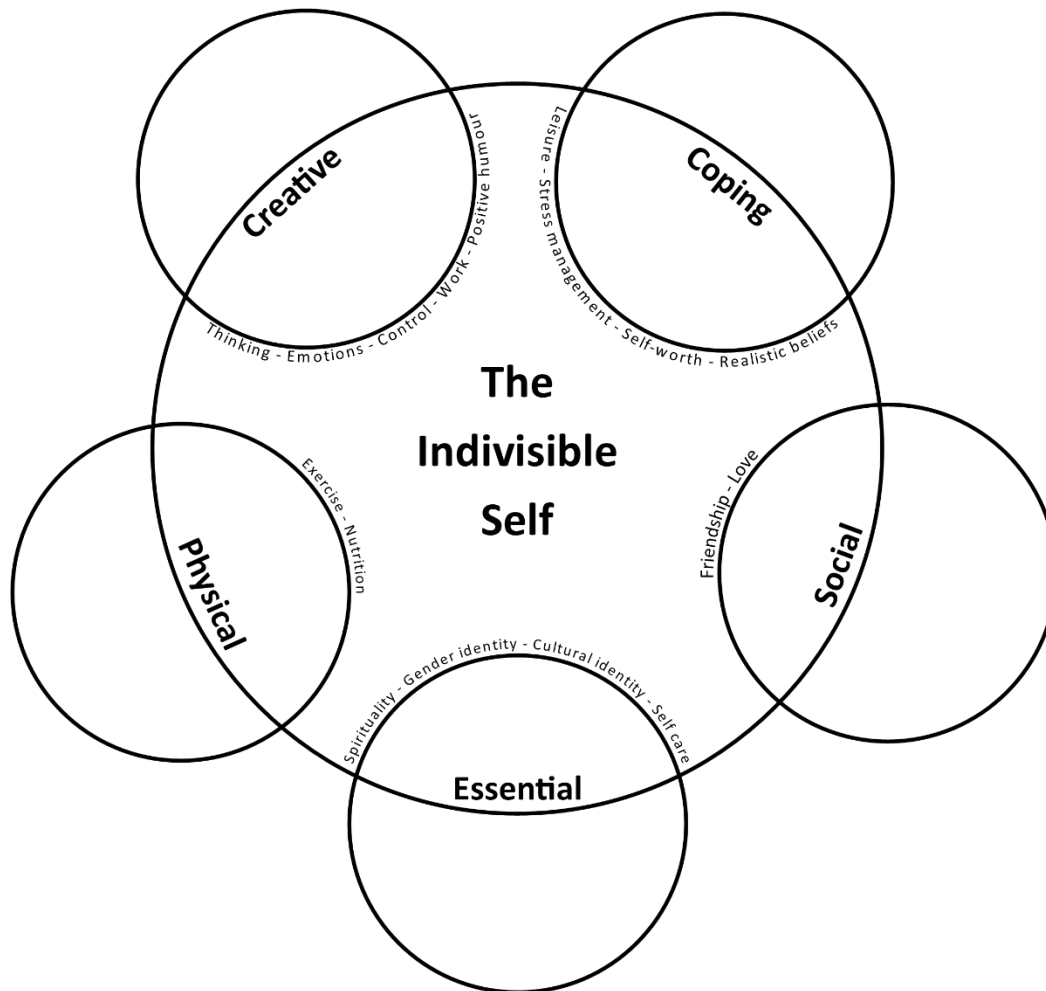


Figure 2.6: The Indivisible Self: An evidence-based model of wellness

Source: Myers & Sweeney, 2004, p. 236

Figure 2.6 illustrates how the higher-order wellness factors align with the second- and third-order wellness factors.

The five higher-order wellness factors link with the five second-order and the 17 third-order factors in the following way:

- **Creative self** refers to a combination of characteristics that individuals use to form social interactions and to interpret the world positively. This dimension enables individuals to be mentally active and to experience the need to learn and solve problems, to be aware of one's feelings (positive and negative), to control one's abilities to achieve set goals, to experience meaning and purpose in one's work and to laugh at one's mistakes.

- **Coping self** refers to a combination of activities that regulate an individual's responses to life events and provides a way to deal with negative situations or circumstances. Leisure activities enable individuals to enjoy life and deal with adversities. Coping mechanisms enable individuals to deal with stress while recognising one's self-worth and accepting one's qualities and imperfections.
- **Social self** refers to building connections through friendships and intimate relationships that include family relationships. Friendships and relationships help individuals build trust and supporting structures while love enables individuals to show affection and receive unconditional acceptance.
- **Essential self** refers to creating purpose and meaning in life. Gender identity is important for self-acceptance while cultural identity builds a sense of belonging. Self-care is an important aspect of wellness because individuals need to take responsibility for their own health and well-being.
- **Physical self** refers to engaging in activities to improve physical health, which relates not only to the absence of illness or disease but also to the improved psychological and physical well-being of individuals through exercise and good nutrition. (Myers & Sweeney, 2004)

2.10 CURRENT WORKPLACE WELL-BEING MODELS

Hope, optimism and well-being are considered psychological constructs that form part of the discipline of psychology. Chetna and Sharma (2019) define PWB as "living a good life" while doing one's best in all aspects of life, while positive psychological capital concerns the "ongoing plight" in a human being's life that is realised through high levels of hope, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience (p. 463). Therefore, it makes sense to review the literature on current PWB models to conceptualise these constructs for theory-building purposes.

2.10.1 Ryff's six dimensions of psychological well-being

Ryff's (1989b) model of PWB was developed in the quest for longevity. The PWB model consists of six dimensions to evaluate eudaimonic well-being (an aspect of PWB),

namely self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth (Figure 2.7).

According to Ryff and Singer (2008), the term “eudaimonic well-being” was first used by the authors to challenge “prevailing conceptions of subjective well-being focused on assessments of feeling good, contentment and life satisfaction” and later, to develop an integrated model of personal development (p. 13).

Ryff (1989a) argued that PWB was unequivocally concerned with “the development and self-realisation of the individual” (Ryff & Singer, 2008, p. 14). The empirical findings from the PWB model emphasised two critical points: (i) well-being is influenced by the circumstances surrounding people’s lives and, therefore, opportunities for self-realisation are not always equally dispersed; and (ii) eudaimonic well-being may well lead to good health because it has an influence on various other psychological systems.

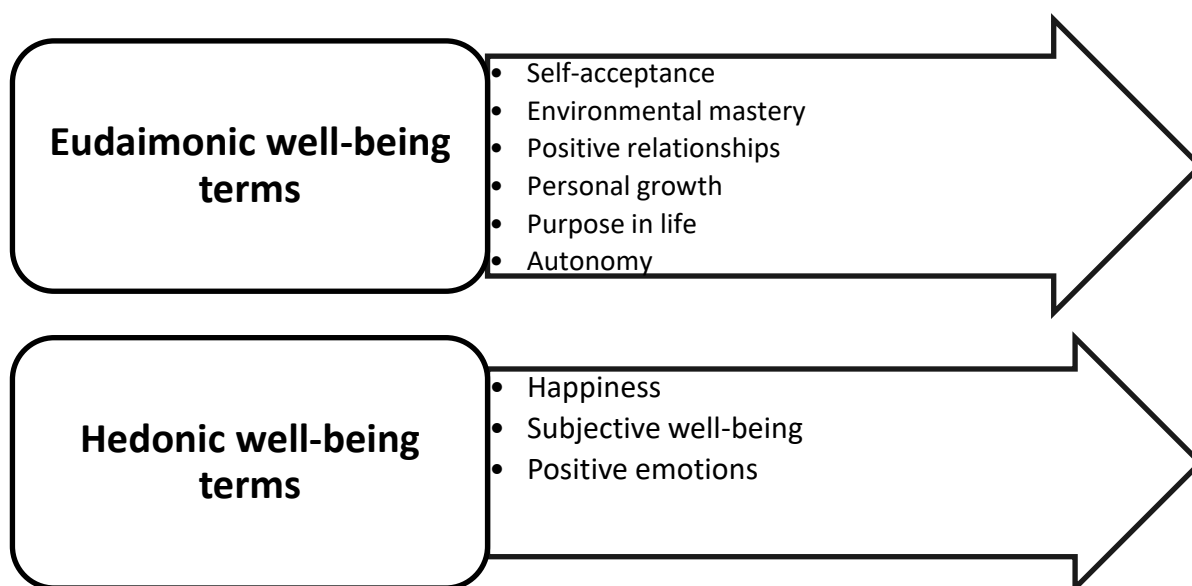


Figure 2.7: Hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of psychological well-being

Source: Adapted from Johnson et al., 2018, p. 286

Figure 2.8 further depicts the eudaimonic terms that are associated with the purposeful elements of well-being, which include the positive aspects of how human beings view and live life and the personal experiences and commands of “knowing oneself”

(Cooper & Hesketh, 2019, p. 28). The figure also includes the hedonic well-being terms that are associated with a human being's pleasure or happiness.

Ryff and Singer (2008) in "Know thyself and become what you are: A eudaimonic approach to psychological well-being" revisited literature to clarify the significance of self-realisation and human fulfilment in becoming flourishing individuals. The results are depicted in Figure 2.8 below.

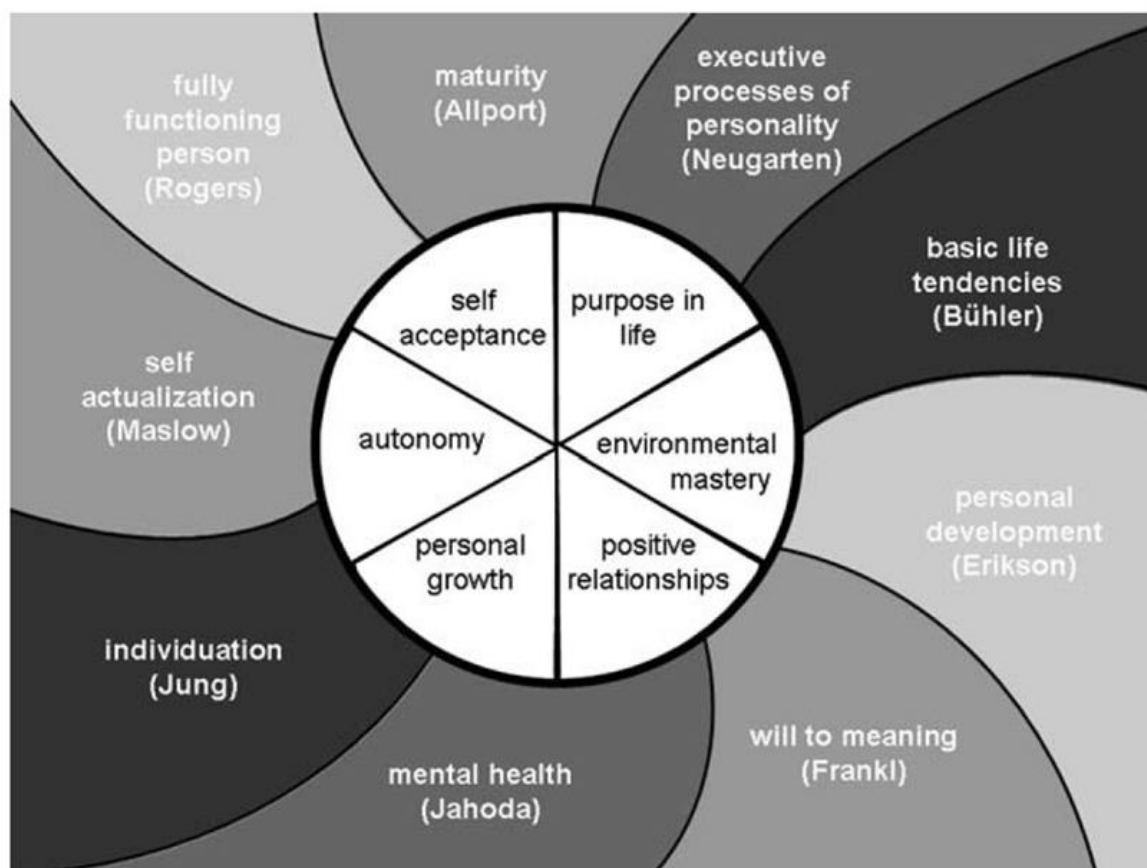


Figure 2.8: Core dimensions of psychological well-being and the theoretical foundations

Source: Ryff & Singer, 2008, p. 20

Figure 2.8 demonstrates the six core dimensions of PWB (Ryff, 1989a; Ryff & Singer, 1996, 2008):

1. **Self-acceptance** involves having positive attitudes towards oneself through recognising one's positive attributes and accepting one's imperfections.

2. **Positive relations** involve the building of trusting interpersonal relationships in which love is the key component to mental health. This includes having the ability to show empathy, to display emotional intelligence, to observe feelings and emotions and to develop cultural sensitivity and compassion for others.
3. **Autonomy** refers to being able to evaluate one's behaviour and self-worth according to personal standards without seeking approval from others. Individualisation is celebrated, and conformity and obedience to the beliefs of the masses can be resisted. Individuals experience a sense of freedom from the "norms governing everyday life" (Ryff, 1989b, p. 1071).
4. **Environmental mastery** relates to the individual's ability to create, manipulate and control the environment in which the individual operates and the ability to generate opportunities to experience psychological health and well-being.
5. **Purpose of life** allows individuals to experience positive emotions when achieving goals and to have a sense of direction that contributes to a meaningful life. Individuals realise that everything happens for a reason, and they accept past experiences as part of a purpose for their future life.
6. **Personal growth** entails realising one's full potential and being able to develop one's competencies continuously rather than being in a fixed state.

2.10.2 The PERMA model of well-being

Seligman (2011) developed a well-being theory in which well-being has five measurable elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (PERMA). None of the elements defines well-being although each element contributes to it. Thus, well-being is referred to as a construct that relies on individuals' strengths (the three underpinning properties).

According to Seligman (2011, p. 15) each of these elements must have the following three properties to be classified as an element: "It contributes to well-being. Many people pursue it for its own sake, not merely to get any of the other elements. It is defined and measured independently of the other elements (exclusivity)" (p. 15).

The PERMA constructs that contribute to well-being are discussed in the following sections.

2.10.2.1 Positive emotions

The first element in the well-being theory comprises positive emotions, which Seligman (2011) refers to as the “pleasant life” (p. 16). These are indicators of optimal well-being (Frederickson, 2002). Seligman (2003) classifies positive emotions into three categories: emotions associated with the past, with the present and with the future, of which happiness and life satisfaction are all aspects (Seligman, 2011). Seligman (2011) classifies hope and optimism, as positive emotions that prepare people for “win-win or win-lose” situations in the future. According to Butler and Kern (2016), emotions can be classified as “circumplex and consisting of valence negative and positive and activation (low and high) dimensions” (p. 2).

In the Seligman theory of happiness, positive emotions are regarded as the goal of the entire theory, which is to achieve happiness and life satisfaction. Positive emotions are discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.1.1 as forming a pillar for positive subjective experiences.

2.10.2.2 Engagement

Engagement refers to people’s involvement and satisfaction with and enthusiasm for work (Robbins et al. 2013). Linley et al. (2010) state that engagement simply means “passion for work” (p. 156). According to Robbins et al. (2013), engagement concerns people having access to resources and opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills, the perceived value and meaning they attach to their work and life, and the development of meaningful relationships with colleagues, friends and family.

Linley et al. (2010) developed a model of ‘positive engagement’ that includes three core elements, namely enjoyment, challenge and meaning, which the authors believe reflect the pathways to happiness as described by Seligman (2003). However, in his theory of well-being, Seligman (2011) dismissed the model of Linley et al. (2010) (Figure 2.9) and included each element independently as part of the well-being construct. Seligman (2011) established that in order to be considered an element of well-being, the element must meet the following criteria: (i) it contributes to well-being; (ii) it is often pursued for its own sake; and (iii) it is defined and measured independently from the other elements.

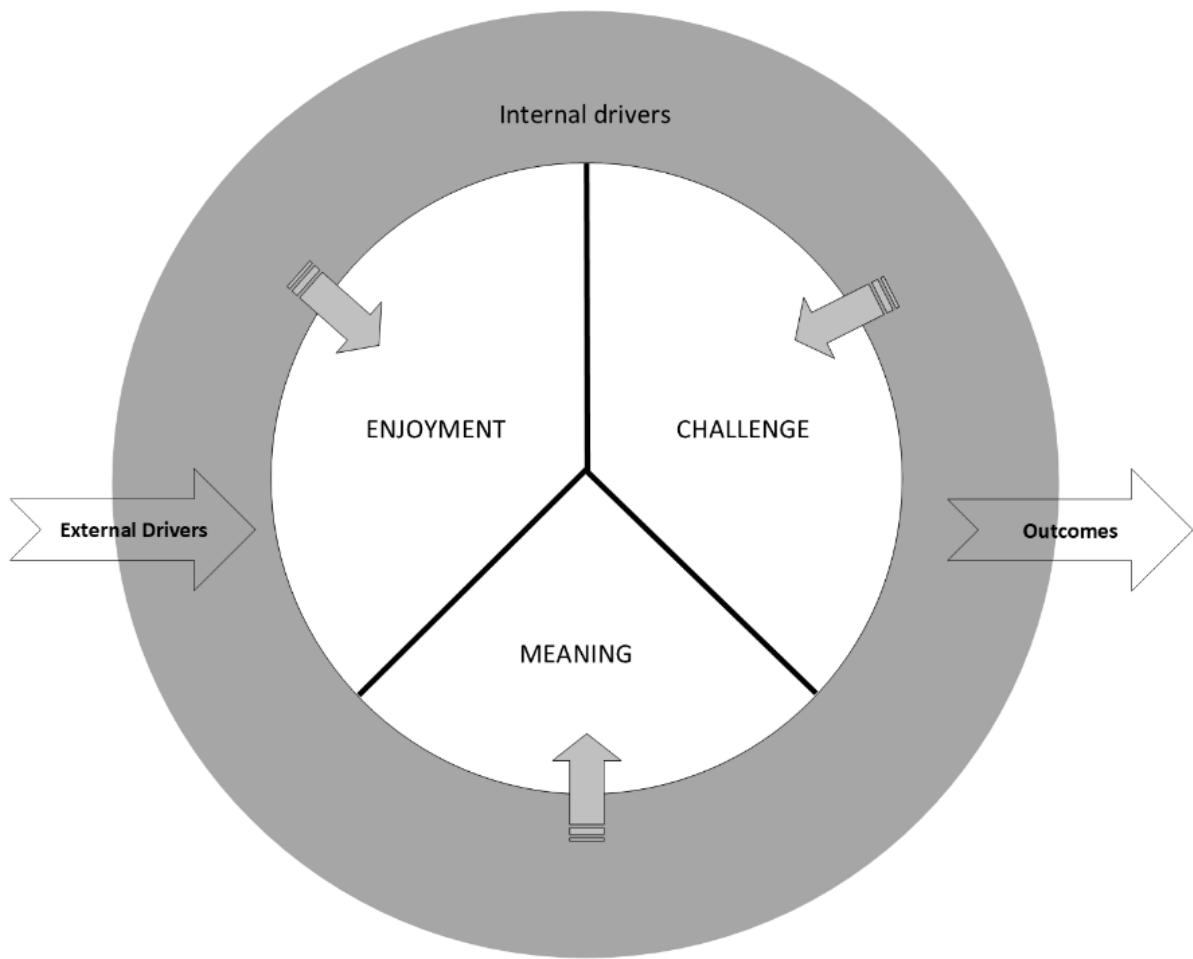


Figure 2.9: A model of positive engagement

Source: Linley et al., 2010, p. 160

Figure 2.9 demonstrates the model of positive engagement developed by Linley et al. in 2010. The model includes the enjoyment element, which reflects the extent to which individuals enjoy their work and experience positive emotions such as enthusiasm, passion and excitement. The challenge element relates to the extent to which individuals experience their work as rewarding because it drives them to work harder and develop their capabilities. The meaning element relates to the sense of purpose that individuals gain from completing their duties and tasks and believing that they contribute to the larger purpose of their organisation.

2.10.2.3 *Meaning*

The third element in the well-being theory is meaning, which Seligman (2011, p. 17) refers to as “belonging to and serving something” that the individuals believe is larger than themselves. The author argues that meaning is, however, not a subjective state. For example, some martyrs, even Mother Theresa, may have judged their lives as meaningless during times of despair and decades later, one reads about their heroism and admires their meaningful lives.

2.10.2.4 *Relationships*

Positive relationships are about other people (Seligman, 2013). A positive relationship relates to the interaction between people and is often cited as the best antidote to life’s miseries (Seligman, 2011). Furthermore, Seligman (2011) argues that performing an act of kindness for someone can lead to a brief increase in well-being.

2.10.2.5 *Accomplishment*

According to Seligman (2011), being involved in ‘something’ improves the individual’s levels of positive emotions and leads to more meaning, to more accomplishment and to better relationships, which lead to a flourishing life.

2.10.3 Flourishing

Hone et al. (2014), Seligman (2011), and Weziak-Bialowolska et al. (2019) define flourishing as a state of heightened psychological activity that occurs through doing well in multiple aspects of life. Huppert and So (2013) agree with this definition by stating that flourishing refers to encounters of good life experiences. Furthermore, flourishing is synonymous with high levels of PWB and embodies psychological health (Huppert & So, 2013; Keyes, 1998; Rothmann, 2013; Ryff, 1989a).

Huppert and So (2013) defined and measured flourishing in 23 European countries and subsequently developed a more elaborate definition of flourishing by identifying three core and six additional features to be included in the definition. The authors

presented the hedonic and eudaimonic aspects of well-being (Figure 2.7) to more than 2 000 adults in each European country to determine how the nations were doing in terms of flourishing. The results showed that 33% of Danish people flourished, followed by 18% of people from the United Kingdom. The Russian Federation demonstrated the lowest percentage, with only 6% of their citizens flourishing (Huppert & So, 2013; Keyes, 1998; Ryff, 1989a).

Table 2.1 lists the core and additional features established by Huppert and So (2013) to determine flourishing European nations.

Table 2.1: Definition of flourishing

CORE FEATURES	ADDITIONAL FEATURES
Positive emotions	Self-esteem
Engagement, interest	Optimism
Meaning, purpose	Resilience
	Vitality
	Self-determination
	Positive relationships

Source: Adapted from Huppert & So (2013) as cited in Seligman (2011, p. 26)

Table 2.2 lists the European Social Survey items that were evaluated as corresponding most closely to each of the ten features of flourishing identified in Table 2.1

Table 2.2: Features of flourishing and indicator items from the European Social Survey

POSITIVE FEATURES	ESS ITEM USED AS INDICATOR
Competence	Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do
Emotional stability	(In the past week), I felt calm and peaceful
Engagement	I love learning new things
Meaning	I generally feel that what I do in my life is valuable and worthwhile
Optimism	I am always optimistic about my future
Positive emotion	Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are?
Positive relationships	There are people in my life who really care about me
Resilience	When things go wrong in my life, it generally takes me a long time to get back to normal (reverse score)
Self-esteem	In general, I feel very positive about myself
Vitality	(In the past week), I had a lot of energy

ESS: European Social Survey

Source: Huppert & So, 2013, p. 843

The above section regarding flourishing demonstrates the importance of the PERMA well-being theory, which is to measure and build flourishing individuals.

2.10.4 The JD-R Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model suggests that working conditions can be divided into job demands and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001) that have a significant impact on employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The JD-R Model further maintains that increased job demands can lead to emotional exhaustion,

and reduced job resources can cause disengagement. According to Demerouti et al. (2001), emotional exhaustion closely resembles traditional stress reactions such as “fatigue, job-related depression, psychosomatic complaints and anxiety” (p. 499). Both exhaustion and disengagement severely affect employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001).

According to Hakanen et al. (2008), job resources refer to “the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of a job” (p. 255) that are valued and needed by employees to minimise work demands, to achieve work goals and to enhance personal development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Job demands refer to the physical, social and organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are, therefore, associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs (e.g. exhaustion, burnout, depression) (Hakanen et al, 2008; Alzyoud et al., 2015). These include aspects such as workload, time constraints of the job, role conflict and intellectual requirements (Knani & Fournier, 2013).

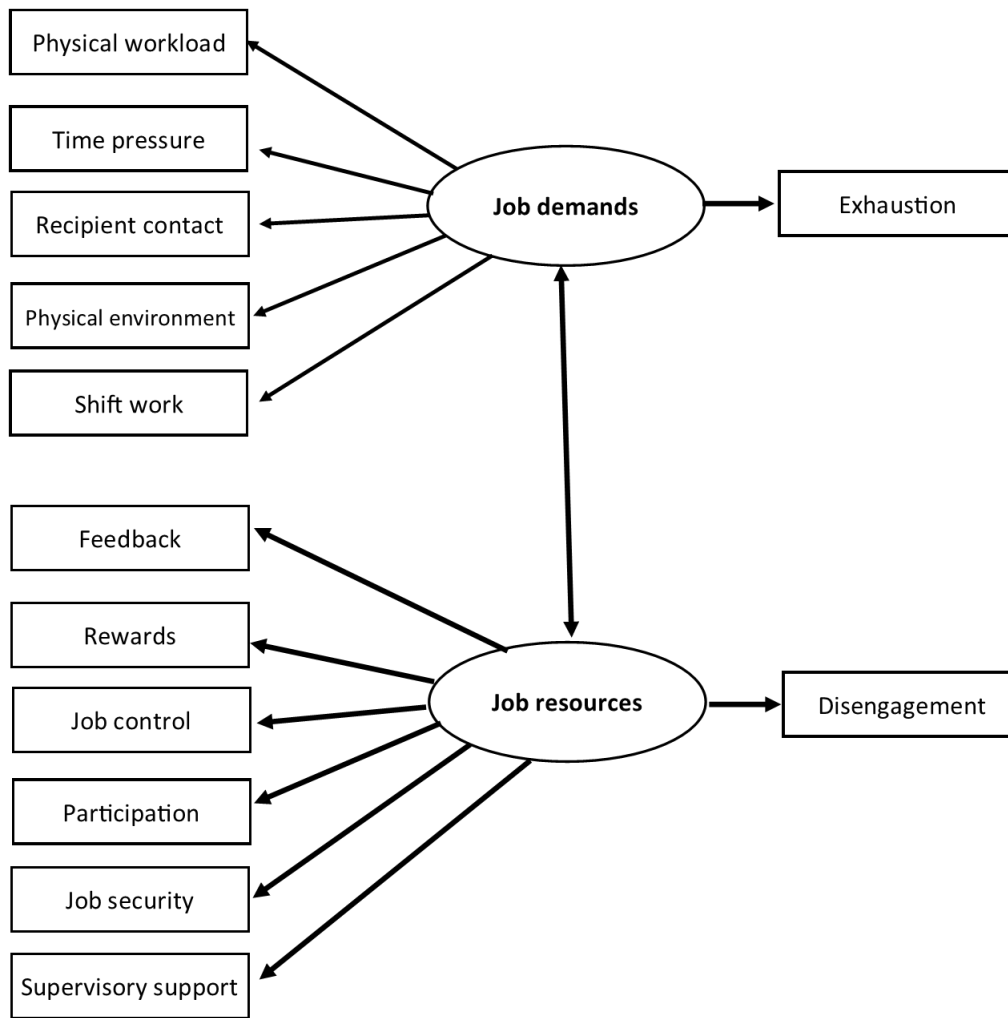


Figure 2.10: The JD-R model

Source: Demerouti et al. (2001, p. 502)

Figure 2.10 illustrates the JD-R Model with job resources that include feedback, rewards, job control, participation, job security and supervisory support, which can be beneficial to employee well-being (Searle & Tuckey, 2017) when applied with caution but may lead to exhaustion if not controlled. The JD-R Model also shows the job demands that include physical workload, time pressure, recipient contact, the physical environment and shift work, which can be harmful to employee well-being (Searle & Tuckey, 2017) because they can lead to disagreement.

The JD-R Model also suggests that job resources are fundamental elements of the motivational process to facilitate work engagement. A significant aspect of the JD-R

Model is that it incorporates a variety of motivating work resources that previous models overlooked.

2.10.5 Personal Resource Allocation framework

Grawitch et al. (2010) proposed a self-regulation perspective referred to as the Personal Resource Allocation (PRA) framework. According to Cooper and Leiter (2017), the PRA framework proposes that individuals have restricted access to the personal resources such as time, energy and finances that they can use to respond to the various demands they encounter in their work, personal life and daily activities. Thus, according to the PRA Model, individuals can decide how they wish to allocate personal resources in response to their perceived or required demands.

How, when or where individuals allocate their personal resources subsequently influences their future resources, subjective well-being and job performance. In Section 3.6 (hope) and Section 3.7 (optimism), the importance of these two personal resources as demonstrated in the literature is investigated.

Furthermore, external resources, person-environment fit and individual differences also influence allocation of personal resources. An important aspect of the PRA Model is that ineffective resource allocation can lead to 'resource depletion' (Barber et al., 2012), which may cause individuals to accomplish fewer goals.

Individual differences also play a significant role in allocating personal resources. Cooper and Leiter (2017) define individual differences as "relatively stable factors that vary among people" (p. 255). These differences relate to intra-individual factors such as personality traits, race, sex, interests/aptitude, competencies and health or to non-work-life factors that may include marital status, parental status and debt.

2.10.6 Dynamic Model of workplace well-being

Cooper and Leiter (2017) propose that the JD-R Model and the PRA framework should be integrated to form the Dynamic Model of Workplace Well-being (Figure 2.11).

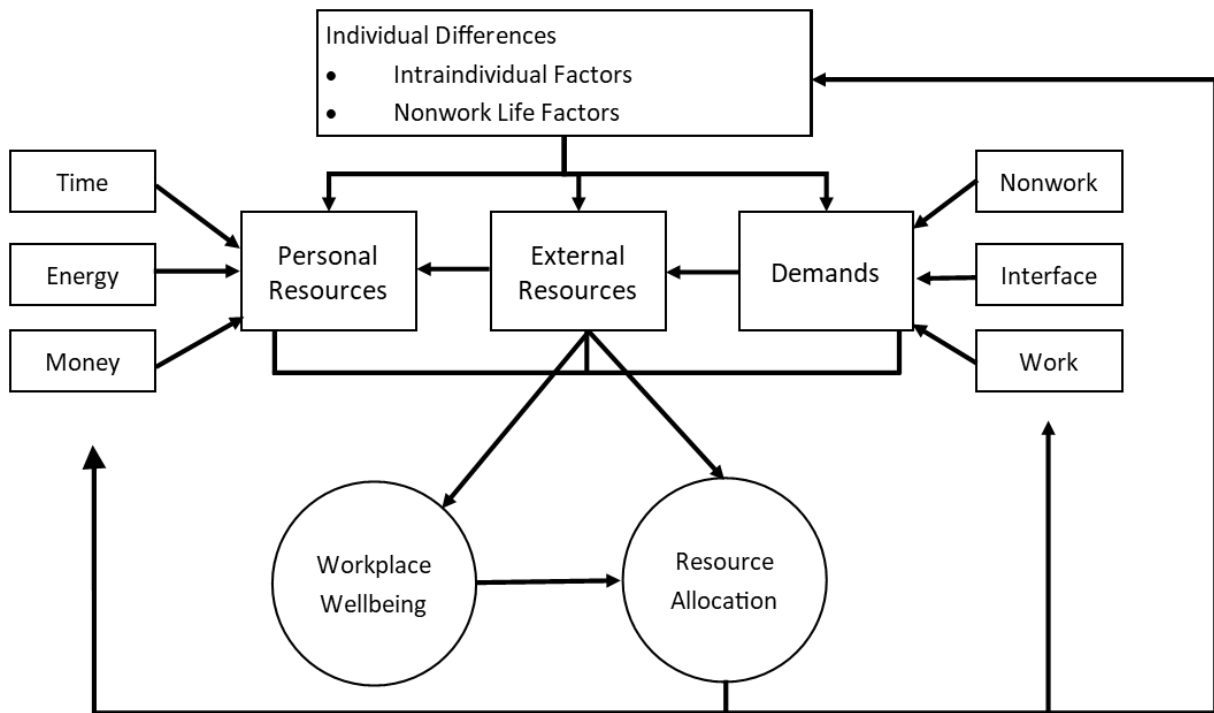


Figure 2.11: Dynamic Model of workplace well-being

Source: Cooper & Leiter, 2017, p. 256

Figure 2.11 illustrates that time, money and energy strengthen and support personal resources such as health and longevity (Seligman, 2007), while the non-work interface and work areas support and strengthen the sources of the demands. Even though people vary in the strengths of their personal resources due to individual differences. Most people try to achieve optimal outcomes and in the process, they shape their social world and vice versa. (Barber et al., 2012; Cooper & Leiter, 2017)

Figure 2.11 further illustrates that personal resources and demands have both subjective and rational qualities that are influenced by individual differences such as intra-individual factors and non-work-life factors. In between the personal resources and demands is the domain referred to as the external resource, which exists in both the JD-R Model and the PRA framework.

According to Cooper and Leiter (2017), the JD-R Model of workplace well-being originally advocated the belief that job demands were the primary negative contributors of burnout while resources were the primary positive contributors to work engagement.

Job resources are known to influence employee well-being intrinsically and extrinsically (Alzyoud et al., 2015).

Various research studies, such as these authors, Bell and Njoli (2016), Hakanen et al. (2008), and Kilroy et al. (2016) on the JD-R Model have, however, demonstrated that both job demands and job resources are typically defined based on employee perceptions (Cooper & Leiter, 2017).

2.10.7 Healthy workplace model

Day and Nielsen (2017) describe a 'psychological healthy workplace' as a place where employees are presented with the necessary organisational resources to enhance their well-being in a safe and healthy environment. Negative behaviours and activities that can jeopardise employees' health and activities are discouraged or where possible, are eliminated. The reflective framework highlights a crucial factor in the model. A co-dependency exists between the workplace and the employees. For the organisation to support and create healthy employees and workplaces, the organisation depends on employees to support the organisation's initiatives, and employees depend on the organisation to support and create well-being.

Day and Nielsen (2017) developed a reflective framework of the numerous healthy workplace models by incorporating previous models (Day & Randell, 2014; Grawitch et al., 2006; Kelloway & Day, 2005; Salanova et al., 2012). Healthy workplaces present employees with organisational resources and practices to deliver meaningful work in physically and psychosocially healthy and safe environments (Day & Nielsen, 2017).

Day and Nielsen's (2017) reflective framework recognises the importance of the following key aspects of healthy workplaces:

- **Employee involvement (engagement) and development** are key aspects of valuing employees' inputs and increasing employees' commitment to organisational success. Robbins et al. (2016) argue that employee engagement is strongly related to increased productivity, job satisfaction and employee well-being.
- **Interpersonal relationships with co-workers** are important to achieve a sense of belonging. These relationships are based on compassion, loyalty,

honesty, respect and forgiveness. Els and De la Rey (2012) argue that interpersonal relationships emphasise significant aspects of working life such as “what makes working life meaningful, optimal and worth living for” (p. 48).

- **Interpersonal relationships between leaders and employees** are important to enhance the learning opportunities that are needed to achieve meaningful work and to receive recognition and feedback (Noe et al., 2017).
- **Leadership behaviour** is vital in inspiring employees to achieve organisational goals. Leaders play a significant role in developing employees’ subjective well-being (Grobler et al., 2011).
- **Interpersonal relationships with clients** are important to build healthy and trusting relationships. Courtesy, integrity, professionalism and a good attitude (optimistic, enthusiastic, confident) are characteristics of good interpersonal relationships with clients that can increase workplace well-being.
- **Corporate social responsibility** is commonly used to describe the practice of good corporate citizenship, and most businesspeople prefer the use of corporate social investment to highlight the voluntary and investment aspects. These investments are beneficial to workplace well-being in that they often have a social-change approach, focus on charitable causes and offer grant incentive schemes to employees (Mersham & Skinner, 2016).
- **Culture of support, respect and fairness** (at organisational and individual level) is vital to create an environment in which people are able to reflect on their well-being, discuss work-related challenges and engage in participatory processes to improve social support and well-being (Day & Nielsen, 2017).
- **Workplace-balance** is a key aspect of achieving occupational wellness. Fessell and Cherniss (2020) maintain that organisational and individual interventions that address burnout, decrease unjustified workload, develop flexible work schedules, and incorporate mindfulness stress-reduction activities should be implemented to achieve a work-life balance.
- **Safety of the work environment** is important to ensure a workplace that is free of hazards and disease. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the South African government developed guidelines for employers based on contemporary infection prevention and industrial hygienic practices to safeguard employees against infection of the COVID-19 disease (The Department of Employment and Labour, 2020). Employers have an obligation

to protect their employees against unhealthy workplace environments (Leppink, 2015; Republic of South Africa, 1998).

- **Work content and characteristics:** Day and Nielsen (2017) highlight the importance of work as a contributor to individuals' good health. The authors maintain that work enables individuals to gain new skills that ultimately lead to enhanced levels of self-esteem and social relationships. Social support and sense of community are contributors to mental health and well-being (Day & Nielsen, 2017).

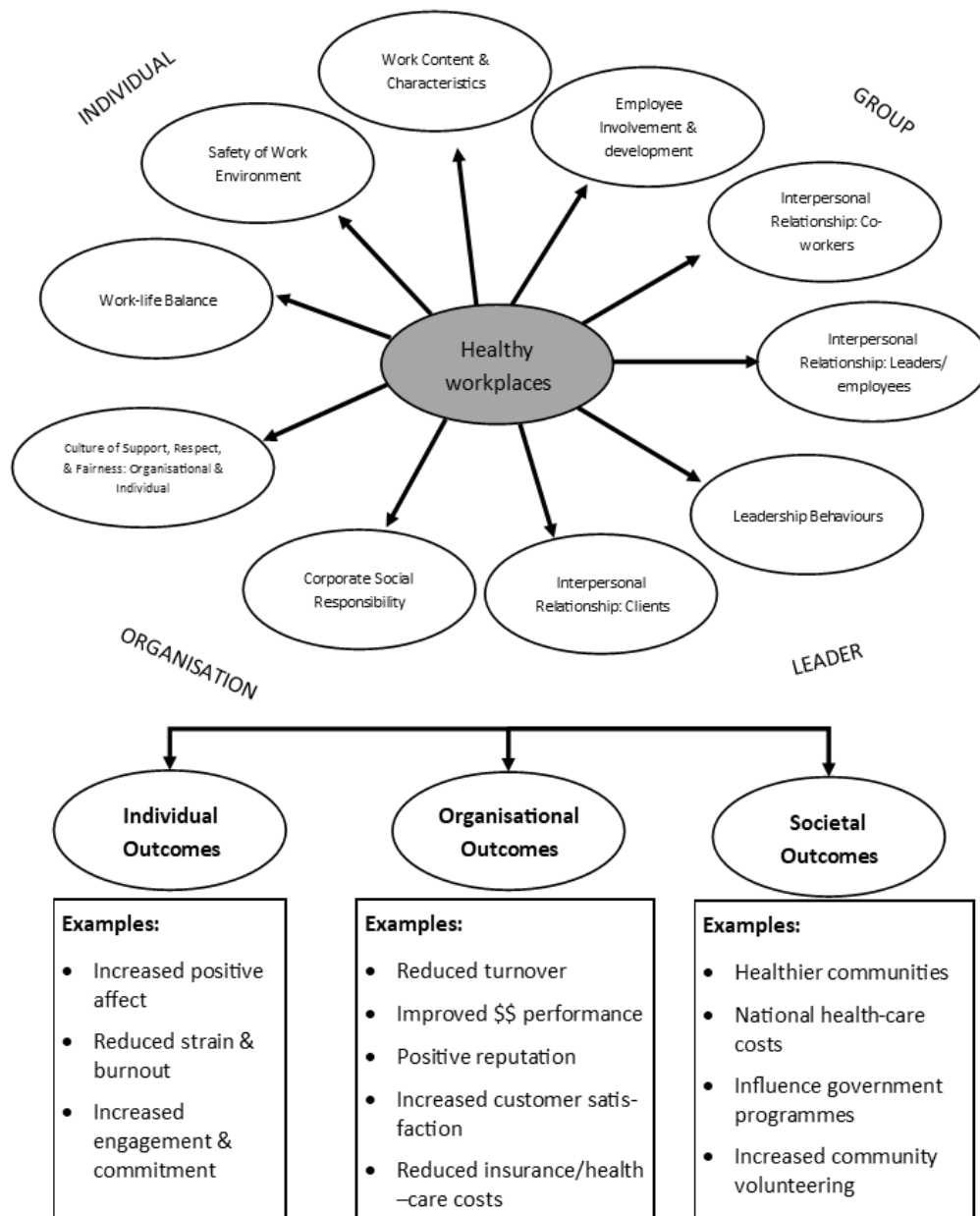


Figure 2.12: Reflective framework of healthy workplace models

Source: Day & Nielsen, 2017, p. 301

2.11 IMPORTANCE OF WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

2.11.1 Workplace stressors

The following factors are identified as workplace stressors that may have a significant impact on the attitudes and emotions of employees (Werner et al., 2016).

2.11.1.1 *Organisational factors*

Restructuring, downsizing or acquisitions often leave employees feeling anxious about their jobs. Also, radical transformation strategies can cause senior minority groups to fear job losses, not only because they are older but also because they are no longer up to date with the latest technology.

2.11.1.2 *Job design factors*

Poor working conditions often affect employees' stress levels as people try to cope with environmental hazards and poor health and safety standards in their workplace. Technological advancement such as artificial intelligence and machine learning is also causing people to fear job losses.

2.11.1.3 *Interactional factors*

Many employees find it challenging to deal with the interpersonal factors required to maintain lasting workplace relationships. These factors include the lack of compassion shown by colleagues and management, the judgemental attitude of management and colleagues, toxic leaders, team pressures and corporate culture and diversity matters.

2.11.1.4 *Career and promotional factors*

Poor career-planning strategies may frustrate and cause employees to lose hope of achieving a promotion and to become pessimistic about their future in the organisation. Werner et al. (2016) state that career plateauing is a serious cause of workplace stress since unfulfilled career expectations may cause employees to feel demotivated.

2.11.1.5 *Role-related factors*

Sometimes, employees feel conflicted between their value systems and their role expectations, making it difficult to relate to the organisation (e.g. when employees are expected to work on their religious holidays or when the organisation does not respect or value an employee's belief system). Work stress may also be caused by role ambiguity such as confusion regarding the employee's expectations of the job, level of authority and social expectations. This is a cause of concern for foreigners or people from different cultures who are not aware of the practices of the particular organisation.

2.11.1.6 *Work underload and overload problems*

Work stress can occur through being either under stimulated or overstimulated in the job. Organisations need to provide employees with meaningful goals to make their jobs matter to them. Information technology can cause home intrusion and create work overload (Guest, 2017).

2.11.1.7 *Stressful occupations*

Certain jobs, particularly in management and supervision, (i.e., human resources, finance, legal), require complex conflict negotiations or require unpopular decisions to be made, leaving employees feeling like outcasts.

2.12 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the construct of positive psychology as encompassing life satisfaction, happiness, resilience, being in control and coping with life. Flourishing was described as a means to measure well-being (Seligman, 2011) although it goes beyond psychological well-being to where all aspects in an individual's life is considered well.

Positive emotions were discussed as a key aspect to enhance individual's overall well-being or happiness and as a construct which leads to expanded and more adaptive responses according to Frederickson (2002). It is clear from the above discussion that

in general, well-being is about experiencing positive emotions most of the time. Positive emotions are also closely associated with growth and human fulfilment, which have significant consequences for human health (Ryff & Singer, 2008).

Overall, well-being consists of social well-being, physical well-being and PWB (Guest, 2017), which lead to flourishing individuals. Social well-being relates to how people are nurtured and assisted through their relationships while physical well-being relates to people's lifestyle behaviours. Johnson et al. (2018) opine that psychological well-being is associated with life and career successes, better health, and better relationships with others.

Cooper and Hesketh (2019) state that to experience PWB, human beings need to experience purpose and meaning in their lives in addition to positive emotions. Well-being can be enhanced through habitual commitment and intentional activity and behaviours such as gratitude, kindness, imagining one's BPS and reframing situations.

Several interventions and initiatives to enhance well-being were discussed. Seligman (1998) suggested enhancing well-being through habitual commitment while Lyubomirsky and Sheldon (2005) proposed intentional activity and behaviour. Davis et al. (2016), and Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) suggested practising certain virtues such as gratitude. Gratitude enables individuals to show emotional responses when recalling meaningful memories, while savouring positive experiences is an important aspect to consider when interpreting positive well-being. Moreover, Peters et al. (2010) and Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) proved that 'best possible self' enhances individual well-being. Acceptance was proposed as an important construct for dealing with adversity (Bond & Bunce, 2003) and to enhance well-being. The section concluded with forces that increase and decrease well-being.

Day and Nielsen (2017) used the term 'psychological healthy workplace' to refer to workplaces that motivates employees to connect and use organisational resources to enhance employees' well-being. Healthy workplaces provide a supportive network where employees can produce meaningful work and thrive.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of good quality health care systems, legislation to combat air and environmental pollution, and of hygiene and adequate living conditions (Arndt et al., 2020; Bilal et al., 2020; Burstrom & Tao, 2020; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020b; Newham & Du Plessis, 2020;

Nicola et al., 2020) to creating healthy environments. Healthy environments build prosperous nations and societies.

Various wellness models have been developed over the years to encourage people to become more aware of their lifestyle choices and improve their well-being. The six dimensions of the wellness model developed by Hettler (1984) recognised social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational and physical wellness as important elements to wellness, while the Wheel of Wellness Model of Sweeney and Witmer (1991) identified spirituality and self-direction as core elements of wellness. The Indivisible Self model was explained in terms of the various relationship that exist between the 17 higher-order wellness factors and the five second-order factors: (i) physical self, (ii) creative self, (iii) coping self, (iv) social self, and (v) essential self-factors.

Several current workplace models were discussed such as Ryff's Six Dimensions of Psychological Well-being, the PERMA model of well-being, the JD-R model, Personal Resource Allocation (PRA) framework, the Dynamic Model of Workplace Well-being, and the Healthy Workplace model. Ryff's (1989a) Six Dimensions model was developed in the search for longevity and proposed self-acceptance with positive relations, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth as key elements. Seligman's (2011) PERMA model echoed many of Ryff's (1989a) sentiments by identifying positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishments. The JD-R model suggests dividing jobs into job demands and job resources to enhance employee well-being. Grawitch et al. (2010) proposed a self-regulation perspective known as the Personal Resource Allocation (PRA) model to enhance well-being while Day and Nielsen's (2017) reflective framework highlighted the importance of providing organisational resources to assist employees to deliver meaningful work in a healthy and safe environment.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW – POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter follows on from the literature review presented in Chapter 2, which aimed to provide an in-depth review of the meaning of well-being and the various elements that foster flourishing. The literature review on positive psychology to investigate the various links between the well-being constructs and their contribution to the enhancement of well-being is provided in Chapter 3. The contribution of positive subjective experiences, positive traits and positive institutions to enhance well-being was reviewed for this purpose. In addition, the researcher conducted an in-depth review of two psychological capital constructs, hope and optimism, to investigate their contribution to well-being.

Figure 3.1 is a graphical representation of the layout of Chapter 3 and the topics that are under discussion in the chapter.

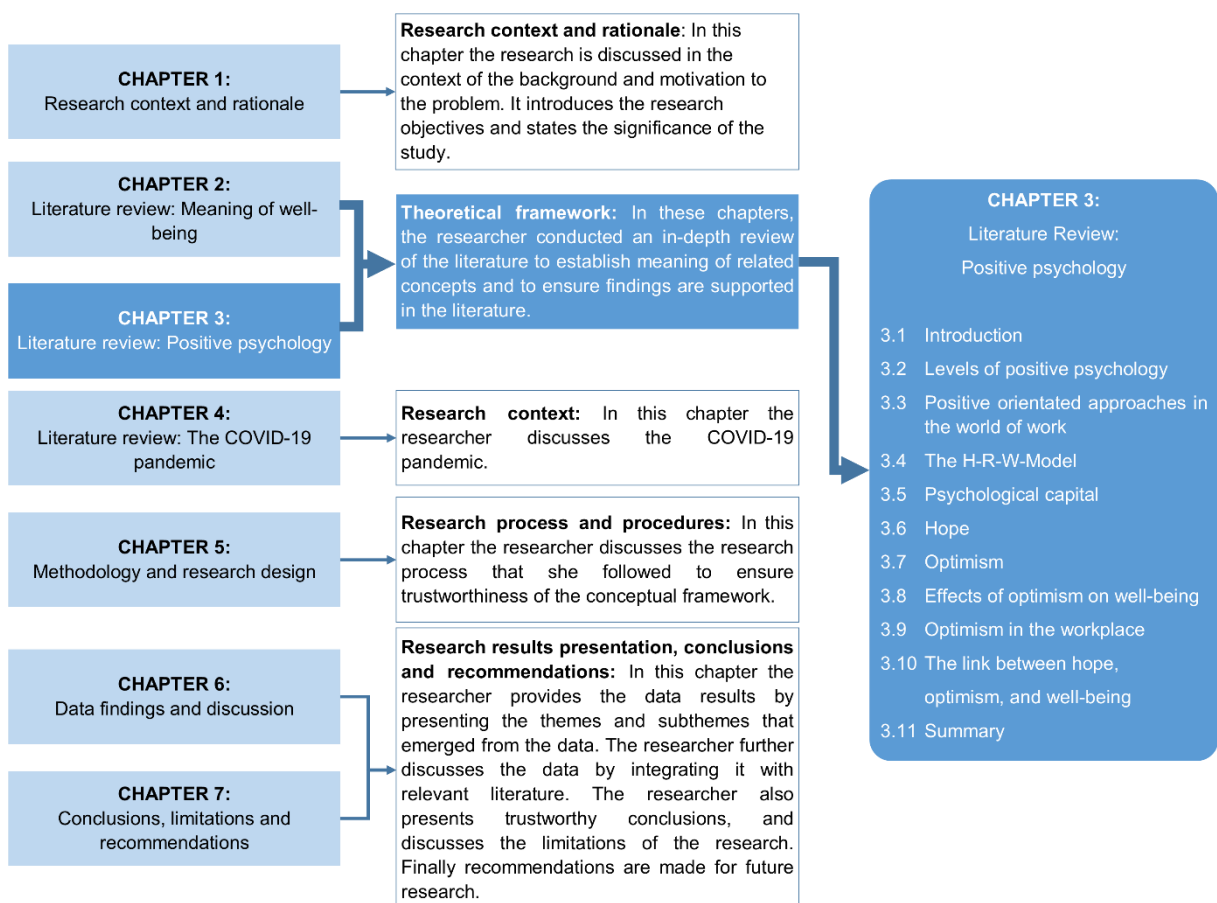


Figure 3.1: Structure of Chapter 3

Source: Author's own compilation

3.2 LEVELS OF POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

When one of the giants of positive psychology, Christopher Peterson, was asked to provide a concise definition of 'positive psychology', he answered simply, "Other people matter. Period" (Seligman, 2013, para. 1). When compiling a suitable definition for positive psychology, the best that the researcher devised is that positive psychology is a scientific methodology used to explore and promote the factors that allow individuals, organisations and communities to flourish. Seligman (2011, p. 11) points out in his book, *Flourish*, that positive psychology is about "what we choose for its own sake". This means that although people sometimes make decisions based on how the choice will make them feel, this is not always the case. People may choose to do good simply because it is their duty to do so or because it gives meaning to their lives. Although health and well-being has been conceptualised as the avoidance of stress or disease (Burton, 2010), positive psychology provides a new contextualisation for health as having a good life (Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argue that positive psychology manifests on three levels: valued experiences; positive individual traits and public virtues; and the institutes that move individuals towards better citizenship. Furthermore, positive psychology consists of three elements that we choose for their own sake, namely positive emotion, engagement and meaning (Seligman, 2003). Seligman (2011) expanded on this argument by adding two additional elements, positive relationships and accomplishment.

Some researchers have conceptualised positive psychological resources on a scale that includes both state-like and trait-like characteristics (Luthans et al., 2006), while others strongly believe that the core positive psychological constructs are only state-like because they can be changed and developed (Lopez et al., 2013; Lopez & Snyder, 2009; Seligman, 1998).

The psychological resource theory proposes that constructs such as hope, self-efficacy (confidence), resilience and optimism can influence an individual's actions and behaviours (Linley et al., 2010). These core psychological resources amalgamate to form capital resources known as PsyCap, which is reported to have positive effects on an individual's well-being since it causes positive spiralling, leading to human flourishing (Frederickson & Joiner, 2002) and thus influencing constructive attitudes towards people's working lives (Harty et al., 2016). As discussed in Chapter 2,

flourishing individuals are more likely to be happy employees (Aamodt, 2010) and, therefore, are more likely to experience higher levels of life satisfaction and as a result, experience higher levels of job satisfaction (Aydintan & Koc, 2016) and vice versa.

Luthans et al. (2015) define positivity as follows:

[A]n integrated system of antecedents, processes, practices and outcomes that can be readily identified and agreed upon by diverse observers and stakeholders as uniquely surpassing standards of adequate functioning and adding sustainable value to both the individual and the context (p. 21).

Although the rapidly growing body of knowledge on positive psychology has many indirect implications on the workplace, more direct evidence can be seen in what is referred to as POB (Luthans et al., 2007). Positive organisational behaviour is a “multidisciplinary behavioural science consisting of disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, philosophy, economics, and engineering” (Bagraim et al., 2016, p. 7).

Positive psychology “revisits the ‘average person’ with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216). Donaldson and Ko (2010) go further and state it is about “the science of positive subjective experiences, positive individual traits, and positive institutions” (p. 178). Martin Seligman (2007), a leader in the field of positive psychology, provides a more expansive definition of positive psychology by stating that it is the study of “positive emotions, engagement, and meaning, the three aspects that makes [*sic*] sense out of the scientific notion of *happiness*” (p. 266). Thus, according to Seligman (2007), positive psychology attempts to appraise, order and promote these important aspects of life that lead to well-being and virtues (Davis et al., 2016).

To appreciate POB, the three important pillars and elements of positive psychology must be considered.

Positive psychology consists of three pillars (levels) (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000):

- **The first pillar** relates to positive subjective experiences and positive emotions. According to Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), these

experiences include well-being, contentment and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present).

- **The second pillar** relates to positive traits that include talents, creativity, wisdom, values, character strengths, meaning, purpose, growth and courage (Peterson, 2006). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) state that the following positive traits are significant for the workplace: interpersonal skills, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, future mindedness, high talent and wisdom. Lopez and Snyder (2009) confirm this by stating that positive traits enable positive experiences, which significantly influence workplaces.
- **The third pillar relates to positive institutions** that move individuals to better citizenship. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) state that positive institutions such as positive families, schools, businesses, communities and societies should build responsibility, work ethic, nurturance, altruism, civility, tolerance and moderation (Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015) in people. Van Rensburg & Rothmann (2020) opine that positive organisational practices facilitates positive individual behaviour which in turn contributes to organisational success and well-being. Moreover, positive institutions are beneficial to individuals, institutions, communities and societies (van Rensburg & Rothmann, 2020).

In this study, the researcher focused her attention on the first pillar of positive psychology, with a particular interest in the constructs of well-being, hope and optimism while understanding how Pillar 1 maintains the factors in pillars 2 and 3 (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) to achieve positive thinking and POB.

Figure 3.2 demonstrates the preliminary theoretical framework as informed by the preliminary literature review.

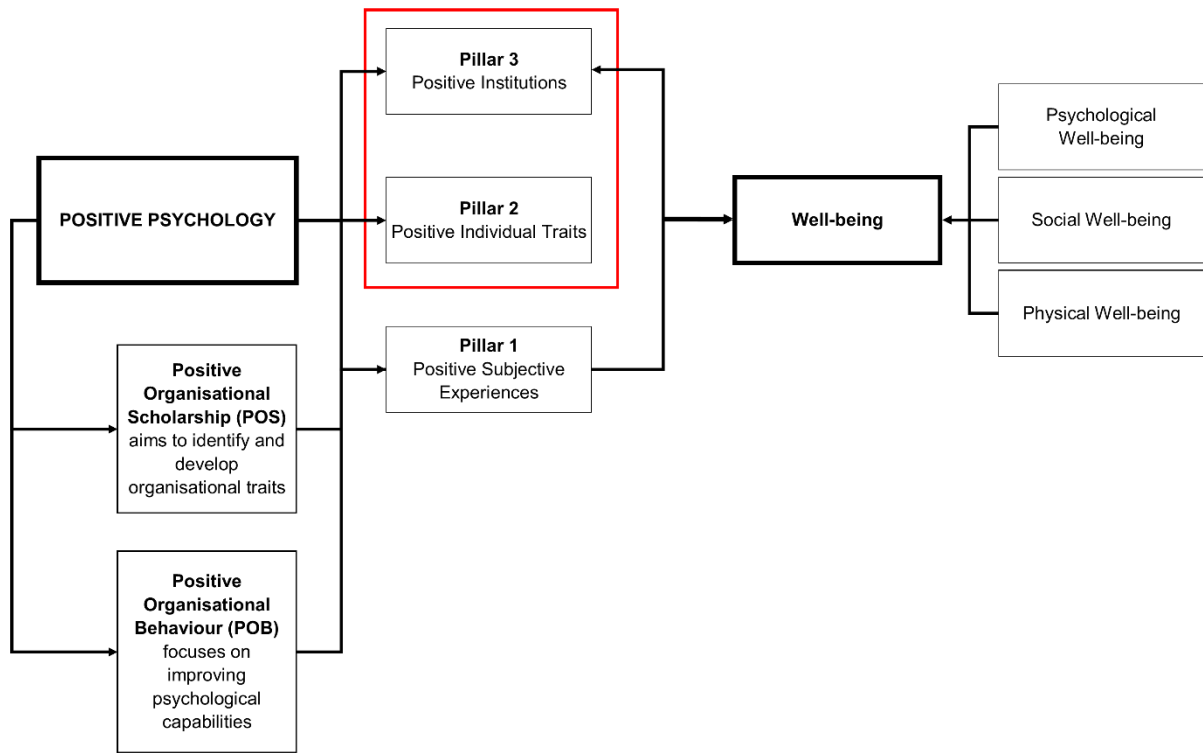


Figure 3.2: Preliminary theoretical framework

Source: Author's own compilation

3.3 POSITIVELY ORIENTATED APPROACHES IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Three distinct approaches can be used to create flourishing organisations with positive organisational cultures that emphasise employees' strengths and positive behaviours, namely POB and positive organisational scholarship (POS) (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019; Lopez & Snyder, 2009), which serves as a foundation for PsyCap and applied positive psychology.

Luthans et al. (2007) point out that although POB tends to focus more on the micro-level issues related to employee development and performance and POS endeavours to focus on macro organisational issues, both approaches have certain recognisable attributes. Cooper and Hesketh (2019) define POB as "the study and application of positively orientated human resource strengths and psychological capacities that can be measured for performance improvement in today's workplace" (p. 19) while POS is defined as a "movement in organisational science that focuses on the dynamics leading to exceptional individual and organisational performance such as developing human strengths, producing resilience and restoration, and fostering

vitality" (p. 19). Applied positive psychology is concerned with the application of positive psychology in the organisational context.

Positive organisational scholarship is about identifying and developing positive organisational characteristics such as thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, vitality and restoration (Hutson & Perry, 2006; Linley et al., 2010) that lead to exceptional individual and organisational performance. However, POB aims to improve employee and the organisational competitive advantage by focusing on "state-like strengths and psychological capabilities that are positive, measurable, developable and performance-related" (Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p. 41). These psychological capabilities include self-efficacy, resilience, hope and optimism (Grobler & Joubert, 2018; Luthans et al., 2007).

Bagraim et al. (2016) argue that POS is the study of POB, which includes positive subjective experiences such as happiness, meaningfulness, joy, optimism, hope, resilience and self-efficacy that involves four of the PsyCap constructs (Luthans et al., 2007). Positive organisational scholarship enables employees to become aware of their positive subjective experiences, making them appreciate their work more and show gratitude.

Luthans (2002) proposes that POB constructs (i) reflect the capacity for positive outcomes; and (ii) are measurable, state-like and flexible. Based on these criteria, Luthans (2002) proposed four constructs: hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism, known as the HERO constructs (Section 3.5).

Regardless of whether POS and POB are seen as two distinct approaches or as being part of each other, the three components of positive psychology, namely positive subjective experiences, positive traits and positive institutions are undeniably important elements of POS and POB.

3.3.1 Pillar 1: Positive subjective experiences

3.3.1.1 Positive emotions

Frederickson (2013) defines positive emotions as "brief, multisystem responses to some changes in the way people interpret, or appraise, their current circumstances" (p. 3). Although Frederickson et al. (2008) state that positive emotions are less

powerful and destructive than negative emotions, Frederickson et al. (2008) argue that positive emotions significantly contribute to friendship development, marital fulfilment, greater earnings, improved physical health and ultimately, success and longevity. Lopez and Snyder (2009) agree with this definition by stating that positive emotions are “multicomponent response tendencies” (p. 14) and that these emotions are important when making evaluations of a situation that not only involves subjective feelings but also “attention and cognition, cardiovascular and hormonal changes” (Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p. 14). For example, when a person interprets a situation to be particularly bad for oneself, negative emotions arise, and when a person interprets or anticipates good expectations, positive emotions arise.

Frederickson (2013) identifies ten key positive emotions that occur most often in people’s daily lives: joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love. According to the author, hope arises in desperate situations, which is in contrast to most positive emotions that seldom occur in life-threatening situations (Frederickson, 2005). For example, people will experience a hope ‘urgency’ when they ‘fear the worst’ or find themselves in dire situations and yearn for better outcomes or results.

Ground-breaking research in the field of positive emotions was made by Frederickson (2005), who found that people who engage in positive emotions are more likely to attempt challenging activities and to consider solving difficult problems (Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015).

Table 3.1: Representative positive emotions

EMOTION LABEL	APPRAISAL THEME	THOUGHT-ACTION TENDENCY	RESOURCE ACCRUED	CORE TRIO IN mDES ITEMS
Joy	Safe, familiar unexpectedly good	Play, get involved	Skills gained via experiential learning	Joyful, glad or happy
Gratitude	Receive a gift or benefit	Creative urge to be prosocial	Skills for showing care,	Grateful, appreciative or thankful

EMOTION LABEL	APPRAISAL THEME	THOUGHT-ACTION TENDENCY	RESOURCE ACCRUED	CORE TRIO IN mDES ITEMS
			loyalty, social bonds	
Serenity (a.k.a. contentment)	Safe, familiar, low effort	Savour and integrate	New priorities, new view of self	Serene content or peaceful
Interest	Safe, novel	Explore, learn	Knowledge	Interested, alert or curious
Hope	Fearing the worst, yearning for better	Plan for a better future	Resilience, optimism	Hopeful, optimistic or encouraged
Pride	Socially valued achievement	Dream big	Achievement motivation	Proud, confident or assured
Amusement	Non-serious social incongruity	Share joviality, laugh	Social bonds	Amusing, fun-loving or silly
Inspiration	Witness human excellence	Strive towards higher ground	Motivation for personal growth	Inspired, uplifted or elevated
Awe	Encounter beauty or goodness on a grand scale	Absorb and accommodate	New worldviews	Awe, wonder amazement
Love	Any/all of the above in an interpersonal connection	Any/all of the above with mutual care	Any/all of the above, especially social bonds	Love, closeness or trust

mDES: modified Differential Emotions Scale

Source: Frederickson, 2013, p. 5

Table 3.1 demonstrates the ten key positive emotions that are experienced daily. Column five in the table presents the modified Differential Emotions Scale (mDES), which is a measure of positive emotions. For example, hope in column two, Appraisal

Theme, refers to the evaluation of the situation – “fearing the worst, yearning for better”. Column three refers to the thought-action, which is taking action to “plan for a better future”. Column four refers to the resources accrued during the hope process, which are optimism and resilience. Finally, column five represents the core trio of mDES items that refer to the state in which people find themselves such as being “hopeful, optimistic, or encouraged”.

3.3.1.2 *Broaden-and-build theory*

Frederickson’s (2005) broaden-and-build theory proclaims that people’s daily experiences of positive emotions broaden their habitual ways of thinking and enable them to build enduring personal resources such as health, longevity, personal relationships and knowledge (Frederickson, 2013; Frederickson & Joiner, 2002; Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015). In addition, positive emotions assist people in becoming more creative, connected, optimistic and resilient (Nelson & Cooper, 2007), thus improving their overall well-being (Frederickson & Joiner, 2002).

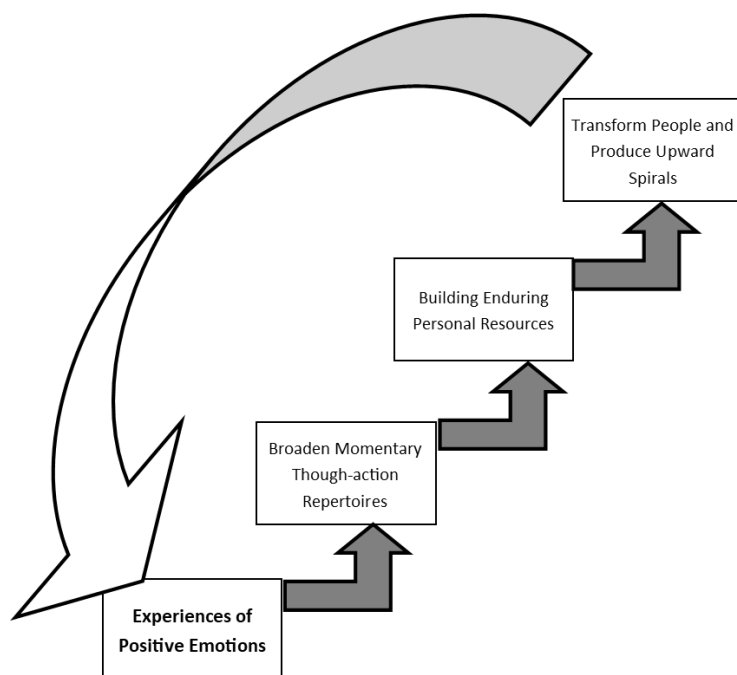


Figure 3.3: Broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions

Source: Frederickson, 2002, p. 124

Frederickson (2005) developed the following hypotheses from the broaden-and-build theory:

- “Positive emotions broaden thought action repertoires.
- Positive emotions undo lingering negative emotions.
- Positive emotions fuel psychological resilience.
- Positive emotions build personal resources.
- Positive emotions fuel psychological and physical well-being” (p. 1370).

Nelson and Cooper (2007) are of the opinion that people who experience positive emotions strive to maintain these emotions and earnestly avoid situations, circumstances and people that threaten their good emotions. Fessell and Cherniss (2020) agree with this view by stating that through mindfulness and coaching, an individual can build personal resources that are potential coping mechanisms for the individual’s “wellness toolbox” (p. 747).

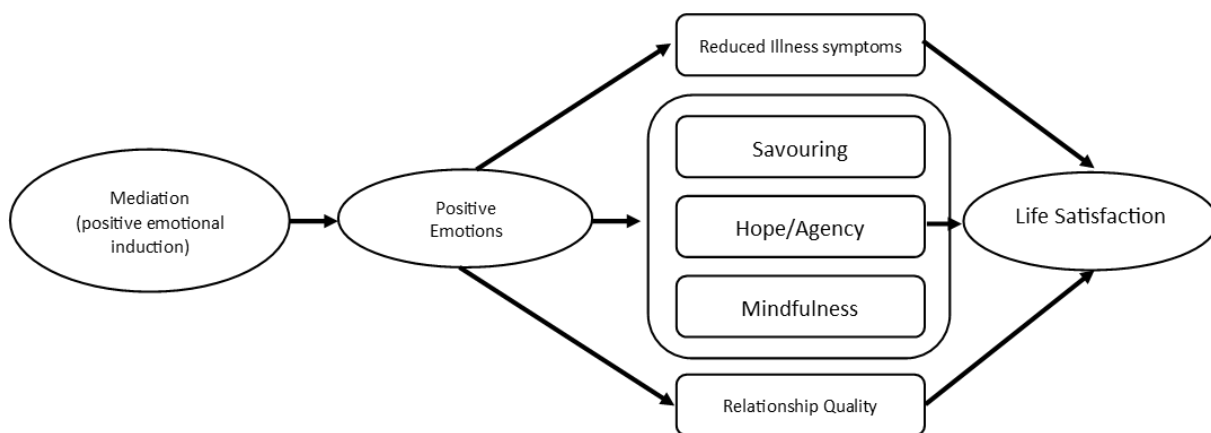


Figure 3.4: Build hypothesis of positive emotions

Source: Lopez & Snyder, 2009, p. 18

Figure 3.4 demonstrates the results of a positive emotions intervention study (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). According to the findings of the study, positive interventions lead to increased daily positive emotions, which lead to the building of physical resources (reduced illness symptoms), psychological resources (savouring, hope,

mindfulness), and social resources (relationship quality). The figure further illustrates that resource building (relationship quality, psychological resources and reduced illness symptoms) lead to improved life satisfaction (well-being) (Lopez & Snyder, 2009).

3.3.2 Pillar 2: Positive traits

People differ in how they experience the world. This is because positive traits enable positive experiences and often influence how people experience people and workplaces. In addition, some people expect mainly good things to happen to them while others believe the world to be full of problems (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Positive emotions can be classified into three categories: past, present and future (Seligman, 2003). The author recognises various positive emotions associated with the future, which include “faith, trust, confidence, hope and optimism” (p. 83).

3.3.3 Pillar 3: Positive institutions

Van Rensburg van Rothmann (2020) define positive institutions as institutions that facilitate a shared purpose and vision, provide a safe environment and “ensure fairness (equitable rules governing reward and punishment), humanity (care and concern), and dignity (treatment of all as individuals regardless of their position)” (p. 2). Positive organisational practices facilitate feelings of positivity within individuals, which enhances organisational success (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Van Rensburg and Rothmann (2020, p. 1) state that “a positive environment provides positive energy”. Thus, organisations need to encourage positive practices to develop positive organisational cultures (Cameron, 2011). These positive organisational practices can be classified according to the following six dimensions: (1) caring, (2) compassionate support, (3) forgiveness, (4) inspiration, (5) meaning, and (6) respect, integrity, and gratitude (Cameron, 2011).

Employees’ attitudes have an influence on the way organisations reach their objectives. In addition, positive employee demeanour contributes to achieving an organisation’s competitive advantage (Linley et al., 2010). Moreover, these positive emotions assist employees in attaching positive meaning to their work and

organisational roles (Frederickson, 2013). Linley et al. (2010) support this notion by stating that when individuals support each other in finding meaning in their work, they develop a sense of “gratitude” that leads to increased enthusiasm in their work (p. 85).

Van Rensburg and Rothmann (2020) conducted a study to investigate how positive organisational practices relate to job demands and resources, person-environment fit and well-being. The results suggest that a perceived absence of positive organisational practices was associated with “experiences of overload, poor role clarity, insufficient training and development, poor co-worker and supervisor support, lack of person-environment fit, and poor emotional, psychological and social well-being” (p. 10). Furthermore, according to the results of the study, positive organisational practices such as “respect, support, meaning, caring, inspiration and forgiveness” are of great relevance for flourishing employees.

3.3.3.1 Building a positive workplace

Cooper and Hesketh (2019) developed the following equation to demonstrate how an individual’s well-being can be improved through the creation of positive and meaningful institutions (Figure 3.5).

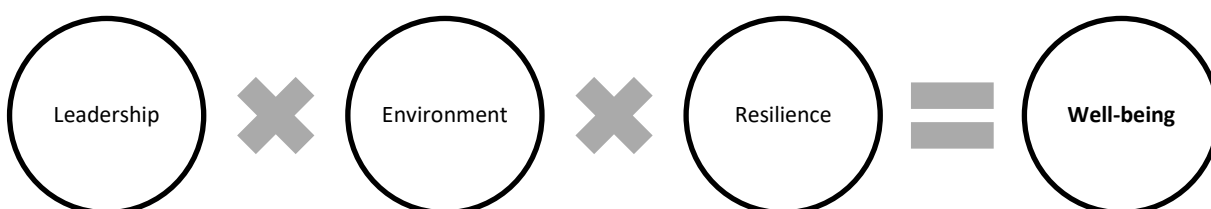


Figure 3.5: Basic equation for well-being

Source: Cooper & Hesketh, 2019, p. 34

According to Cooper and Hesketh (2019), employees need to build solid relationships with leaders in order to cultivate positive emotional experiences (PEE) such as happiness, hope, optimism, commitment, productivity and improved performance (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019; Linley et al., 2010). The environment in which employees

operate can represent the way people feel (positive, subjectively well, inspired and competent) about their institutions (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019, p. 43). Lastly, resilience is needed to be able to cope with and/or “bounce back” from experiences that are positive (opportunities or advancement) or negative (dealing with adversities or calamities) in their institutions (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019, p. 48).

Linley et al. (2010) suggest applying a strength-based collaborate enquiry technique such as Appreciative Inquiry (AI) to build positive emotional experiences in the workplace and to produce immediate positive psychological changes in individuals. According to the authors, this technique encourages employees to share positive memories, stories and testimonials about what they appreciate about their work. Furthermore, AI inspires collaborative thinking to discover what generates longevity and vitality for the institutions and individuals to flourish. The AI technique (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2003) involves a four-step process – discovery, dream, design and destiny – to move employees towards a shared vision for the future.

3.3.3.2 Vital engagement

According to Pryce-Jones (2010), vital engagement refers to “doing something worthwhile that takes the individual beyond their interest into something much more profound” (p. 71). According to the author, vital engagement improves when individuals are involved in meaningful group activities that relate to the organisation’s vision.

3.3.3.3 Resilience

In a study conducted by Munck et al. (2020) to assess the prevalence of mental disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, concluded that resilience can be considered a protective variable to deal with adversity. The authors contend that resilience is a constructive factor to preserve or regain mental help during adversity.

3.3.3.4 Employee commitment

According to Pryce-Jones (2010), commitment consists of “feelings and beliefs” about an individual’s work and organisation (p. 67). According to the author, commitment

starts with the belief of knowing that “you’re doing something worthwhile” (p. 67). These positive emotions often enable employees to find their work more enjoyable and meaningful. According to Baumeister and Vohs (2002), the pursuit of meaning can be understood in terms of meeting the following needs: (i) the need for purpose; (ii) the need for values; (iii) the need for a sense of efficacy; and (iv) the need for self-worth. It is important for employees to experience a meaningful life because it can assist them in dealing with adversity and disappointments.

3.4 THE H-R-W MODEL

Luthans, Luthans et al. (2015) argue that there is an interactive, reciprocal determination between a person’s mental and physical health, social relationships and their work performance as indicated in the H-R-W model. The abbreviation H-R-W denotes health, relationships and work. Work performance requires HERO elements to ensure that planned, proactive efforts are initiated to improve the employees’ and the organisation’s outcomes. For example, a person’s work performance has an influence on their health, their health has an influence on their relationships and their relationships have an influence on their work performance and so forth.



Figure 3.6: H-R-W model

Source: Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015, p. 174

Figure 3.6 demonstrates the interactive and shared purpose between an employee's health (physical and mental), relationships (colleagues, friends, spouses, etc.) and work performance (the HERO constructs).

According to research conducted by positive psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky (2008), a person's happiness or level of positivity or H-R-W well-being is as follows:

- 50% is determined through genetics, dispositional 'hard-wiring';
- 10% is determined by life's circumstances; and
- 40% is determined through intentional activity.

Figure 3.6 demonstrates that both POB and PsyCap provide many benefits for the workplace that improve performance, relationships and health. Furthermore, these constructs are state-like and open to development through optimism techniques that are learnt (Seligman, 1998) and hopeful thinking practices (Lopez, 2013).

3.5 PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL

Luthans et al. (2015) define PsyCap as the following:

[A]n individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterised by (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success (p. 2).

Thus, according to Luthans et al. (2015), PsyCap can be described as going beyond human capital (what you know – skills, knowledge, abilities, experience), economic capital (what you have – physical and financial assets) and social capital (who you know – network of friends) to psychosocial capital, which is 'who you are' (the actual self) and 'who you intend to become' (your possible self) (see Figure 3.7).

According to Luthans et al. (2015), the four constructs of PsyCap (hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy) share commonalities that include having a positive outlook on life, the selection of challenging goals, and the investment of energy and resources

to achieve the desired goals despite potential challenges, obstacles and setbacks. These positive outcome expectancies become powerful driving forces that act as motivators for people to persevere in attaining their goals. Moreover, these driving forces can move individuals towards learning and developing new attitudes, behaviours and performances to become the person they want to be.

Presently, organisations are recruiting candidates based on their 'human capital' potential, that is, their ability to apply their experiences and educational background to the workplace (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). However, this will soon change because in most fields, the rate of knowledge development and acquisition is accelerating at such an alarming rate that what employees know today may be obsolete in less than five years (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, et al. 2015). Moreover, due to artificial intelligence, many jobs will become obsolete. This may require employees to redefine themselves in terms of PsyCap, which goes beyond human and social capital investment and focuses more on "who employees are" rather than "who they would like to become" (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p. 427) (see Figure 3.7).

Myers (2008) states that "there is a power to negative as well as positive thinking" (p. 65). According to the author's statement, success in life requires "enough optimism to sustain hope and enough pessimism to motivate concern" (p. 65).

Globalisation, changes in technology and doing more with less are all factors that encourage organisations to look beyond traditional sources of capital and to determine other contributions that employees can make to create positive working environments. Luthans et al. (2007) are of the opinion that individuals are the most important link to creating a transformed environment. Moreover, according to Snyder and Lopez (2007), organisations are less concerned about "what employees have" (traditional economic capital) and more interested in "who employees are" (psychological capital) (p. 427).

Figure 3.7 illustrates the move from traditional economic capital to psychological capital. Traditional economic capital involves the assets that make an organisation unique such as the financial and tangible assets. Human capital includes the explicit skills, knowledge and abilities of employees. Social capital involves having access to advice, which is important to the success of an organisation. The latest and most grossly undervalued form of capital is positive PsyCap, which involves hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy.

This research study examines hope, optimism and well-being, which is part of the PWB domain that rationalises a human being’s cognitive ability, process, behaviour and responses to others. Thus, PWB resembles both good stress (eustress) and bad stress (distress) (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019).

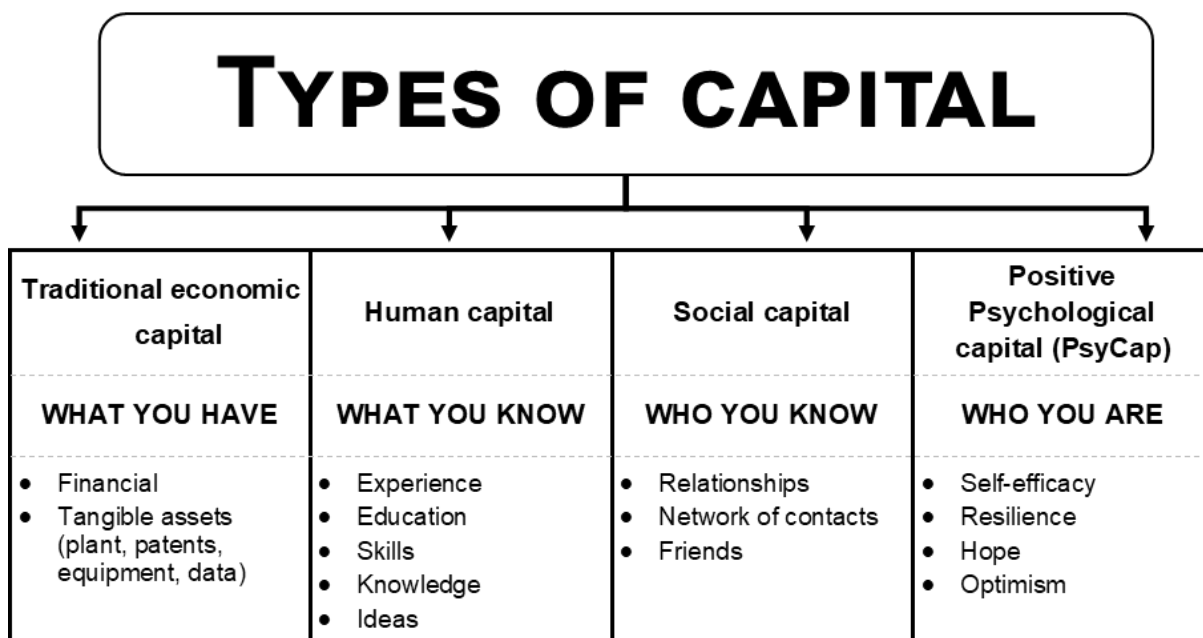


Figure 3.7: Types of capital

Source: Adapted from Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p. 427

Various research studies indicate that salutogenic personalities strive for optimality and apply good coping mechanisms to deal with stressful experiences (Bergh & Theron, 2003).

Another area that is often overlooked when studying PsyCap is employees’ need to maintain a positive self-image. Employees often maintain this image by associating themselves with success and distancing themselves from failure (Myers, 2008). For example, when employees experience success in their jobs, they attribute the success to themselves whereas if they experience failure, they blame it on either the situation or the circumstances at work. For this reason, employees need organisations to instil confidence and pride in their work and themselves, enabling them to experience a sense of purpose and to become more hopeful and optimistic

(Cooper & Hesketh, 2019). Adler (1996) was a firm believer in the ability of humans to strive for superiority and to have the goal of reaching perfection.

3.5.1 Features of PsyCap

Psychological capital enhances our understanding and management of human resources in the following ways:

- PsyCap goes beyond human capital. PsyCap relates not only to what people know and can do but also to whom they would like to become as a person (Luthans et al., 2007).
- PsyCap goes beyond social capital. PsyCap is not only about who you know but also how those relationships can take you forward (Luthans et al., 2007).
- PsyCap is positive. PsyCap offers organisations a positive perspective to explain and manage human potential (Luthans et al., 2007).
- PsyCap is unique. PsyCap offers a new perspective that can be encapsulated through unique and innovative theoretical frameworks, constructs, measures and interventions (Luthans et al., 2007).
- PsyCap is a theory and is research based. PsyCap is founded on widely recognised theoretical frameworks such as social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and hope theory (Snyder, 2000). PsyCap uses “scientific research methodologies and deductive reasoning to enhance predictions and causal implications that PsyCap may have on human resource development and performance outcomes in organisations” (Luthans et al., 2007).
- PsyCap is measurable. There are many reliable and valid measures that can be used to assess PsyCap elements (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).
- PsyCap is state-like and, therefore, open to development. PsyCap is made up of changeable and developmental states that can increase through interventions.
- PsyCap is influential in work-related performance. Various research studies have supported the notion that PsyCap is significantly related to performance enhancement in the workplace regarding the individual components (self-efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience) and a combination of all PsyCap constructs. (Luthans et al., 2007, pp. 11-13)

Luthans et al. (2007) argue that PsyCap becomes a benefit to organisations' performance and competitive advantage when it is used effectively.

Although this study explores both hope and optimism to improve employee well-being, it should be noted that there is a distinct difference between hope and optimism, as is seen in Section 3.6 (Hope) and Section 3.7 (Optimism).

3.6 HOPE

Hutson and Perry (2006) describe hope as “wishing, waiting, expecting and dreaming and containing an element of passivity, mystery and vexation” (p. 17). It can be learnt (hopeful thinking) and is state-like (changes over a period of time) (Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015). Furthermore, hope builds durable resources such as optimism and resilience (Frederickson, 2013), which enables people to look beyond the current situation and to envision a time when things change for the better.

Hope has both instrumental and intrinsic value (Bovens, 1999). The instrumental value of hope is that it opposes risk aversion, while the intrinsic value is that it provides fulfilment (Bovens, 1999). Hope allows people to imagine better situations or conditions for the future, and this pleasant anticipation both “motivate[s] and enables progress” (Hutson & Perry, 2006, p. 21).

The world-renowned expert on the psychology of hope, Dr Shane Lopez, reveals three significant aspects of hope:

- Hope matters (it is not just a positive emotion but an essential life tool).
- Hope is learnt.
- Hope is contagious (Rural Futures Institute, 2015).

Snyder et al. (1991) define hope as a “positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (1) agency (goal-directed energy) and (2) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (p. 287). The definition of Snyder (1991) highlights the sum of the two components, which includes having the 'will' and the 'way' to carry out goals and not to suffer from wishful thinking. The 'agency' element is significant because it gives people power, freedom and authority to increase their determination to achieve their goals by making decisions and choices (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, et al., 2015). Furthermore, Snyder's (1991) definition highlights the ability of individuals

to develop and manage their pathways through effective goal setting. The waypower allows individuals to design alternative pathways and contingency plans proactively to achieve the desired goals despite complications and obstacles (Carr, 2004; Luthans, 2007). Therefore, where people are certain of achieving goals, hope is often almost redundant.

Hope is both a characteristic and a mindset (Pryce-Jones, 2010) and is, therefore, closely related to constructs such as optimism (Carr, 2004). It is a goal-directed, flexible thinking construct that enables individuals to visualise a better future through self-developed pathways (Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, et al., 2015; Papantoniou et al., 2013). Carver and Scheier (2001) argue that without goals, people's lives fall apart because life requires engagement. According to Carver and Scheier (2001), "life retains vibrancy when people remain engaged, accept tragedy and move on" (p. 9).

Hope, as can be seen from Snyder's (1991) definition, consists of two important elements, the pathways and the willways (Pryce-Jones, 2010). The pathways refer to the routes to achieve the goals (success), which can be anything that an individual wishes to create, experience, attain, action or become (Lopez, 2013), and the willways refer to the individual's will to carry these out. Pathways thinking is vital to hope development and can be stimulated through "mental rehearsals" that enable pathway building towards components of hope (Luthans et al., 2007b, p. 15).

From the above explanation, hope can be seen as a significant contributor to an individual's life achievement and endurance (Papantoniou et al., 2013) and can be considered a key aspect to human strength because it contributes to higher productivity and happiness (Pryce-Jones, 2010). Snyder et al. (1991) developed the Hope Scale to measure people's hopefulness about their ability to deal with calamities and challenging situations. Snyder (2000) later hypothesised that hope develops throughout infancy, childhood and into adolescence as the individual's vision learns to overcome a series of obstacles.

Snyder (1994) is also clear about what hope is not:

- "Pollyanna optimism - being naïve and lacking compassion.
- Learned optimism – distancing oneself from failure.
- Type A behavioural pattern – being impatient and uncompromising.
- Emotion and self-esteem – failing to be thoughtful or to achieve.

- Intelligent or previous achievement – hope can be learnt.
- Useless – hope is broadly beneficial.
- Vague – the hope scale is quite specific”. (Snyder, 1994, pp. 16–26)

Snyder’s (2000) theory about the process of experiencing hope is illustrated in Figure 3.8. According to Snyder’s (2000) conceptualisation of hope, valued goals are established and pursued with the probability of attaining challenging but not impossible goals.

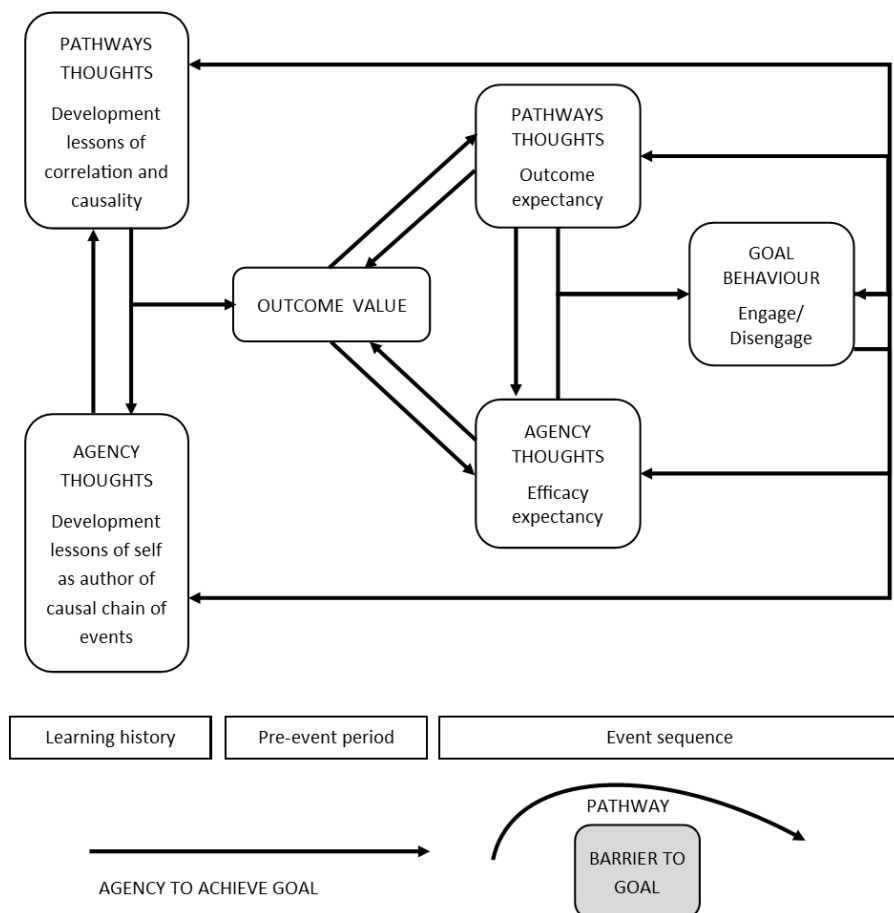


Figure 3.8: Snyder's Hope Theory

Source: Snyder, 2000, pp. 11-12

Snyder’s (2000) theory illustrates (see Figure 3.8) that whenever a valued goal is pursued, the hopeful goal-directed behaviour will be determined by the interaction of the following:

1. The degree to which the outcome or goal is valued.

2. Thoughts about pathways to the goals and related expectations about how effective these will be in achieving the outcomes or goal.
3. The thoughts about personal agency and how effective one will be in following paths to goals (Carr, 2004).

Lopez (2013) argues that people today are facing a hope crisis because they are lacking one of the following elements of hope: “(a) at least one exciting future goal, (b) the belief that they have the will and the way to achieve their goals, and (3) a cheerleader that cares about them” (p. 85).

3.6.1 Religiosity, hope and subjective well-being

Nell and Rothmann (2018, p. 1) define religiosity as the extent to which individuals advocate a particular “belief system which involves specific practices, rituals, or symbols” as significant associations to the divine or holy. A study conducted by Diener et al. (2011) found that religiosity is associated with higher subjective well-being and that an association exists between religiosity and subjective well-being through social support, feeling respected, and purpose or meaning in life. Nell and Rothmann (2018) conducted a study to examine hope as a facilitator between religiosity and subjective well-being. The findings of the study suggest that agency hope facilitates the relationship between religiosity and life satisfaction, positive effect, and negative effect.

3.6.2 Hope development

The literature provides significant evidence of how hope is influenced by goals, pathways and agency (Lopez, 2013). Developed goals generate sustained motivation to increase agency (willpower). The pathway generating process develops an individual’s ability to identify and plan for contingencies, thus reducing the negative impact of contingencies on the individual’s willpower.

Luthans, Youssef-Morgan, et al. (2015) state that hope is achieved through pathway thinking and, therefore, developing and nurturing hope requires the following strategic approaches:

1. Goal setting aims to motivate people.

2. Stretch goals are goals that do not easily excite people but are within reach.
3. Approach goals give people a sense of accomplishment and reinforcement.
4. The stepping process enables people to break down difficult, long-term and even overwhelming goals into smaller milestones.
5. Mental rehearsals (hopeful thinking) provide people with opportunities to prepare and think about how they see the future and in the process, to become excited for a future desired state.
6. Rituals (routines to reinforce the goals) enable people to stay committed while conserving limited mental energy and resources.
7. Involvement strengthens employee empowerment and engagement and provides employees with the power, freedom and authority to make relevant decisions and choices.
8. Reward systems allow people to see how their actions are instrumental in attaining a specific reward.
9. Resources (social resources, knowledge resources, etc.) enable people to find alternative ways of reaching their goals.
10. Strategic alignment enables people to select from a broader choice of pathways that is aligned with the organisational goals to achieve the organisation's competitive advantage.
11. Training promotes pathway thinking to enhance people's sense of agency (action/motivation needed to achieve the goals). Training further enhances people's skills on how to develop goals to achieve the outcomes that they are truly passionate about. This is more valuable than trying to create false 'hope' for unrealistic or unsupported pathways.

3.6.3 Characteristics of hopeful people

Hope gives people a passion for life and makes them enthusiastic (Hutson & Perry, 2006). Recent studies in POB have found that employees with high levels of hope often experience higher job satisfaction, organisational commitment, work happiness and improved performance (Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015). Various studies including these authors, Carlile and Christensen (2005), Chan et al. (2019), Snyder (2000), Snyder and Lopez (2007) found that organisations with high-hope individuals are more

profitable, have higher retention rates and experience improved levels of employee satisfaction and employee engagement.

In addition, according to Pryce-Jones (2010; 2013), hopeful people engage in the following activities:

- They engage in positive self-talk.
- They focus on success, limit negative thoughts that suggest failure and through the process, motivate themselves and others.
- They are future orientated in their discourse and thinking.
- They engage in positive communication through the use of language regarding goals and objectives.
- They experience fewer negative emotions whenever they encounter failure.

3.6.4 Hope mechanisms

Although some authors argue that hope exhibits trait-like characteristics (Hirsch & Conner, 2006), others argue that hope is state-like (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). Hope mechanisms, therefore, help employees formulate clear goals, identify various pathways to attain these goals and assist them in finding the motivation to pursue the identified goals and view obstacles as challenges that need to be overcome. Hope mechanisms encourage employees to develop contingency plans to deal with obstacles that impede their future goals (Hutson & Perry, 2006; Snyder, 1994, 2000).

3.6.5 Experiences of hope at work

According to Hutson and Perry (2006) hopeful organisations display the e-factors, “energy, enthusiasm, effort, excitement and excellence” (p. 14). Furthermore, according to scientists of the Case Western Reserve University, if hope is a primary source of positive knowledge and action in organisations, hope will be evident in “how people appear, what they say and how they work” (Hutson & Perry, 2006, p. 14).

In his famous lecture before the American Psychiatric Association in 1959, Karl Menninger saw that people need “real-life experiences of hope” to become hopeful.

During his conversations with people, four broad themes emerged of their experiences of hope in the workplace: energy, belief, reality and meaning (Menninger, 1959).

3.6.5.1 Energy

Hope-energy is promoted when people begin recounting their stories of hope with such enthusiasm that it entices people to action. Hutson and Perry (2006) refer to this chain reaction as “infectious energy” (p. 21). Hope allows people to seek authentic happiness (Seligman, 2003), thus providing energy that influences the outcomes.

3.6.5.2 Belief

Hope is created through positive expectations, combined with the belief that “things can happen” (Hutson & Perry, 2006, p. 21). According to the authors, hopeful belief is a choice “not a conclusion based on evidence” (p. 21). Belief is an essential element in achieving a hopeful organisation. Often, during turnaround strategies, organisations that are restructuring and downsizing need employees who have confidence (optimism) in the organisation’s abilities to turn the organisation around and who choose to put their belief in management to achieve this. Wallis (2004) states that “hope is believing despite of the evidence, then watching the evidence change” (p. 203).

3.6.5.3 Reality

The ideas that people use to rationalise and forecast a positive future distinguish true hope from false hope and hope from optimism (Hutson & Perry, 2006). According to the authors, “hope, unlike optimism is rooted in absolute reality” since hope acknowledges the adversities in the pathways and “true hope has no room for delusion” (p. 23). Hope that is rooted in reality requires employees to understand that reality can be cruel but that they need to look beyond the current situation, remaining truthful to create a better future while keeping sight of the present.

3.6.5.4 Meaning

Hutson and Perry (2006) argue that an underlying experience of hope is “searching for meaning” (p. 23). Frankl (1992), in the book ‘Man’s search for meaning’, claims that a human being’s deepest desire is to find purpose and meaning in life, and once they find meaning, they can overcome anything. According to Frankl (1992), although a person’s destiny is affected by their life circumstances, one has both the freedom and the responsibility to choose one’s path. The author opines that there are three ways to find meaning in life: through work (by doing something significant), through love (by caring for another person), and through bravery during difficult times.

3.7 OPTIMISM

Optimists are people who expect good things to happen (Lopez & Snyder, 2009) without regard to one’s actions. According to the authors, the most significant difference between optimists and pessimists lies in the way in which they deal with adversity by advocating confidence or doubt. Various research studies have been conducted to establish if optimists have better health outcomes than pessimists (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Scheier & Carver, 1985) and the influence of optimism on well-being (Chetna & Sharma, 2019; Frederickson, 2013; MacLeod, 2013; Rius-Ottenheim et al., 2013). Meevissen et al. (2011) found that through positive thinking and coping mechanisms such as imagining one’s BPS, individuals can boost their levels of optimism and thus propose optimism as being part of an individual’s “self-preserving and self-enhancing” tools (p. 373).

Optimists are able to respond to adversities better because they have positive outlooks on life and demonstrate high levels of self-efficacy (Myers, 2008), which leads to enhanced PWB (Carver & Scheier, 2014). In addition, optimists experience more positive emotions and higher hope than pessimists (Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015) because they understand the importance of initiating coping reactions to deal with adversity.

Various research studies have found (e.g. Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019, 2019; Donnelly, 2017; Peterson & Bossio, 2001; SMG, 2017) that optimistic people live longer, are more productive, have more energy, make better decisions, have better health habits, are in healthier relationships, demonstrate better coping mechanisms and are

generally much healthier and happier (Carr, 2004; Schneider, 2001) than pessimists. Positive individuals imagine a brighter future filled with positive outcomes and, therefore, engage in activities that promote PWB (Frederickson, 2005).

Rius-Ottenheim et al. (2013) state that optimists enjoy higher levels of well-being due to better mental health because they possess effective coping styles that include the ability to apply goal-orientated strategies. Rius-Ottenheim et al. (2013) are of the opinion that although various interventions and coping mechanisms can be used to increase optimism, there are controversies as to whether it is possible to change a person's levels of optimism. Certain researchers such as Scheier and Carver (1985) believe that optimism should rather be interpreted as a durable personality characteristic. Conversely, Carr (2004) is of the opinion that optimism is determined by the type of influence that parents have on their children "in terms of mental health, the type of role model, and the degree to which parents reward and encourage optimism in their children" (p. 84).

Luthans, Luthans, et al. (2015) caution against the consequences of unbridled optimism (unrealistic or false optimism) which may lead to meaningless and dysfunctional outcomes, particularly when things do not go as planned.

3.7.1 Dimensions of optimism

The literature is filled with many aetiological (i.e. traits versus learnt) studies on optimism. According to Luthans, Luthans, et al. (2015), most psychologists regard optimism as either part of human nature (dispositional optimism) or as an individual difference (explanatory optimism).

Scheier and Carver (1985), Rius-Ottenheim et al. (2013), and Carr (2004) argue that optimists are individuals who expect good things to happen to them because it is part of their personality (dispositional optimism: Section 3.7.1.1), while Seligman (2011) argues that individuals' habitual attributes cause the outcomes of events due to prioritisation of goals (explanatory optimism: Section 3.7.1.2).

3.7.1.1 Optimism as human nature – Dispositional optimism

The literature is infused with studies by various psychologists in the field of organisational psychology such as Freud and Menninger who argue that optimism is “an illusion essential for the afterlife” (Carr, 2004, p. 80) and detrimental to one’s health, while Tiger (1979) argues that optimism is an inherent characteristic of human beings. However, during recent years, many psychologists have been advocating the benefits of positive emotions and argue that optimism may be inherent and trait-like (Luthans, Luthans, et al., 2015; Lyubomirsky, 2008) due to the personality dimension (Carver & Scheier, 2014). According to Lopez et al. (2013), between 25% and 30% of the variability in optimism is due to genetic factors (depending on how the estimate of heritability is made). Interestingly, Guest (2017) argue optimism (about the future) is more acute for Millennials.

Carver and Scheier (2014) describe dispositional optimism as a positive stable approach to the future and as a tendency to expect favourable outcomes to life’s events. Carr (2004) agrees with this definition by stating it is a “global expectation” that more good things than bad will happen in the future (p. 82). Rius- Ottenheim et al. (2013) elaborate on this definition and state that dispositional optimism is an aspect of personality based on the ‘self-regulation’ theory of Carver and Scheier (1981). This theory claims that optimistic people regulate themselves and continue to pursue their valued goals based on their perception of what they believe are desirable and attainable goals by using effective coping mechanisms such as redefinition or reframing (Carr, 2004). According to Carver and Schreier (2014), the self-regulation approach relies much on the individual’s approach to goal achievement and expectations when adversities emerge. For example, when an individual is confident that success is possible, the effort will continue, whereas when a person believes a goal becomes improbable, they may withdraw.

3.7.1.2 Optimism as an individual difference - Explanatory optimism

In recent times, more psychologists argue that optimism (as with other PsyCap constructs) should be viewed as an individual difference. This means that optimism should be regarded from the “cognitive determined expectations and causal attributions” (Luthans, Luthans, et al. 2015, p. 82) of individuals.

Luthans et al. (2007) state that PsyCap optimism is a “responsible and adaptive form of optimism which carefully considers and learns from both positive and negative events as well as their causes and consequences, before taking credit for successes or distancing and externalising failures” (p. 15). Luthans (2007) is of the opinion that in PsyCap optimism, two features, namely realistic (Schneider, 2001) and flexible (Peterson, 2006) are key.

Seligman (1998) conceptualised optimism as an explanatory style rather than a broad personality trait. According to the optimistic explanatory style, people make sense of events or experiences by denouncing external, temporary and specific attributions about prior negative events. In contrast, the pessimistic explanatory style attributes negative experiences or events to internal, stable, global factors such as being a failure as a person (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Donnelly, 2017; Hirsch & Conner, 2006; Peterson & Bossio, 2001). For example, optimists are more likely to blame their organisation for not providing them with sufficient support to excel in their jobs, whereas pessimists are more likely to attribute their failure on the job to their lack of qualifications or experience.

Seligman (2007) developed programmes to assist people in changing their explanatory style from pessimism to optimism by teaching them to monitor and analyse mood-altering situations in order for their explanatory style to become more optimistic. In addition, when people are confident, they are able to identify and plan for contingencies.

3.7.2 Developing optimistic thinking

Individuals can become more optimistic by imagining their “best possible self” and by training them to develop “systematically more optimistic explanations for events” (Carver & Scheier, 2014, p. 293). Conversely, Schneider (2001, pp. 255-256) identifies a three-step approach to developing optimistic thinking without supporting self-deception. Schneider (2001) suggests a three-step process that includes (i) leniency for the past (benefit of the doubt), (ii) appreciation for the present (appreciate the moment), and (iii) opportunity-seeking for the future (window of opportunity).

- The benefit of the doubt principle involves allowing past events to be classified as subjectively positive although some of the events may potentially have had questionable outcomes.
- Appreciation for the moment principle refers to routine events, people, places and things that are often taken for granted and that should be brought into awareness and acknowledged as an important positive contributor to one's experiences.
- The window of opportunity principle refers to considering one's future goals and plans positively instead of considering them a challenge or a negative problem that needs to be overcome.

3.7.2.1 Optimality and deficiencies in being

Bergh and Theron (2003) define optimality as relating to “ongoing growth and the realisation of potential and may include aspects such as work and how other tasks and problems in life are handled” (p. 366). According to the authors, optimality can be seen as a self-actualisation process that enables persons to develop (optimise) their “physical, psychological and mental capabilities” through their behaviour and attitudes towards their work, relationships and religious associations (p. 366).

3.7.3 Characteristics of optimistic people

Optimists cope better with stress, are more productive (Seligman, 2007) and have a better quality of life (Bharti & Rangnekar, 2019) and a greater number of social connections because they use coping mechanisms to avoid stressful events and work harder to form better social support networks (Carr, 2004; Carver & Scheier, 2014; Saltzman et al., 2020). Optimistic people become depressed less often (Bagrami et al., 2016) and tend to use coping mechanisms such as “approaching problems directly, acknowledging and endeavouring to change uncontrollable situations, attempting to overcome adversity, and persisting towards the accomplishing of goals” (Hirsch & Conner, 2006, p. 210). Lopez and Snyder (2009, p. 303) agree with this view by stating optimists “differ in how they approach problems, and they differ in the manner – and the success – with which they cope with adversity”. Moreover, Lopez

and Snyder (2009) argue that when individuals face challenges they experience emotions ranging from excitement and eagerness to anger, anxiety and depression. The difference lies in the variations of optimism. Optimists expect good outcomes despite facing several difficulties.

Optimists are able to pursue multiple goals simultaneously (Carver & Scheier, 2014). Because optimists choose where to invest their self-regulatory resources, they may only increase their efforts when they believe the circumstances are favourable for them. Unfortunately, this characteristic can negatively affect the workplace because optimists often relinquish all efforts if they feel demoralised.

Optimists thrive in a “wide range of social conditions” (Carver & Scheier, 2014, p. 294), work harder at relationships, engage in higher-priority tasks, are good at constructive problem-solving and have a greater perception of support.

Bharti and Rangnekar (2019) conducted research on employee optimism and made the valuable conclusion that employee optimism will likely vary in different cultures due to roles, personal values and belief systems.

3.8 EFFECTS OF OPTIMISM ON WELL-BEING

Guest (2017) opine that well-being may be affected by the lack of optimism about the future. An experts in the field of psychology (Ryff, 1989a) argued that a sense of achievement and a prosperous future are essential for individual well-being. According to Carr (2004), coping mechanisms are useful in situations in which there are discrepancies between stressful demands and the availability of resources to meet the demands.

Moos and Holahan (2003) state that “coping encompass [*sic*] relatively stable *coping styles* that characterise individuals’ habitual interactions with their environment as well as the cognitive and behavioural *coping responses or skills* individuals employ to manage specific stressful encounters” (pp. 1387-1388).

Figure 3.9 demonstrates the environmental system (Panel 1), the personal system (Panel 2), the transitory conditions (Panel 3), the cognitive appraisal and coping skills (Panel 4), and health and well-being (Panel 5).

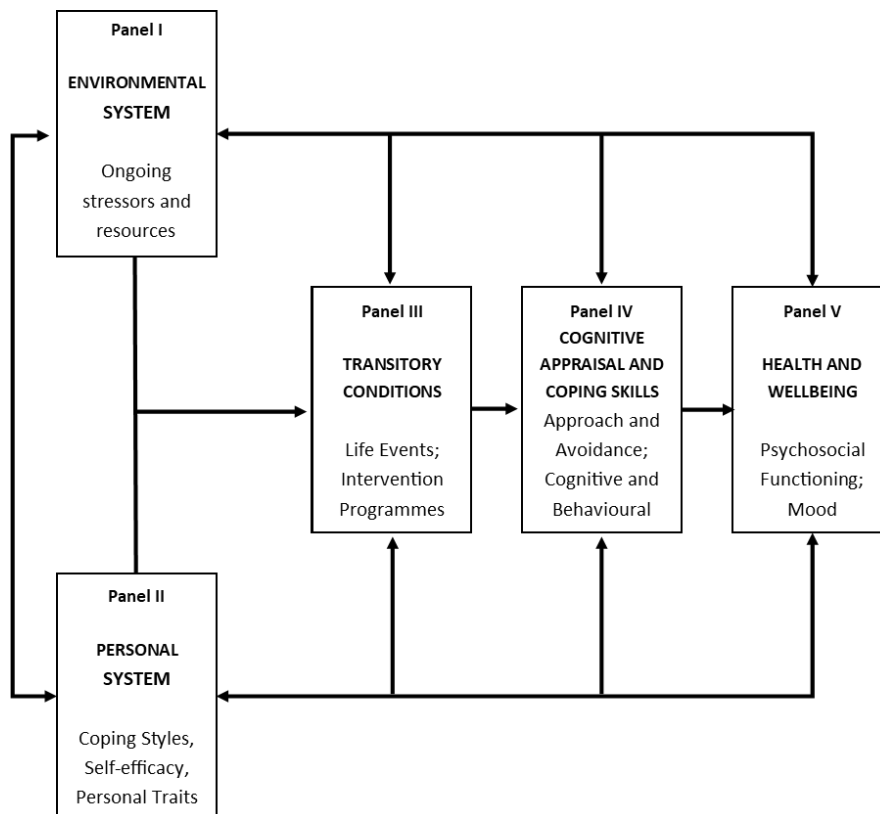


Figure 3.9: A model of interplay between the environmental system, the personal system (including coping styles), coping skills and adaptation

Source: Moos & Holahan, 2003, p. 1394

As demonstrated in Figure 3.9, the factors in the individual's environmental system (Panel 1) comprising life stressors and social resources and in the personal system (Panel 2) comprising coping styles and personal characteristics (e.g. self-efficacy and dispositional optimism) and general personality traits influence changes in life circumstances such as life crises and transitions (Carr, 2004; Moos & Holahan, 2003). All these factors (panels 1–3) have a direct and indirect effect on an individual's health and well-being through cognitive appraisal and coping.

3.8.1 Differences in the coping tendencies of the optimist and pessimist

Carver and Scheier (2014) believe that optimists manage relationship crises more positively than pessimists do.

Table 3.2: Differences in the coping tendencies of optimists and pessimists

OPTIMISTS	PESSIMISTS
Seek information about the problem	Suppress thoughts about the problem
Plan and use problem-focused coping	Engage in self-distraction tactics
Use positive reframing	Focus on their distress
Try to find benefits in their adversity	Use cognitive and behavioural avoidance
Use humour	Overtly deny that problems exist
Try to accept the reality of their situation	Give up trying to cope with the problem

Source: Lopez et al., 2013, p. 659

Table 3.2 depicts the different coping mechanisms that optimists and pessimists use to deal with adversity. The table demonstrates that optimists and pessimists use different coping mechanisms.

3.9 OPTIMISM IN THE WORKPLACE

In 2019, a study conducted by the Harvard Business School in collaboration with the Boston Consulting Group Henderson Institute found that three forces will have significant influence on organisations in the next five years. These are “employee expectations to find a balance between personal and work life through flexible work strategies; the need to improve the level of skill in the workforce; and the difficulty finding workers for the new evolving jobs” (Fuller et al., 2019, p. 2).

3.10 LINK BETWEEN HOPE, OPTIMISM AND WELL-BEING

Optimism is a broader belief about positive future outcomes in general, whereas hope is about the personal attainment of specific goals (Donnelly, 2017; Rius- Ottenheim et al., 2013; Seligman, 1998; Snyder, 2000). In regard to some other aspects, optimism has been shown to correlate with hope (Efklides & Moraitou, 2013).

Optimism and hope share the pathway (waypower) component but differ in the sense that optimism does not include the agency (willpower) component.

Austin and Vancouver (1996) and MacLeod (2013) argue that goals not only relate to well-being but also promote goal-directed activities. Various empirical studies support the notion that striving for meaningful goals gives meaning and direction to life (Cooper & Leiter, 2017; Efklides & Moraitou, 2013; Nicholson, 2011).

Various studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between “optimism, pessimism, and distress among people undergoing adversity” (Lopez et al., 2013, p. 358). According to the authors, the results of assorted studies conclude that “optimistic persons experience less distress during times of adversity than pessimists do” (p. 358).

In their research article titled, “Positive psychological capital as an indicator of psychological well-being”, Chetna and Sharma (2019) observed that components of positive psychological capital positively and significantly contribute towards PWB. In addition, a review of the literature consistently shows a link between PWB and coping responses, as identified in Table 3.2.

However, limited research has been conducted to address the idea that a person can be optimistic and hopeless at the same time due to simultaneous goals or life experiences and how coping mechanisms affect such scenarios.

3.11 SUMMARY

This chapter builds on the earlier chapter on well-being by focusing on the positive psychological aspects that contribute to well-being. Chapter 3 starts by introducing the three levels or the three pillars of positively orientated approaches (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The purpose of the first pillar is to maintain the factors in the second and third pillars to improve well-being. Pillar 1, positive emotions, is described in terms of the key positive emotions that occur most often in our daily lives such as joy, gratitude, hope and pride and that contribute to well-being. Furthermore, Frederickson’s (2004) broaden-and-build theory is discussed to explain the link between positive emotions and individuals’ ability to become more optimistic and resilient, thus improving well-being. Pillar 2, positive traits, is introduced as a factor

that affects how individuals experience circumstances. Finally, Pillar 3, positive institutions, is introduced as the third element that influences how individuals react to circumstances or events.

The H-R-W well-being model is described in terms of the contribution of each element to well-being, with an emphasis on the performance element that relates to PsyCap (hope, self-efficacy, resilience and optimism), which is of particular interest to this study. The features of PsyCap were discussed, including the link between hope, optimism and well-being.

In the following chapter, the COVID-19 pandemic is discussed to provide a contextual perspective for the background of the study.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review conducted in chapters 2 and 3 reviewed the various constructs of well-being and positive psychology that were relevant to the research and that supported the theoretical framework used during the empirical phase of the research. The meaning of well-being (Chapter 2) linked the overarching argument of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) that positive psychology manifests on three levels, namely valued experiences, positive individual traits and public virtues, and the institutes. Positive psychology (Chapter 3) supports the arguments for this research study and provide reasoning for including multiple constructs in the final conceptual framework.

Chapter 4 is a particularly important chapter because it describes the research setting and context in which the research interviews took place. The chapter explains the COVID-19 pandemic, how it came about and the measures that were put in place, particularly in South Africa and Germany, to deal with the health and social crisis. It must be understood that all the interviews took place during high alert levels of the pandemic and that the measures implemented to limit the spread of the virus had a significant impact on the overall mental status of individuals at the time. For this reason, the researcher provides an in-depth discussion about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on organisations and individuals to ensure that the reader understands the impact of the pandemic on individuals' livelihoods and working conditions.

Figure 4.1 is a graphical representation of the layout of Chapter 4 and the topics under discussion in the chapter.

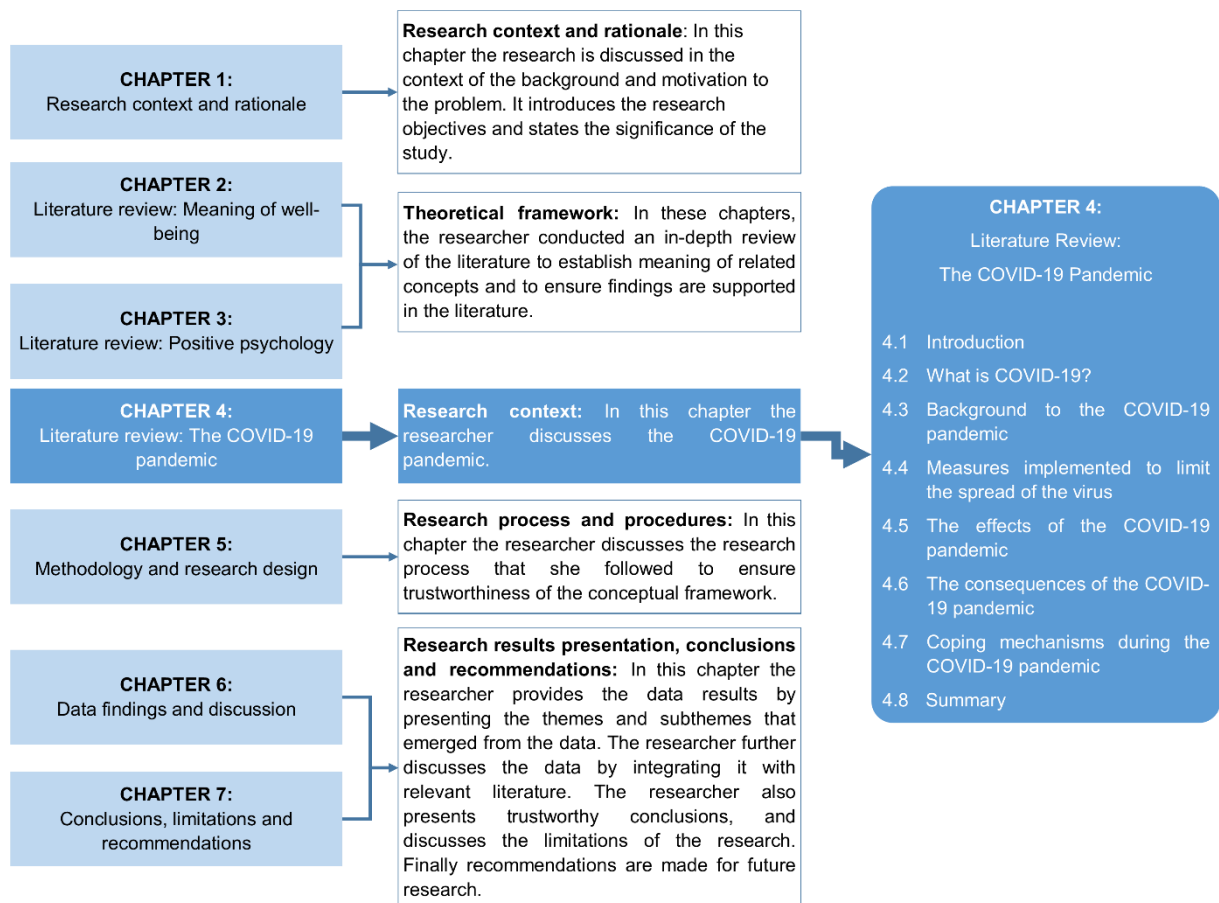


Figure 4.1: Structure of Chapter 4

Source: Author's own compilation

4.2 WHAT IS COVID-19?

Global influenza pandemics are not a new phenomenon (Stephany et al., 2020). On the contrary, history has documented many devastating influenza pandemics. For example, the 1918 influenza pandemic, also known as the Spanish flu, was estimated to have claimed 50 million human lives, the 1957 pandemic claimed 1.1 million lives, and the 1968 pandemic resulted in the loss of 1 million human lives worldwide. The latest influenza pandemic in 2009 claimed 12 469 lives (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). At the time of finalising this thesis (2020-11-11), the COVID-19 pandemic had claimed over 1 280 549 lives worldwide (Anon., 2020) during the first pandemic wave. According to Abraham Wagner, a research assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Michigan (Heesterbeek, 2020), a wave suggests an increasing number of ill individuals with a defined peak and decline. Furthermore,

according to Heesterbeek (2020), some diseases follow a predictable seasonal wave, although it is uncertain if COVID-19, has a similar nature. This is of great importance for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic as waves and seasonal dynamics are “affected by levels of immunity in the human population” (Heesterbeek, 2020, para. 9).

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused tremendous fear and anxiety (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Joska et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020) amongst people worldwide because the coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, that is responsible for COVID-19 is a highly infectious, novel virus. It is called a ‘novel’ coronavirus because this new strain has not been previously identified in humans. At the time of the thesis submission to the university (2020-11-30), there was no vaccine available for preventing COVID-19 (WHO, 2020a) although nine vaccines were in the clinical trial phases (Forbes, 2020). Vaccines are genetic measures that present immunity against specific diseases by stimulating a response from the body’s immune system (Stevens et al., 2017).

It was first believed that the virus emerged in late November 2019 in the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan, a livestock market (Bäuerle et al., 2020), but recent research has revealed that this was not the case (Letzter, 2020). Although the Huanan Seafood Market may have been the site where the first person spread the virus, the virus could not transmit from animal to human without the animals carrying the virus, and no traces of the virus were found in animals at the time (Letzter, 2020).

It is believed that the virus is spread mainly through droplets, saliva or discharge from the nose or mouth when an infected person coughs or sneezes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Because the virus is transmitted from human to human, it started spreading at an unprecedented rate, reaching a peak in infections in many countries early to mid-2020.

4.3 BACKGROUND TO COVID-19

The highly infectious coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, referred to as COVID-19 spread rapidly and on 11 March 2020, the WHO declared it a pandemic of unprecedented magnitude (Nabi, 2020). The resulting health and socioeconomic crises lead to the greatest health and financial disaster since the Great Depression (Rappepoer & Smialek, 2020; Wallace & Rees, 2020).

Not only did the pandemic have an overwhelming impact on the world of work and people's mental health and well-being (The Economist, 2020d) but it also had catastrophic consequences for freedom of movement (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Stephany et al., 2020) and globalisation ("Has COVID-19 Killed Globalisation?", 2020). In addition, COVID-19 caused a collapse of world economies because billions of people were in some form of lockdown or quarantine (Van Hoof, 2020), while millions of individuals died and lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

Abkowitz (2008), author of *Operational Risk Management*, poses the question, "With all the knowledge, skills, and technology available in the world, how is it possible for a disaster to cause such devastation?" (p. 1). According to the author, the more that people think about this question, the more anxious and fearful they become of the world. Disasters can be classified as man-made accidents, terrorist acts and natural disasters (Abkowitz, 2008). According to the author, man-made disasters are "the results of human action or inaction that starts a chain of events leading to a catastrophic outcome" (p. 2). Abkowitz (2008), identifies "economic pressures, inadequate training, not following appropriate procedures, lack of planning and preparedness, communication failure, arrogance; and stifling political agendas" as ingredients in a "recipe for disaster" (p. 3).

On 20 March 2020, the total cases worldwide were reported to be 246 054 cases and 10 049 deaths (Anon., 2020). On the same day, South Africa reported only 150 cases with no deaths. On 15 March, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a National State of Disaster and on 23 March, he announced a nationwide lockdown starting at midnight 26 March 2020 (SA News, 2020) to help 'flatten the curve' and to prepare the national healthcare system for the influx of infected patients (Joska et al., 2020). This resulted in an international travel ban from 18 March 2020, which caused the closure of land ports and two seaports. In addition, a general ban on gatherings of 100 people or more was implemented. According to the Disaster Management Act, No. 57 of 2002, a National State of Disaster is a "natural or human-caused occurrence that causes disease, damage to property, infrastructure or the environment or disruption of the life of a community" (South Africa. Disaster Management Act, 2002, p. 6)

On 18 April 2020, the total number of positive COVID-19 infections passed 2 160 207 cases, with 146 088 deaths in 213 countries (Anon., 2020). These numbers continued to increase so drastically that by 27 May (five and a half weeks later), these numbers

had almost doubled to 5 451 532 confirmed cases and 345 751 deaths in 217 countries (Anon., 2020). On 11 November 2020 (the time of finalising this research), there were 51 861 437 confirmed cases and 1 280 549 deaths worldwide (Anon., 2020).

South Africa experienced its peak in infections during the month of July 2020 when on average, between 6 000 and 8 000 new cases were being reported daily, with the country recording 205 721 confirmed cases on 7 July 2020 (Anon., 2020). On 29 July 2020, the highest number of daily infections was recorded, which was 11 362 cases (Department of Health, 2020b). By mid-August 2020, the number of daily infections began to decline as the peak of the pandemic was reached, and the daily infection rate decreased to approximately 2 500 new cases per day. On 18 August 2020, confirmed cases surpassed 589 886, causing South Africa to be listed fifth on the world ranking of countries with the most infections. Only the USA, Brazil, India and Russia were listed above South Africa (Anon., 2020).

4.4 MEASURES IMPLEMENTED TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

When the first cases of people infected with the coronavirus were reported globally, governments and organisations encouraged people to practice social distancing, to limit public gatherings, to wash their hands regularly and to wear cloth masks. As the number of reported cases increased, additional voluntary preventative measures were proposed by governments and businesses such as sanitising workspaces and introducing remote working arrangements (Benke et al., 2020; Bubear, 2020). However, as the number of infections started to increase rapidly towards the end of March 2020, many countries began to implement strict compulsory preventative measures (Nicola et al., 2020), which involved over 100 countries closing their schools and universities. A study conducted by researchers from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health to understand the impact of future coronavirus transmissions reported that keeping stringent hygiene, social distancing and various isolation measures in place will be vital for at least the next two years (until 2022) or until an effective vaccine has been developed (Kissler et al., 2020).

4.4.1 Remote working

Organisations worldwide implemented various measures to minimise the number of employees at work at any given time. These measures included “rotations, staggered working hours, shift systems, remote working arrangements” (Sangoni, 2020, para. 3) as alternatives for employees to continue earning an income, albeit from home. Many employers and employees were in favour of remote working due to its many advantages such as creating a work-life balance, reducing various costs and improving productivity. However, there were also many negative consequences such as the risk of professional isolation and even unequal distribution of work and opportunities in teams, departments and industries during remote working conditions (Sangoni, 2020), which significantly affected some employees’ well-being (Grant et al., 2013).

Although there is limited research available on the impact of remote working conditions on the PWB of employees and despite many employees demanding flexible working conditions, the implications of a disengaged and disconnected workforce cannot be disregarded. Grant et al. (2013) point out that although remote working can reduce fatigue and stress through, for example, no longer being exposed to traffic congestion, it may contribute to work overload due to ‘overlap’ between work and home and thus reduce many of the positive benefits that working from home claims to have.

4.4.2 Stringent hygiene

For some people, the government’s instructions of washing hands for 22 seconds, maintaining hygienic surfaces and refraining from touching the nose and mouth came as no surprise, but for others living in distress and absolute poverty, this came as an almost impossible request. People living in extreme poverty in unhygienic conditions and confined spaces without running water and sufficient sanitation found it extremely challenging to adhere to the health protocols.

4.4.3 Social distancing

Social distancing involves avoiding close contact with people to limit the spread of the virus. This includes no hugging, no handshaking and avoiding any form of touching to show affection or good intentions. In addition, social distancing was introduced as a

measure to avoid overcrowding in public areas and to keep people from being in close contact with someone who may be a carrier of the virus. Moreover, social distancing was implemented to encourage people to stay in their homes and where possible, to work from home. (Benke et al., 2020).

Organisations implemented social distancing to encourage separation of staff, particularly in public areas of the building and to avoid sharing of offices spaces. Mass social gatherings for meetings, funerals, weddings, birthdays, etc. had to be cancelled and were considered prohibited unless permission was obtained from a government department for the gathering to take place with less than 50 people. Virtual communication using information technology (IT) applications such as Zoom or Skype have become the 'new normal' since the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.4.4 Isolation and quarantine

Lockdown is an unknown and unfamiliar concept to South Africans and Germans since never before in the history of both these countries has a lockdown been implemented. In South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa called for the lockdown to commence on 27 March 2020 and referred to it as unprecedented (SA News, 2020). Germany's Chancellor Merkel made a call to stay at home (Marcus, 2020) when she announced a contact ban on the 23 March 2020 (Eckner, 2020).

On 11 March 2020, the WHO (Brandswell, 2020) declared the rapidly spreading coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) a pandemic. Following this announcement, many European countries such as Italy, Spain and France started implementing quarantine measures to contain the virus, which included a nationwide 'lockdown'. Quarantine is regarded as one of several public health measures that can be implemented to assist in the prevention of the spread of the virus (Brooks et al., 2020). However, countries without curfews and strict isolation protocols such as Japan, South Korea, Germany and Sweden have not experienced more negative health outcomes than countries such as South Africa that implemented draconic measures (McKie, 2020).

Quarantine refers to the "separation and restriction of movement of people who have potentially been exposed to a contagious disease to ascertain if they become unwell, so reducing the risk the risk of them infecting others" (Brooks et al., 2020,), whereas

isolation (similar to lockdown) refers to “the separation of people who have been diagnosed with a contagious disease from people who are not sick” (p. 912). According to Lindsay Wiley (2020), a health law professor at the Washington College of Law, a lockdown is “anything from mandatory geographic quarantines to non-mandatory recommendations to stay at home, closure of certain types of businesses, or bans on events and gathering” (Secon et al., 2020, para. 3).

Figure 4.2 illustrates that approximately 2.6 billion people worldwide were in some type of lockdown or quarantine during April 2020 (Van Hoof, 2020).

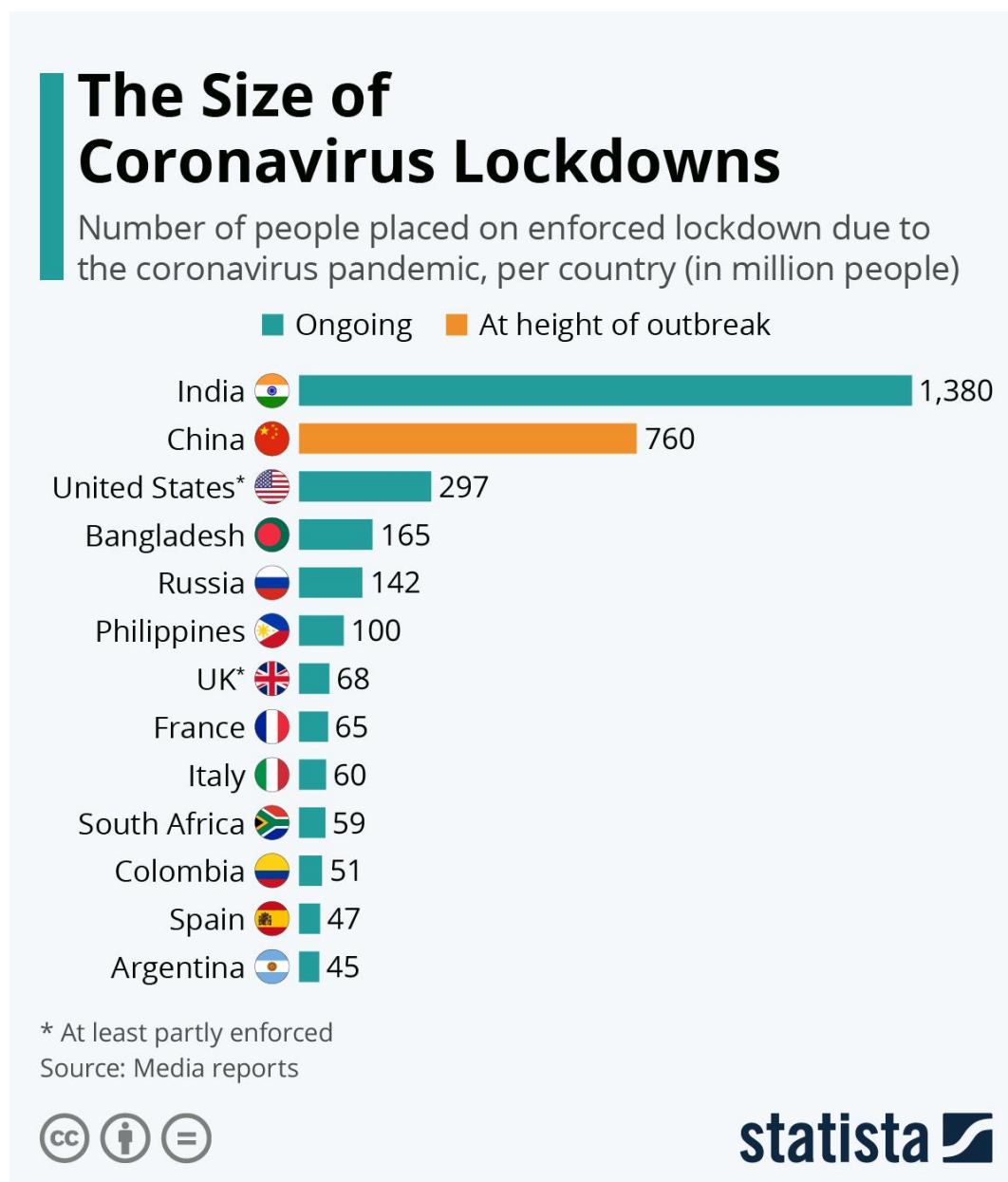


Figure 4.2: Estimated size of lockdowns around the world

Source: Buchholz, 2020; Van Hoof, 2020, para. 5

Imposed quarantine or isolation is an unfamiliar and unpleasant experience (Benke et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020) because it causes separation from support structures such as family and friends and leads to a loss of freedom and daily routines. While Usher et al. (2020) state that isolation is known for causing psychosocial harm, a research study conducted by Brooks et al. (2020) to “establish the psychological impact of quarantine on the mental health and psychological well-being on individuals” (p. 912) found that there are several negative psychological effects of quarantine including “post-traumatic stress symptoms, confusion and anger” (p. 912). In addition, Brooks et al. (2020) found “longer quarantine duration, infection fears, frustration, boredom, inadequate supplies, inadequate information, financial loss, and stigma” to be the most significant aspects that lead to heightened levels of stress during quarantine (p. 912).

Various authors (e.g. Benke et al., 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2020) conducted research to establish the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on individuals. The study conducted by Grover et al. (2020) found that 38.2% of participants reported experiences of anxiety, while 10.5% showed symptoms of depression. Overall, 40.5% of the participants experienced either anxiety or depression because of the lockdown and 71.7% reported poor well-being during the lockdown. The findings of Branley-Bell and Talbot (2020) complement the findings of Grover et al. (2020) and Saltzman et al. (2020) who argue that the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown negatively influenced the PWB of individuals because they demanded self-control and isolation, which produced low feelings of social support. Furthermore, the study conducted by Kimhi et al. (2020) found that the significant degree of uncertainty that characterises the COVID-19 pandemic causes notable increases in “anxiety and distress symptoms” (p. 10).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified the following emotional reactions after quarantine:

- “Mixed emotions, including relief after quarantine
- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Stress from the experience of monitoring yourself or being monitored by others for signs and symptoms of COVID-19

- Sadness, anger, or frustration because friends or loved ones have unfounded fears of contracting the disease from contact with you, even though you have been determined not to be contagious
- Guilt about not being able to perform normal work or parenting duties during quarantine and mental and health changes” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020, para. 11).

Although the above measures were found to be effective in slowing the spread of the virus, a report from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public health warned that prolonged measures such as social distancing, even if applied intermittently, may have “profound negative economic, social and educational consequences” (Kissler et al., 2020, p. 868).

4.5 EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic not only resulted in many behavioural and lifestyle changes but also reshaped people’s working lives and finances significantly (Polakovic, 2020). During Level 5 lockdown in South Africa, severe restrictions were placed on public movements. In addition, certain items were declared essential items and were available for purchase, while the selling and buying of other items such as alcohol and tobacco were strictly prohibited. Although these restrictions caused major disruptions in people’s lives (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020), they not only assisted in ‘flattening the curve’ but also contributed to improving public safety in South Africa (Newham & Du Plessis, 2020). According to Usher et al. (2020), the restrictions not only disrupted familiar aspects of people’s daily lives (Benke et al., 2020) but also complicated aspects of life that were previously regarded as simple and uncomplicated. While some authors argue that the world may never be the same again (Eckner, 2020; Ghai, 2020; Heesterbeek, 2020; Shaman & Galanti, 2020; Wan & Johnson, 2020), several experts argue that people will need to adjust to the ‘new normal’ (Meister, 2020; National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020b).

Non-pharmaceutical measures such as case isolation, school closures, banning of mass gatherings and public events, and restrictions on movement seems to limit the spread of the virus (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020b; Gollwitzer et

al., 2020). However, due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, nobody knows how long these restrictions will have to remain in place, if the restrictions must be extended, intensified or relaxed. A study conducted by Gollwitzer et al. (2020) to investigate how the general public in Germany reacted to the various lockdown scenarios found that although most of the respondents endorsed and complied with the lockdown policies, they were sceptical about extensions and/or intensifications of the restrictions. Most respondents were displeased about the possibility of ongoing mobility restrictions and distancing rules. The results of the study suggest that by further extending restrictions a larger portion of the German population will become resistant which may reduce compliance to social distancing measures (Gollwitzer et al., 2020).

Germany is able to limit the spread of the virus through their advanced health care system that facilitates early-stage identification and widespread testing (Bilal et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures created far-reaching consequences particularly for different social groups in Germany due to an increase in the demand for “practical help, childcare, financial aid, and emotional support” (Bertogg & Koos, 2021, p.1).

The UN (2020b) and the WHO (2020c) cautioned societies that the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic such as lifestyle changes (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020), limitations regarding freedom of movement (Khoo & Lantos, 2020) and economic turmoil (Cele, 2020) may leave citizens scarred for generations to come (Wiederhold, 2020). According to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases, a great concern is that South Africans have developed a new condition referred to as “Coronavirus Burnout and Pandemic Fatigue” (National Institute for Communicable Diseases, 2020b, para. 4).

4.5.1 Effect of COVID-19 on mental well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic and the different forms and levels of restrictions as preventative measures posed significant risks for individuals' mental health (Joska et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020; Pancani et al., 2021; Usher et al., 2020), including anxiety, mental distress, and depression (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020). A study conducted by

Benke et al. (2020) to examine the effects of quarantine on anxiety and depression found that lockdown measures severely increase psychological distress. Moreover, Kimhi et al. (2020) identified 'anxiety' as the most critical negative factor affecting the psychological health and well-being of people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kim et al. (2020) found that South Africa's lockdown caused serious harm to individuals' mental health, leading to "potent experiences of anxiety, financial insecurity, fear of infection and rumination" (p. 1). Benke et al. (2020) found the stay-at-home measures in Germany caused "enhanced levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms, fearful spells, enhanced psychosocial distress and loneliness including lower life-satisfaction" (p. 5). Furthermore, a study conducted by Petzold et al. (2020) found that German individuals spent several hours a day thinking, also called ruminating, about the COVID-19 pandemic, causing increased levels of anxiety and depression.

A study conducted by Saltzman et al. (2020) found that social support not only plays a vital role in mental well-being but also acts as a predictor of resilience following disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also found that because of social distancing and lockdown, isolation and loneliness will affect populations' mental well-being in the future. However, social support and community ties play a critical role in mental health recovery.

As physical symptoms and psychological states are interlinked, negative emotions such as frustration, anger and anxiety (Bagraim et al., 2016) may contribute to stomach ulcers, and as soon as the physical symptoms become evident in individuals, their psychological state is heightened by additional anxiety and worry over the physical symptoms (Robbins et al., 2016).

- **Headline stress:** A psychologist, Dr Steven Stosny (2017), identified a new psychological disorder called "headline stress disorder", which causes a patient to feel anxious and stressed due to overexposure to news and media reports (Dong & Zheng, 2020, para. 1). According to Dr Stosny, this condition may lead to "anxiety disorders, depression, mental diseases and physical diseases, including hypertension" (para. 1).
- **Stressors during and post isolation:** According to research conducted by Brooks et al. (2020), people are severely affected by the fear of contracting

the virus in addition to feelings of frustration and boredom due to loss of usual routines and reduced social and physical contact during isolation. Also, people experience significant frustration when they only have access to what the government deems 'essential items' during isolation. Moreover, people are regularly subjected to inaccurate and false information, causing more fear and anxiety about the virus (Marr, 2020). The researchers also found that post-isolation people experience extreme financial stress due to either a true or a potential loss of income. Finally, post-isolation patients often report stigmatisation after being quarantined for contracting the virus.

- **Family stress** (children not going to school): In 2020, South African school children missed a significant number of school days due to social distancing measures implemented at schools nationwide (Van der Berg, 2020). The situation placed great responsibility on working parents to home-school their children with technology while working from home (Goldschmidt, 2020). A greater concern is that almost one million children in South Africa below the age of six years have no adult caregiver except for a parent who needs to work to support the family (Van der Berg, 2020).
- **No hospital visits during COVID-19 pandemic:** Government hospitals announced at the start of lockdown that no hospital visits were allowed. In addition to these measures, only patients who presented with a life-threatening emergency were allowed in hospital. This situation was very traumatic, particularly for family members who were not even permitted to say farewell to a dying loved one.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic not only severely affected the mental well-being of individuals but also infringed on individuals' basic human rights.

4.5.2 Effect of COVID-19 on basic human rights

South Africa's Constitution contains the Bill of Rights in Chapter 2, which informs the human rights of citizens. These rights are the right to freedom and security, human dignity, personal privacy, freedom of expression and education, amongst other rights. Many of the protocols and regulations implemented by the South African government during the COVID-19 lockdown period infringed on people's right to freedom. For

example, the South African government implemented regulations that determined which products were regarded as essential items, which industries were allowed to operate and which times people were allowed out of their homes for exercise and carrying out 'essential chores'. All these draconic decisions constrained people's freedom in a democratic state, specifically infringement on freedom of movement, freedom of choice and freedom of privacy.

The COVID-19 pandemic and consequent regulations posed a severe risk to public order. In South Africa, between July 2020 and August 2020, people started to become violent, looting stores and trucks and disregarding lockdown rules because they believed their livelihoods were at risk (Roelf, 2020). Communities became frustrated with the long-term implications of lockdown regulations that significantly affected their ability to feed their families, secure their jobs and access the healthcare systems. Also, when people felt that their right to freedom of choice was being violated, they become angry and frustrated and started violent protests to protect their basic human rights. Moreover, citizens began to believe that the government was causing unnecessary fear and panic amongst the people, which escalated the situation and led to much litigation and strikes, particularly in support of lifting the alcohol and cigarette bans (BusinessTech, 2020; Isaacs, 2020).

The coronavirus posed a significant threat to civil rights in Germany, which are a major consideration after World War II and during the drafting of the German Constitution in 1948/49. The banning of small gatherings and implementation of various preventative measures to slow the spread of the virus severely affected the fundamental rights of citizens ensured by the Constitution (Eckner, 2020). According to the author, this caused many German people to become fearful. German-British sociologist, Ralf Dahrendorf, who believed in the importance of democracy and freedom once said, "I've never become comfortable with a concept of responsibility that prompts us to give up freedom, so that future generations can get back. Whoever begins to abridge freedom has renounced and forfeited it" (Eckner, 2020, para. 9).

Many of the rights enshrined in the Constitution and related legislations regarding labour relations are implemented to protect the rights of workers and, therefore, it is important to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the workplace.

4.5.3 Effect of COVID-19 on workplaces

The Occupational Health and Safety Act, No. 85 of 1993 (OHSA) states that employers have a duty to employees to provide safe working systems and machinery, to develop safe production processes and to eliminate hazards. This duty includes not permitting employees to perform dangerous tasks unless precautionary measures are in place, thus ensuring the health and safety of all employees (Finnemore & Joubert, 2013).

Employee safety, health and wellness are all critical issues, and it must be ensured that employees are not endangered or exposed to health and safety risks because of being unprepared or untrained in certain conditions at the workplace. Organisations are responsible for creating and maintaining working conditions that are free from avoidable hazards that can lead to injury, illness or death (Sieberhagen et al., 2011; South Africa, 1993).

The worldwide isolation measures caused major lifestyle changes, particularly changes that affected workplace protocols. For example, videoconferencing and webinars became many organisations' new reality since the outbreak of COVID-19. According to Apptopia, Zoom registered 600 000 downloads on 22 March 2020 compared with 343 000 downloads the week before and 90 000 downloads two months prior to that (Alam, 2020).

Moreover, lines between private life and work life were being blurred significantly with the invasion of video conferencing in homes and during all times of the day. The 24/7 access to technology kept people continuously connected to their work. According to Meister (2020), COVID-19 was becoming the "accelerator for one of the greatest workplace transformations of our lifetime" (para. 3).

4.5.4 Effect of COVID-19 on families of lower socioeconomic status

Throughout history, the SES of a population has been linked to its health. Various studies including these authors Adler (1954) and McNaughton et al. (2012) have demonstrated that individuals in the lower socioeconomic classes have the highest rate of morbidity and mortality and that rural populations experience lower socio-economic activity and educational attainment. Early evidence corroborates the findings of these prior studies and shows that economic and social consequences of

the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown have disproportionately affected disadvantaged societies (Arndt et al., 2020; Bertogg & Koos, 2021). A study conducted by Bertogg and Koos (2021) to investigate the socio-economic position and local solidarity in times of crisis in Germany found that the pandemic and consequential lockdown measures have had diverse consequences for vulnerable groups. According to the results of the study, about one in two people in Germany provided some type of assistance during the first lockdown until early May 2020. Furthermore, one fourth of all assistance arrangements in the country had not been in place before the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the research conducted by Ananat and Gassman-Pines (2020) in their article “The effect of work experiences on worker and family well-being”, parents and children have experienced a decline in their mental health since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly in poor countries such as South Africa with high unemployment rates (Stats SA, 2020b, 2020c; Tradingeconomics.com, 2020) and inequality (Gelb, 2004; Keeton, 2014; Sulla & Zikhali, 2018), isolation is often carried out in cramped and confined living conditions. Moreover, surveys conducted by Stats SA found an increase in hunger (Arndt et al., 2020) since the beginning of lockdown due to many employees losing their employment and children no longer having access to free school meals (Stats SA, 2020b). Moreover, a report on the poverty levels in South Africa (UNICEF, 2020) found that 62.1% of children in South Africa are from “multidimensionally poor” families. This means that on average, children in South Africa suffer from deprivation of four of the seven basic needs, “water, sanitation and hygiene, housing, nutrition, protection, health, child development and information” (p. 2).

4.5.5 Effect of COVID-19 on relationships

The recent study conducted by Grover et al. (2020) reported various positive improvements in relationship dimensions due to lockdown. According to the findings, 47% of participants reported an improvement in their relationship with their spouse or partner, while 44% reported an improvement in the relationships with their children. Furthermore, 47% of participants reported an improvement in the relationships with their parents and astoundingly high percentages reported an improvement in their relationships with their neighbours (61.8%) and their colleagues (59.6%). The authors

argue that improvement in relationships could be due to availability of more free time, reduced work stress and fulfilment of long-desired interruption in responsibility. Grover et al. (2020) also contend that the 'we are in this together' mindset placed less emphasis on interpersonal relationships, leading to less conflict and thus enhanced relationships (p. 355).

Conversely, Joseph (2011) argues that when people struggle to cope with change, they often become distressed, causing relationships to suffer. Moreover, various studies found an increase in domestic violence during times of distress (Hamadani et al., 2020; Joska et al., 2020; Newham & Du Plessis, 2020; The Economist, 2020b; UNWomen, 2020a).

4.5.6 Effect of COVID-19 on crime and domestic violence

Official statistics show that the scale of violent crime declined significantly during the early stages of the pandemic in many big cities (The Economist, 2020b) because potential perpetrators and victims were being kept off the streets (The Economist, 2020a). In contrast, other authors demonstrate a significant increase in domestic violence as a result of lockdown (Hamadani et al., 2020; Joska et al., 2020; Newham & Du Plessis, 2020; The Economist, 2020b; UNWomen, 2020a). For example, between 16 March 2020 and 22 March 2020, crime in New York City dropped by 17%, with a similar figure reported in the Netherlands (Newham & Du Plessis, 2020). During Level 5 of lockdown in South Africa, the heightened levels of police presence and military interventions contributed to a significant reduction in crime (Minister Bheki Cele, 2020; Mothata, 2020; Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), 2020). In a media briefing on 22 April 2020, Police Minister Bheki Cele reported a significant reduction in crime during the Level 5 lockdown in South Africa (Mothata, 2020). According to his report, car hijackings decreased by 80.9%, business robberies by 65.5% and residential robberies by 53.8%. Additionally, the Police Minister reported that rape was down from 699 in 2019 to 101 in 2020 (comparing the first week of lockdown to the same period in 2019). Moreover, serious assault cases were down from 2 673 cases in 2019 to 456 cases in 2020, and murders decreased from 326 cases in 2019 to 94 cases during the same period of the Level 5 lockdown (Mothata, 2020).

Conversely, Joska et al. (2020) argue that globally and in South Africa, there has been an increase in gender-based and domestic violence since the implementation of lockdown. According to the authors, during the first week of lockdown in South Africa, there were 87 000 reported cases of domestics and interpersonal violence.

According to the Institute for Security Studies, “alcohol is a major contributor to inter-domestic violence in SA” and, therefore, the prohibition of sales is argued to reduce violent incidences (Newham & Du Plessis, 2020, para. 10). However, some psychologists disagree with this view, arguing that addicts could experience heightened levels of stress that could lead to increased levels of conflict and violence.

Nonetheless, the banning of alcohol for 14 weeks in South Africa had major ramifications for the wine industry. For example, R7.5 billion in revenue and between 18 000 and 21 000 jobs were lost in this industry as a result of the ban (Allcock, 2020; Palm, 2020). Various other industries also suffered significant job losses (Stephany et al., 2020; UN, 2020a).

4.5.7 Effect of COVID-19 on employment

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on various business sectors such as airlines, hotels, restaurants, the hair and beauty industry, entertainment and many others (Stephany et al., 2020). Since many of these industries are unable to work remotely, they experienced a complete shutdown of their operations in South Africa until lockdown Level 3. This situation forced many businesses to cease operations permanently or to file for bankruptcy. According to the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, 3 million South Africans lost their employment during the COVID-19 pandemic (Tswana, 2020) compared with Germany that did not record a significant decline in employment (Institute of Labor Economics, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a significant risk to employment, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, travel and transport. Moreover, the pandemic will steer a new era of air travel once the industry completely emerges from the crisis (Whitley, 2020). According to Whitley (2020), in April 2020, almost two-thirds of the world’s 26 000 passenger aircrafts were grounded, which caused many airlines to declare bankruptcy by May 2020 (Slotnick, 2020). The *BBC News* forecast that the ramifications of the travel restrictions implemented during 2020 would cause the travel

sector worldwide to decline by up to 25% (“Virus Could Cost Millions of Tourism Jobs,” 2020) as hundreds of planes were grounded and dozens of cruise liners were docked in harbours (Lombrana, 2020). In addition, the global travel and tourism market predicted 50 million job losses worldwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Lock, 2020). According to Lock (2020), many tourism stakeholders believe that the tourism industry will take up to ten months to recover from this set back. In addition, new travel and health restrictions could make travel burdensome and infringe on people’s privacy (Whitley, 2020), which could prompt people to reassess the need to fly and rather use remote video conferencing.

A study by Ananat and Gassman-Pines (2020) found that the outbreak of the pandemic not only caused major job losses but also led to severe reductions in work hours. More concerning is the fact that of the people who lost their employment, most were working hourly services with no or low level qualifications (Ananat & Gassman-Pines, 2020).

4.5.8 Effect of COVID-19 on the economy

Nicola et al. (2020) state that the COVID-19 pandemic affected communities, businesses and organisations globally. According to Nicola et al. (2020), “uncoordinated governmental responses” to the global pandemic not only disrupted the supply of goods and services but also decreased the demand for goods and services (p. 187). While saving lives was the main priority worldwide, one should not forget that economic collapse can also have catastrophic health risks (Khoo & Lantos, 2020). The Global Economic Manifesto reiterates the importance of the obligation of employers towards “humanising the functioning of the global economy” (Khoo & Lantos, 2020, p. 2).

The outbreak of COVID-19 affected certain industries more severely than others. For example, bars, shops, restaurants and gyms were immediately shutdown and were only able to open on Level 2 of the South African lockdown, which was during mid-September 2020, while other industries such as cinemas and international aviation could only resume business on Level 1 of the lockdown.

Germany as a leading industrial economy in Western Europe, has been relatively successful at managing the pandemic (Dao & Mineshima, 2021) although its economy has also been severely affected (Bilal et al., 2020). Millions of employees had to reduce

their working hours, became unemployed or dependent on financial support from the government (Bertogg & Koos, 2021). The short-time work grant or 'Kurzarbeit' as it is known provides substantial support to retain jobs and to stabilise incomes (Dao & Mineshima, 2021).

According to a report by the UN (UNWomen, 2020) on *The impact of COVID-19 on violence against woman and girls and service provision*, the closure of businesses and industries placed an increased financial strain on communities, particularly on the populations that are already vulnerable. The report highlighted that due to gender inequality, women are more likely to be employed in "lower-paid, part-time and informal employment" and are, therefore, less protected from the impact of economic recession in times of crisis (p. 9).

4.5.9 Effect of COVID-19 on technology

Worldwide, people gained their knowledge about the pandemic through various forms of technology, for example, social media, video conferencing, virtual news channels, Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Never before during a disaster of this magnitude have people depended to such an extent on IT and social media to keep them informed and connected. Goldschmidt (2020) agrees with this view by stating during the pandemic there is a growing reliance on the use of technology to "learn, live and stay connected" (p. 88). Saltzman et al. (2020) noted that during the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals make use of technology to guard against loneliness and isolation while social networks play a key role in promoting resilience to stress and trauma. Guest (2017) point out that even though technology can be beneficial because it leads to automation of routine activities, creates opportunities to work remotely, and provides greater access to information, technology also presents significant challenges to employee-well-being including work overload and home intrusion.

4.5.10 Effect of COVID-19 on information services

At the outbreak of the coronavirus disease, fake news began flooding social media and creating confusion and panic worldwide. Many governments have since banned the

spread of fake news and declared this practice a criminal offence that is punishable by law.

However, physical and social distancing caused many people to experience “boredom, loneliness and anger, amongst other emotions” (Wiederhold, 2020, p. 2). During this time of self-isolation, people worldwide depended on social media and technology to keep them connected to the outside world. According to Wiederhold (2020), “information seeking in the face of danger can be an adaptive behaviour” (p. 2). It allows people to look for ways to make them feel safe and secure (Maslow’s hierarchy of needs) in a time of uncertainty. The WHO coined a new term, ‘infodemic’, which refers to “an overabundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it” (WHO, 2020a).

Although many studies reported on the various negative aspects of the pandemic, a study conducted by Grover et al. (2020) reported on the positive aspects, which included improvement to air quality, healing of nature, people’s realisation of the importance of social support, and improvement in relationship dimensions.

4.6 THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

As seen above and according to recent studies on COVID-19 that establish the mental impact of the pandemic on well-being (Chew et al., 2020; Deb et al., 2020; Hamm et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2020), the psychosocial responses to the pandemic can have significant mental health consequences (Chew et al., 2020; Gurvich et al., 2020). Moreover, Ornell et al. (2020) concluded that people’s mental health was more severely affected by the pandemic than by the viral disease. Moreover, according to Ornell et al. (2020), mental health consequences often last longer and affect more people, and the psychosocial and economic consequences can be incomprehensible if one considers these consequences in various contexts. Evidence from the study of Chew et al. (2020) indicated that widespread themes in psychosocial responses include anxiety and fear, depressive symptoms, post-traumatic stress symptoms, stigmatisation, abandonment and isolation. In addition, positive changes lead to a greater sense of empowerment and compassion towards others (Chew et al., 2020) and generate coping mechanisms

(Chew et al., 2020; Gurvich et al., 2020; Ornell et al., 2020) needed to deal with adversities such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.6.1 Impact on the future of work

A research study conducted by Future Workplace amongst 350 human resource leaders in the USA “to establish the impact of the coronavirus in the workplace” found that organisations are investing in the training of staff to work remotely, making worker well-being a priority and using COVID-19 as an opportunity to reinvent business operations (Meister, 2020, para. 1).

4.6.2 Discovering new ways of doing things

The coronavirus pandemic is transforming the way that people live and conduct their business (Meister, 2020). According to Meister (2020), the crisis will lead to an acceleration of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) as people are forced to depend on “smart technology such as artificial intelligence and mobile supercomputing” (para. 3). The pandemic has not only caused organisations to rethink their products and services but also how they deliver their products and services to customers and clients. This re-thinking initiates transformation strategies regarding the role of the organisation in leading its human resources to implement remote working, in re-skilling its human resources to deal with IT challenges while working from home (Guest, 2017) and in recruiting people based on their positive psychological capacities such as hope, optimism, self-efficacy and resilience (Meister, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many organisations to rethink working from home. Benefits such as automation of routines, reduced commuting times, lowered air pollution as a result of limited travel and reduced operational costs (Guest, 2017) caused employers such as Twitter and Square to implement remote working conditions permanently while Google and Facebook are implementing this option until the end of 2020 (Brownlee, 2020). However, there are risks involved in working remotely that many organisations have not substantially investigated such as maintaining an organisational culture and team cohesiveness while working remotely, overcoming collaboration challenges due to the physical distance, productivity loss due to

disengagement, and differentiating customer service expectations (certain customers may still prefer personal contact) (Brownlee, 2020) that affect work-related well-being (Guest, 2017).

4.7 COPING MECHANISMS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Chew et al. (2020) conducted a narrative synthesis on 144 literature papers to establish the psychosocial impact of several pandemics on the well-being of citizens, including the coping mechanisms used in previous pandemics. The authors demonstrated that various coping mechanisms were used to deal with the different pandemics such as applying problem-solving techniques, conducting positive appraisals, seeking social support and employing emotion-focused coping mechanisms such as distraction, denial and avoidance. However, the most practical responses for dealing with the current COVID-19 pandemic included gaining access to psychological help, self-care, establishing support groups and seeking engagement with reliable information sources (Chew et al., 2020). Furthermore, the authors are of the opinion that while problem-solving mechanisms reduce sadness, emotion-focused mechanisms such as avoidance, acceptance and denial could be more favourable in uncontrollable and unfamiliar situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Chew et al., 2020).

4.8 SUMMARY

Chapter 4 provided a background to the COVID-19 pandemic that caused a complete shutdown of non-essential services and operations worldwide, particularly during the peak infection period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter discussed the various strategies implemented by governments and organisations to limit the exponential rise in infections while protecting the livelihoods of societies. Measures such as remote working, stringent hygienic conditions and social distancing were discussed in depth. In addition, the purpose of isolation and quarantine that included total lockdown in many countries was considered.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed in terms of their impact on the following: individuals' mental well-being, basic human rights, human resources and workplace practices, families of lower socioeconomic income status, crime,

employment, the economy and technology. Finally, the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic were discussed in terms of the future world of work.

The chapter highlighted the devastating impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on people's livelihoods and will continue to have long after the pandemic. It is clear from the discussion that societies will have to adjust to an altered reality and adapt their lifestyles to live with the consequences and implications of the pandemic for generations to come.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While chapters 2 and 3 consulted the literature to develop an understanding of the constructs relevant to the research and to support the findings, Chapter 4 provided the context in which the research was conducted and the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic. The context of the study is significant in terms of meaning-making and interpretation of the data. It, therefore, makes sense to follow Chapter 4 with the research methodology chapter that presents the data in the context of Chapter 4 (The COVID-19 Pandemic) in order to make meaningful interpretations and to value the participants' experiences in the context of the pandemic. Chapters 4 and 5 present the essential building blocks for constructing the conceptual framework.

Figure 5.1 is a graphical representation of the layout of Chapter 5 and the topics under discussion in the chapter.

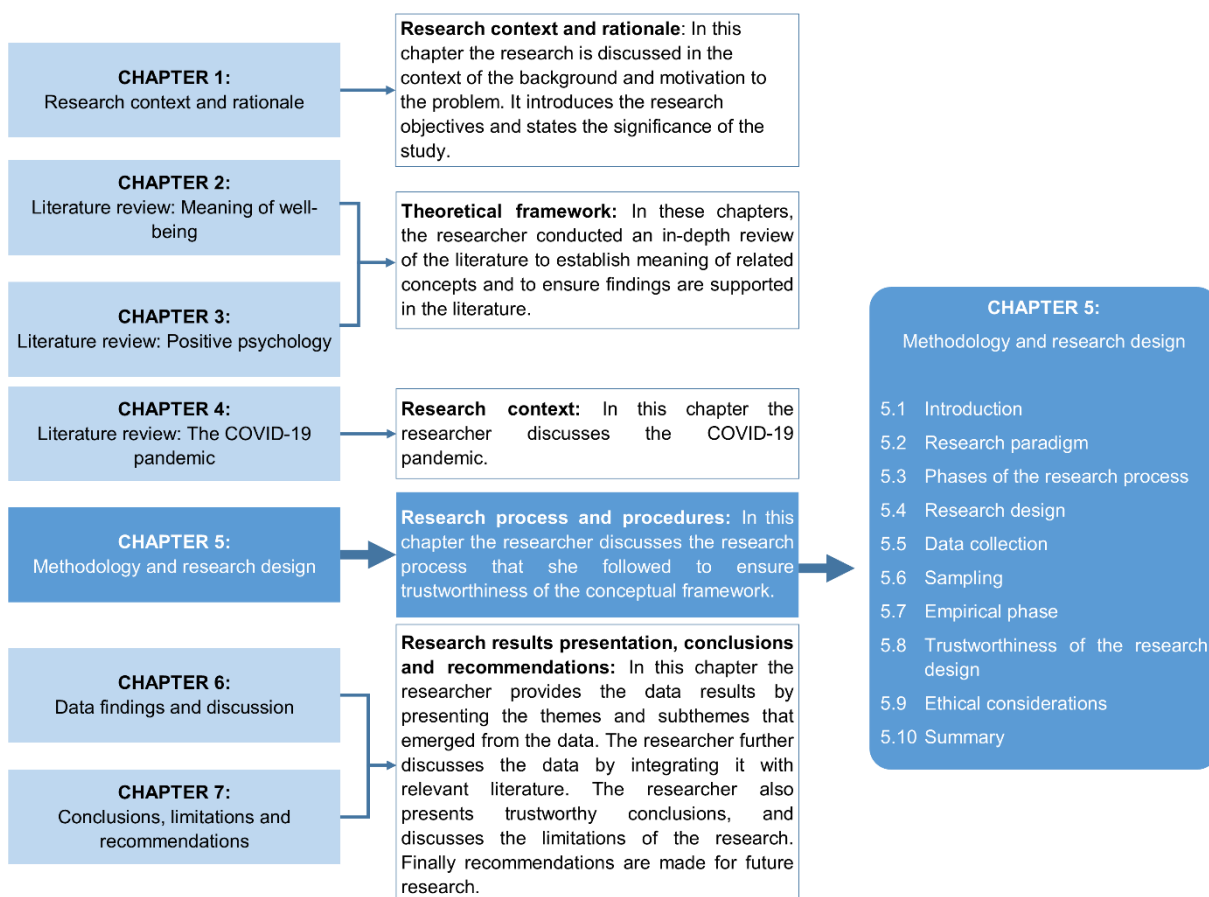


Figure 5.1: Structure of Chapter 5

Source: Author's own compilation

The key objective of this research was to create a framework for well-being by exploring the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from Germany and South Africa in terms of their experiences and the coping mechanisms that they adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, discussion forums were held with the two generational cohorts through focus groups and individual face-to-face interviews using the Zoom application.

The study was conducted within the interpretivist paradigm to relate the experiences in a meaningful manner. The researcher used a qualitative approach to gather data from 29 employees representing six organisations from two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) in Germany and South Africa with focus group discussions. In addition, the researcher gathered data from eight individuals in one-on-one Zoom interviews (n = 37).

The researcher aimed to gather sufficient data to investigate the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic. These narrative accounts were then used to develop a framework that described participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that were adopted to improve their well-being during adversity.

This chapter explains the research design and the methods applied to achieve the research objectives. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the data collection methods, the sampling strategy, the data analysis process and the ethical considerations.

5.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Guba (1990) cited in Creswell (2014) defines worldview as fundamental viewpoints or paradigms that inform the research direction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Creswell (2014), a worldview is “a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to the study” (p. 6). Thus, paradigms refer to different systems of understanding.

For this study, the researcher used an interpretivist, qualitative (grounded theory) research design (Figure 5.2).

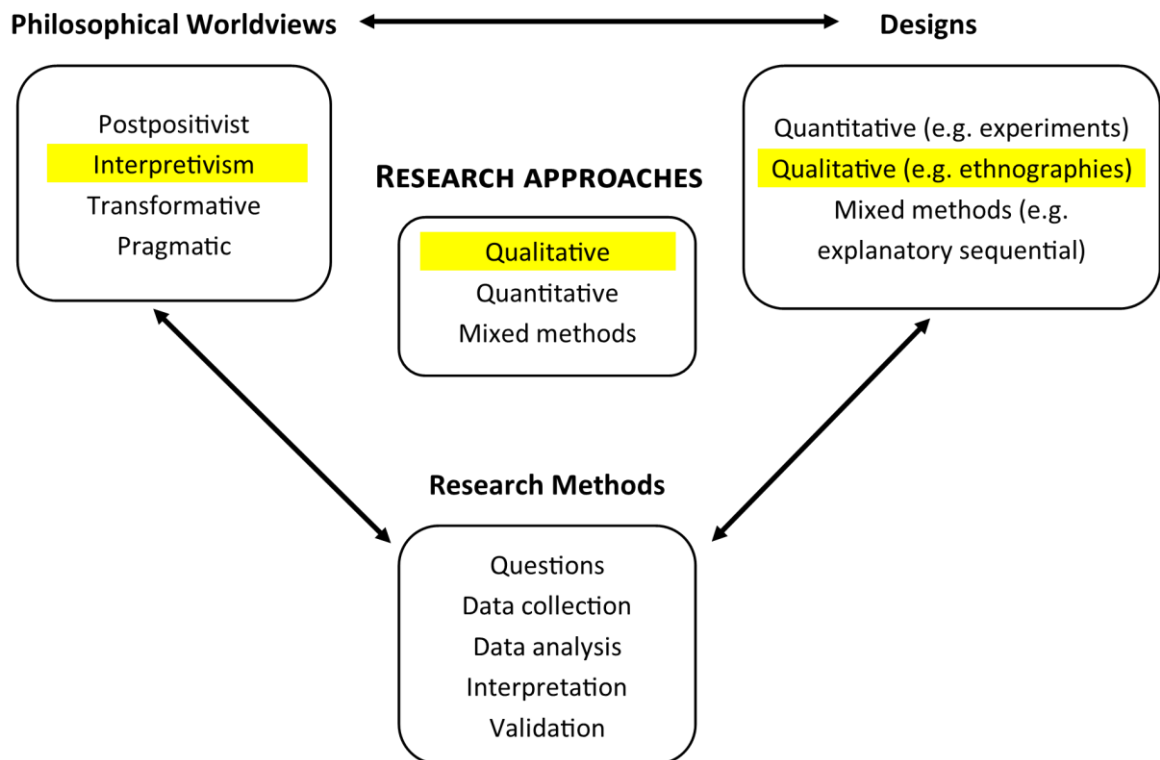


Figure 5.2: A framework for research – the interconnection between worldviews, design and research methods

Source: Creswell, 2014, p. 5

An interpretivist paradigm was selected because the purpose of the research was to construct theory. The researcher applied a holistic approach by integrating flexible guidelines and emergent methods. The qualitative data were collected by means of computer-mediated focus group discussions (asynchronous) and individual interviews (synchronous) with participants from both Germany and South Africa. The interpretivist approach was used to analyse and interpret the collected data and to make trustworthy findings.

5.2.1 Interpretivist paradigm

The researcher applied an interpretivist strategy in combination with aspects of constructivism because the latter focuses on the individual's ability to construct meaning. Although interpretivism is strongly influenced by phenomenology since it recognises the subjective interpretations of human beings and their life experiences,

the researcher recognises, in agreement with the characteristics of the paradigm, that reality is not objectively determined but socially constructed. Furthermore, the interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to apply some of the key features of the interpretivist approach identified by Magnussen and Marecek (2015) to the study:

- The researcher was able to develop research questions that focused on meaning-making. The semi-structured interview questions enabled the researcher to find meaning in 'people's talk' as suggested by Magnussen and Marecek (2015).
- The researcher was able to conduct multiple (focus groups and individual) interviews with diverse participants to gain multiple perspectives. Magnussen and Marecek (2015) contend that interviews are the most authentic way to collect data from participants who are eager to share their experiences with outsiders.
- The researcher was able to conduct asynchronous, semi-structured focus group discussions with 29 focus group participants representing six diverse organisations and industries. The asynchronous approach allowed participants to share their ideas, to respond to other participants' ideas and to collaborate on new ideas without interrupting their thought process because they were able to text their responses as and when it was convenient for them. The researcher was able to conduct synchronous, semi-structured, face-to-face internet interviews through the Zoom application with eight participants to confirm the experiences shared in the focus group and to discover new perspectives. The synchronous approach allowed participants to share their experiences of COVID-19 through narratives without being interrupted.
- The researcher was also able to focus on intricate details of participants' narratives and accounts of events during the analysis process because no transcription was needed and thus, the 'talk/text' was an accurate reflection of participants' ideas, views and perceptions at the time of the discussions and interviews.
- The researcher was able to interpret each participant's experience of COVID-19 in context due to the many clues and descriptions that the participants provided in their narratives to the questions.

- The researcher was able to draw research themes from the participants' comments, reflections and narratives.

As can be deduced from the above explanation, interpretivism was the most suitable approach for the study because the researcher relied heavily on the participants to construct meaning of their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they adopted to deal with the adversity.

The researcher developed three broad, ordinary questions for participants to answer when narrating their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they adopted to enhance their well-being. The research questions were open-ended, which allowed the researcher to understand participants' perspectives and to make meaningful interpretations of their needs to achieve well-being.

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) identified five commonly used qualitative research designs, namely case study, ethnography, phenomenological study, grounded theory and content analyses to develop a framework. The researcher used grounded theory, content analysis and theory-building models to construct the framework for this study.

5.2.2 Metaphorical descriptions of the researcher's position

The "outsider" researcher fulfils the role of an independent, unbiased observer who gathers data, while the "insider" researcher takes on the role of a participant immersed in the action and experiences within the system being studied (Van de Ven, 2007, pp. 269-270).

In this study, the researcher took on both roles, moving from the 'insider' to the 'outsider' to immerse herself in the action and experiences of the research participants. During the insider role, the researcher contributed data in the form of reflective journal entries to refine the data collected from participants. As the outsider, the researcher applied an etic perspective (Salmons, 2012) to bracket her ideas by clearing her mind of any preconceived ideas about the COVID-19 pandemic and by listening without judgement to each participant's viewpoint.

Although qualitative research is synonymous with biases and assumptions of the researcher, the questions are whether this subjectivity is harmful to the study or not,

and what can be done about it. The researcher's subjectivity was a strength to the research as she brought her passion for well-being, her knowledge of people's practices and her ability to connect with people to the study. Nevertheless, the researcher applied the grounded theory approach to guard against biases and negative assumptions by carrying out regular data comparisons, keeping a reflexive diary and checking in with the research participants to ensure her interpretations were accurate and trustworthy. For example, data were matched against data not only for similarities and differences but also for consistencies within the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The researcher limited her preconceived ideas about what people need to experience well-being and depended on her extensive human resource management experiences to make ethical and trustworthy interpretations. Furthermore, the researcher's understanding of the research problem and her didactic experiences enabled her to devise three main thought-provoking interview questions that assisted in understanding the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic to realise the meaning behind the beliefs and opinions of the research participants.

5.3 PHASES OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

According to Creswell (2014) and Saunders et al. (2016), the process of qualitative data analysis should include the following processes:

- Organise and prepare data for analysis
- Become familiar with the data
- Code the data
- Identify the themes
- Identify interrelating themes and relationships
- Interpret the meaning of the themes

The research was conducted in various phases as suggested by Creswell (2014) and Saunders et al. (2016) and as indicated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Phases of the research study

Conceptual phase	<p>Research problem</p> <p>Research objective</p> <p>Literature review</p>
Design and planning phase	<p>Research approach</p> <p>Data collection method</p> <p>Collection method</p> <p>Sampling design</p>
Empirical phase	<p>Focus group discussions with Millennials and Generation X participants from Germany and South Africa</p> <p>Individual interviews with Millennials and Generation X participants from Germany and South Africa</p>
Data analysis phase	<p>Thematic analysis of data from focus group discussions</p> <p>Thematic analysis of data from individual interviews</p> <p>Interpretation of data</p>
Dissemination phase	<p>Presentation of data</p> <p>Discussion of data</p> <p>Recommendations</p>

Source: Author's own compilation

5.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is used to achieve the research objectives. In this section, the researcher describes the action involved to undertake the research and the reasoning behind the decisions.

5.4.1 Qualitative strategy

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) state that all qualitative research approaches have two features in common. First, they relate to phenomena that are occurring or have previously occurred in a natural setting. Second, they involve describing and studying the complexity of the phenomenon. To this end, the researcher selected a qualitative approach to describe participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a relatively unknown phenomenon at the beginning of 2020, and the coping mechanisms that were adopted to deal with the unfamiliar phenomenon. The participants' narrative accounts enabled the researcher to develop a framework that described participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they used to improve their well-being during adversity.

For this study, the researcher used an e-research method to conduct computer-mediated focus group discussions with 29 participants representing six organisations. The e-research approach allowed the researcher to gain a true understanding of the complexities of participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they used to deal with the pandemic. E-research is a term used to refer to innovations in emerging research methods that make use of an e-infrastructure (Halfpenny & Procter, 2015), which is "a combination and interworking of digitally based technology, resources, communications, and the people and organisational structures needed to support modern, internationally leading collaborative research in the arts and humanities or the sciences" (p. 2).

The researcher selected an e-research method that is conducted through the internet although the study phenomenon is not internet related. The e-research approach was particularly suitable to conduct qualitative research during the COVID-19 pandemic because strict social distancing measures were in place at the time of the focus group discussions. This approach enabled the researcher to follow strict COVID-19 protocols

while enabling research participants to engage with one another in focus group discussions without physical contact.

The qualitative research approach had the following advantages for this particular research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015):

- **Exploration purpose:** The qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gain insights into the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that were adopted by the Millennials and Generation Xers to enhance their well-being.
- **Multifaceted description:** The qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to reveal the complex, multi-layered nature of the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that were adopted by Millennials and Generation Xers to enhance their well-being.
- **Theory development:** The qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to develop new concepts or theoretical perspectives (framework) related to the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that were adopted by Millennials and Generation Xers to enhance their well-being.

5.4.2 Constructivist grounded theory

The goal of the research was to discover themes that could contribute to theory development and, therefore, grounded theory was the most suitable choice. As proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory aims to reveal abstract, conceptual understandings of studied phenomena. Furthermore, it encourages simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis with the aim of moving beyond descriptive studies to abstract, conceptual understandings of the phenomena (Charmaz, 2014).

Constructivist grounded theory adopts the inductive, comparative, emergent, and open-ended approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) but considers research as a construction that occurs under exciting and pre-existing conditions (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz (2014) and Mills et al. (2006), a constructivist approach to grounded theory emphasises the flexibility of the method and recognises the multiple

truths and realities of subjectivism and the researcher's construction and interpretation of data into a grounded theory model.

The grounded theory approach was ideal for the study because it produced a more interpretive level of understanding (located in the data) (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2013). In addition, this approach compelled the researcher to consider all data as important while relying on a systematic yet flexible approach to gather the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maree et al., 2016; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015), which was necessary to construct a trustworthy theory.

The analysis and conceptualisation was the result of a constant comparative method that began with inductive data (Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical sampling played a significant role in enabling the researcher to seek pertinent data to develop her emerging theory (Charmaz, 2014; Urquhart, 2013). Theoretical sampling allowed the researcher to refine the categories that informed the theory. The process involved referring back to the collected data and then collecting more data in order to clarify concepts further or to develop the emerging theory (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2013). This process continued with the comparative method, which assisted categorisation until no new themes and concepts emerged.

The grounded theory approach further enabled the researcher to initiate the data collection process and thereafter to develop theory from the data by categorising and developing themes. The term 'grounded' reiterates the idea that the emerging theories are derived from and are rooted in the collected field data rather than in the research literature. In this way, the theory evolved during the empirical research phase while the researcher continued with the interchange between the data analyses and the data collection.

Furthermore, data collected through the grounded theory approach was field-based, flexible and changed over the three-day period in which the interview sessions took place. The interviews played a significant role in the data collection because they included authentic perspectives and the 'voices' of the research participants (Charmaz, 1983; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researcher used open coding, selective coding and theoretical coding to develop her theory (Charmaz, 2014; Urquhart, 2013). Coding is discussed in more detail in Section 5.7.2.

5.4.3 Content analysis

Content analysis as a secondary method of exploration in qualitative research has been successfully applied across a variety of disciplines (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) and is often used in combination with other methods such as grounded theory to code and categorise qualitative data. The researcher applied the content analyses approach to focus on the content generated by the focus groups and the individual interviews and used the approach in a supportive analytical role. For example, the researcher used content analyses to explore the verbal and text-based interviews in order to identify patterns and themes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014) in the data. The coding of the content generated the categories that were used in the analysis phase (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

As suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2015), the researcher applied the following measures to make the content analysis process as objective as possible:

- Step 1: Study text-based interviews in their entirety
- Step 2: Define the characteristics or qualities to be examined in precise and concrete terms
- Step 3: Break down the text-based interviews (transcripts) into small, manageable segments (naming the patterns and identifying corresponding constructs)
- Step 4: Scrutinise the transcripts for instances of each characteristic or quality identified in Step 2, thus making judgements more objective since the researcher is the only person identifying and matching similarities and differences
- Step 5: Listen repeatedly to the one-on-one internet interviews to gain an understanding of what the research participants said in context. Continue with steps 2–5 for the video recordings of the interviews with the one-on-one internet participants.

5.4.4 Theory-building models

The researcher made use of two contrasting approaches, namely deductive and inductive reasoning to develop the framework. Saunders et al. (2016) state that

deductive reasoning occurs when “the conclusion is derived logically from a set of premises, the conclusion being true when all premises are true” (p. 144). In contrast, inductive reasoning does not begin with a pre-established truth or assumption but with observation of a situation or persons (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

Table 5.2 shows how the researcher moved between the deduction and the induction approach to develop her theory.

Table 5.2: Deduction and induction: From reason to research

Logic	In a deductive interference, when the premises are true, the conclusions must also be true	In an inductive inference, known premises are used to generate untested conclusions
Generalisability	Generalising from the general to the specific	Generalising from the specific to the general
Use of data	Data collection is used to evaluate propositions or hypotheses related to an existing theory	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework
Theory	Theory falsification or verification	Theory generation and building

Source: Adapted from Saunders et al., 2016, p. 145

Figure 5.3 illustrates the descriptive stage of the cycle of theory building as indicated by Carlile and Christensen (2005).

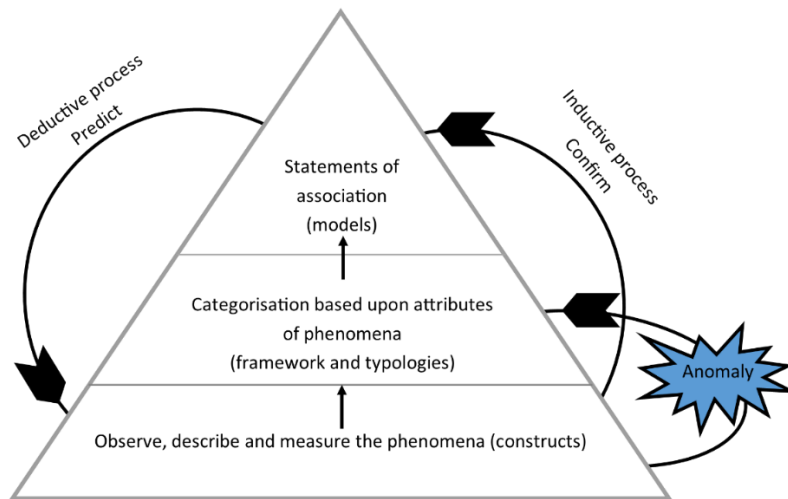


Figure 5.3: Cycles of theory building

Source: Carlile & Christensen, 2005, p. 5

The descriptive stage of theory building (Figure 5.3) is a preliminary stage of theory development that allowed the researcher to work through the various stages in order to reach the normative theory development stage (Carlile & Christensen, 2005).

5.4.4.1 Descriptive theory-building process

To provide an accurate description of the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure external validity (a key aspect in describing participants' social worlds), descriptive design features were used in the research approach (Terreblanche et al., 2011). These design features ensured that observations of Millennials and Generation Xers in South Africa and Germany focused on providing accurate and consistent accounts of the participants' experiences (Terreblanche et al., 2011) of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher subsequently applied a holistic approach to interpret and describe the data (Terreblanche et al., 2011).

The descriptive process consists of two separate processes, namely the inductive and the deductive process. The theory-building process was initiated by the inductive process that mainly involves confirming attributes of the constructs. The process consists of three steps, namely observation, categorisation and association.

A: The inductive process

Step 1: Observation

During this stage, the researcher 'observed' participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and used their narratives of their experiences to describe appropriate constructs that contribute to their experiences meaningfully. Carlile and Christensen (2005) refer to this process as developing 'abstractions' from the 'messy' and chaotic details of the experiences. The researcher made careful observations and documented the experiences in as much detail as possible to make appropriate interpretations. During this stage, the researcher also developed an in-depth composite of the various constructs that related to the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the various coping mechanisms that were adopted by the Millennials and Generation Xers to enhance their well-being. New constructs emerged as participants recounted their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and in particular, how the constructs affected their experiences of COVID-19.

Step 2: Classification

Once the researcher was able to describe the observed experiences extensively, she was able to move to the next stage, which was the classification of the phenomenon stage. During this process, the researcher referred to the attributes of the phenomenon (experiences of COVID-19) to simplify and organise the data. This process included looking for consequential relationships and outcomes of interest regarding the phenomenon. According to Carlile and Christensen (2005), these descriptive categorisation schemes are referred to as frameworks for typologies, which involve grouping the constructs with similar and relevant attributes according to the purpose of the classifier. This process was particularly beneficial to the theory-building process because it allowed for limited overlapping of categories, thus limiting each experience to one category.

Step 3: Defining relationships (associations)

ATLAS.ti enabled the researcher to scrutinise intensely the associations between the category-defining attributes and the observed outcomes by conducting a co-occurrence analysis of the data, as suggested by Carlile and Christensen (2005). As part of the theory-building process, the researcher began to recognise and highlight the differences in the attributes of the constructs and themes in addition to highlighting

the significance of the attributes of each construct. This process enabled the researcher to identify themes and subthemes (relationships) from the various constructs by examining the patterns/codes in the framework that was emerging from the collected interview data.

B: The deductive process

The inductive process was followed by the deductive process (the top-down approach), which mainly involves predicting attributes, relationships and significances of the constructs. During the process, the researcher predicted that if the same relationships existed between the attributes of the constructs, the outcomes would be similar in different environments (organisations) as the ones being 'tested'. Finally, the researcher looked for anomalies to generalisation and was able to describe the environments or situations in which the framework would not deliver the desired or expected outcomes.

5.4.4.2 Normative theory development process

The researcher continued the theory development process by moving from the descriptive approach to the normative theory development approach until the theory was defined. According to Carlile and Christensen (2005), the normative theory building process is "the ability to know what actions will lead to desired results" for a specific situation (p. 4). During the normative process, the researcher applied the same three steps as discussed above (Section 5.4.4.1). However, in Step 2, the categorisation phase, the researcher focused her understanding on the circumstances or contexts in which the constructs were founded whereas in the descriptive theory process, her focus was on confirming the attributes of the constructs. In Step 3 of the descriptive theory, the focus was on defining relationships of the phenomenon (inductive) and predicting relationships (deductive), whereas during Step 3 in the normative theory process, the researcher's focus was on confirming the causes of the experiences (inductive) and predicting the causes of the experiences (deductive).

Causality was a major consideration during this study and the researcher had to consider the circumstances in which the constructs occurred because the

circumstances and context had a major influence on the outcomes. For the study to have any significant relevance to another industry and/or company, the researcher had to ensure that the framework included references to time and context to enable readers to draw valid and relevant conclusions.

5.5 DATA COLLECTION

The researcher gathered the data according to the agreed plan to investigate the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from South Africa and Germany of the COVID-19 pandemic. Salmons (2012) raised an important issue in selecting participants for virtual representations, particularly participants whose human controllers are anonymous; the author asserts “the importance of developing approaches that can reduce the potential of false representation of self and of one’s experiences” (p. 121). To deal with the raised concern of Salmons (2012), the researcher only contacted organisations where there was a potential interest in the research and only used contacts from a known and legitimate source. By carefully selecting suitable organisations and participants for the one-on-one interviews, the researcher was confident that the data collected were from reliable sources and were not contaminated in any way.

A pilot study was conducted with four participants from the target population one week before the actual focus group discussion commenced to test the functions, functionalities and the trustworthiness of the data collection platform.

The data for the current study were gathered from 29 employees representing six organisations from two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) in Germany and South Africa with focus group discussions on an internet-based ‘Moodle’ platform that was custom designed for the study. Additional data were gathered from eight individuals representing the two generational cohorts in one-on-one Zoom interviews.

The research participants (employees) had to comply with the stipulated selection criteria (see Table 5.5) in order to be considered for participation. Once the participants met the inclusion criteria, they were given instructions on how to participate in the respective platforms, that is, the online Moodle platform or Zoom application (virtual).

The researcher followed the steps below to select participants for the study:

Step 1: Initially, the researcher created a list of all the private higher education institutions in South Africa with one site of delivery. Thereafter, the researcher sent an e-mail to the 69 institutions requesting permission for five of their employees to participate anonymously in the study. Disappointingly, only one institution responded. The researcher then decided to change the selection criteria because she realised that a possible reason for non-participation could have been that the researcher is the principal of a higher education institution and that the institutions perhaps feared their staff being 'poached' by another training institution.

Step 2: The researcher created a second contact list that included all the debtors (SMMEs) with which the researcher's training institution (College) engages professionally. An additional 70 e-mails were sent to these organisations requesting participation. Only one organisation responded because it was the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Step 3: Consequently, the researcher realised that due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its constraints, organisations were not particularly excited to participate in research. Hence, the researcher requested friends and colleagues to suggest organisations that would be willing to participate in the research. An additional 15 e-mails were sent to these contacts. Three organisations responded but one week before the research commenced, two organisations stopped responding to correspondence from the researcher.

Step 4: One week before the focus group discussions were scheduled, the researcher decided to widen the research criteria to include German organisations and participants. Because the COVID-19 pandemic was a new phenomenon, the researcher became particularly interested to know if people experienced the pandemic in the same way and if people adopted the same coping mechanisms to enhance their well-being. The researcher was able to gain access to organisations in Germany within short notice due to her sons living in Germany and the contacts that the researcher had made through her visits to Germany over the years. Three organisations

responded to her invitation and were excited to participate since they considered research and knowledge creation extremely valuable.

Step 5: Organisations were considered eligible for participation if they submitted the provided template with five willing employees' names, e-mail addresses and other relevant demographical information. Organisations who submitted the template with less than five employees were automatically excluded from the study.

Step 6: On completion of the focus group discussions, the researcher sent e-mails to the participants, thanking them for their participation and requesting them to pass her details to other individuals who may be interested in participating in the research study and willing to be interviewed individually. In this way, the researcher gained access to an additional eight research participants for the one-on-one Zoom interviews.

Confidentiality and anonymity played a significant role in this study. The researcher found in her master's study that participants did not feel comfortable sharing intimate details about their life experiences with colleagues. The participants from the previous study indicated that their responses would have been somewhat different had they been afforded the opportunity to respond anonymously or had their identity been protected. Because this study investigated people's experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which are of a sensitive nature, the researcher opted to keep all responses anonymous to ensure that participants felt secure and comfortable in sharing their experiences without fear of being discredited.

5.5.1 The data collection platform

Dale and Abbott (2014) define a platform as a "collection of tools and technologies that provide a virtual place to conduct online research in various forms and modalities" (para. 1). The researcher made use of a computer-mediated platform to host focus group discussions via a bulletin board with employees. The bulletin board, also interchangeably called the 'discussion forum', referred to a threaded computer-mediated discussion via the internet (Dale & Abbott, 2014).

The focus group discussions were conducted on an online platform known as Moodle, which was customised for the purpose of the research (see Figure 5.4). Moodle is an online learner management system (LMS) that supports learning and training needs

for various organisations and is used worldwide by over 90 million users. The online platform has strict user-privacy settings, which ensured that the internet-mediated focus group discussions could be hosted on a secure site. The researcher selected the platform because of its user-friendly functions and privacy settings that could be customised. In addition, the researcher was able to provide participants with the necessary support to navigate their way on the platform. The researcher had access to advanced technical support to assist participants with technical queries, and due to COVID-19 protocols and social distancing measures, the platform allowed for contactless engagement with the research participants.

Although all precautionary steps, including password protection, were taken to keep participants' information confidential, the researcher could not guarantee the participants that the Moodle LMS system could not be 'hacked', which could lead to a breach of the system.

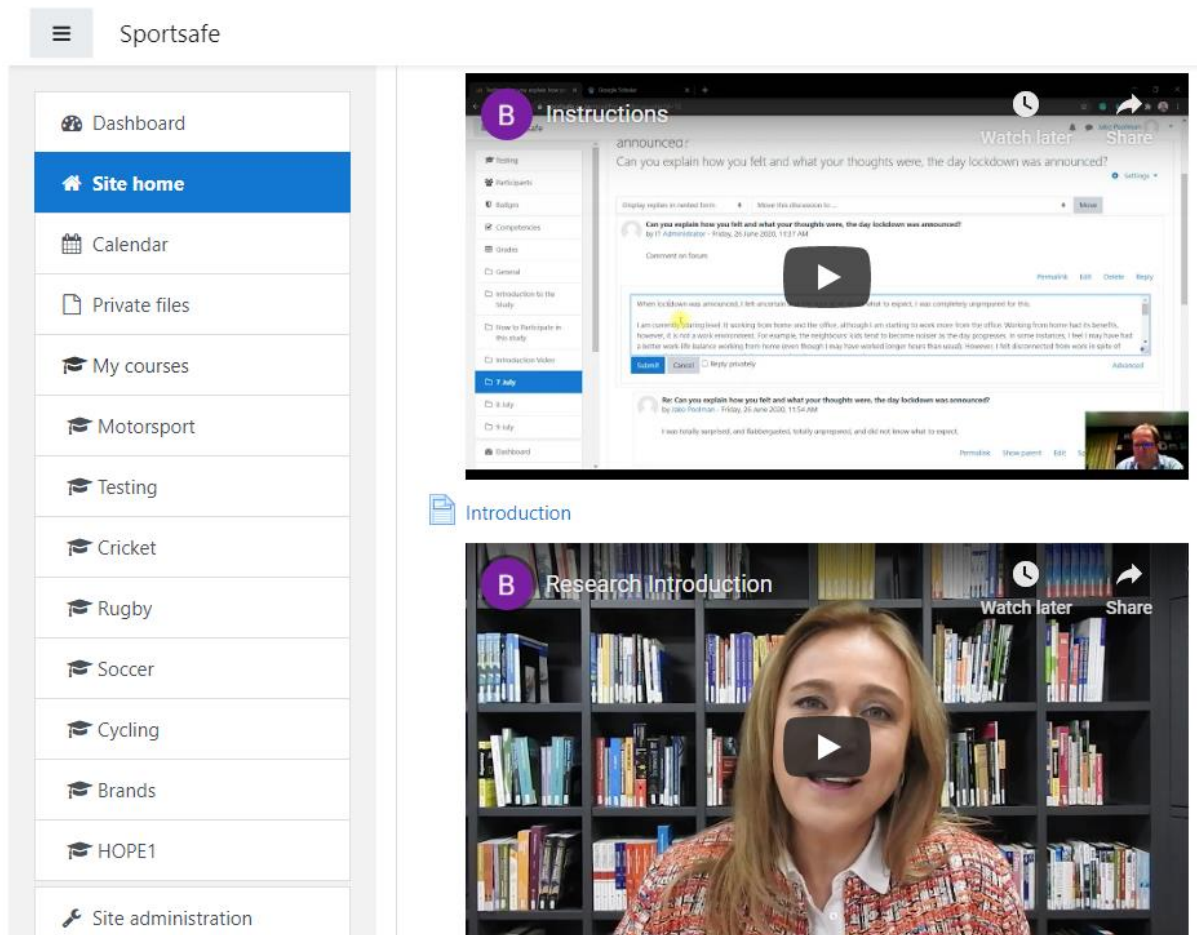


Figure 5.4: Dashboard of the platform

Source: Author's own compilation

Being the principal of a Higher Education College, the researcher applied her knowledge of LMS and together with her IT manager developed this unique data collection platform. The researcher used her private www.Sportsafe.co.za website to host the platform and to provide each participant with a unique e-mail address for the purpose of the research, for example, brumbries@sportsafe.co.za.

Each organisation was allocated to a specific group (i.e. cricket, cycling, motorsport, rugby, soccer and brands) for categorisation purposes, as illustrated in Figure 5.4. As suggested by Dale and Abbott (2014), group names were selected to make the research experience interesting and fun for the participants. Additionally, the groups' names assisted the researcher in making connections between the participants and the groups, which facilitated the data analysis process.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many participants were encouraged to practice social distancing. Therefore, some participants were working from home and some were working reduced hours. However, others were already back to work at the time the discussions took place. The flexibility of the LMS system allowed participants to log in with their passwords from anywhere in the world if they had an internet connection.

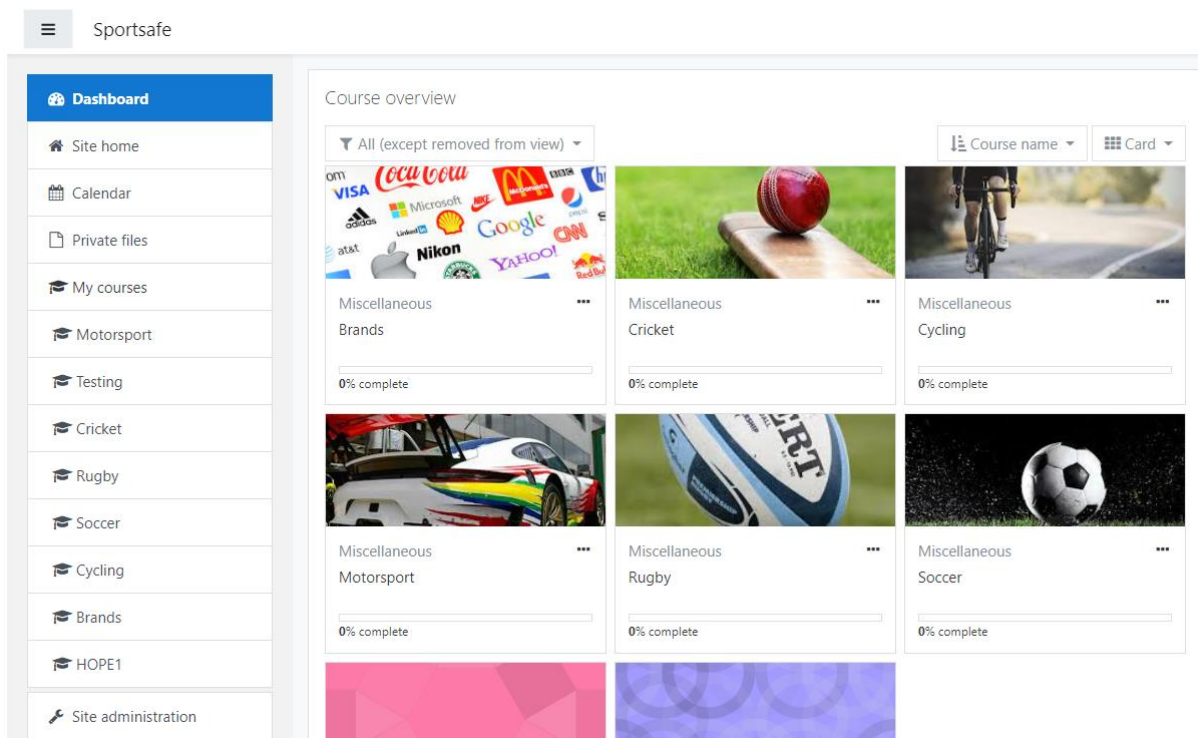


Figure 5.5: Data collection platform

Source: Author's own compilation

One week before the focus group discussions commenced, the gatekeepers (business owners and human resource managers) were requested to complete a table with the demographic information of the five participants who were to represent the organisations and to include the e-mail addresses of the participants. The IT administrator used the information to register the participants on the platform, to issue them with pseudonyms and to allocate them to their respective groups. A new private e-mail address was created for each participant using their pseudonym and the *sportsafe* domain to ensure that the true identity of each research participant was not revealed, thus further ensuring privacy and anonymity. Once the profiles were created, participants received an e-mail from the IT administrator informing them of their login


credentials, which comprised a unique username and password. The system allowed participants to change their passwords after the initial login.

The researcher developed an instructional video and a personal introduction video, which were sent to the participants a few days before the focus group discussions commenced. This enabled participants to familiarise themselves with the interview discussion process and to become acquainted with the researcher, albeit through a personal video. The instructional video encouraged participants to change their passwords and to contact the researcher before the discussions commenced if they were unable to log in or if they had additional questions.

The focus group discussions were held during Level 3 lockdown in South Africa. In the two federal states of Bavaria and North Rhine Westphalia where both German organisations were located, strict preventative measures were still in place although participants were not in full lockdown.

Over the three-day period of 7–9 July 2020, the researcher posed the three main questions to all the groups (one per day) and requested participants to respond to them by narrating their experiences as they related to the main question each day. Thereafter, participants were requested to respond to the comments made by the other participants within their respective groups. The participants could only view the comments made by members of their group. Moreover, because the participants' identities were concealed through the use of pseudonyms, they did not know who they were responding to in reality.


Figure 5.6 shows an extract of the focus group discussion that took place on 8 July 2020 by the cycling group. The platform displays participants' comments using their pseudonyms (Classic and Jock) and provides a date and time stamp of when each comment was made. The comments were displayed in nested form on the platform. In other words, in the order in which the participants made the comments.



Re: Looking back at the last few months, since the outbreak of the pandemic and lockdown started. What have you learned (personal realisation) from these uncertain times?
by [Clasic Cycling](#) - Wednesday, 8 July 2020, 12:52 PM

I have learnt that we often sweat about small things in life & not about what really matters. We get caught up in our everyday lives & forget to appreciate what is actually important like our family, friends, colleagues, our freedom of movement, the ability to socialize, our job security & just being alive. We are all in this together, regardless of our culture differences, our race, our size, our gender & if we as a country learn and grow from this together there is no stopping us - the sky is the limit..

[Permalink](#) [Show parent](#) [Edit](#) [Split](#) [Delete](#) [Reply](#)



Re: Looking back at the last few months, since the outbreak of the pandemic and lockdown started. What have you learned (personal realisation) from these uncertain times?
by [Jock Cycling](#) - Wednesday, 8 July 2020, 1:18 PM

For me the past few months have released different emotions that I have not really had to deal with before and there has been a feeling of being captive within the walls of our home. The first 21 days felt like I had things relatively under control - children we home safely with us and our home life was as normal as can be under the circumstances. Exercise became more structured at home and I found that the hours in my day seemed to fly past. Work carried on as usual and we adapted to all being in one environment. But we were safe and protected from the virus starting to spread in the outside world.

The frustration however of not being able to go out to exercise whenever I wanted to, just pop out and have a coffee and of course have a friend or family round for a meal was a big mind blow. But there was a form of acceptance that this is they way things were but it was not to be for too long. We all embraced the Zoom Calls chatting to friends and family and of course celebrating all those "lockdown" birthdays and special occasions that could not be celebrated in the way we have done in the past.

Then the extended lockdown was announced and this bought about another mindshift. All of a sudden, the stark reality of the poverty & unemployment in our closely safeguarded community, and the financial issues that were now starting to affect close friends and colleagues, were becoming a topic of discussion every meal time. To add to this, the new challenge of educating my children at home (which was not something I had ever elected to sign up for). I have realised how very grateful I have been to have a reasonably sized house for our family of 5 to move around in giving everyone a bit of space to move and having a quiet space to work. I have been so

Figure 5.6: Data collection platform: Focus group discussion

Source: Author's own compilation

Figure 5.7 illustrates the dashboard view of the 'cricket' team's focus group discussion on the second day. The dashboard view shows the question posted on the second day on the right-hand side and an overview panel on the left-hand side, with links to the other functions available on the platform such as the introduction video and the instruction video. Some of the links (such as grades and badges) were not functional and could not be removed since the platform is an LMS. Nevertheless, this did not distract or impede the functionality of the platform.

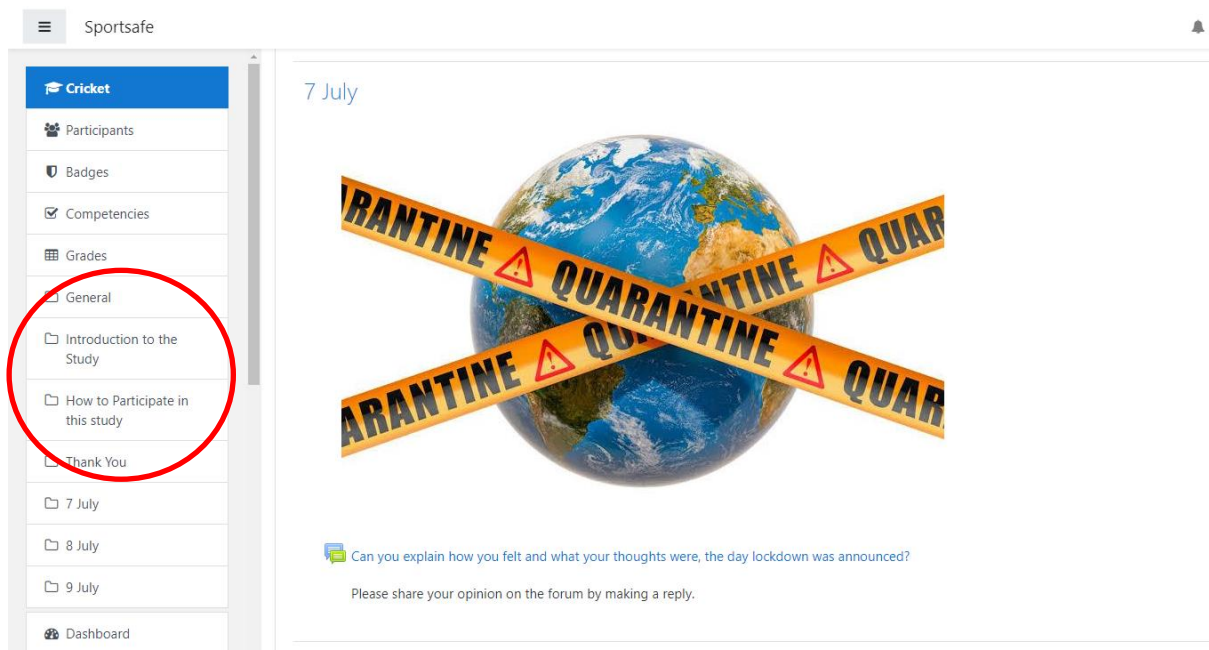


Figure 5.7: Data collection platform: The dashboard

Source: Author's own compilation

5.5.1.1 Features of the data collection platform

The platform offered the following features, as suggested by Dale and Abbott (2014):

- The platform allowed the researcher (as the moderator) to see who was active on the platform and who had not yet responded to the last question posted by the researcher. In addition, the researcher could see the participants who had and the participants who had not commented on other participants' responses.
- The platform allowed participants to send a private message to the researcher. This feature was particularly useful for participants who needed clarification on the questions.
- The platform allowed the researcher to pre-load the three main discussion questions but only showed the question that needed to be answered on that specific day.
- The system allowed participants to comment on the question posed throughout the day and on questions from a previous day. This feature enabled participants to schedule their time and to respond to questions when

convenient. It also allowed participants to think about their answers before responding.

- The platform allowed participants to respond anonymously by using their pseudonyms.
- The system gave the researcher sufficient control over the extent to which participants were able to edit their responses. For example, the platform only allowed participants 30 minutes after posting a comment to change their responses. Thereafter, no changes could be made.
- The platform allowed participants to respond simultaneously to questions, largely avoiding their having to wait their turn to respond and thus providing a greater variety of ideas in first responses.
- The platform enabled German participants who were not anglophone to participate with confidence in the study through the use of a translator application and/or word processor document.
- The platform enabled people from separate locations and countries (South Africa and Germany) to participate in the research simultaneously.

Figure 5.8 shows the participation activities on the platform. This feature allowed the researcher to view who was currently logged in, when the last participant logged in and who had never logged in to the platform.

First name / Surname	Email address	Roles	Groups	Last access to course	Status
Bulls Rugby	bulls@sportsafe.co.za	Student	No groups	185 days 23 hours	Active
Sharks Rugby	sharks@sportsafe.co.za	Student	No groups	185 days 19 hours	Active
Wallabies Rugby	wallabies@sportsafe.co.za	Student	No groups	185 days 16 hours	Active
Brumbies Rugby	brumbies@sportsafe.co.za	Student	No groups	185 days 9 hours	Active
Jaguares Rugby	jaguares@sportsafe.co.za	Student	No groups	185 days	Active
Researcher Van der linde	researcher@sportsafe.co.za	Manager	No groups	184 days 17 hours	Active
IT Administrator	webmaster@sportsafe.co.za	Manager	No groups	13 secs	Active

Figure 5.8: Data collection platform: Participation activities view

Source: Author's own compilation

5.5.2 The data collection process

Consistent with the unique characteristics of qualitative research, the researcher was the primary data collection instrument (Salmons, 2012). The researcher did not regard data collection and data analysis as two separate processes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maree et al., 2016; Patton, 1990) but rather as an ongoing, cyclical and iterative (non-linear) process that was necessary to develop her theory. Furthermore, data collection was guided by data saturation (the point where no new ideas or insights were brought forward) (Maree et al., 2016).

Figure 5.9 illustrates the cyclical and iterative process of data collection, reflection and analysis that the researcher applied.

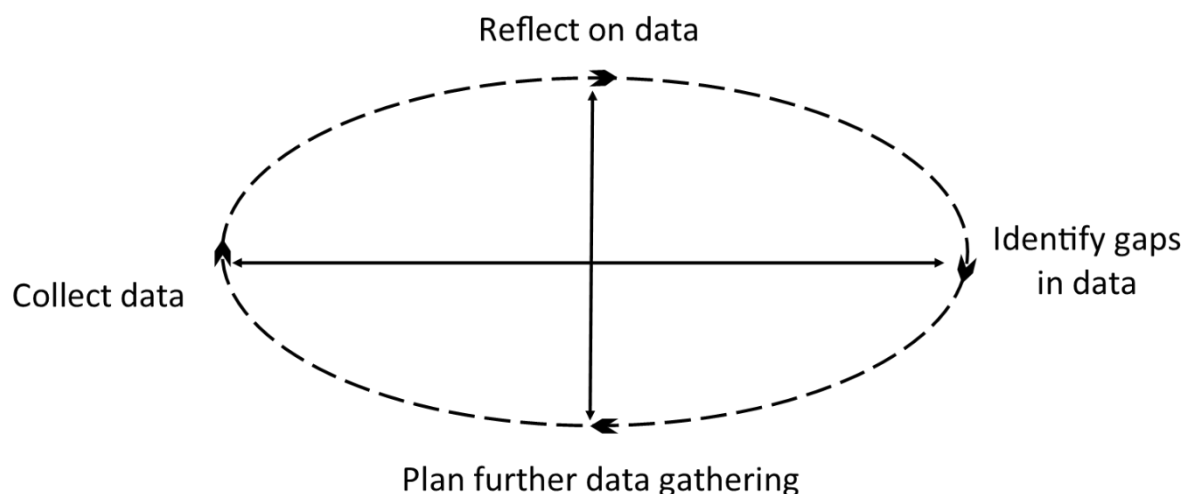


Figure 5.9: Cyclical and iterative process of data collection, reflection and analysis

Source: Maree et al., 2016, p. 87

Figure 5.9 demonstrates the four-step approach that was followed in the study during the data collection process, namely collect data, reflect on data, identify gaps in the data, and plan further data gathering.

In qualitative research, four different methods can be used to collect data, namely observation, interviews, documents, and audio and visual materials (Creswell, 2014).

For data collection in the current study, the researcher made use of the internet in the computer-mediated focus group discussions and the cloud platform Zoom for the individual interviews. Sections 5.5.2.1 to 5.5.2.5 discuss the focus group discussions in detail and Section 5.5.2.6 comprehensively discusses the individual Zoom interviews.

5.5.2.1 Focus groups

The researcher made use of asynchronous focus group discussions (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) by means of a bulletin board (Krueger & Casey, 2015) in extended time (Dale & Abbott, 2014). This process allowed participants to log in and to leave at any time during the three days of the discussions. The discussions were scheduled with a start and an end time. The focus groups started at 08:00 on 7 July and ended at 17:00 on 9 July 2020. The participants responded to the three main questions intermittently during these times. Although the participants and the moderator (researcher) were not located in the same country (South Africa or Germany), all participants were in the same time zone, which made the interviews possible.

The researcher added visual stimuli in the form of short videos as suggested by Dale and Abbott (2014) to introduce both herself and the research platform. These videos contributed to make the research process more personal and allowed the researcher to thank her participants personally for their participation and to build rapport with them. It was also important to the researcher that the participants understood the relevance and importance of their responses and the impact that their responses would have on the trustworthiness of the study.

Asynchronous computer-mediated focus group discussions were selected for the following reasons:

- The focus group discussions minimised intrusion on the participants' work time, eliminated travelling time and avoided physical contact with the participants, which were important considerations during the COVID-19 pandemic (Wirtz et al., 2019).
- They were the most suitable way to reach participants who were geographically dispersed (South Africa and Germany) and/or in some form of physical and social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- This approach has non-obtrusive characteristics (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) and the ability to convene secure discussions across geographic space (with minimal time inconvenience) without losing the standardised approach that is expected with focus group discussions (Turnkey & Pocknee, 2005; Wirtz et al., 2019). Moreover, although face-to-face interviews often generate a greater number of data, computer-mediated focus group discussions are found to produce a better quality and variety of creative ideas (Reid & Reid, 2005).
- Focus group discussions provide researchers with an opportunity to delve deeper into the non-observable behaviours and practices of individuals such as their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and values (Magnussen & Marecek, 2015).
- Finally, the researcher, as a human resource practitioner and principal of a college, has considerable experience in focus group moderation and is familiar with the use of IT and particularly the application of internet-based discussions.

Advantages of focus group discussions for this study

A primary advantage of the text-based, asynchronous computer-mediated focus group discussions was that they provided participants with the opportunity to engage in conversation with the researcher from any location without physical contact. This method was particularly suitable during the COVID-19 pandemic when many participants were required to practice social distancing.

Another major advantage was that the interviews did not need to be transcribed once the discussions were concluded. The original lengthy, text-based discussions (typed by the participants) were directly imported from the platform into a Microsoft (MS) Word document and then imported into ATLAS.ti., which avoided incorrect capturing by transcribers (Salmons, 2012). In addition, because the platform allowed for a 30-minute window period in which participants could either edit or change their responses, no important data could be missed. Moreover, this feature ensured that participants could not delete or alter their responses after viewing other participants'

comments but merely allowed them to make comments about their previous responses and how they wished to rectify their position on an issue.

Disadvantages of focus group discussions for this study

The only disadvantage of this method was that due to the strict confidentiality considerations of the study, there were no audio or face-to-face recordings and thus, it was not possible to verify conclusively the participant's age, sex, diversity and other personal characteristics that were provided by the organisation. Furthermore, no facial clues could be gathered or conclusions made from the individual's body language. Nevertheless, due to the social distancing protocols and geographical distribution of the participants, this method was the most suitable communication tool, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.5.2.2 Composition of the focus groups

An important aspect of the focus group discussions was reaching a balance between the researcher's need to achieve high-quality discussions that would produce high-quality data and managing the participants' concerns about the limited time that they had available for participation. In addition, the researcher had to pose questions that were not only of interest to the research participants but would also generate responses that were of interest to the research study (Krueger & Casey, 2015). For this study, each focus group had to consist of a minimum of five employees from the same organisation (Krueger & Casey, 2015; Masadeh, 2012) per organisation to enable participants to explore the COVID-19 phenomenon in an intimate setting. As explained in section 5.5.1, the research participants were registered on the platform using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity was not compromised.

Although 32 participants committed to participate in the focus group discussions, three participants (SA20, SA21, GM31) never participated and one participant (SA17) quit after the first day. Nevertheless, the focus group discussions concluded on Day Three with 29 participants.

The researcher, being a skilled moderator, ensured through good planning (see Table 5.3) that all participants felt at ease with the process and were able to share their

experiences and ideas openly within their group. Although some groups showed more enthusiasm and devotion in the research process, all participants who started the process completed the process on the third and final day.

As the moderator, the researcher managed and controlled the processes without any significant challenges. No participant was coerced into agreeing with statements or felt obligated to respond to a question and anonymity and confidentiality was ensured.

Furthermore, the researcher used her interviewing and moderating skills to draw on leading human qualities such as “trust, thoughtful questioning and perceptive probing, empathy and reflective listening” as suggested by Salmons (2012, p. 1), although these qualities were experienced differently in computer-mediated discussions due to the delimitating effect of technology (Salmons, 2012).

The researcher made use of the computer-mediated focus group discussion method with an asynchronous approach to conduct focus group discussions with Millennials and Generation Xers from South Africa and Germany. In addition, the researcher conducted eight synchronous individual interviews through the Zoom application to ensure saturation and trustworthiness of the data.

Asynchronous approach to computer-mediated focus group discussions

The researcher employed the **asynchronous approach** to conduct the computer-mediated, focus group discussions by means of a bulletin board on the platform.

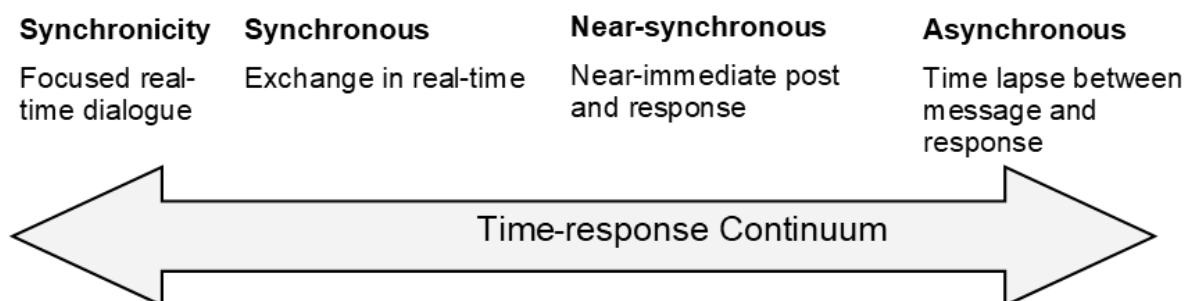


Figure 5.10: Time-response continuum

Source: Salmons, 2012, p. 23

Figure 5.10 illustrates the time-response continuum of responses to questions.

For this study, asynchronous discussions were selected as the most beneficial because the researcher needed participants to formulate well-thought-through answers. The research phenomenon needed serious reflection and could not be addressed without careful consideration. Salmons (2012) refers to asynchronous communication styles as 'fruitful' exchanges because they allow participants time to ponder the answers (p. 23).

The discussions were thus not held in real time but extended over three days, allowing participants to contribute to the conversation at their convenience but within the allocated time period (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The bulletin boards were hosted on a secure, password-accessed LMS on the specially developed platform. The researcher acted as the moderator and posed three main questions on the bulletin board over three days. During the three days, the researcher continuously monitored the responses of the participants, asking further probing questions where needed and encouraging participants who showed little or no interaction with the group.

The Media Richness Theory (MRT) argues that an immediate response is a key factor of "richness" to determine quality communication (Salmons, 2012, p. 33), while the study of Hertel et al. (2008) suggests that anxious participants are more likely to share their personal experiences if they experience the environment as non-threatening. For this reason, the researcher made a personal video to introduce herself to the participants and to encourage trustworthy responses. As suggested by Roller and Lavrakas (2015), the researcher requested participants to visit the bulletin board at least once in the morning and once in the afternoon, to respond to the day's question and to comment on responses made by other participants. This asynchronous communication style allowed participants time to reflect on the question before responding to it. In addition, participants could add to their previous day's response after reflecting on their views.

5.5.2.3 The pre-focus group discussion process

A pilot test was conducted with three volunteers (SA3, SA4, SA5) and the IT specialist (SA2) from 18 June to 20 June 2020 to test the platform and its functions. The

researcher used the same format for the questions (i.e. one question per day to test the simplicity of participation and to test participants' anonymity on the site).

On completion of the test, the researcher, in collaboration with the IT specialist, made certain structural changes to the site for ease of manoeuvrability around the site and to make the site more user-friendly. In addition, minor changes were made to the acceptance functionality of the terms and conditions.

The results of the pilot test were not included in the findings.

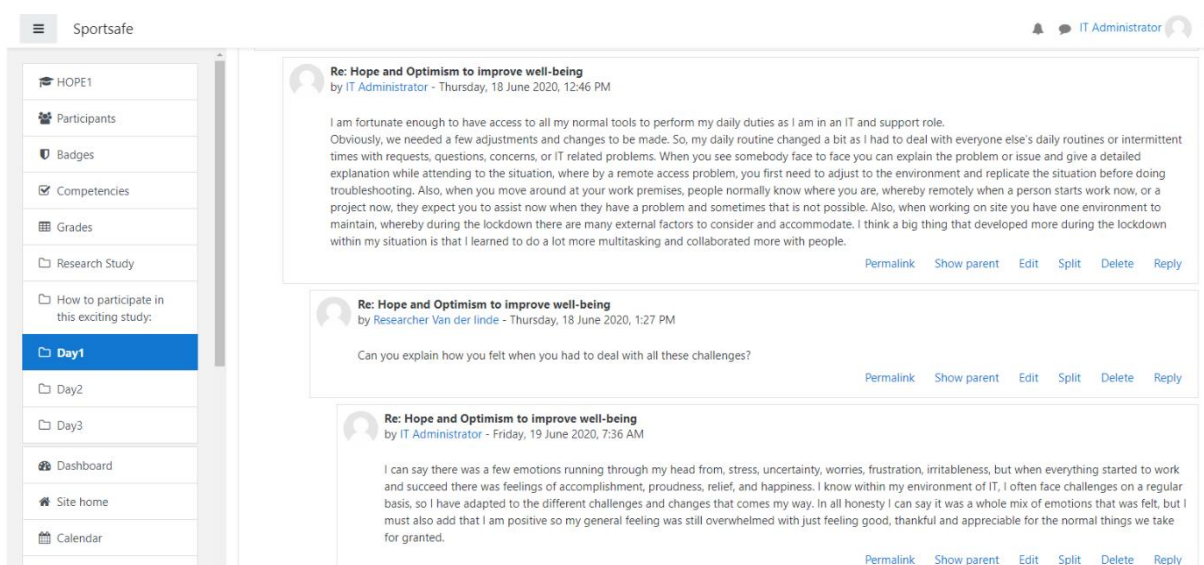


Figure 5.11: Data collection platform: day one of the pilot test

Source: Author's own compilation

A few days before the focus group discussions started, the researcher sent e-mails to all the participants reminding them of the date and time of the focus group discussion. Once again, the researcher expressed her appreciation for their participation and reinforced the importance of trustworthy responses.

The focus group questions were also pre-loaded on the bulletin boards of all the focus groups. However, the question for Day Two and the question for Day Three were not visible until the actual day.

Table 5.3: Typical timetable for the research study

DAY OF THE WEEK	ACTIVITY PLANNED
Thurs	Send e-mails with video links introducing the researcher and issuing instructions on how to participate in the study
Fri	Send out login details: Username and Password
Sat	
Sun	
Mon	Send e-mail reminder of focus group discussion starting time the following day
Tue	Ask the first question and start focus group discussion
Wed	Ask the second question and continue the focus group discussion
Thu	Ask the third question and continue the focus group discussion
Fri	Wrap up any stragglers
Sat	Close forum
Sun	

Source: Adapted from Dale & Abbott, 2014, loc. 2610

The researcher followed the steps below to initiate the focus group discussion process:

- **Step 1:** The researcher created six groups (six organisations) on the LMS platform with a minimum of five participants in each group.
- **Step 2:** The IT specialist registered each participant (under a pseudonym) in their respective group (per organisation) on the LMS (see Figure 5.12).
- **Step 3:** A week before the start of the focus group discussions, the gatekeeper (the organisation’s correspondent) received an e-mail from the researcher with instructions for participants on how to access the LMS platform with their unique username and password. A link to an instructional video was included in the e-mail. Thereafter, the IT specialist allocated new e-mail addresses to the participants with their pseudonym as part of their e-mail address (e.g. nurburgring@sportsafe.co.za). These unique and personalised e-mail addresses were used to communicate with the participants during the research period.
- **Step 4:** The focus group discussions began on 7 July 2020 and continued over three days.

- **Step 5:** The researcher allowed 'stragglers' (Dale & Abbott, 2014, loc. 2610) until Friday 10 July to complete all outstanding comments. Because there are often unexpected occurrences in life, participants were granted one additional day to finalise responses and make late contributions. This process allowed the researcher to collect complete submissions instead of losing a contribution because the research process was excessively rigid.

Figure 5.12 illustrates how the six focus group discussions were conducted in parallel to ensure consistency and 'sameness' across the groups (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

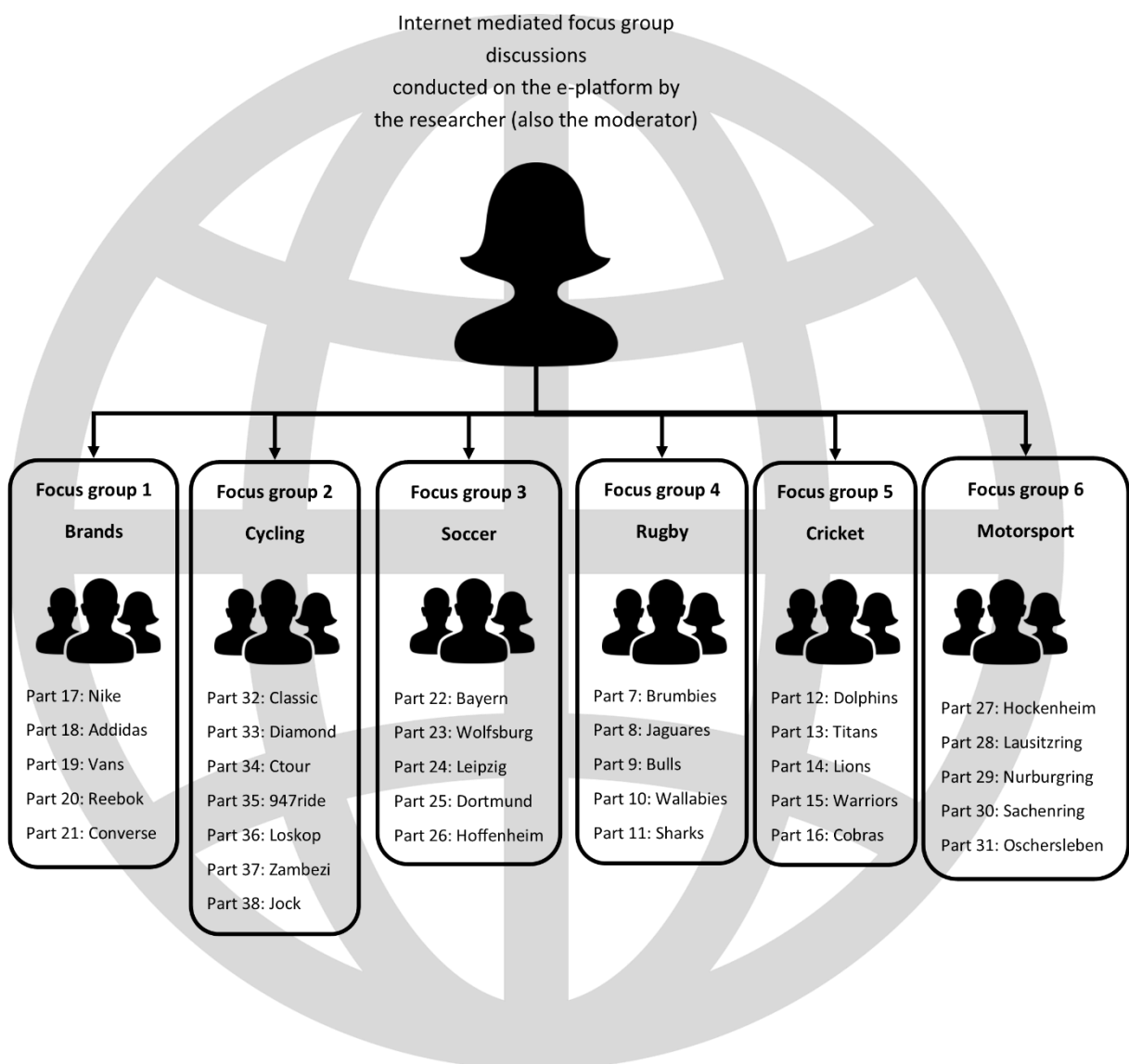


Figure 5.12: The computer mediated interview process

Source: Author's own compilation

5.5.2.4 Focus group discussion process

The researcher (also the moderator) began the discussion by requesting participants to respond to the question posed on Day One. The topic discussions on the first day were intended to be non-intimidating and not overly intense to encourage participation and to set a welcoming and relaxed tone for the following days. The researcher guarded against asking too many probing questions on the first day to ensure that the participants did not experience the process as too rigid, time consuming and invasive of their privacy.

On the second day, the main question was more direct and required more engagement from the participants. From Day Two onwards, the researcher initiated the most interaction amongst the participants. Similar probing questions were asked across the groups. The process continued over three days until data saturation was reached. The purpose of the questions was to get participants to discuss each topic at length and to find common ground while generating current ideas. The researcher guarded against excessive interference in the discussion process since this could have hampered the flow of ideas. Furthermore, asking participants to 'go back to ideas' causes frustration because they may have moved on and not wish to revisit a particular topic (Dale & Abbott, 2014).

On the last day (Day Three), the question was more holistic and the probing questions offered a twist on what had already been discussed. Moreover, the researcher made use of the final opportunity to clarify uncertainties regarding the responses of the previous days and to summarise the major points made over the past three days.

The ground rules reiterated participants responsibility to be truthful in their responses and not to tailor their responses based on other participants' viewpoints, as suggested by Dale and Abbott (2014).

5.5.2.5 Types of interview questions

In qualitative research, three different types of interview questions can be identified, namely open-ended questions (sometimes referred to as unstructured questions), semi-structured questions and structured questions. The open-ended nature of the three main questions in the current study allowed participants to describe how they

experienced COVID-19 by recalling and discussing particular situations that had a significant impact on their lives or were particularly traumatic for them.

In addition, the fact that the questions were semi-structured allowed participants to digress slightly from the main idea of the questions and to add ideas and opinions that mattered to them. An example of an open-ended question is the main question that was asked on Day One: “Can you explain how you felt and what your thoughts were the day lockdown was announced?”

The researcher remained mindful of asking particular types of question to elicit responses since some participants, particularly during the individual interviews, showed signs of anxiety and stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it had had on their lives. The researcher did not want to interrupt participants as they recalled and narrated their experiences because this was a way for them to deal with their emotions and to express some of the concerns that they had been suppressing for a while. The interviews were a way for them to release some of their fears and anxieties. Various focus group participants told the researcher afterwards that the focus groups discussions had provided them with ‘journalling’ reflexive benefits, enabling them to release some of their emotions through the research process.

Each day for three days, the researcher posted one semi-structured question on the bulletin board. The researcher wanted to ensure that the participants discussed the topics between themselves and did not feel intimidated by the researcher. The researcher did not want to be seen as an ‘interviewer’, which would have defeated the purpose of the focus groups, but rather as a moderator responsible for ensuring ethical conduct and anonymity within the group while encouraging participation. The researcher had a list of possible probing questions available, but the questions posed varied between the different focus groups according to the flow of the participants’ responses. For example, in some groups, probing questions were asked to explore a certain area of the participants’ experiences. In other groups, no probing questions were necessary because the participants had developed a tight sharing ‘bond’ that enabled them to discuss the questions in-depth amongst themselves while sharing intimate information of their experiences with the group. The researcher did not want to risk contaminating this open and sharing platform with her ‘presence’.

The researcher applied a ‘funnel’ approach by starting each day with an open question that required a narrative response and thereafter used probing questions to elicit more

specific responses (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). During the discussions, the researcher made rigorous notes about each focus group and the various themes that were emerging in each group. This process enabled her to acknowledge her developing thoughts and ideas and ensured that she bracketed her ideas. Memos were also made as her ideas were developing, and the influences of the groups that developed these ideas were noted. Notes regarding the dynamics of the groups were made, including notes on personalities and characteristics within the groups.

Table 5.4: Interview questions

Day 1	Can you explain how you felt and what your thoughts were the day lockdown was announced?	
Day 2	Looking back at the last three months since lockdown started, what have you learnt?	How did lockdown affect your plans for the future? How do you see the future?
Day 3	Can you tell me about the things that you need in order to achieve/maintain fulfilment in your life?	Please explain your ideal work life after COVID-19.

Source: Author's own compilation

The same three main questions and probing questions were asked in all the focus groups on the platform and in the one-on-one individual Zoom interviews.

5.5.2.6 Individual internet (Zoom) interviews

Virtual communication is a mode of communication that includes the use of technology to connect with people through either audio or video. In addition, this technology enables people to communicate with each other remotely in real time (Frost, n.d.). Videoconferencing and webinars have become the new reality for many organisations since the outbreak of COVID-19.

The researcher used the Zoom application to conduct online interviews with eight participants. Salmons (2012) defines online interviews as internet-mediated research used to gather data via the internet with the purpose of answering research questions. Eight online interviews were conducted with four participants from South Africa and four participants from Germany. Five participants represented the Generation X cohort while three participants represented the Millennials cohort (see Section 5.6.5. for sample characteristics).

Zoom is a cloud-based application (app) that houses a full spectrum of modern videoconferencing and webinar tools. The Zoom interviews allowed participants to communicate openly with the researcher during the interview session. Because the app is compatible with Android phones, the iPhone, iPad and various other web platforms, the participants did not need any special equipment or specific computer to use the application.

Zoom has become extremely popular since the outbreak of COVID-19. According to Apptopia, Zoom registered 600 000 downloads on 22 March compared with 343 000 downloads the week before and 90 000 downloads two months prior (Alam, 2020).

The Zoom app was the most suitable communication tool during the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly due to the social-distancing protocols and the geographical distances of the participants.

5.5.3 Memo writing

The researcher made memos in ATLAS.ti to assist in explaining her developing ideas and to record the process of how she constructed the theoretical categories as she worked through the data. In addition, memo writing assisted the researcher in analysing these developing ideas and explaining the purpose of each code while increasing her level of conceptualisation of ideas (Charmaz, 2014). In this process, some codes became more prominent while others began to fade. The prominent categories developed into theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014). Moreover, memo writing assisted the researcher in making comparisons between the various data, between data and codes and between codes and categories.

5.6 SAMPLING

A non-probability purposive and volunteer sampling method was used to generate the sample since sampling frames could not be provided by the employers due to confidentiality concerns. According to Salmons (2012), sample frames in online interview research refer to “a list or grouping of people from which the sample is selected” (p. 14). For this reason, the employers were only required to submit the names of five employees (minimum) who would be willing to participate in the research and who matched the inclusion criteria.

The final sample consisted of 36 participants of whom 29 participated in focus group discussions and eight in one-on-one interviews. Individuals were the units of analysis (see Table 5.6 for biographical information of participants) for this research study.

5.6.1 Target population

Saunders et al. (2016) define a population as the full set of cases or elements from which a sample is drawn. The target population for this study was employees who were Millennials (born between 1982 and 2000) and Generation X (born between 1965 and 1981). Furthermore, the population consisted of individuals working in various sectors and industries in different geographical areas of Germany and South Africa. Millennials and Generation Xers were targeted for this study because they represent the working population and thus were able to provide insightful accounts of their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they used to enhance their well-being.

5.6.2 Sampling method

The elements were not determined by a random sample. Furthermore, the probability of each case being selected from the target population was not possible, and the researcher had no way of predicting or guaranteeing that each element of the population would be represented in the sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015). Since it was not possible to reach the entire population and the researcher had limited funding (Maree et al., 2016), a non-probability sampling method was deemed suitable for the study.

In addition, focus groups and individual results cannot be used to describe an entire population; therefore, the types of sampling techniques that require random sampling were not appropriate for this study. The purpose of focus group and individual sampling was not to infer or to generalise but rather to gain insights into how people view a particular phenomenon (Hennink & Diamond, 2000).

There are four types of non-probability sampling methods, namely convenience, quota, snowball, and purposive sampling (Creswell, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014; Maree et al., 2016).

The researcher made use of purposive and volunteer sampling with the additional snowballing effect (Marshall, 1996; Saunders et al., 2016) (see Figure 5.13) to conduct this research.

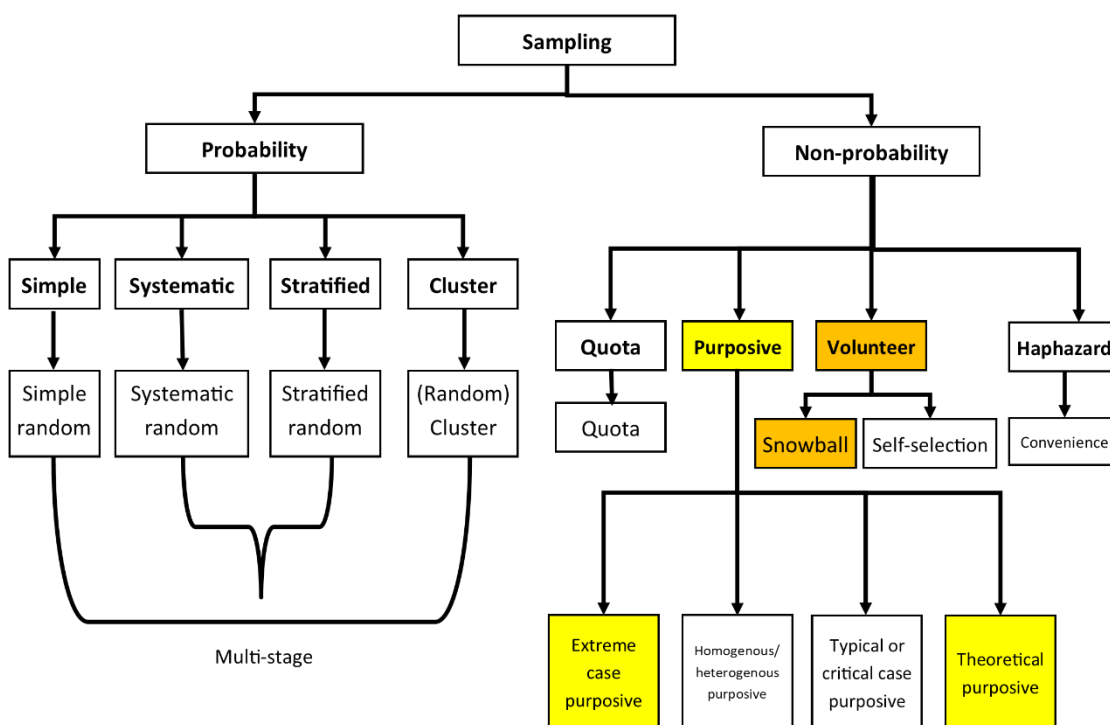


Figure 5.13: Sampling techniques

Source: Saunders et al., 2016, p. 276

5.6.3 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is useful when a specific group of people is intentionally selected to be interviewed about a unique situation or event. Leedy and Ormrod (2015) state

that in purposive sampling, people are selected because they represent 'typical' elements of a group or can present diverse perspectives on an issue.

Purposive sampling was used to acquire elements of the population who first, were willing to participate and second, were a match to the identified criteria for the study (Millennials and Generation Xers). The criteria that participants had to meet in order to be eligible to participate in the study are presented in Table 5.5.

5.6.3.1 Theoretical purposive sampling

Theoretical purposive sampling is a key characteristic of grounded theory, which supports theory development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). By using this approach, the researcher was able to adjust the sample according to her theory development needs (Marshall, 1996; Saunders et al., 2016; Terreblanche et al., 2011). This approach necessitated the collection of additional data to support the theory development process and to allow the context to be investigated further (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The researcher ensured theoretical saturation by identifying all the main attributes and relationships of the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic of the Millennials and Generation Xers and the coping mechanisms that they adopted to enhance their well-being. The researcher continued through the cycle of data collection and analysis until no new insights or categories could be attained and no further predictions could be made.

5.6.3.2 Extreme case purposive sampling

Extreme case or deviant sampling was used to focus on unusual or negative cases (Saunders et al., 2016; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) that contradicted the characteristics of the constructs. The researcher made use of extreme case sampling by conducting individual face-to-face internet interviews to understand and interpret more unusual cases within the data.

5.6.4 Volunteer sampling (snowball sampling)

Saunders et al. (2016) define volunteer sampling as a technique in which participants offer to be part of the research rather than being chosen. The researcher made use of volunteer sampling because she found it exceedingly difficult to find participants who were willing to participate in the focus group discussions (Maree et al., 2016). During the COVID-19 pandemic, many organisations requested their employees to work from home or implemented reduced working hours and, therefore, participants had limited time available for activities that were considered non-essential such as participation in a research study. The researcher also depended on colleagues and friends to suggest people who would be willing to participate.

Snowball sampling was used to gain access to all the individual interview participants. In her 'thank you' letter to the focus group participants, the researcher asked the participants to refer other persons who would be willing to participate in face-to-face internet interviews. Eight participants responded to this request and participated in the individual interviews.

Table 5.5 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting research participants.

Table 5.5: Sampling criteria

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Participants must be able to converse well in English.	Non-English-speaking people are excluded.
Participants must be living in either South Africa or Germany.	People living in countries other than South Africa or Germany are excluded.
Participants must be born between 1965 and 2000 (Generation X or Millennial).	People born before 1965 and after 2000 are excluded.
An organisation must submit the requested template with demographical information for a minimum of five employees (focus groups).	Templates with less than five employees and without demographical information are excluded.
Focus group participants must be willing to participate in a group discussion.	Unwilling persons are excluded.

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Individuals participating in internet interviews must be willing to be interviewed through the Zoom application.	People who are not willing to install the Zoom application on their computer or cellular phone are excluded.
Participants must have good internet and Wi-Fi connections and access.	People who do not have good internet and Wi-Fi connections and access are excluded.
Participants must be willing to download the training video from YouTube on how to use the LMS platform.	People who are not willing to download the training video from YouTube on how to use the LMS platform are excluded.
Participants must have good computer skills to be able to navigate the LMS platform, to participate in discussions online (focus groups) and to download the Zoom application (individual interviews).	People with limited computer knowledge are excluded.

Source: Author's own compilation

5.6.5 Sampling size and characteristics

The sample consisted of more women (n = 20; 56%) than men (n = 16; 44%). More participants belonged to the Millennials cohort (n = 21; 58%) than the Generation X cohort (n = 15; 42%). One participant indicated that he represents the Baby Boomer cohort. The data from this participant were excluded from analysis because he did not meet the inclusion criteria. The sample mostly represented white participants (n = 31; 86%), with fewer coloured participants (n = 3; 8%) and less black African participants (n = 2; 6%). Predominantly black African organisations were invited to participate in this study. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organisations declined participation at the last minute on account of the lockdown restrictions that resulted in employees not having access to data or the internet needed for participation. Many of the participants had a degree or postgraduate education (n = 16; 44%), while the majority had a matric certificate (n = 20; 56%). There were more participants with dependants (n = 11; 31% Millennials and n = 12; 34% Generation Xers) than without dependants (n = 9; 26% Millennials and n = 3; 9% Generation Xers).

Table 5.6: Biographical information of the research participants

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS 7-9 JULY											
PARTICIPANT NUMBER	PSEUDONYM	GENDER	ETHNICITY	MILLENNIAL (1982-2000)	GENERATION X (1961-1981)	DEPENDANT	GERMAN OR SOUTH AFRICAN	POSITION	MATRIC	UNDERGR	POST GRAD.
7	Brumbies	Male	White	X		NO	SA	DEPUTY EDITOR		X	
8	Jaguares	Female	White	X		YES	SA	EDITOR			X
9	Bulls	Female	White	X		NO	SA	JOURNALIST			X
10	Wallabies	Female	White		X	NO	SA	WRITER			X
11	Sharks	Female	Black	X		NO	SA	JOURNALIST			X
12	Dolphins	Male	White		X	NO	SA	MARKETING MANAGER	X		
13	Titans	Female	White	X		YES	SA	ADMIN CLERK	X		
14	Lions	Male	White	X		YES	SA	ENGINEER	X		
15	Warriors	Male	White	X		NO	SA	MECHANIC	X		
16	Cobras	Male	White		X	YES	SA	MECHANIC	X		
17	Nike	Female	White	X		YES	SA	HR DIRECTOR	X		
18	Addidas	Female	White	X		NO	SA	ADMIN CLERK	X		
19	Vans	Female	White		X	YES	SA	FINANCE	X		
22	Bayern	Female	White	X		NO	GM	PERSONAL ASSISTANT	X		
23	Wolfsburg	Male	White	X		YES	GM	PROJECT MANAGER		X	
24	Leipzig	Male	White		X	YES	GM	PROJECT MANAGER			X
25	Dortmund	Male	White		X	YES	GM	MANAGING DIRECTOR			X
26	Hoffenheim	Male	White	X		YES	GM	DESIGN ENGINEER		X	
27	Hockenheim	Male	White			*BABY BOOMER YES	GM	PRODUCTION MANAGER	X		
28	Lausitzring	Female	White		X	NO	GM	ADMIN CLERK		X	
29	Nürburgring	Male	White		X	YES	GM	DEVELOPER		X	
30	Sachsenring	Female	White		X	YES	GM	MARKETING MANAGER		X	
32	Clasic	Male	White	X		NO	SA	ACCOUNTANT		X	
33	Diamond	Female	White	X		NO	SA	ADMIN CLERK	X		
34	Ctour	Female	White	X		YES	SA	ADMIN CLERK		X	
35	947Ride	Female	White	X		YES	SA	ADMIN CLERK	X		
36	Loskop	Male	Coloured		X	YES	SA	CLAIMS CONSULTANT	X		

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS 7-9 JULY											
PARTICIPANT NUMBER	PSEUDONYM	GENDER	ETHNICITY	MILLENNIAL (1982-2000)	GENERATION X (1961-1981)	DEPENDANT	GERMAN OR SOUTH AFRICAN	POSITION	MATRIC	UNDERGR	POST GRAD.
37	Zambezi	Female	Coloured		X	YES	SA	CLAIMS CONSULTANT	X		
38	Jock	Female	White		X	YES	SA	FINANCIAL MANAGER	X		
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS											
PARTICIPANT NUMBER	INTERVIEW DATE	GENDER	ETHNICITY	MILLENNIAL (1982-2000)	GENERATION X (1961-1981)	DEPENDANT	GERMAN OR SOUTH AFRICAN	POSITION	MATRIC	UNDERGR	POST GRAD.
39	10/07/2020	Female	White		X	YES	SA	BUSINESS OWNER	X		
40	15/07/2020	Male	Coloured	X		YES	SA	RECRUITER	X		
41	15/07/2020	Male	White	X		NO	SA	DECK HAND	X		
42	15/07/2020	Female	White		X	YES	GM	BUSINESS OWNER		X	
43	15/07/2020	Male	Black African		X	YES	SA	NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION DIRECTOR	X		
44	15/07/2020	Female	White	X		YES	SA	CREDIT CONTROLLER	X		
45	21/07/2020	Male	White	X		YES	GM	ENGINEER			X
46	21/07/2020	Female	Black African	X		YES	SA	BANKER	X		

Note: *Numbers 1-6 were used in the pilot test.¹

**Although one Baby Boomer participated in the research study, his data were excluded from further analysis because he did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Source: Author's own compilation

¹ The researcher was allocated number 3 and the IT specialist was allocated number 2

Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that an appropriate sample size is one that answers the research question, whereas Saunders et al. (2016) are of the opinion that the more complex the topic, the smaller the focus group interviews should be and suggest involving four to twelve participants in focus group interviews.

Roller and Lavrakas (2015) provide a more comprehensive explanation and state that there are many variations on focus groups and that sampling size depends on various factors such as (i) the number of participants, (ii) the type of participants, and (iii) the mode of conduct. According to these authors, there are four levels of focus groups that are established in terms of size: (i) two participants referred to as 'dyads', (ii) three participants referred to as 'triads', (iii) four to six participants referred to as 'mini groups', and (iv) seven to ten or more participants referred to as 'full groups'. Hennink and Diamond (2000) opine that seven to ten people with similar characteristics is acceptable for a focus group interview, although smaller groups will provide more people with the opportunity to share their views.

Considering all the above suggestions and the extreme difficulty of gaining access to research participants during the COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher used homogenous mini groups (four to six participants) for the focus group discussions. Six organisations with an average of five participants per focus group provided in-depth descriptions of their experiences of COVID-19.

Although the focus group participants provided good data, the researcher aimed to collect additional data to confirm the experiences of the focus group participants and to ascertain whether new experiences could be uncovered from individual interviews. The researcher used the volunteering and snowballing technique to select additional participants for individual interviews until data saturation occurred. Significant new insights were gained from the individual participants.

The researcher used her knowledge on interview skills acquired during her master's degree to improve on her interview techniques, particularly for the focus groups. She learnt the importance of not interrupting participants and by using limited and far-reaching (wide) questions, allowed them through narrative to provide a complete account of their experiences.

5.7 EMPIRICAL PHASE

During the empirical phase, the researcher carried out focus group discussions with Millennials and Generation Xers who represented six diverse organisations (four in South Africa and two in Germany) and conducted eight individual virtual interviews with Millennials and Generation X participants (six from South Africa and two from Germany). The focus group interviews took place between 7 July 2020 and 9 July 2020 while the individual interviews took place between 10 July 2020 and 21 July 2020.

Three days before the focus group discussions started, the focus group participants each received a pseudonym from the researcher in a new e-mail address created specifically to ensure absolute confidentiality during the data collection process.

5.7.1 Ordering and preparing data for analysis

The researcher used ATLAS.ti, a computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programme to assist with the data analysis process and to derive trustworthy interpretations (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The researcher was familiar with the programme and its functions since she had used the software in previous research studies and had attended various ATLAS.ti training sessions and courses. ATLAS.ti assisted the researcher to map ideas and/or concepts systematically as they were emerging into networks.

Since the focus group participants typed their own responses to the questions on the platform, the researcher could import the responses directly into a Microsoft Word document as depicted in Figure 5.14. A total of 18 documents (three documents per organisation, that is, one per day) was imported into ATLAS.ti in this way. ATLAS.ti labelled these documents D1 to D18. The individual video interviews were then imported as D19 to D26. Each participant's response was individually coded. The South African participants were denoted with 'SA' and the German participants with 'GM'. The codes for South African participants ranged from SA7 to SA19, SA32 to SA41 and included SA43, SA44 and SA46. The codes for the German participants ranged from GM22 to GM30 and included GM42 and GM45.

Quotations in ATLAS.ti were numbered according to the document number and a unique identification (ID) was given where the quotation occurred in the document.

Thus, each quotation could be found by referring initially to the document number, then to the line number and lastly, to the character number in the document.

The individual interviews were coded directly from the video files as shown in Figure 5.15. The researcher transcribed only the parts of speech that were needed in Chapter 6 (Data findings and discussion), for example, “I have a problem now with my son when I have to go out for business. Now, he’s asking me to stay” (GM45).

According to Saunders et al. (2016) and Creswell (2014), the first step in data analysis involves obtaining a broad understanding of the data in the transcripts. The researcher began the data analysis process by reading the transcripts to become familiar with the data.

Figure 5.14 is a graphical representation of the document display manager in ATLAS.ti. The figure displays the transcript of the document labelled D7 (the original typed focus group discussion) with the associated codes assigned to the themes in ATLAS.ti.

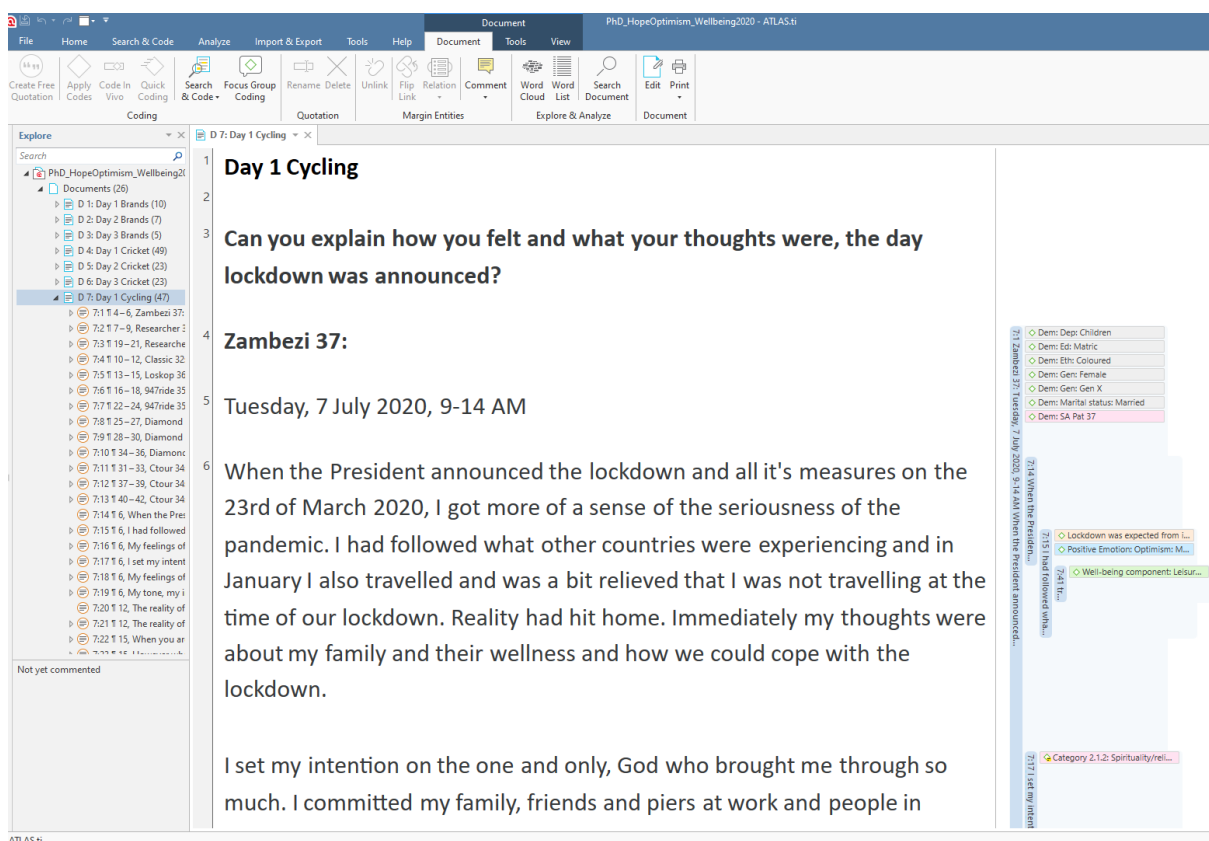


Figure 5.14: Example of transcript and coded interview using ATLAS.ti

Source: Author's own compilation in ATLAS.ti

Figure 5.14 also illustrates the various codes attached to the participant's response, for example, Generation X, female, with children, matric, etc. The illustration also shows the various code numbers assigned to each quotation of the participants, for example, 7:14 and 7:18.

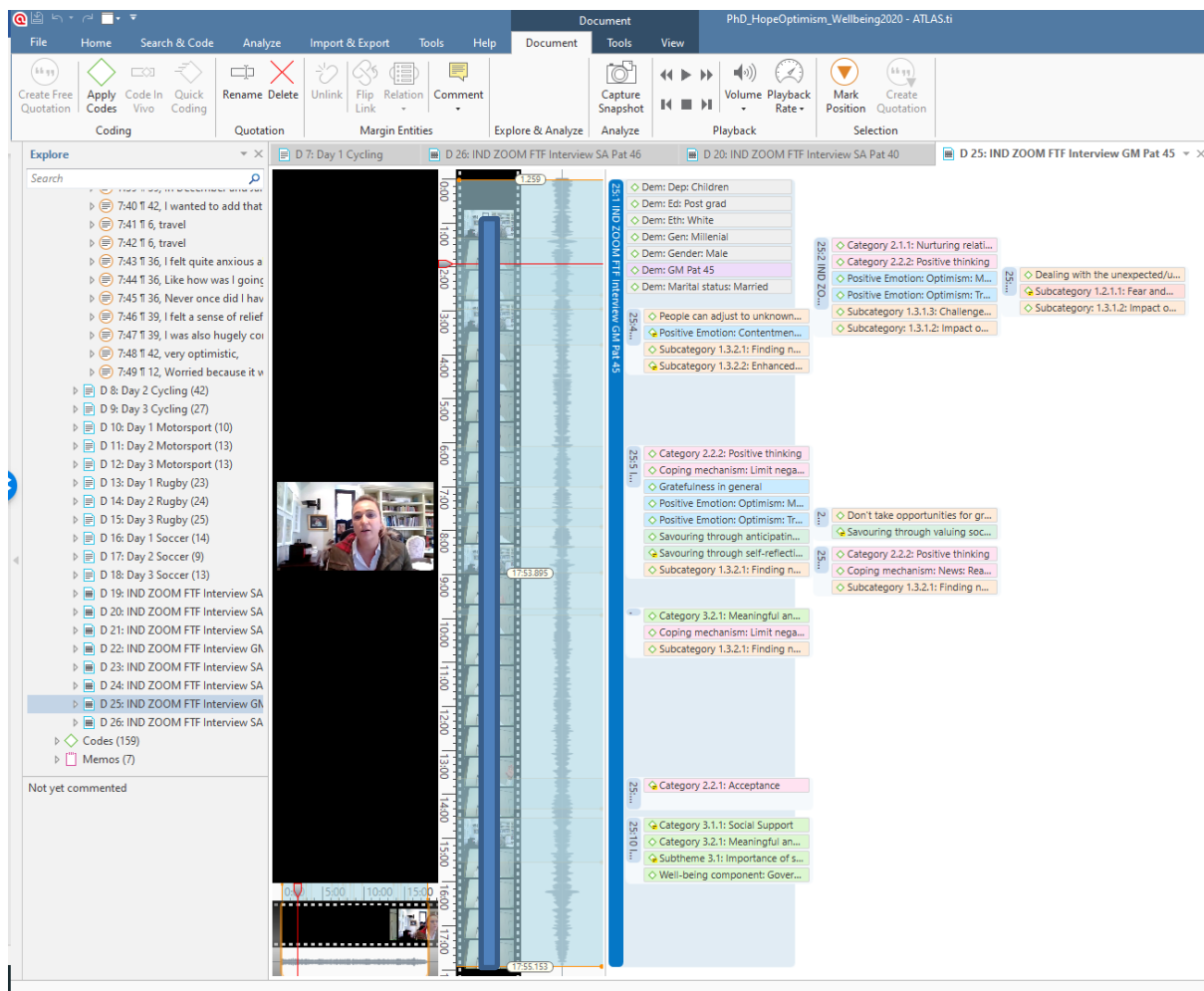


Figure 5.15: Example of individual (video) coded interviews using ATLAS.ti

Source: Author's own compilation in ATLAS.ti

The researcher used a six-step approach to analyse the qualitative data as suggested by Creswell (2014):

Step 1: Organise and prepare the raw data for analysis. This step involved organising and transferring the self-typed focus group responses of participants from the LMS Moodle platform into Microsoft Word documents.

Step 2: Organise data into preliminary documents. During this step, the Word documents were uploaded into ATLAS.ti referring to the pseudonyms of the companies (e.g. cycling, motorsport, brands) and participants (e.g. Nürburgring, Hockenheim, Brumbies) in the documents.

Step 3: Reading through the data. This step involved reading the data to understand how best to organise the data into meaningful bits. The researcher started by making a list of possible categories through understanding the data and from the conceptual framework developed in the literature review. Thereafter, the researcher worked through the data again in search of general themes that stood out as significant to the experiences under investigation. In this way, the researcher made use of a combination of emerging and predetermined codes (Creswell, 2014).

For example, the starting list codes included the following:

- specific topics
- characteristics and attributes
- actions
- processes
- emotions
- beliefs
- values

Emerging codes were added as the coding process progressed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014).

Step 4: Coding the data in ATLAS.ti. Coding involved organising the data by bracketing chunks into smaller segments such as individual phrases or sentences. The eight-step data analysis method of Tesch (1990) was applied to the coding process. The researcher used the coding process to generate a description of the participants' experiences of COVID-19 and to develop themes and categories as suggested by Creswell (2014).

In addition, the thick descriptions (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) provided by the research participants were used to construct a clear understanding of the context in which these experiences occurred. The researcher generated codes for these descriptions because they captured the feelings and thoughts of the participants and the complex

relationships amongst the constructs. These detailed descriptions allowed the researcher to develop themes that could support the major findings in the research and be used to develop the theoretical frameworks.

Step 5: Interrelating themes/descriptions. During this step, the researcher presents an explanation for the theoretical framework and the various themes that are incorporated in the framework by developing network diagrams in ATLAS.ti. to illustrate interdependencies of codes and themes.

Step 6: Interpreting the meanings of themes and/descriptions. During this step, the researcher presents interpretations of the data and presents the findings.

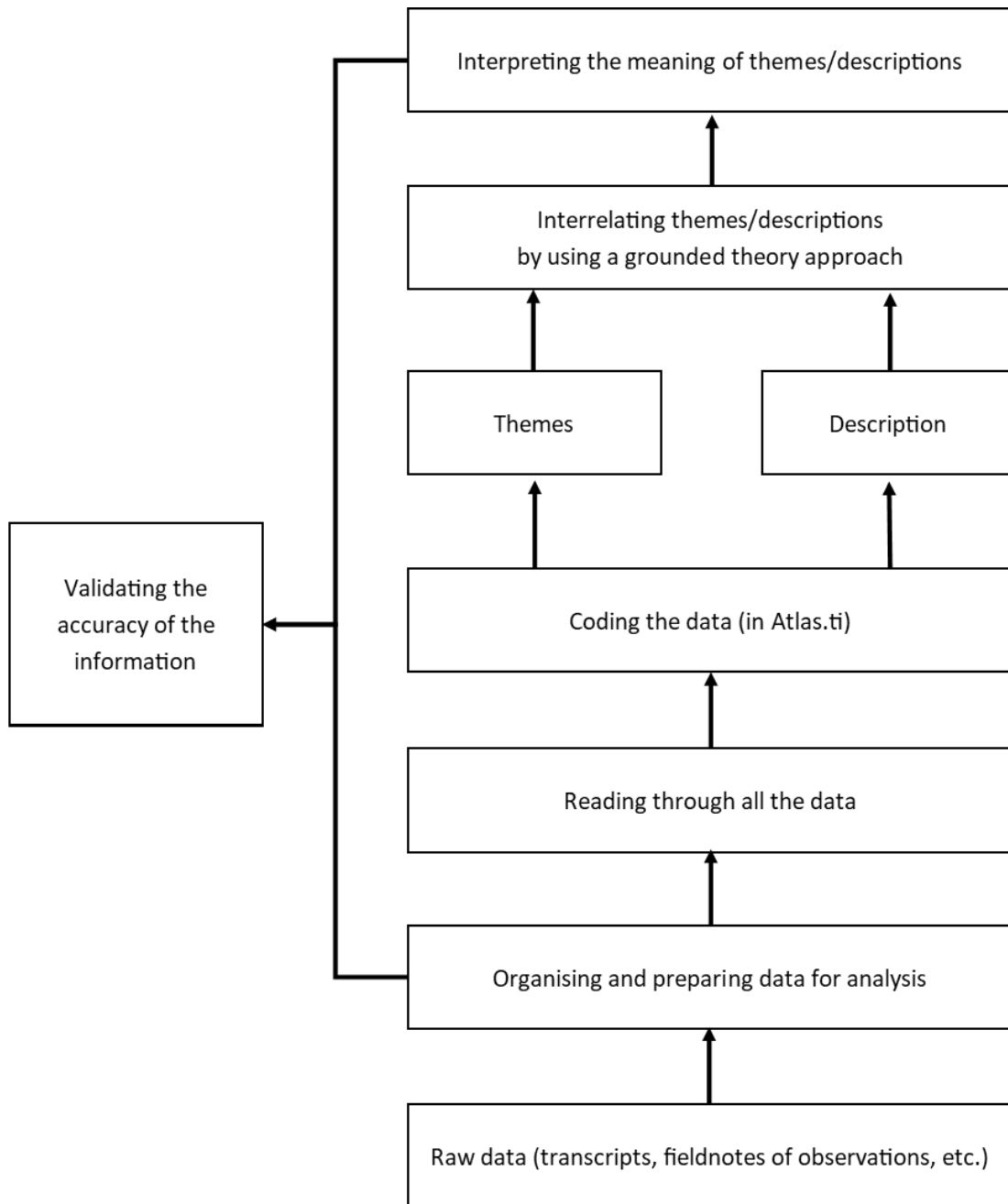


Figure 5.16: Data analysis process in qualitative research

Source: Adapted from Creswell, 2014, p. 197

Figure 5.16 illustrates the data analysis process that the researcher followed. The process began with organising and preparing the raw data and ended with the data interpretation process. During each step of the data analysis process, the researcher ensured trustworthiness of the data by validating the accuracy of the data interpretations with her research participants and her supervisor. This was achieved

by engaging in peer debriefing sessions, using a reflexive journal, using data triangulation, identifying deviant cases and engaging in member checking (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

In addition, the researcher applied the constant comparison method that involved moving between the data of the various focus groups to find contrasts and similarities within and between the categories.

5.7.2 The coding process

A code refers to either a word or a short phrase that symbolises a “summative, salient and essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute” (Saldana, 2013, p. 3) for a portion of language-based data. Codifying is the process of classifying data to extract meaningful ideas, themes and categories.

The data for this research consisted of self-typed data by focus group interview participants. The researcher used a two-cycle coding process, as suggested by Saldana (2013). In the first cycle, data coding ranged from a single word to a full paragraph. In the second cycle of coding, the researcher used pattern codes to group the first-cycle codes into smaller categories. The pattern codes, also known as “explanatory or inferential codes” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 86), were used to identify emergent themes, attributes or explanations of the constructs and to make sense of and create meaning of the first-cycle codes.

According to Miles et al. (2014), pattern codes consist of the following four, often interrelated, summarisers:

- “Categories or themes
- Causes or explanations
- Relationships among people
- Theoretical constructs” (p. 87)

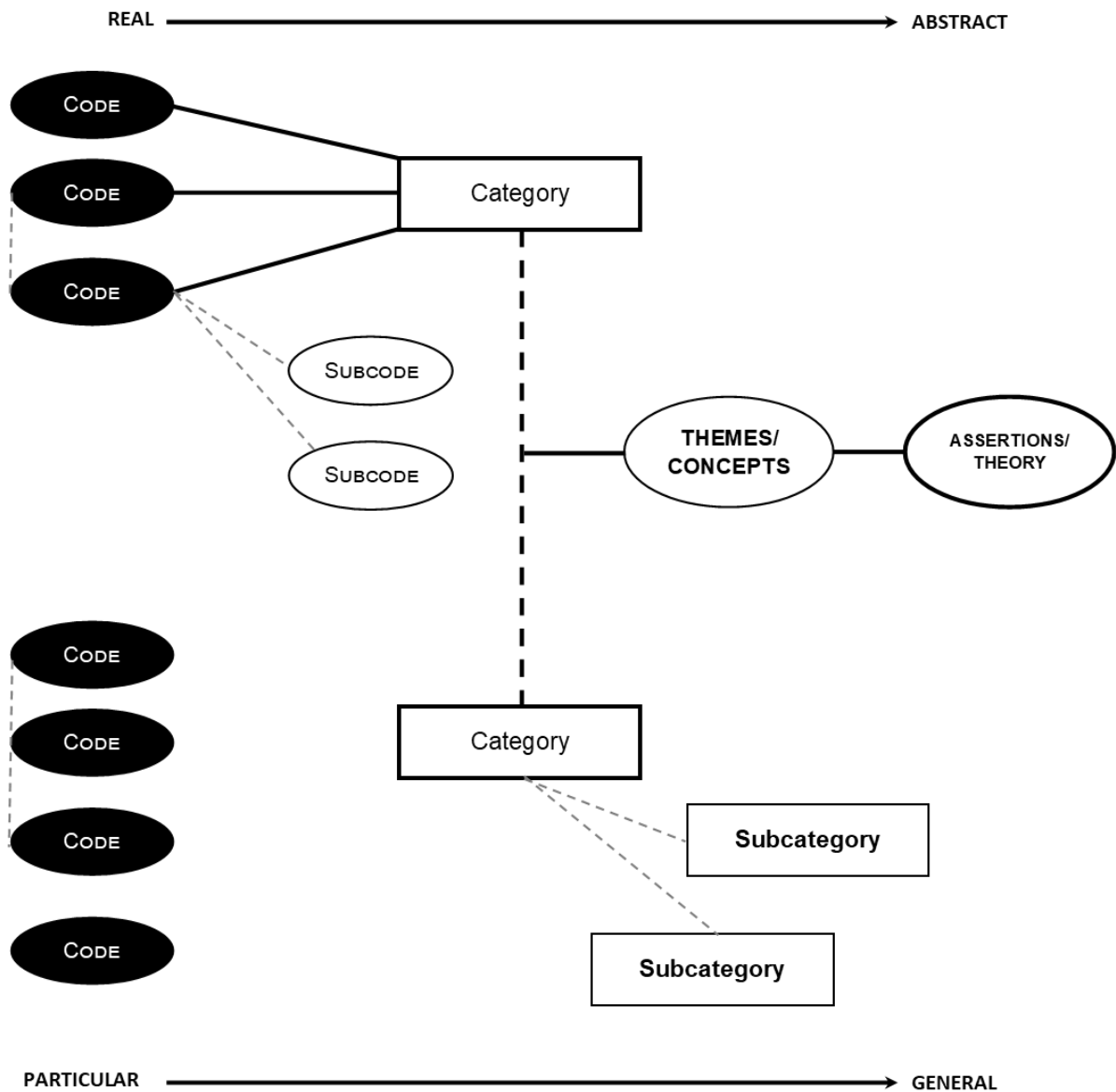


Figure 5.17: A streamline code-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry

Source: Saldana, 2013, p. 13

Figure 5.17 illustrates a considerably basic and streamlined approach to coding. However, in reality, this approach was much more complex. From the categories and subcategories, themes were developed and from the themes, theories emerged.

5.7.2.1 Open coding

The researcher started with an open-coding process (also referred to as initial coding) (Saldana, 2013) to make sense of the large 'chunks' of data and to provide initial 'labels' to the data. Saldana (2013) describes initial coding as a foundational process of grounded theory to ensure that the data are broken down into distinct parts that are closely scrutinised and compared for differences and similarities. The researcher applied line-by-line coding of the data to ensure real intimacy with the data as suggested by Urquhart (2013). The main challenge for the researcher was to remain 'open' to all possible theoretical directions. This process allowed the researcher to reflect deeply on the contents and distinctions in the readings of the data (Saldana, 2013).

5.7.2.2 Selective coding

The researcher made use of selective coding as suggested by Glaser (1978) and cited in Urquhart (2013). Selective coding is also referred to as focused or theoretical coding (Saldana, 2013). The method of Glaser (1978) as cited in Urquhart (2013) was more suitable for this study because the researcher dealt with vast amounts of data and only focused on coding on those categories that related to the core category. During this stage of the coding process, subcategories were developed where conditions, actions/interactions and consequences were predicted (Urquhart, 2013). Once the point of data saturation was achieved, the researcher selected the final categories to be analysed in order to arrive at a possible theory.

5.7.2.3 Theoretical coding

During theoretical coding, the researcher began to identify how substantive codes related to each other and the nature of the relationships between the codes. For example, the researcher searched for conditions, actions/interactions and consequences, etc. in the data (Urquhart, 2013).

5.7.3 Use of reflexive journal

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) highlight the importance of using “a highly reflexive process” to balance the researcher’s move from insider to outsider (p. 4). The researcher carried out the coding process herself and, therefore, kept a reflexive journal to keep note of her thoughts relating to the content, the coding process and the research project. The reflexive journal became a very useful tool during categorisation and interpretation of the data (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

5.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Trustworthiness relates to the reliability of the results and whether the research study is scientifically sound (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2016; Struwig et al., 2013; Terreblanche et al., 2011). The following four criteria were used to ensure trustworthiness in the research as proposed by Guba (1981):

- credibility,
- transferability,
- dependability, and
- confirmability.

5.8.1 Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that credibility refers to the extent to which the findings of qualitative research are found to be accurate. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) argue that credibility is established through (i) prolonged engagement, (ii) persistent observation, (iii) triangulation, (iv) peer debriefings, (v) deviant case analysis, (vi) referential adequacy, and (vii) member checks.

For this study, data credibility was ensured by concentrating on two main areas, namely scope and data gathering (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015), while the researcher applied various strategies to promote confidence in the accuracy of the interpretations and findings.

The researcher ensured that the scope of the data was credible in that it represented the population of the two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) that

the study set out to investigate and that appropriate strategies were put in place to gain access to the sample. In addition, the researcher ensured that the gathered data accurately presented what the study claimed to investigate.

The researcher employed the criteria suggested by Roller and Lavrakas (2015) to assess how well the data-gathering process was conceptualised and conducted:

- “matching constructs to research objectives.
- Identifying the attributes to measure each construct.
- Choosing the mode of data collection.
- Operationalising the constructs and attributes in the form of a data collection tool.
- Evaluating the data collector (researcher) as a source of bias and inconsistency.
- Evaluating the participants as sources of bias and inconsistency” (p. 30).

Credibility was further ensured by the following:

- Requesting participants to make **reflective journal** entries about the interviews (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Salmons, 2012). This process enabled the researcher to review and judge the quality of her data-gathering process and the soundness of her interpretations.
- Encouraging meaningful participation by allowing participants to share their personal thoughts and ideas and in the process, to **build trusting relationships** with the other participants who were also actively involved in the data collection process (Miles et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004).
- Encouraging **diverse organisations** and individuals to participate in the focus group interviews to discuss conflicting and similar ideas (Miles et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004).
- Using **peer debriefings** to reveal possible biases or s in data gathering and to verify the data and the analysis, including the interpretations (during and after the interviews) with participants to ensure credibility (Guba, 1981; Roller & Lavrakas, 2015; Saunders et al., 2016; Shenton, 2004). This process included encouraging colleagues, her supervisor and academics to scrutinise the data and the findings and to challenge assumptions made by the researcher.

- Applying the technique of **deviant case analysis** (also known as negative case analysis) to verify the findings and interpretations by searching the data for instances that contradict the prevailing evidence (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).
- Removing any preconceived ideas and expectations of the research and constructs under investigation and not allowing prejudice to influence the interpretations of participants' socially constructed realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Saunders et al., 2016).

Moreover, the following provisions were made to promote confidence in the accuracy of the interpretations and findings, as suggested by Shenton (2004):

- Applying a scientifically just and 'fit for purpose' research method such as computer-mediated focus group interviews to collect data (Reid & Reid, 2005; Saunders et al., 2016; Wirtz et al., 2019).
- Ensuring trustworthiness of the data by making use of not only computer-mediated focus groups interviews but also individual interviews (when needed) to collect additional data in order to confirm and predict attributes of the constructs.
- Using appropriate tactics to ensure truthfulness in the accounts of the participants. For example, the researcher allowed participants to decline to respond to a particular comment or to respond to comments made by other participants if the participant felt uncomfortable with a particular question or comment. Furthermore, the independent status of the researcher as a moderator advanced the credibility of the responses.
- Applying iterative questioning techniques in data collection dialogues to ensure that participants understood the context in which a question was placed. Shenton (2004) suggests using distinct types of questions as preventative strategies to ensure truthful answers. For example, the researcher sometimes raised matters that had been previously discussed but managed to extract additional data by rephrasing questions differently in the follow-up questions. When contradictions or suspected fabricated answers emerged, the researcher opted either to exclude the suspected data or to direct the reader's attention to such inaccuracies in the final report.

- Conducting regular debriefing sessions with her supervisor to ensure credibility and transparency during the research process. The researcher and her supervisor developed a unique and trusting relationship, which enabled the researcher to discuss her developing ideas and theories regularly with her supervisor. The supervisor was able to question the researcher's predicting process, biases and preferences on a continuous basis (Miles et al., 2014), thus ensuring absolute accuracy in interpretation.
- The researcher used reflective commentary in ATLAS.ti to make notes of her impressions of not only the participants and interviews but also of the developing patterns and emerging theories. This process assisted the researcher in monitoring her own developing constructions and in examining her personal assumptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ortlipp, 2008).
- Self-funding the research to ensure no potential threat was posed to participating organisations or individuals.
- Requesting participants to verify emerging theories (Shenton, 2004) and where possible, requesting participants to offer their views on why they believe the researcher made certain interpretations and predictions (Miles et al., 2014).
- Providing complete descriptions of the phenomenon to enable readers to familiarise themselves with the scenarios and to ascertain the extent to which the accounts are a true reflection of the participants' experiences (Shenton, 2004).

5.8.2 Transferability

According to Saunders et al. (2016), transferability is the parallel criterion to external validity or generalisability in quantitative research. In other words, it refers to the degree to which results can be generalised to the entire population. Thus, by providing a full description of the research questions, design, context, findings and interpretations, the researcher enables the readers to determine the extent to which the research will be transferable to their situations.

Although each case is unique, every organisation represents a broader group of individuals who experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and, therefore, transferability should not be rejected in its entirety. The study aimed to reflect the socially constructed

interpretations of individuals' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the interviews (Saunders et al., 2016). Most organisations in South Africa and Germany experienced consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic within their organisations and effects on their employees' well-being and, therefore, should be able to relate some of the findings of this research to their own environment and circumstances (Shenton, 2004).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that sufficient contextual information must be provided for the reader to enable transferability. Therefore, the researcher provided the following information in the research methodology section to ensure transferability of the study findings as suggested by Shenton (2004):

- The number of organisations that took part in the research, including the provision of some geographical information by the organisations.
- The number of research participants involved in the study per organisation and collectively.
- The data collection methods that were applied.
- The number and length of the data collection sessions (interviews).
- The time during which the data were collected.

5.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is the degree to which an independent auditor can look at the research and find it "acceptable" because there is a valid and reliable "audit" trail (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015, p. 21). Thus, dependability refers to the reliable gathering and recording of data and related evidence to produce a trustworthy and consistent account of the emerging evidence to be valued by the readers.

Guba and Lincoln (1994), Saunders et al. (2016), and Willis et al. (2016) point out that people behave differently in different contexts and express different opinions in changing environments due to realities being unstable and constantly changing (Terreblanche et al., 2011). For these reasons, the researcher had to guard against making unfounded predictions and assumptions, which would cause the data to be unreliable.

The researcher ensured dependability of the data by conducting the interviews with all 29 participants simultaneously over three days. This ensured that all research participants were subjected in the same manner to the same type of questions on the same day and in the same circumstances prevailing in the macro environments.

Particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was extremely important to interview participants on the same day because changes in the macro environment could significantly influence people's ideas and opinions of the COVID-19 pandemic and their experiences and coping mechanisms to enhance their well-being. For example, if the President had a negative announcement or comment on a particular interview day, this could have severely affected the responses of the participants. Therefore, all interviews were conducted on the same day over three days to ensure dependability of responses.

For the reasons explained in this section, the findings are mostly a true reflection of the participants' experiences at the time of the study.

5.8.4 Confirmability

The concept of 'confirmability' refers to the qualitative researcher's attempt to show objectivity in the study (Miles et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004) and concerns the use of the same dependability audit to examine the evidence in the data. Furthermore, Miles et al., (2014) maintain that key to confirmability is the researcher's obligation to admit her own predispositions and to identify ways in which these predispositions can be overcome.

Data triangulation, peer debriefings and deviant case analysis played a major role in confirmability of this research study (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Miles et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004). The researcher compared the data gathered between the various sources such as the data from the employees in the focus groups interviews and the data from the individual interviews and continuously conducted peer-debriefing sessions.

The researcher also used 'reflective commentary' to reduce any effect of researcher bias and encouraged research participants to keep diaries. In addition, the researcher applied a content analysis approach in ATLAS.ti to identify 'factual' objects in the data

instead of relying on her subjective judgements. The intrusion of researcher bias is inevitable due to the interpretivist nature of the study. However, the researcher was committed to ensuring that the findings were representative of the experiences and opinions of the participants rather than the experiences or ideas of the researcher and, therefore, searched for deviant cases to ensure confirmability.

This section explained the provisions made to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the study by discussing credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the research study.

5.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The trustworthiness of a study depends largely on the ethics of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The research applied “rigorous” thinking as suggested by Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 260) to ensure that the overall study conformed to ethical standards regarding not only the methods and analysis applied but also the protection of research participants from harm.

Potential ethical challenges were considered during the research process. According to Terreblanche et al. (2011), four widely accepted philosophical principles should be applied to determine whether the research is ethical. These include the principles of autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons, nonmaleficence, beneficence and justice. These are explained below.

5.9.1 The principle of autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons

This philosophical principle is linked to the Nuremberg Code and finds expression in the requirement of voluntary informed consent by all research participants. The researcher ensured individual and organisational confidentiality throughout the research.

5.9.1.1 *The right to self-determination*

The right to self-determination gave the participants free will to decide whether or not to participate in the study. At the onset of the interviews, the researcher informed the

participants of their right to clarify questions, their right to withhold information and their right to discontinue participation at any time.

5.9.1.2 *The right to full disclosure*

The right to full disclosure provided participants with the right to be informed about every aspect of the research. The researcher made a full disclosure in her personal capacity as the principal of a college and provided sufficient information about the purpose and nature of the study.

5.9.1.3 *Informed consent*

Informed consent forms (for participants and organisations) and a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) (with IT specialist) were issued and signed prior to the focus group discussions to ensure absolute confidentiality and non-disclosure of employees' and organisations' confidential information. The researcher also ensured through the informed consent and the NDA that she remained within the boundaries of the research and adhered to the objectives of the study and methods agreed upon between the organisations and the employees.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out that the importance of informed consent is to ensure that the research participants understand the implications of their actions and participation, which includes being permitted to discontinue participation at any time if they experience any discomfort. The consent forms that were signed and issued before the focus groups discussions began stated clearly that participation was voluntary and that participants could discontinue participating at any point. In addition, the forms provided participants with sufficient information to make informed choices about their participation, which included an explanation of the purpose of the study, the implications of providing research data, information regarding the dissemination of information and the procedures to ensure safekeeping of data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). Moreover, participants were given clear instructions in a training video on how to access the platform (LMS) and how to engage in the focus group discussions. The researcher also issued 'house rules' on the platform that participants had to accept before they could start participating on the platform.

5.9.2 The principle of nonmaleficence

This principle supplements the autonomy principle and requires that no harm befalls research participants as a direct or indirect consequence of the research. According to Saunders et al. (2016), any harm to participants must be avoided, be it through risk to emotional wellness, mental or physical health, or social or group cohesion. As far as possible, the researcher eliminated any harm or risk that a participant could be exposed to as a direct or indirect result of participating in the research. This included suffering from embarrassment, anxiety and fear of exposure. The researcher was sensitive to the need to ensure that the participants remained anonymous.

5.9.2.1 Avoidance of harm (*nonmaleficence*)

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out the importance of ensuring that no harm is inflicted on participants, be it through risk to PWB, to mental or physical health, or to social or group cohesion. For this reason, the researcher aimed to eliminate any harm or risk for participants as a direct or indirect result of participation. Fear of exposure and intimidation were addressed by ensuring absolute anonymity and privacy. In addition, the researcher informed participants that making racial, sexism and segregation remarks during discussions would result in them being removed from the study. Moreover, the 'house rules' were carefully overseen by the moderator (the researcher) to ensure that no participant was offended in any way and no participant risked losing his/her anonymity.

5.9.3 The principle of beneficence

This principle compels the researcher to maximise the benefits that the participants receive from the study. The researcher assessed the relative risks to the participants against the benefits that may directly result from the study.

5.9.3.1 Favourable risk/benefit ratio

The researcher identified possible risks, harms and 'costs' of the research to the participants; identify means to minimise such risks and costs so that the risk/benefit

ratio is favourable (Terreblanche et al., 2011). The researcher identified a low risk in participating in this research because participants were allocated pseudonyms. Furthermore, the participants did not incur any costs for participating in the study.

5.9.3.2 Freedom of exploitation

Exploitation refers to the misuse, mistreatment or manipulation of participants' information (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher ensured that the participants' information was not exploited in the research process because the participants verified the data analysis and research findings. In addition, the individuals who were selected for participation had no financial or other involvement or connection with the researcher.

5.9.3.3 Freedom from harm

Harm can manifest in a variety of ways, including blows to self-esteem, 'looking bad' in front of others and threats to one's interests, position or advancement in the organisation (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher was able to ensure the absence of harm since the study did not involve vulnerable persons or institutions or highly publicised organisations. In addition, the participants used pseudonyms to participate in the study. The identities of the participating organisations were also disguised.

5.9.4 The principle of justice

Justice refers to the fair treatment of research participants and the equity considerations taken during the research (Terreblanche et al., 2011). It also refers to the fair selection of research participants and the assurance that those who will possibly benefit from the research will not be harmed by the benefits.

5.9.4.1 Right to fair treatment and fair selection

Upon recruiting the participants, the researcher provided sufficient information about the goals of the study, and the participants were assured of their right to make an

informed decision regarding participation in the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2014). The population was selected from elements who matched the research criteria and from populations who were able to help answer the research questions.

5.9.4.2 *Right to privacy*

Privacy and anonymity enrich the reliability of data and were key aspects in the data collection of the study. Saunders et al. (2016) state that individuals and organisations should, as far as possible, remain anonymous to protect their information and privacy. The researcher took extra care and precautions to make the data non-attributable by giving participants pseudonyms under which they participated in the research on the LMS. In addition, the identities of the participants and the organisations were further protected by ascribing code words to personal data. For example, where a participant mentioned an organisation's name or confidential information about people from the organisation, the researcher used 'xx' to hide the information. Finally, the researcher took utmost care with the storage of the texted data (Terreblanche et al., 2011) by storing the information on a password-protected computer and using password protection on the text files.

The right to privacy allows participants to decide the type of information that they wish to share and the conditions under which the information may be disseminated. Individual interviews were conducted in private, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. The participants indicated which information they wanted to remain confidential, that is, not disclosed in the research report.

5.9.4.3 *Ensuring permission is obtained*

According to Saunders et al. (2016), the participants have the right to expect the researcher to observe the extent of the consent given and not widen the scope without first obtaining permission. Prior to the interviews, the researcher discussed the boundaries of the research with the participants and explained the importance of observing these limits. The researcher ensured through her reflexive diary entries that she did not exceed the boundaries of the research. Furthermore, no person was coerced or placed under pressure to participate in the research.

5.9.5 Ensuring permission is obtained

According to Saunders et al. (2016), the participants have the right to expect the researcher to observe the extent of the consent given and not widen the scope without first obtaining permission.

5.10 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the research methodology and design, the research paradigm, the data collection process and methods and the sampling strategy in order to provide a justification for the various research decisions that were made to achieve trustworthiness in the research.

Trustworthiness was discussed in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Regarding the ethical considerations, the researcher described the measures that were implemented to ensure that the research data complied with ethical protocols and that the research participants were in no way harmed by the research process.

CHAPTER 6: DATA FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study. Three main themes emerged from the data collected through the focus group discussions and the individual interviews discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.5.2. The core themes that emerged from the data are: the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, and elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several subthemes emerged from the main themes, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 6.1 is a graphical representation of the layout of Chapter 6 and the topics under discussion in the chapter.

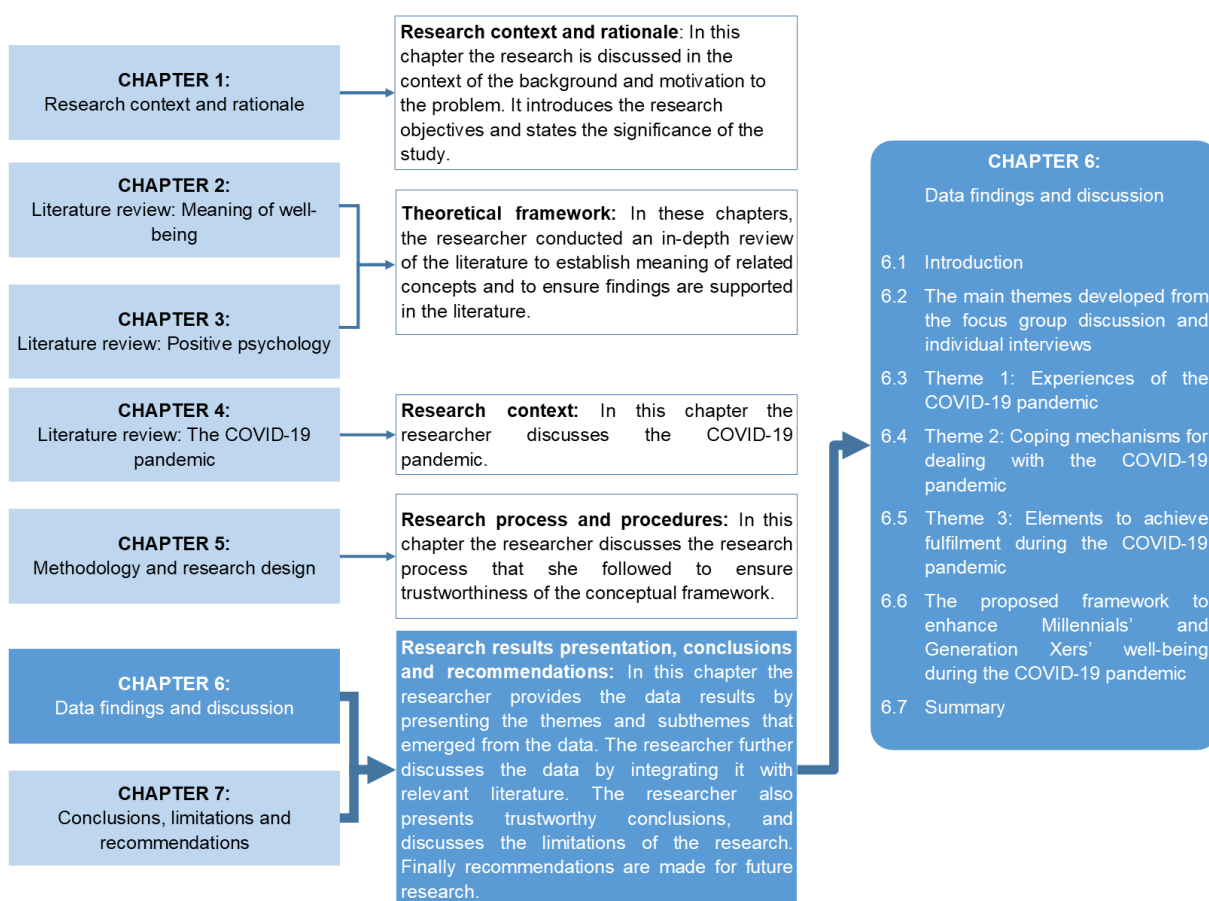


Figure 6.1: Structure of Chapter 6

Source: Author's own compilation

The main objective of the study was to explore the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from South Africa and Germany during the COVID-19 pandemic while the second objective was to investigate the coping mechanisms that were adopted by Millennials and Generation Xers from South Africa and Germany to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The main themes and subthemes supported the primary and secondary objectives of the study. The investigation found that individuals apply various coping mechanisms during times of adversity (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) to enhance their well-being.

The findings of the study were based on the literature review and the thematic analysis of the data obtained from focus group discussions representing six diverse organisations located in Germany and South Africa and from individual interviews with six South Africans (two Generation Xers and four Millennials) and two German participants (one Generation Xers and one Millennials). The confirming and refuting views of the Millennials in South Africa were used to support the interpretations of the experiences of the German Millennials. In addition, the experiences of the South African Generation Xers were used to confirm and corroborate the views of the German Generation Xers.

6.2 MAIN THEMES DEVELOPED FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Three main themes emerged from the participants' responses to the main questions discussed in Section 5.5.2.5. The researcher conducted thematic data analysis and independent coding by applying a grounded theory approach to establish emerging themes. The themes and subthemes emanating from this research are included in Annexure D. The following main themes emerged:

Theme 1: Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Theme 2: Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

Theme 3: Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the following sections, the researcher indicates when the objectives of the study are met by a main theme.

The main themes and subthemes with the associated categories are presented and discussed by using extracts from the focus group discussions, the individual interviews (verbatim evidence) and the diagrams constructed in ATLAS.ti. Additionally, the identified themes, subthemes and categories are compared with the literature and discussed in terms of the findings of the current study.

6.3 THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

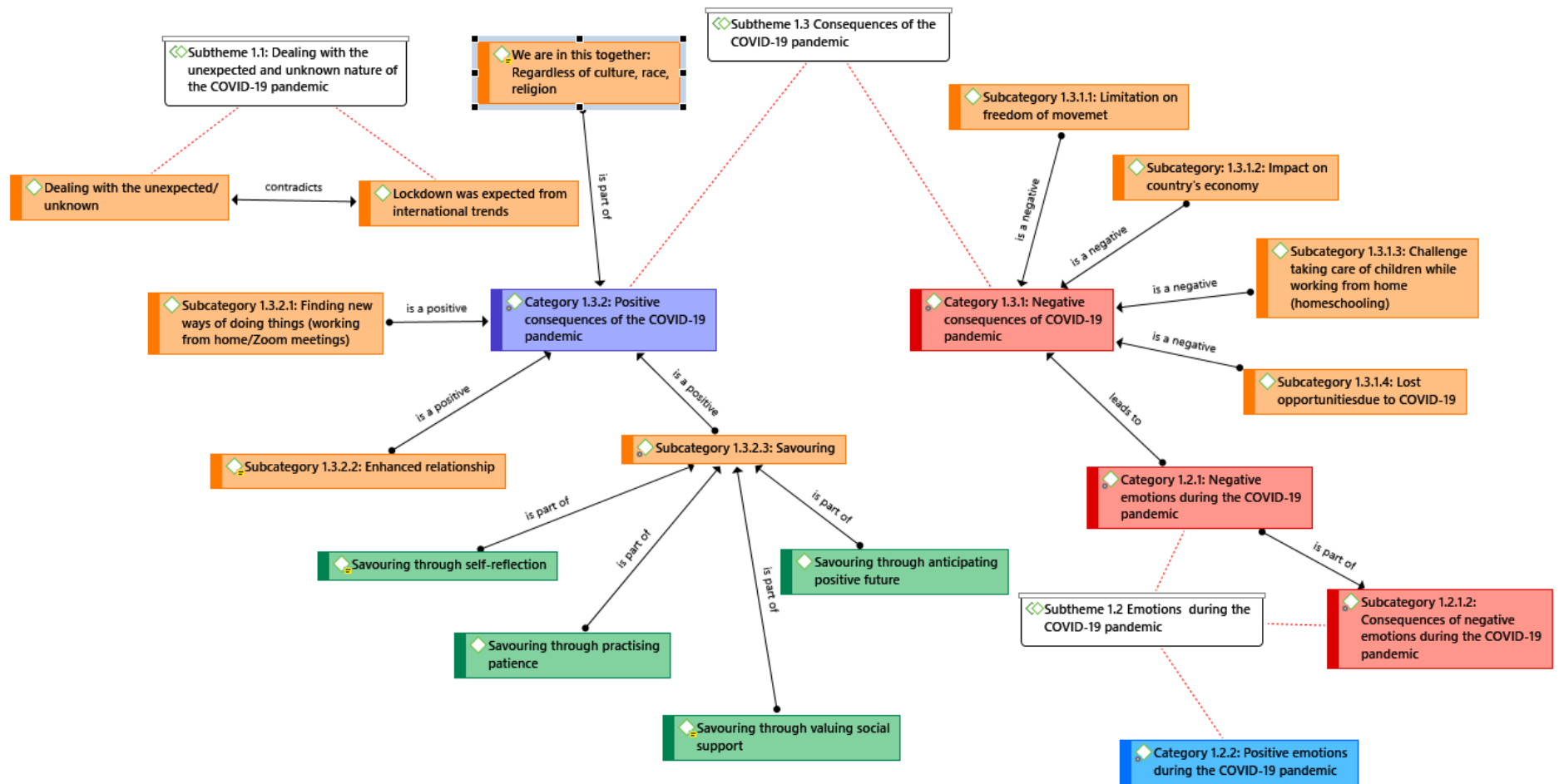
The responses to the following questions gave rise to Theme 1: Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Can you explain how you felt and what your thoughts were the day lockdown was announced?
- Looking back at the last three months since lockdown started, what have you learnt?

The first theme (experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic) developed into the following subthemes and categories as depicted in Figure 6.2.

- Subtheme 1.1: Dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Subtheme 1.2: Emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 1.2.1: Negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 1.2.2: Positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Subtheme 1.3: Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 1.3.1: Negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 1.3.2: Positive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Figure 6.2: Preliminary sub-framework – Theme 1: Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic with associated subthemes 1 to 3



Source: Author's own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to examine the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these experiences, a preliminary sub-framework was constructed in ATLAS.ti. Figure 6.3 illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Subtheme 1.1 (dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the COVID-19 pandemic) in ATLAS.ti. The figure also demonstrates the various codes that emerged from Subtheme 1.1.

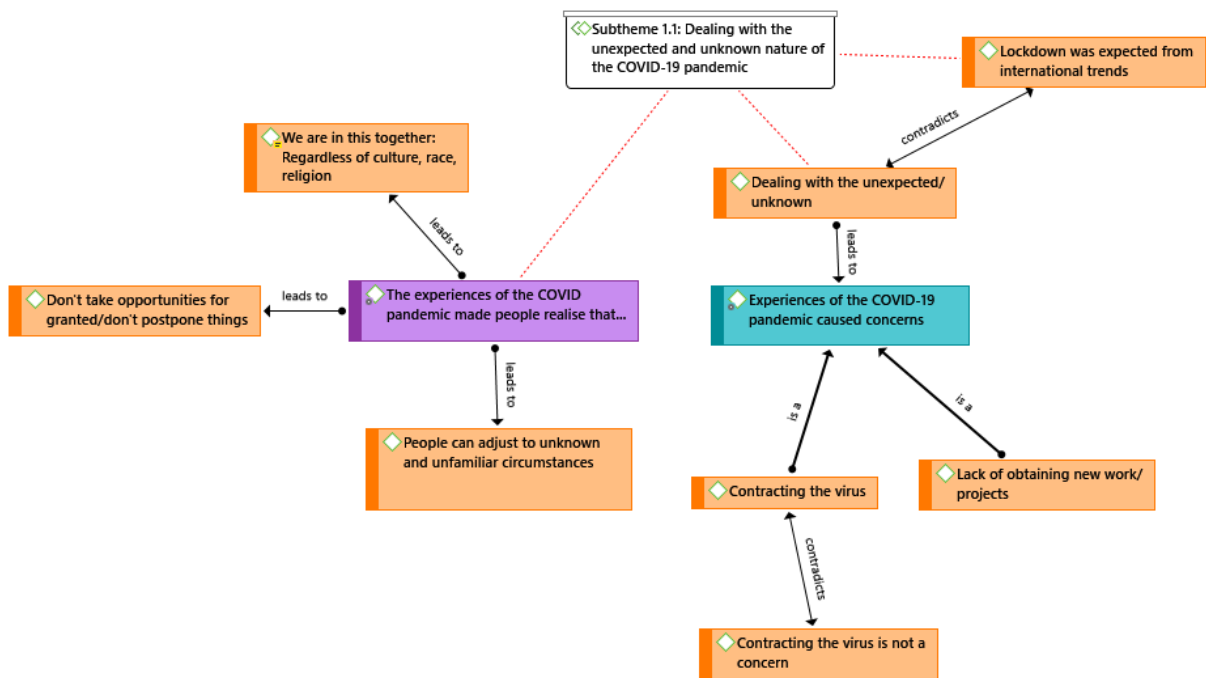


Figure 6.3: Preliminary sub-framework for Subtheme 1.1: Dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the COVID-9 pandemic

Source: Author’s own compilation using ATLAS.ti

6.3.1 Subtheme 1.1: Dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the COVID-19 pandemic

‘Dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic’ emerged as a subtheme from the interviews that were conducted with the research participants. Furthermore, dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic also emerged as a psychological challenge for the German participants (denoted with ‘GM’)

and the South African participants (denoted with 'SA'). Millennials were indicated with 'Mill' and Generation Xers with 'Gen X'.

Many participants described their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic explicitly and implicitly as 'unexpected and unfamiliar'.

Six Generation X participants (SA16, SA19, SA39, SA43, GM30, GM42) and nine Millennial participants (SA13, SA15, SA18, SA22, SA33, SA44, GM28, GM22, GM45) explained how fearful they were of lockdown because it was unexpected and unfamiliar to them. However, three Generation X participants (SA36, SA37, GM24) and five Millennial participants (SA14, SA18, SA32, SA34, SA41) expected lockdown to happen on account of daily occurrences in other countries. Moreover, many participants expressed how unprepared they felt for the lockdown. The participants used word such as "shocked" (SA15, SA14) and "scared" (SA 15) to describe their feelings of lockdown.

The code co-occurrence function in ATLAS.ti was used to interpret the narrated experiences of the Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa (Figure 6.4). The code 'dealing with the unexpected/unknown' was used to develop the code co-occurrence table and Sankey diagram (see Figure 6.4). The code co-occurrence table shows that of the quotations coded 'dealing with the unexpected and unknown', the majority (14) of the quotations were made by South African participants, with 11 of these quotations being made by Millennials. The code co-occurrence table shows that there were no significant differences in the degree of uncertainty experienced by the Millennials and Generation Xers and by the German and South African participants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

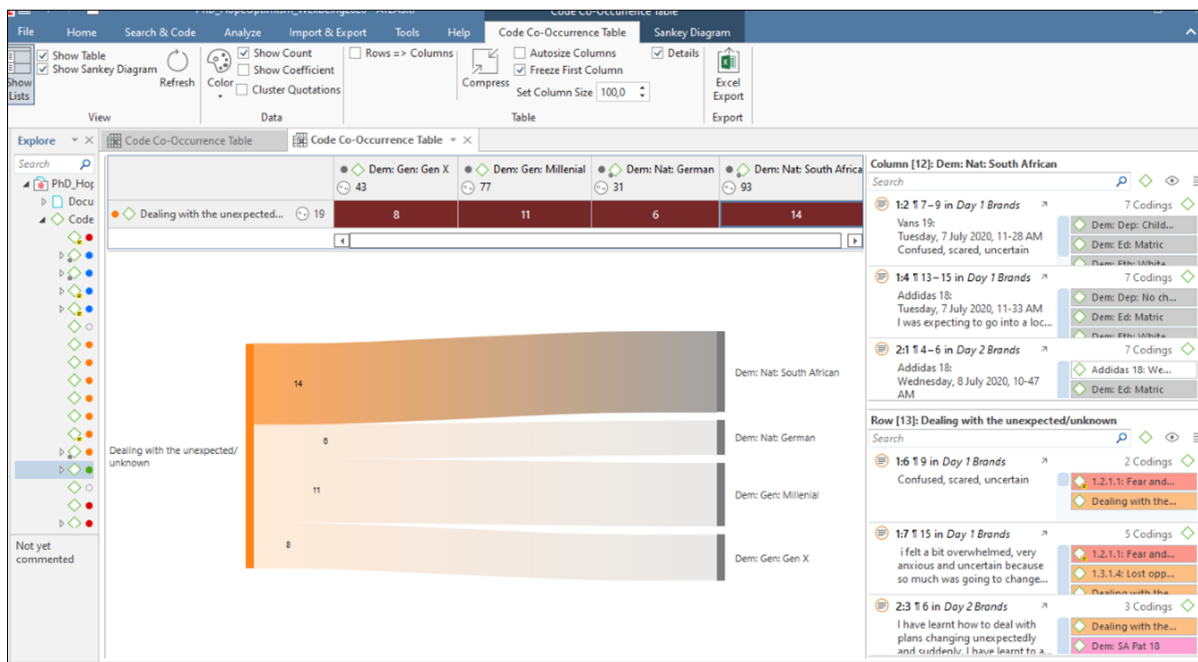


Figure 6.4: Subtheme 1.1 – Co-occurrence table and Sankey diagram of quotations coded ‘dealing with the unexpected’

Source: Author’s own compilation in ATLAS.ti

Table 6.1 provides the verbatim evidence collected from participants in the focus group discussions and individual interviews to support the emerging code ‘unexpected and unfamiliar’ nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 6.1: Subtheme 1.1: Dealing with the unexpected and unknown nature of the COVID-19 pandemic

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA15: Didn't expect something like this would ever hit us as bad as the COVID 19 did.	SA39: Under any adversity that comes my way, I usually go back. I go back and I have a look [at] how did I solve it. It is usually familiar to me ...	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>SA18: I was expecting to go into a lockdown given what was happening around the world. I did not think it would happen so soon because our numbers weren't high. So when it was announced, I felt a bit overwhelmed, very anxious and uncertain because so much was going to change.</p> <p>SA33: I felt quite anxious about the unknowns.</p>	<p>any problem that comes to me, it's usually a familiar problem and this time, I look back and there is nothing there. It's unknown territory for me this COVID. This lockdown, it was just terrible and the fact that I didn't know what to do about it.</p> <p>SA43: I have no idea where I'm going to be next year The longer this goes on, the more I struggle with this just dealing with uncertainty Schools have not gone back, which means my career and my work really is uncertain from month to month.</p>	Unexpected/unknown
German participants	<p>GM28: I felt a little insecure and a little bit afraid as it is a new situation that we have never known before.</p>	<p>GM30: The lockdown with all its limitations came as a great surprise to me. I could not have imagined something like this before.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

Participants also discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic made them realise how vulnerable and “fragile” (SA39) life is and that it should not be taken “for granted” (SA12, SA16, SA14, SA39, SA40, SA41, SA46). One German participant (GM42) described this experience by stating,

I learned that we are much more vulnerable than I thought we would be. As a German, you think you are in a secure country, nothing really bad can happen to you, and now you can see something like this virus hits [affects] the whole world. (GM42)

The experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the following realisations

The participants related that they experienced a sense of togetherness during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicating how they were in this together (SA13, SA32, SA35, SA34, GM28, GM42). Interestingly, three Millennials (SA41, SA46, GM45) discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic made them realise that they should not continue to postpone their plans because COVID-19 caused them to lose valuable opportunities (SA18, SA41, GM27), “It taught me [that] when opportunities do come around to go and do something, you have got to go and do it; you can’t say you’ll do it next time or when it comes around again” (SA41). Two other Millennials agreed with this viewpoint by stating, “Don’t take the present for granted, especially in good times” (SA33, Millennial) and “I realised that I took a lot for granted” (SA35, Millennial).

Concerns about contracting the virus

It is noteworthy that only two participants (SA46, Millennial and GM42, Generation X) mentioned that they were concerned about contracting the virus, while three Millennials (SA33, SA44, GM23) stated that they were not concerned about being infected. The researcher did not pose an explicit question to the participants regarding concern for contracting the virus. Therefore, one should not infer too much from these responses, which could have been different had the participants been asked to respond to such a question.

6.3.1.1 Discussion of Subtheme 1.1: Dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the COVID-19 pandemic

The researcher started the investigation into the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic by examining how they experienced the

lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, neither South Africa nor Germany had ever experienced a lockdown. Therefore, the concept was unfamiliar to Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa. Despite warnings worldwide, lockdown came as a shock to the people of both Germany and South Africa. Prior to the announcement made by President Cyril Ramaphosa on 23 March 2020, there had been no indication when lockdown would happen in South Africa. The German participants explained that although lockdown 'caught them by surprise', it was somehow expected considering European trends. The South African participants agreed that never in the history of their country had they ever experienced such an occurrence (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4).

Although, Generation Xers are considered more mature in their problem-solving abilities due to their life experiences, there was nothing that they could relate to the COVID-pandemic to solve this 'problem'. As one Generation X participant explained, in the past when faced with adversity, she always looked back and reflected on how she had managed the previous situation, but with the COVID-19 pandemic, "there was just nothing" (SA39). Moreover, although Millennials are often considered easy-going and flexible in their thinking due to their age advantage, they also experienced great fear and anxiety because the pandemic was unknown and affected everyone, regardless of their race, religion, sex or beliefs (Section 1.2.6).

The findings of the study confirmed the views of various authors who argue that imposed quarantine or isolation is an unfamiliar and unpleasant experience (Brandley- Bell & Talbot, 2020; Brooks et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020). This is because quarantine involves separation from family and friends, causes disruption in everyday routines (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Usher et al., 2020) and leads to reduced access to social support networks (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Saltzman et al., 2020) (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4) that play a pivotal role in mental well-being and mental health recovery (Saltzman et al., 2020).

The findings concur with the findings of Usher et al. (2020) and Grover et al. (2020) who maintain that isolation is known for causing psychosocial harm in the form of anxiety or depression. The study further supports the findings of Brooks et al. (2020) who found several other negative psychological effects of quarantine such as post-traumatic stress, confusion and anger (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4), which were also

evident in the findings of this study. Contrary to certain findings of Brooks et al. (2020), this study did not find “fear of infection, boredom, inadequate supplies, inadequate information, and stigma” to be the most significant aspects leading to heightened levels of stress during lockdown or quarantine (p. 912). While Brooks et al. (2020) aimed to investigate the impact of quarantine on PWB by conducting a literature review of 3 166 papers, this study interviewed Millennials and Generation Xers in focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews to gain a first-hand understanding of participants’ experiences of the pandemic and lockdown. From these discussions, it was clear that the pandemic and resulting lockdown were unexpected and unfamiliar and, therefore, caused heightened levels of anxiety and stress for the participants.

Various authors such as Branley-Bell and Talbot (2020), Grover et al. (2020), Kimhi et al. (2020), and Peng et al. (2020) acknowledge the impact that the COVID-19 lockdown had on individuals, including the fact that it caused individuals to experience heightened levels of anxiety (Chaix et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020). This study supports the findings of Grover et al. (2020) and Kimhi et al. (2020) who found that participants experienced heightened levels of anxiety due to lockdown (Chapter 4, Section 4.4.4). In addition, the research findings concur that due to the significant degree of uncertainty characterised by COVID-19 (Kimhi et al., 2020), individuals experience heightened levels of anxiety and distress symptoms.

Subtheme 1.2 (emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic) developed through dealing with the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic discussed in Subtheme 1.1. The participants experienced various emotions (positive and negative) during COVID-19, which are discussed in more detail in Subtheme 1.2 (emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic) under Section 6.3.2.

Figure 6.5 illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Subtheme 1.2 (emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic) in ATLAS.ti. The figure shows Category 1.2.1 (negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic) and Category 1.2.2 (positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic) that developed from Subtheme 1.2 and includes the subcategories that developed (i.e. Subcategory 1.2.1.1: fear and anxiety, Subcategory 1.2.2.1: gratitude, etc.).

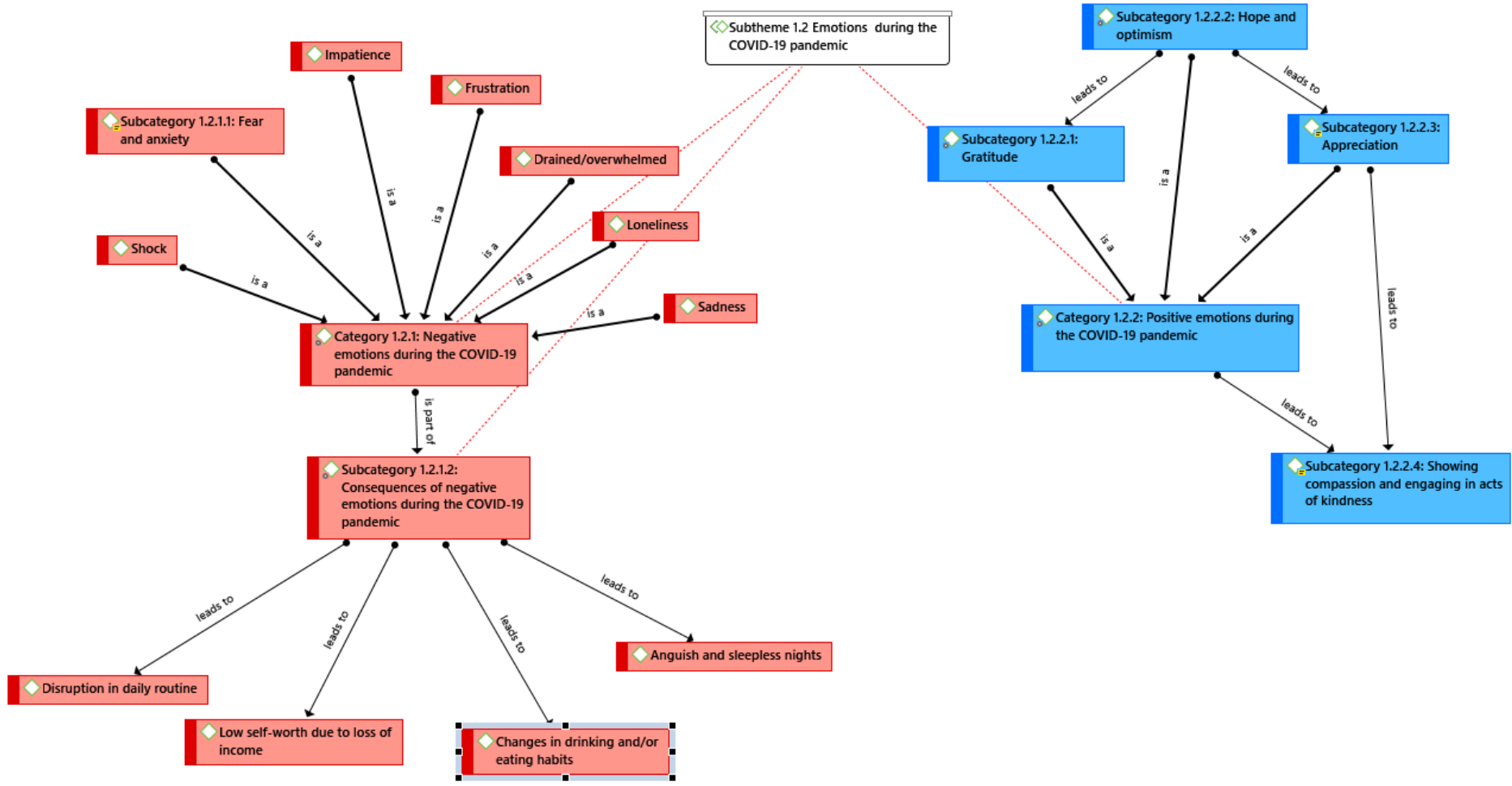


Figure 6.5: Preliminary sub-framework for Subtheme 1.2: Emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation using ATLAS.ti

6.3.2 Subtheme 1.2: Emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic

'Emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic' emerged as a subtheme from the interviews that were conducted with the research participants. The participants discussed both the positive and the negative emotions that they experienced during the pandemic. Several participants described how they used positive emotions to overcome the traumatic experience and to safeguard themselves against the negative aspects of the experience (Allen et al., 2007; Chetna & Sharma, 2019; Joseph, 2011; Joseph & Butler, 2010; Kimhi et al., 2020; Luthans, Youssef-Morgan et al., 2015; Peterson & Bossio, 2001; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004) (Section 1.2).

6.3.2.1 Category 1.2.1: Negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic

Nineteen Millennial participants (SA7, SA8, SA9, SA13, SA14, SA15, SA17, SA18, SA32, SA33, SA34, SA35, SA36, SA41, SA43, SA44, SA46 GM28, GM45) and nine Generation X participants (SA10, SA16, SA19, SA37, SA38, SA39, SA40, GM25, GM42) used several emotional words to describe their negative emotions towards the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

- Subcategory 1.2.1.1: Fear and anxiety

Participants used the words 'anxious or anxiety' interchangeably 20 times and 'fear' 19 times during focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews to explain their thoughts and feelings the day that lockdown was announced. Participants also used words such as 'angry' (SA39, SA40), 'emotionally drained' (SA37), 'overwhelmed' (SA10), 'state of panic' (SA9), 'utter desperation' (SA40), 'frustration' (SA7, SA8, SA38, SA40) and 'loneliness' (SA33, SA35) to express their emotions about the unexpected experience of lockdown.

The code co-occurrence function in ATLAS.ti was used to make a comparison between the emotions experienced by the Millennial and Generation X participants from Germany and South Africa (Figure 6.6.). Subcategory 1.2.1.1 'Fear and anxiety' on the top line of the table is a smart code for the codes below. A smart code groups other codes together in ATLAS.ti. The code co-occurrence table in Figure 6.6 shows that of the 39 quotations coded for 'fear and anxiety', the majority (35) of quotations were from

South African participants, and 27 of these quotations were from Millennials. The code co-occurrence table further shows that German participants did not experience emotions such as feeling drained/overwhelmed, frustrated, impatient, lonely or sad as a result of lockdown. The table shows that the Millennial participants had more negative emotions towards lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic than the Generation X participants and that the South African Millennials experienced significantly more ‘fear and anxiety’ than any other group.

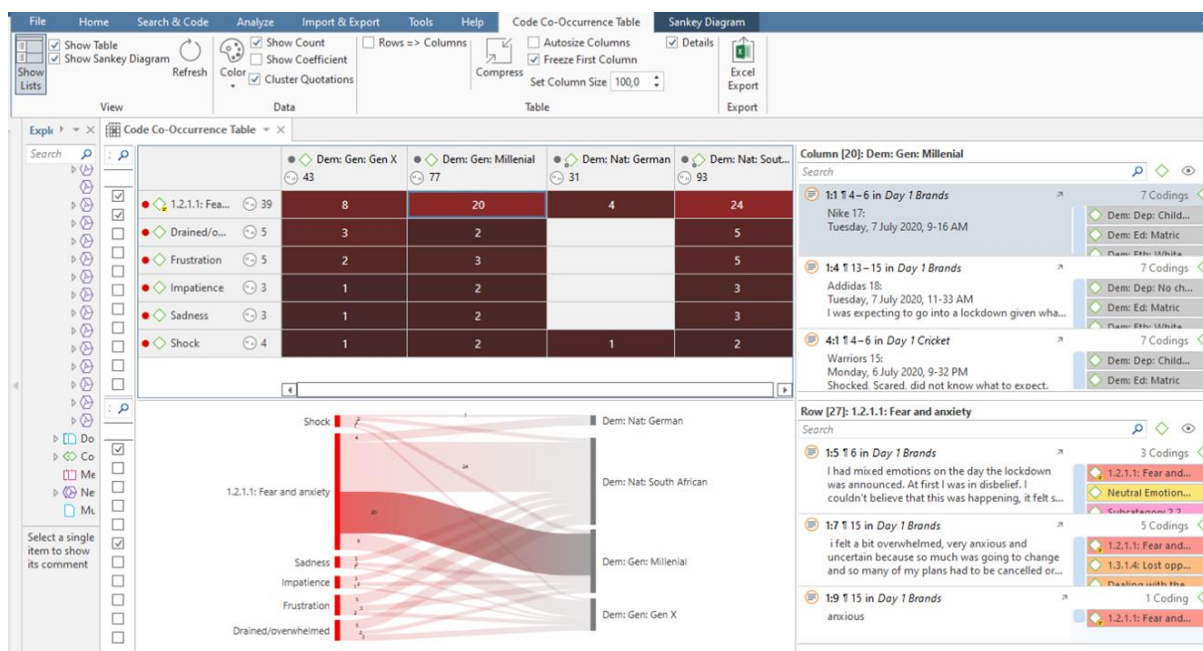


Figure 6.6: Subcategory 1.2.1.1. Co-occurrence table and Sankey diagram of quotations coded for negative emotions

Source: Author’s own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The results in Figure 6.6 can be summarised by the following comment made by a South African Millennial (SA34), “[T]his pandemic period has been one of the most tiring periods of my life”.

A more detailed account of participants’ negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic are expressed in Table 6.2 by selecting the code ‘fear and anxiety’.

Table 6.2: Subcategory 1.2.1.1: Fear and anxiety

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA13: We can only stay on our knees and let God take care of the rest. This fear and uncertainty ... looking back to 26 March 2020 and thinking of the fear exploding in my brain.</p> <p>SA14: When the lockdown was first announced, it was a shock. When the lockdown started that Thursday evening, I actually felt depressed.</p> <p>SA15: Shocked, scared, did not know what to expect.</p> <p>SA18: I felt a bit overwhelmed, very anxious and uncertain because so much was going to change and so many of my plans had to be cancelled or postponed.</p> <p>SA34: I haven't felt this level of anxiety for years.</p>	<p>SA36: When the lockdown was announced, I was not so anxious. Fear, anxiety, doubt and uncertainty.</p> <p>SA37: My feelings of fear and anxiety became less with the President's assurances and my spiritual conviction, which has always kept my mind and emotions in check.</p>	Fear and anxiety

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
German participants	GM28: I felt a little insecure and a little bit afraid.	GM42: I was totally surprised.	

Source: Author's own compilation

It was noted that the majority of South African participants indicated that they felt anxious and fearful about lockdown. However, only one German participant indicated a slight uneasiness with the lockdown while another indicated simply being 'surprised' by the lockdown.

German Generation Xer (GM25) made an interesting comment about the fear surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic: "It felt strange to see how some people and even institutions were able to instrumentalise [project] the fear for the virus and people are very vulnerable if they are in fear." In her explanation, the participant noted how organisations and people in Germany were using the pandemic to make people fearful of the virus and according to the participant, people become more vulnerable when they are fearful.

- Subcategory 1.2.1.2: Consequences of negative emotions experienced during the COVID-9 pandemic

The findings showed that negative emotions such as fear and anxiety often contribute to heightened levels of distress and concerns, and this leads to physical symptoms such as anguish and sleepless nights (SA14, SA38, SA44), excessive eating and drinking of alcohol (SA14, SA35, SA40, SA44), loss of daily routine (SA33, SA44) and harm to self-worth (SA7, SA13, SA39, SA41).

6.3.2.2 Category 1.2.2: Positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Subcategory 1.2.2.1: Gratitude

A word search in the quotations of the focus group discussions revealed that the word 'grateful' was mentioned 41 times and 'gratitude' was indicated 16 times. Aspects of gratitude were also mentioned, explicitly and implicitly, by six of the eight individual participants.

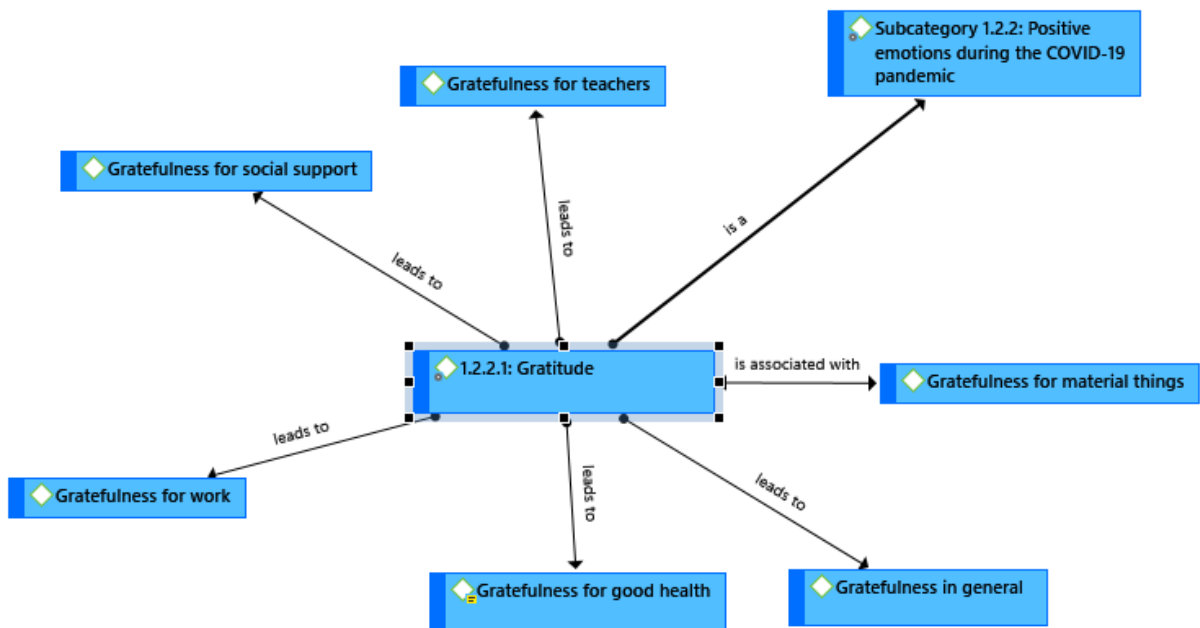


Figure 6.7: Preliminary sub-framework for experiences of gratitude during the Covid-19 pandemic

Source: Authors own compilation from ATLAS.ti

Figure 6.7 demonstrates the emerging codes that developed from Category 1.2.2 (positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic) into the Subcategory 1.2.2.1 (gratitude) in ATLAS.ti. The significance of the codes (gratefulness for work, gratefulness for social support, gratefulness for teachers, gratefulness for good health, gratefulness for material things) in Subcategory 1.2.2.1 are now discussed.

- Gratefulness in general

Sixteen (16) participants explained that they were extremely grateful for everything they have, while ten participants expressed their gratitude for having social support from friends and family. Seven participants discussed their gratitude for retaining their employment during the pandemic, three participants expressed their gratitude for having good health and three others discussed their gratitude for having access to material things.

Of the 16 participants who mentioned their gratitude towards everything in general, ten were Millennials (SA9, SA10, SA13, SA14, SA15, SA33, SA34, SA35, SA41, GM45) and six were Generation Xers (SA12, SA14, SA37, SA39, SA40, SA43).

- Gratefulness for social support

Five Millennial participants (SA13, SA14, SA18, SA32, SA34) and five Generation X participants (SA16, SA19, SA28, SA39, SA40) discussed their gratitude for having friends and family on whom they could depend during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants discussed at length the importance of socialisation with friends and family to enhance their mood and to remain optimistic and hopeful for the future. Participant SA14 commented, “How good it was to have a braai with family and friends. How easy and good it felt to walk up to someone you have not seen in a while, give them a hug and chat”.

The code co-occurrence table in Figure 6.8 lists the codes that emerged from the subcategory for gratitude. In the table (Figure 6.8), Subcategory 1.2.2.1 (gratitude) is on the top line of the table in ATLAS.ti. This subcategory was used as a smart code for the codes listed below. A smart code groups other codes together in ATLAS.ti. The table shows that of the 39 quotations coded for ‘gratitude’, the majority (37) of the quotations were from South African participants, and 22 quotations were from Millennials. The code co-occurrence table further shows that although the German participants made some comments (quotations) regarding being grateful in general, they did not comment on feeling grateful for “good health, teachers and their work”. Most importantly, the table shows that the Millennial and the Generation X participants demonstrated equal expressions of gratitude.

PhD_HopeOptimism_Wellbeing2020 - ATLAS.ti

Code Co-Occurrence Table

Code Co-Occurrence Table

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Excel Export

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Table

Co-Occurrence Table

Name	Dem: Gen: Gen X 43	Dem: Gen: Millenial 77	Dem: Nat: German 31	Dem: Nat: South African 93
1.2.2.1: Gratitude	16	22	3	37
Gratefulness for good...	2	1		3
Gratefulness for materi...	1	1	1	2
Gratefulness for social...	5	5	1	10
Gratefulness for teach...		1		1
Gratefulness for work	3	4		7
Gratefulness in general	12	13	2	24

Figure 6.8: Subcategory 1.2.2.1: Co-occurrence table for positive emotion gratitude

Source: Author's own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The participants' experiences of gratitude for friends and family (social support) are reflected in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Subcategory 1.2.2.1: Gratitude – Gratefulness for social support

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA13: I am now thankful for this time I was given to spend with my loved ones.</p> <p>SA18: I have learnt to appreciate time with friends.</p>	<p>SA14: Everyone is missing friends and family. Again, thankful we can call them.</p> <p>SA19: Loyalty, consistency, dedication, spending time with friends and family.</p> <p>SA37: The pandemic has taught me to be grateful for what I have and to give thanks for family and those closest around me.</p>	Gratefulness for social support
German participants	<p>GM45: I need more private time with friends and family.</p>	<p>GM28: You have learned how important friends and family are, whose visits you had largely to do without at that time.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

- Gratefulness for work

Three Millennial participants (SA14, SA32, SA33) and two Generation X participants (SA38, SA43) expressed their gratitude towards their work. Participant SA14 commented, "I have learnt to say thank you for a job that might be challenging at times but now thinking that I do still have one and my employer has managed to keep his company afloat".

- Gratefulness for good health

Two Millennial participants (SA35, SA40) and one Generation X participant (SA12) expressed their gratitude for good health. Participant SA12 commented, “Being happy and grateful for what I have as there are many people who are not as fortunate to have good health”, while Participant SA35 commented, “Health is a privilege and I always knew that but it became more pertinent”.

- Grateful for material things

Only one Millennial participant (SA14) and one Generation X participant (SA38) expressed gratitude for material things. Participant SA14 commented, “Relieved and fortunate enough to have DSTV, Wi-Fi and a big house with a yard”. Participant SA38 commented, “I have realised how very grateful I have been to have a reasonably sized house for our family of five to move around in, giving everyone a bit of space to move and having a quiet space to work”.

- Gratefulness for teachers

One Millennial participant (SA14) expressed his gratitude for teachers: “I learnt to be thankful that school fees and aftercare fees might be expensive but comparing to the education and stimulation that they were short of these few months has been a wakeup call.”

- Subcategory 1.2.2.2: Hope and optimism

A South African Millennial discussed how she needed the anticipation of future events to keep her hopeful and optimistic about the future. Participant SA34 commented,

Being able to plan things to look forward to [such as] small family breaks, meals with friends and so on is really helpful for me in terms of staying motivated and joyful. Not knowing when anything like this will be possible again is tough.
(SA34)

Another South African Millennial, Participant SA8, echoed the same sentiments about planning and stated, “Planning for me is absolutely crucial, and it helps manage my stress level”.

Four Millennial participants (SA7, SA8, SA14, SA34) and three Generation X participants (SA36, SA37, GM25) used the word 'hope' to express their hopes for the future.

Table 6.4: Subcategory 1.2.2.2: Hope and optimism

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA7: I started off really hopeful that people would take this seriously. I really was hopeful.</p> <p>SA8: I was also hopeful and optimistic to begin with. Kind of like starting a new challenge and you want to prove to yourself that you can do it I was definitely scared about how it would affect my life, but I was full of hope and optimism that I would be able to cope and that our household would adjust accordingly.</p> <p>SA14: Can't wait for normal again. Let's just say I hope normal again.</p> <p>SA34: I've also realised how easy it is for me to stop prioritising myself at</p>	<p>SA36: This year was meant to be both her confirmation and matric year and she had really hoped to make it her best and most memorable year.</p> <p>SA37: The pandemic has taught me to be grateful for what I have and to give thanks for family and those closest around me. For as long as there is breath, there is hope. I have learnt to hope again, to have a confident expectation of good.</p>	Hope and optimism

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	all when times are a bit tough, and this has been an important lesson, and I hope I can work on it a bit in the coming weeks.		
German participants	GM45: I always say with every negative, there is also hopefully something positive to pull out; it's the only way for me to motivate myself again.	GM25: I learnt that it is important to rely on family and close friends and that our world is always changing. One has to adapt to change and then there is no need for worry and fear but optimism.	

Source: Author's own compilation

- Subcategory 1.2.2.3: Appreciation

The centrality of appreciation was apparent in almost all of the accounts of the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven Millennial participants (SA9, SA12, SA18, SA32, SA33, SA34, SA35) and six Generation X participants (SA10, SA36, SA40, SA43, GM28, GM42) expressed their appreciation in general on various matters. Appreciation was not mentioned in any of the responses of the German Millennial participants.

The participants discussed experiences of appreciation by referring to aspects of their life before and after the COVID-19 pandemic as demonstrated in Table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Subcategory 1.2.2.3: Appreciation

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA9: I want always to be humble and appreciate that which I have because there is always someone out there that has things worse.</p> <p>SA18: I have learnt how to deal with plans changing unexpectedly and suddenly. I have learnt to appreciate time with friends and family as well as freedom of movement.</p> <p>SA32: We get caught up in our everyday lives and forget to appreciate what is actually important like our family, friends, colleagues, our freedom of movement, the ability to socialise, our job security and just being alive.</p> <p>SA35: I realised that I took a lot for granted and missed my domestic worker and gardener so much. They work really hard and I respect their</p>	<p>SA36: We need to appreciate our family and friends and treat each other with dignity and respect.</p> <p>SA40: One of the things in particular just around the lockdown and life in general is to appreciate every day. You never know what tomorrow might hold.</p>	Appreciation

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	hard work even more and appreciate them.		
German participants		<p>GM28: You learn to appreciate family and friends differently if they are not available as usual.</p> <p>GM42: You have to appreciate what all these things like freedom of travelling and all these things, which were just— You took it for granted that you could travel, that you could see your family, and suddenly, someone tells you no, you have to stay in your house.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

In addition, two Millennial participants (SA13, SA34) and two Generation X participants (SA38, GM27) discussed the importance of affection such as giving 'hugs' to show someone you care. Participant SA13 stated, "I have now realised that a plain and simple hug is worth a million words".

- Subcategory 1.2.2.4: Showing compassion and engaging in acts of kindness

Five Millennial participants (SA13, SA15, SA33, SA34, SA35) and five Generation X participants (SA35, SA37, SA43, GM24, GM28) discussed acts of kindness and incidents of compassion. Participant SA15, a Millennial, made the following statement, "[J]ust the thought of supporting my family and friends who also need the assistance

and help makes me feel it's not over yet and to take it one day at a time". Participant SA13, also a Millennial, agreed with the statement by saying, "Make people smile. You never know how much a little bit of laughter might mean to someone. You might be the only bit of positivity in someone else's day". Participant SA37, a Generation Xer, added to the conversation, "I must say, I was disturbed with people's bulk panic buying and felt so much compassion for the less fortunate".

Although both generations discussed acts of kindness and compassion for others, the Millennial participants were more verbal in discussing their blessings than the Generation X participants.

6.3.2.3 Discussion of Subtheme 1.2: Emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to interpret the emotions of the Millennial and Generation X participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these interpretations, a Sankey diagram was constructed to illustrate the relationships amongst the positive and negative emotions experienced by the participants.

Figure 6.9 shows a co-occurrence table (top) and Sankey diagram (bottom) in ATLAS.ti with the number of codes allocated to the quotations made by the participants about positive and negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The red lines represent Subcategory 1.2.1 (negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic) and the blue lines represent Subcategory 1.2.2 (positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19). The Sankey diagram shows that a considerable number of participants discussed positive emotions. More specifically, 101 quotations were assigned to South African participants, with 71 of these quotations assigned to Millennials for positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The figure also demonstrates that despite the South African Millennial participants experiencing significant levels of fear and anxiety, they remained positive during the COVID-19 pandemic.

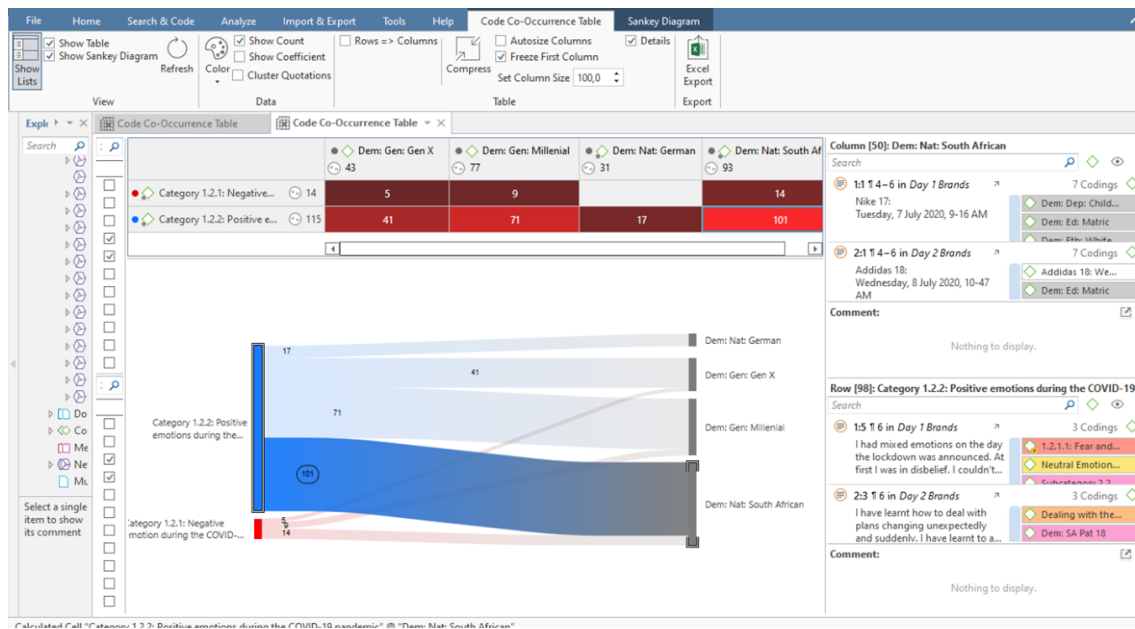


Figure 6.9: Subtheme 1.2: co-occurrence table and Sankey diagram of quotations coded for emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation in ATLAS.ti

Negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic

Emotions are an individual's reactions to feelings that can be expressed by the six primary emotions of anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise (Eckman, 1999). Negative emotions can be destructive and powerful when an individual perceives a situation to be particularly unfavourable (Frederickson et al., 2008) (Chapter 2, Section 2.2).

The findings showed that participants were exposed to unexpected and unfamiliar circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, which caused them to experience heightened levels of fear and anxiety (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020; Petzold et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020) (Section 6.3.2.1). Consequently, the findings of this study confirm the views of Kimhi et al. (2020) who argue that anxiety is the most critical negative factor affecting the mental well-being of individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chapter 4, Section 4.5.1.).

Mead (2020) opines that anxiety can assist individuals in taking action during times of adversity. Moreover, according to the author, experiences of fear and anxiety can also

caution individuals against a potential threat and in the process, prepare them to respond (Theme 2: Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic) by applying appropriate coping mechanisms. The findings showed that both generations experienced significant levels of fear and anxiety during the lockdown period (Section 6.3.2.1). However, in contrast to the opinion of Mead (2020) and due to the unfamiliarity and uncertainty of the pandemic, the participants could not take action against the pandemic because they did not know how to take action, when to take action and against what or whom to take action.

Furthermore, the findings regarding negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 1.2.1) agree with the findings of Branley-Bell and Talbot (2020) and Di Renzo et al. (2020). The latter studies indicate that because daily routines were significantly affected by lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of participants experienced changes in relation to food and alcohol consumption and underwent loss of self-worth (Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020) (Chapter 4, Section 4.5). The findings of both studies support the findings of the current study, which found negative emotions to be a contributor of anguish and sleepless nights, excessive eating and consumption of alcohol, causing harm to self-worth.

Furthermore, the negative emotions experienced by participants support the views of Chew et al. (2020) (Section 4.6 and Section 4.7) who found that the reasons why individuals experience fear and anxiety during pandemics are due to “uncertainty regarding the pandemic, concerns about the well-being of loved-ones, the economic situation, separation from loved ones, disruption in work life and having to juggle multiple responsibilities as a caregiver” (p. 350). This is consistent with the evidence gathered in this study.

Positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic

The participants acknowledged that during the COVID-19 pandemic, they depended on positive emotions to overcome the unexpected and unfamiliar circumstances of lockdown (Donaldson & Ko, 2010; Snyder et al., 2000). Positive emotions are key in experiencing well-being (Frederickson, 2005; Lopez & Snyder, 2009; Seligman, 2007), particularly during times of adversity (Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1.1). Frederickson (2013) identified ten key positive emotions that occur most often in people’s daily lives, namely joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe and love (Section 3.3.1.1). These emotions may all contribute to well-being and lead to a

flourishing life. The participants discussed four of the aforementioned positive emotions that they experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely gratitude (Subcategory 1.2.2.1), hope and optimism (Subcategory 1.2.2.2), appreciation (Subcategory 1.2.2.3) and showing compassion and engaging in acts of kindness (Subcategory 1.2.2.4). These emotions enabled them to feel positive about the future, to count their blessings, to visualise their BPS, to develop plans to achieve goals, to view relationships positively, to create meaningful relationships, etc.

The findings of the current study further recognise the research conducted by Frederickson (2005) who argues that hope arises in desperate situations, which is in contrast to most positive emotions that seldom occur in life-threatening situations. The participants presented various accounts of hope since they did not consider the COVID-19 pandemic life threatening, although they did express their fear and anxiety about the situation (Subcategory 1.2.1.1). The findings also agree with the views of Frederickson et al. (2008) who contend that positive emotions are less powerful and less destructive than negative emotions (Section 3.3.1.1).

In addition, the findings confirm the views of Luthans et al. (2007) (Section 3.2.1) who argue that positive subjective experiences such as hope and optimism can enable individuals to appreciate things more, ultimately leading individuals to become more grateful (Figure 6.5). The findings also agree with the views of Tugade and Frederickson (2004) and Davis et al. (2016) (Section 2.3.1) who maintain that gratitude plays an important role as a coping mechanism to deal with negative stressors. According to Davis et al. (2016), such activities include listing effects or people for which one is grateful and journalling one's experiences, which was evident in the current research study (Section 2.3.1).

Gratitude also requires individuals to recall meaningful experiences (Davis et al., 2016; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). The findings regarding gratitude (Subcategory 1.2.2.1) may suggest that people in South Africa are more inclined to express gratitude than German people because the South African population is often exposed to more adversity due to heightened levels of unemployment, inequality and poverty in the country (Gelb, 2004; Keeton, 2014; Minister Bheki Cele, 2020; Overseas Security Advisory Council, 2020; Stats SA, 2014, 2019a; Tradingeconomics.com, 2020) (Chapter 4, Section 4.5).

The data revealed that although both generations experienced gratitude (Section 6.3.2.2), the experiences of the Millennial participants regarding gratitude were slightly higher than those of Generation Xers. Both generations used positive reframing (Lyubomirsky & Sheldon, 2005) (Section 3.7) to discuss aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which also demonstrated thoughtful self-reflection (King, 2001) (Section 2.3). Although both Millennial and Generation X participants expressed the hope that ‘things would go back to normal soon’, none of the generations articulated optimism for the future at the time of the interviews.

The data also revealed that the Millennial participants were more grateful in general during the COVID-19 pandemic than the Generation X participants, regularly indicating gratitude for friends and family, jobs and good health. Both generations expressed their gratitude for family and friends in a similar context. Through the expression of gratitude (Davis et al., 2016; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006), participants were able to overcome some of their negative thoughts and feelings about the COVID-19 pandemic because they realised that they still had much to be thankful for and that there were people worldwide who were less fortunate than them. The findings of this study are consistent with the findings of Davis et al. (2016) (Section 2.3.1) who argue that being grateful assists individuals in limiting negative emotions such as anxiety and depression and other symptoms that may harm well-being. Finally, through the expression of gratitude, participants “payed [sic] attention to life details”, which allowed them to focus on the positive aspects of life, as argued by Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006, p. 80).

The research findings further support the views of Mead (2020) and Schneider (2001) who suggest that appreciation is associated with mindfulness (Section 2.9.2) which forms part of physical-selfcare and thus can be developed through optimistic thinking (Section 3.7.2). The findings confirmed that research participants were able to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown in a more positive way by redirecting their fears and anxiety. Moreover, the research participants were able to reframe their feelings (Mead, 2020) by recognising and appreciating things in general. According to Mead (2020), the appreciation principle relies on individuals acknowledging routine events that are often taken for granted such as visiting friends, having lunch with family and celebrating achievements as positive contributors to one’s meaningful experiences in life.

The findings further revealed that congruent with the literature (Section 2.3), positive emotions and well-being can be improved by counting one’s blessings, engaging in acts of kindness and identifying and applying coping mechanisms (Section 6.4) to deal with adversity (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006) such as the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that the data did not reveal any significant differences between the altruism levels of the two generational cohorts. Also, recent studies (Frederickson et al., 2008) have shown that when people engage in habitual acts of kindness (see Section 2.3), it enables them to experience enhanced well-being.

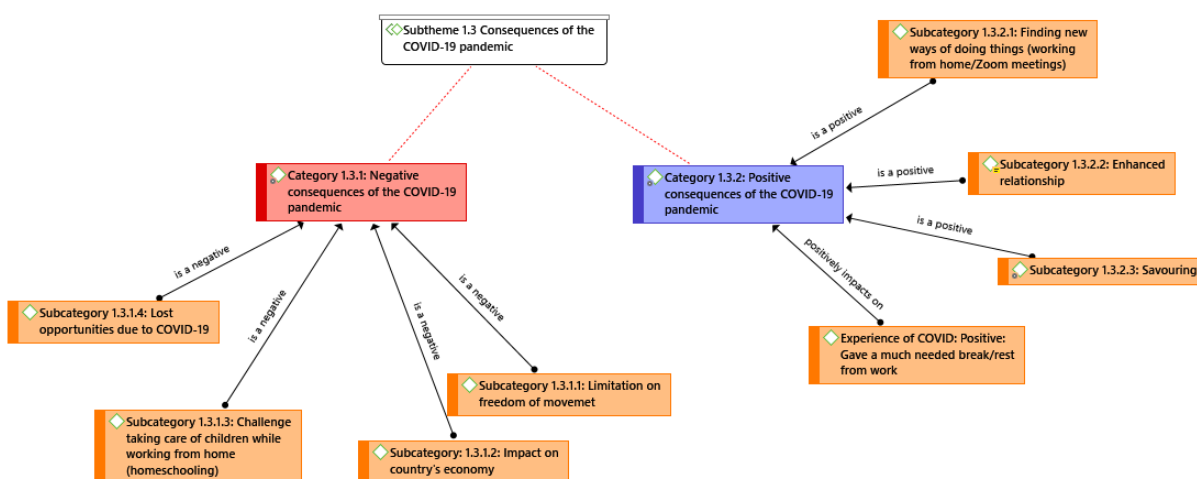


Figure 6.10: Preliminary sub-framework for subtheme 1.3: Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author’s own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to examine the consequences of the COVID-19 on Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa. Based on the consequences experienced by the participants, a preliminary sub-framework was constructed. Figure 6.10 illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Subtheme 1.3 (consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic) in ATLAS.ti. The figure demonstrates the various codes that emerged from Subtheme 1.3.

6.3.3 Subtheme 1.3: Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

This subtheme (consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic) developed into the sub-categories that are subsequently discussed.

6.3.3.1 Category 1.3.1: Negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Subcategory 1.3.1.1: Limitation of freedom of movement

A key topic that appeared in various forms in several narratives was “freedom of movement”. In most of the discussions, limitations to ‘freedom of movement’ were a major concern for participants and caused significant resentment towards the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants explained how they felt lonely and isolated during lockdown because they were not able to visit their family and friends. A South African Millennial participant (SA35) stated, “I felt insecure and lonely”. Other participants mentioned that socialising with family and friends (SA13, SA38, SA41, GM30, GM42) was a significant part of their lives prior to the pandemic and, therefore, social isolation was a major challenge for them to overcome.

Five Millennial participants (SA7, SA18, SA15, SA41, SA46) and seven Generation X participants (SA12, SA38, SA39, GM24, GM28, GM30, GM42) discussed the impact that the limitation on freedom of movement had on their social lives and the disruption to their daily lives with activities such as planning visits to the office and grocery store and managing food supplies. It was noted that none of the German Millennial participants referred implicitly or explicitly to ‘freedom of movement’ in any of their responses.

Table 6.6: Subcategory 1.3.1.1: Freedom of movement

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA15: On the other hand, I need my freedom to do what I feel like to do and not to be questioned around each and every corner or at all the places I used to go to. As long as my family is save [safe] and healthy, then I'm happy.</p> <p>SA18: I have learnt how to deal with plans changing unexpectedly and suddenly. I have learnt to appreciate.</p>	<p>SA12: That we take our freedom sometimes for granted as we could quickly just jump in the car and go somewhere, where now you plan your trips and decide, 'Is it really necessary to go?'</p> <p>SA38: For me, the past few months have released different emotions that I have not really had to deal with before, and there has been a feeling of being captive within the walls of our home.</p>	Freedom of movement
German participants		<p>GM28: I need the freedom to be able to do whatever I can.</p> <p>GM30: Often, you only notice the things that are important to you when you no longer have them. Like the freedoms we have to give up in the corona period.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

- Subcategory 1.3.1.2: Impact on the country's economy

Four Millennial participants (SA7, SA33, SA34, GM45) and six Generation X participants (SA38, SA40, SA43, GM25, GM29, GM42) expressed their concern about the impact that COVID-19 had on their country and the world's economy. This concern was one of the causes of the participants' fear and anxiety, which was discussed in Subtheme 1.2 (emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Two South African Generation X participants expressed their feelings of utter "desperation" during this COVID-19 pandemic. Participant SA40 commented, "There has been no work for the last three months. I don't know where to turn, what to do and really just feeling like it's the end." Participant SA39 also noted with concern, "For me, there is only survival at the moment ... When someone says to me pay school fees and I can't do it, that for me is ... [crying]".

It is noteworthy that the impact of COVID-19 on the economy was more concerning for participants with children than for participants without children. Nine participants with children, of whom three were Millennials (SA34, GM26, GM45) and five were Generation Xers (SA38, SA40, SA43, GM29, GM42) from both Germany and South Africa expressed their concern about the negative impact that the COVID-19 was having on their country's economy. Only one South African Millennial participant without children (SA7) mentioned the impact of COVID-19 on the South African economy by stating, "I knew the implications—lockdown and slow the spread (because lockdown isn't a cure) and save lives but at the same time, slow down an already fragile economy".

Table 6.7 includes some of the most significant quotations extracted from ATLAS.ti regarding the participants' views of the impact of COVID-19 on their country's economy.

Table 6.7: Subcategory 1.3.1.2: Impact on economy

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA34: I was also hugely concerned about the effects the shutdown would have on the SA economy as a whole and the poorest parts of our country specifically, but initially, I did think preventing deaths through lockdown was the most important thing to do. I think I was very naive as to how serious poverty is in SA and how quickly people would be starving.	SA38: As the economy takes a battering after battering, so the financial worries become more real. SA43: What is going to happen to the economy next? And if the economy tanks, you know, what is going to happen to all of us? The stress has been quite significant.	Impact on economy
German participants	GM45: The economy is down; the businesses can't run on 100% At some point, you get nervous because you don't know the business side of it.	GM29: I was concerned about how the pandemic and the overall economic situation would now develop.	

Source: Author's own compilation

- Subcategory 1.2.1.3: Challenge of taking care of children while working from home

A compelling topic emerged from the data of participants with children, namely the challenge of taking care of children while working from home. Four Millennial participants (SA8, SA14, SA44, GM45) and three Generation X participants (SA38, SA40, SA43) discussed the challenges they experienced in taking care of their children while working from home. These included assisting children with online home-schooling and day-care activities. The parents discussed how their children expected their undivided attention when they were home because this was the norm before lockdown was implemented.

Table 6.8: Subcategory 1.2.1.3: Taking care of children while working

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA8: The reality of working from home—not being allowed to see your family, taking care of a baby while working.	SA38: The new challenge of educating my children at home, which was not something I had ever elected to sign up for.	Taking care of children while working from home
German participants	GM45: I have a problem now with my son when I have to go out for business. Now, he’s asking me to stay.		

Source: Author’s own compilation

- Category 1.2.1.4: Lost opportunities due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a more significant impact on the future plans of Millennial participants than it did on the future plans of the Generation X participants. Two Millennial participants (SA19, SA41) stated that COVID-19 severely affected their

plans for 2020. Participant SA19 commented, “I felt a bit overwhelmed, very anxious and uncertain because so much was going to change and so many of my plans had to be cancelled or postponed”. Participant SA41 was distraught by the events of the COVID-19 pandemic because it affected his plans significantly. He made the following comments during his interview:

I was getting ready to go overseas again to go work on the yachts. I was in Cape Town doing courses when word broke that we were going to get a lockdown ... My plan going forward had been interrupted by that because obviously, I haven't been able to go back overseas this year. And it's changed my plans quite a lot because I've decided now in lockdown that I can't sit around and wait for next year again because then it's another year that's gone by without me doing anything. So, it set me back on going to work on the yachts, and I'm going back to study. So COVID-19 and lockdown had a major impact on my life and my life's plans for in the moment and the future. (SA41)

6.3.3.2 Category 1.3.2: Positive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Although the participants discussed several negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 6.3.3.1), they also identified positive consequences of the disease. These included finding new ways of doing things (Subcategory 1.3.2.1), enhanced relationships (Subcategory 1.3.2.2), savouring moments through self-reflection, savouring through practising patience, savouring through valuing social support, savouring through anticipation of a positive future (Subcategory 1.3.2.3), and receiving a much-needed break while valuing significant aspects of life. The positive consequences that emerged from the discussions with the participants are now discussed.

Despite the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 6.3.3.1), most participants mentioned that there were also positive aspects. Some of the most significant consequences of the pandemic were that COVID-19 allowed working people the flexibility to work from home although this posed many additional challenges for participants such as being dependent on themselves to deal with online technology, power failures and unstable or unavailable internet connections. The researcher was intrigued to read the argument of one South African Millennial participant (SA11) about

her experience of working from home: “It’s not working from home, but rather living at work”.

- Subcategory 1.3.2.1: Finding new ways of doing things

Seven Millennial participants (SA8, SA33, SA34, SA35, SA38, SA41, GM45) and two Generation X participants (SA10, GM24) explained how they were able to use technology to work from home and to stay connected to colleagues, friends and family. Noted was how it is was mostly the Millennials who discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the technology that was used during lockdown since this generation is known to be technology dependent (Bernstein et al., 2008) (Section 1.2.6).

Five Millennial participants (SA8, SA34, SA35, SA38, SA41) and one Generation X participant (GM42) discussed how they used technology to stay connected with family and friends and indicated that this was an important coping mechanism for them. As Participant SA35 stated, “Once I had all the necessary tools set up for online working and Zoom for example, it helped me to feel a connection to the outside”.

Table 6.9 includes some of the most significant quotations extracted from ATLAS.ti indicating the views of participants in regard to finding new ways of doing things during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 6.9: Subcategory 1.3.2.1: Finding new ways of doing things

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA8: I was also reminded that you can only get so far with technology. If the system lets you down, there is nothing you can do about it other than to make alternative plans. Technology that doesn't	SA38: But again, thank goodness for technology and the fact that we have been able to teach our elderly parents how to make use of these tools,	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>work when you need it to can crush your soul.</p> <p>SA35: Once, I also had all the necessary tools set up for online working and Zoom, for example. It also helped me feel a connection to the outside. Our company also organised weekly meetings on Zoom or Microsoft teams to touch base, which was great. I looked forward to those.</p>	<p>and this has enabled us to keep in touch.</p>	<p>Finding new ways of doing things</p>
<p>German participants</p>	<p>GM45: For me, it was just important still [to] motivate the team. At some point, I had to stand up in front of the team (that was beginning of April) saying that I really don't know where this all this goes and I cannot give you any answers in terms of where are we in three months. But I just can tell you, I have put everything in for securing the jobs and letting them</p>	<p>GM24: Besides, it was interesting how the society tried to adjust daily life and found practical solutions for problems occurred due to covid19 [COVID-19] limitations in business and private life. Some of the ideas [were] really creative and may [be] adoptable in future daily routine.</p>	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	in and then just find new ways of doing things.		

Source: Author's own compilation

- Subcategory 1.3.2.2: Enhanced relationship

During the focus group discussions and individual interviews, five Millennial participants (SA15, SA33, SA34, SA41, GM45) and five Generation X participants (SA12, SA38, SA39, SA40, SA43) discussed how the lockdown period enabled them to build stronger relationships with family members. Interestingly, although the majority of the German Generation Xers consisted of participants with dependents, none of the German Generation Xers made comments about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their social relationships.

Table 6.10: Subcategory 1.3.2.2: Enhanced relationships

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA15: [T]o be very thankful for what I have even if it's not what we used to, and it bring us as a family closer. SA32: Worried because it was obviously very serious but also excited	SA12: We were always rushing somewhere, and we started to live pass [past] your own family where now you had the time to connect again. SA40: It has put us as a family at a different space.	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>because I'd be able to go spend three uninterrupted weeks with my parents, which [I] hadn't done since I was a student 10 years ago.</p> <p>SA33: The pandemic has reshaped personal relationships because everyone is looking for comfort in their thoughts and feelings as well as an outlet for stress. Family relationships are the safest and less critical way to vent.</p> <p>SA34: I also thought my partner and I would get a little bit in each other's hair through all of this, and while we have had stressed days and anxious days where we've been snappy or cross, it has been a huge blessing to spend this much time together, and we're going to miss it a lot.</p>	<p>I'm taking the time and have started taking the time to listen when my boys say, 'Daddy, look at what I can do' or I'll stop and turn and look and high five them and appreciate them in the moment. It has also really just pushed us to closeness [as] a family, and we're doing things that we would not necessarily have done previously as a family.</p>	<p>Enhanced relationships</p>
German participants	<p>GM45: For the first time, I was really like at home. I</p>		

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	had lots of time with my family. I mean, I have a young boy at home. My wife is xx so I could support her a bit more. Specially for my kid, it was crazy. I have a problem now. When I start to go out again for business, he is basically asking me to stay. For me, on a personal side, it was quality time.		

Source: Author's own compilation

Two South African Millennial participants (SA15, SA35) pointed out that lockdown gave them a much-needed break from their work and life in general. Participant SA15 commented, "I have to say, I did enjoy a bit of a break". Participant SA35 agreed with the statement by stating, "I was excited. Isn't that strange!? However, it was an excuse to slow down".

- Subcategory 1.3.2.3: Savouring

Savouring requires individuals to regulate their positive feelings by (i) reminiscing about past positive experiences; (ii) savouring present positive experiences; and/or (iii) anticipating future positive experiences. Higher levels of optimism and lower levels of hopelessness are often associated with the perceived capacity to savour the moment as maintained by Smith et al. (2014) and Bryant (2003) (Section 2.3.2).

Savouring through anticipating positive future events

Two South African Generation X participants (SA40, SA43) discussed how even though the future looked uncertain to them, they believed that it held good things due to their faith. A German Millennial participant (GM45) noted that as a business leader, the COVID-19 pandemic made him realise the importance of positive thinking to motivate his team during the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertain times that lay ahead.

Savouring by practising patience

Three South African participants explained how the COVID-19 pandemic made them realise the importance of patience in dealing with the uncertainty of the pandemic. Participant SA18 commented, "I have learnt to have patience in everything that I do". Participant SA12 agreed and stated, "I believe lockdown taught me to be more patient". Participant SA15 concurred with the previous two statements, "Secondly, I've learnt to have patience as we are not used to go up and down as we are used to".

Savouring through self-reflection

Three Millennial participants (SA35, SA41, GM45) explained that another positive consequence of the lockdown period was that it enabled them time to do self-reflection. Participant SA35, a Millennial, noted,

I have realised that silence and stillness forced me to face a lot of emotions and issues. I felt insecure and lonely despite being surrounded by loved ones. Suddenly, there was less distractions and more time to focus on that inner voice that we so often put aside. (SA35)

Another Millennial participant (SA41) explained how COVID-19 affected him positively through self-reflection:

It has given me a little more motivation to push on and to achieve things as quickly as I possibly can. By working as hard as I can and setting myself regular goals is something that I'm going to take out of this. (SA41)

A German Millennial, Participant GM45, explained how the pandemic motivated him to live more in the present moment and not to neglect his family life:

It really showed me also how important it is to live more in now. Like I always have that thing that I want to work hard now and in 20 years, I can maybe settle a bit, but that's ridiculous because whatever you miss now cannot be given back to you in 20 years ... for sure, even before COVID-19, I already decided to work less. (GM 45)

Savouring through valuing social support

Two South African and one German Millennial participant (SA8, SA13, GM45) and one South African and four German Generation X participants (SA16, GM28, GM29, GM25, GM45) explained that the COVID-19 pandemic made them realise that they should value their friends and family more.

Table 6.11: Subcategory 1.3.2.3: Valuing social support

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA8: And that I rely more on my loved ones than I realised. I need to see them and spend time with them to feel like myself.</p> <p>SA13: I have come to value my family and close friends more. I have now realised that a plain and simple hug is worth a million words.</p>	<p>SA16: In this difficult time, we must stand together and help each other where we can.</p>	Valuing social support
German participants	<p>GM45: I need more private time with friends and family.</p>	<p>GM25: I learnt that it is important to rely on family and close friends and that our world is always changing.</p> <p>GM28: You have learnt how important friends and family are, whose visits you had to largely do without at that time.</p> <p>GM29: I was confirmed in my opinion that the value of family and friends is very important.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

Valuing family and friends (social support) not only emerged as a code under Category 1.3.2 (positive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic) but also as part of various other subthemes and categories of the current study:

- Theme 2: Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Subtheme 2.1: Social support as a coping mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 2.1.1: Nurturing relationships

- Theme 3: Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Subtheme 3.1: The importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 3.1.1: Support from family and friends
 - Category 3.1.2: Spirituality
 - Category 3.1.3: Sense of security

Family and friends are discussed further under the associated subthemes and categories listed above.

6.3.3.3 Discussion of Subtheme 1.3: Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Despite participants reporting incidences of fear and anxiety, most participants coped well with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings showed that it is possible for Millennials and Generation Xers to deal with adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic when appropriate coping mechanisms are applied to an unfamiliar and unknown situation. Moreover, the findings show that various participants experienced and made positive changes to their lives because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his book, *What doesn't kill us: A guide to overcome adversity and moving forward*, Joseph (2011) shares that although adversity can be devastating, it also has the potential to bring about positive changes in people's lives. The author conducted a survey in 1987 with survivors of a cruise liner disaster and through the research discovered that several positive changes were made to their lives following their

trauma. The researcher of this study found it intriguing that the same sentiments and positive changes were evident in the experiences of the research participants regarding the COVID-19 pandemic as the survivors of the cruise liner disaster.

A comparison between the experiences of the cruise liner survivors (Joseph, 2011) and the experiences of the participants in this COVID-19 research study can be seen in Table 6.12.

Table 6.12: Comparison between experiences of cruise liner survivors and experiences of participants in current study

EXPERIENCES OF CRUISE LINER SURVIVORS (Joseph, 2011, p. 8)	EXPERIENCES OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC SURVIVORS Verbatim evidence from this study
I do not take life for granted.	SA16 (Gen X): You cannot take anything for granted as we live in uncertain times.
I value my relationships much more now.	SA13 (Mil): I have come to value my family and close friends more.
I live every day to the full now.	SA16 (Mil): Make the day worth every second.
I am a more understanding and tolerant person now.	SA40 (Gen X): I can tolerate disappointment and try again.
I no longer take things for granted.	SA14 (Mil): There is a lot we took for granted in our lives.
I value other people more now.	SA13 (Mil): I have come to value people more.
I am more determined to succeed in life now.	SA41 (Mil): It has given me a little more motivation to push on and to achieve things as quickly as I possibly can.

Source: Adapted from Joseph, 2011, p. 8

The findings agree with the findings of Chew et al. (2020) and Gurvich et al. (2020) who argue that the psychosocial responses to the pandemic can have significant mental-health and well-being consequences (Chapter 4, Section 4.6.) for individuals

and, therefore, coping mechanisms are needed to deal with the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic (Theme 2).

In the present study, the most common themes that emerged from the negative consequences of the pandemic centred on freedom of movement, impact on the economy, challenges of taking care of children while working at home and lost opportunities.

Freedom of movement was identified as a significant negative consequence of the pandemic due to the restriction of social interaction and the shutdown of entire economies (Khoo & Lantos, 2020) (Section 4.6). Munck et al. (2020) point out that in Germany, public social life ceased to exist during lockdown, causing significant harm to the mental health and well-being of citizens. Other recent studies also reported negative consequences of the pandemic and lockdown (Benke et al., 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Di Renzo et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Munck et al., 2020), including the reduction in workforces with unprecedented job losses. The findings further confirmed the views of the UN (2020b) and WHO (2020d) that argue that limitation on freedom of movement (Khoo & Lantos, 2020) may severely harm people's mental health and well-being. Furthermore, the findings agree with the conclusion of Khoo and Lantos (2020) who contend that the restriction on freedom of movement not only caused "loneliness, confusion, anger, frustration, boredom and constant feelings of inadequate information" (p. 2) in individuals but also violated fundamental human rights (Section 4.5.2).

Furthermore, the findings of this study showed that research participants were fearful of the looming economic crisis, not only for the economy of their own country but also the global economy and the possibility of a global recession. The study of Nicola et al. (2020) found that the COVID-19 pandemic affected communities, businesses and organisations worldwide because of social distancing, self-isolation and travel restrictions (Section 4.5.8).

The findings of this study found that research participants often experienced heightened levels of family stress (Section 4.5.1) due to children not being able to attend school and children requiring additional care and support during the lockdown period. Anger et al. (2020) and Van der Berg (2020) confirm this view by stating that the additional responsibilities and obligations of parents to deal with home-schooling duties while working from home had a significant impact on families.

Although several studies have pointed to the negative consequences of the pandemic (discussed above), none of the studies identified 'lost opportunities' as a negative consequence of the pandemic. Although lost opportunities were identified in this study by a small number of Millennials, the true impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be seen. Several experts have made predictions about an austere future while living with the COVID-19 pandemic (Ananat & Gassman-Pines, 2020; Brandley-Bell & Talbot, 2020; Cilliers, 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Mahler et al., 2020; Stats.SA, 2021; United Nations, 2020a).

The findings of this study identified several positive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which include finding new ways of doing things, enhanced relationships and savouring past, present and future experiences. The research findings showed the importance of applying technology to stay socially connected while working remotely. The findings support the views of Linde (2020) and Sangoni (2020) who argue that individuals need to adapt to the new 'normal' in order to thrive in the world of work (sections 4.5.3, 4.5.7 and 4.5.9). Sangoni (2020) cautions people about the impact of remote working conditions on individuals' career growth prospects, happiness in the workplace and social interactions between colleagues in the new virtual world. It is also worth noting that there are numerous benefits to remote workplaces and the changes that come with working remotely.

The findings of this study further support the findings of Grover et al. (2020) who found that lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant improvements in the relationship dimension (Section 4.5.5). Grover et al. (2020) report that half of the research participants experienced improvements in their relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic, while the current study found that almost one-third of the participants experienced improvements in their relationships with family members. Similar to the conclusions of Grover et al. (2020), this study found that the improvements in relationships were due to participants having more unrestricted time to attend to family matters and because participants were exposed to less work stress. Moreover, the participants in this study reported on the idea of 'we are in this together' and thus wanted to experience less conflict.

Capacity to savour has important implications for enhanced mental health and well-being (Bryant, 2003) (Section 2.3.2). According to the author, variances in individuals' capacity to savour positive experiences often lead to differences in positive

well-being. Bryant (2003) and Smith et al. (2014) argue that savouring requires individuals to regulate their positive feelings by (i) reminiscing about past positive experiences; (ii) savouring present positive experiences; or (iii) anticipating future positive experiences. The findings of the study showed that research participants used various aspects of savouring to practice patience, to self-reflect and to value their social support during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, such experiences enabled participants to realise the importance of taking on new opportunities as and when they arise and not taking anything in life for granted. Furthermore, the findings of this study agree with the views of King (2001), Bryant (2003) and Smith et al. (2014) (Section 2.3.2) who argue that savouring experiences enhances individuals' mental health and well-being.

6.3.3.4 Discussion of Theme 1: Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic

Because each subtheme was discussed in depth in the section above, this section provides a summary of the findings of Theme 1:

- Dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic emerged as a psychological challenge for both the German and South African participants from the two generational cohorts. The findings revealed that South Africans expressed more concerns about dealing with the unexpected nature of the pandemic. However, no significant differences were found in the degree to which Generation Xers and Millennials (from South Africa and Germany) experienced uncertainty during the pandemic. The participants described the pandemic and lockdown as an unfamiliar, unexpected and unpleasant experience, which is in agreement with Branley-Bell and Talbot (2020), Brooks et al. (2020), Grover et al. (2020), Kimhi et al. (2020), Peng et al. (2020), and Usher et al. (2020) (Section 4.4.4). Furthermore, experiencing the pandemic made participants realise that opportunities should not be taken for granted, that everyone was in the same situation regardless of race, religion and age and that people would (eventually) be able to adjust to the unfamiliar and unknown circumstances.
- The research participants experienced both negative and positive emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. Although, the German

participants were more reserved in terms of discussing their emotions related to the pandemic, none of the German participants expressed any feelings of 'frustration, impatience, loneliness or sadness'. Moreover, only one German participant indicated slight feelings of uneasiness with the lockdown. The most significant negative emotions experienced by participants were fear and anxiety. The findings agree with Usher et al. (2020) and Grover et al. (2020) (Section 4.4.4 and Section 4.5.1) who maintain that isolation causes anxiety or depression. The South African participants expressed significantly more negative emotions towards the pandemic than the German participants. Most of the South African participants indicated that they felt fearful and anxious about the lockdown. Furthermore, both Generation Xers and Millennials expressed equal negative emotions towards the pandemic and restriction measures. Although the South African Millennials experienced significantly more fear and anxiety than any other group, they remained positive during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research participants also experienced several positive emotions such as gratitude, appreciation, hope and optimism and hence engaged in acts of kindness and showed compassion towards other people. The positive emotions enabled the participants to overcome the traumatic experiences and to safeguard them against the negative aspects of the experience. The findings of this study support the views of Frederickson and Joiner (2002) and Nelson and Cooper (2007) (Section 3.3.1.2) who maintain that positive emotions are beneficial in overcoming unexpected and unfamiliar circumstances. The finding further revealed that Millennials expressed a lot more positive emotions than Generation Xers. In addition, the South Africa participants discussed much more experiences of positive emotions than the German participants.

- The findings also revealed that there were both positive and negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for the participants. The negative consequences included loss of opportunities, challenges of taking care of children, negative impact on the economy and limitations on freedom of movement. The positive consequences included finding new ways of doing things, enhanced relationships and savouring experiences. The findings agree with the findings of Chew et al. (2020) and Gurvich et al. (2020) (Section 4.6) who maintain that positive psychosocial responses to the pandemic can

have significant mental-health and well-being consequences and, therefore, coping mechanisms are needed to deal with the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the COVID-19 pandemic had a more significant impact on the future plans of the Millennial participants, the findings demonstrate that all the participants (i.e., Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa) experienced equal amounts of both negative and positive consequences related to the pandemic. Most interestingly, although both generational cohorts demonstrated equal expression of gratitude the South African participants experienced the most gratitude. Even though some of the German participants made comments about feeling grateful in general, none of the German participants expressed feelings of gratitude (i.e., towards good health, teachers, and their work) or mentioned appreciation.

6.4 THEME 2: COPING MECHANISMS TO DEAL WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The responses to the following questions gave rise to Theme 2: Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

- What did you do to cope with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of lockdown?
- Looking back at the last three months since lockdown started, what have you learnt?

Theme 2 (coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic) developed into the following subthemes and categories:

- Subtheme 2.1: Social support as a coping mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 2.1.1: Nurturing relationships
 - Category 2.1.2: Spirituality/religion
- Subtheme 2.2: Positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 2.2.1: Acceptance
 - Category 2.2.2: Positive thinking
 - Category 2.2.3: Educating oneself

- Category 2.2.4: Self-care
- Category 2.2.5: Keeping to normal routines
- Category 2.2.6: Mindfulness

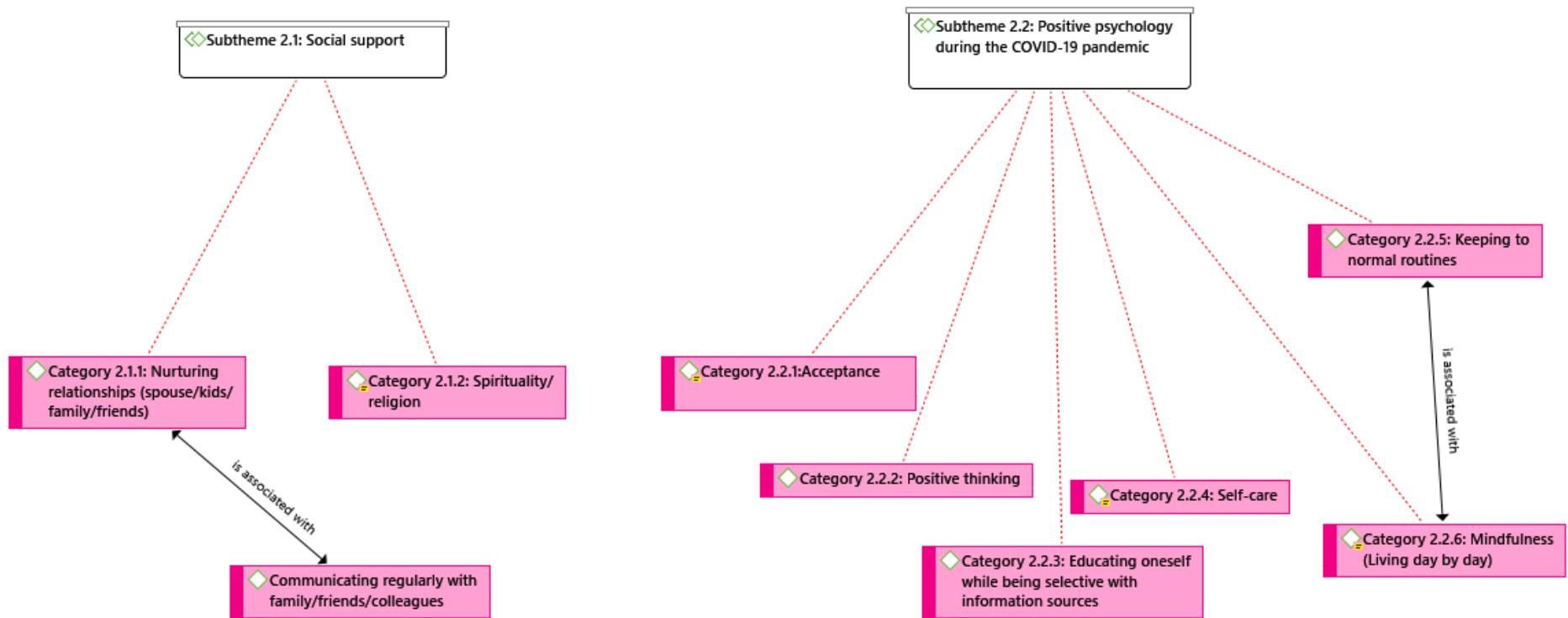


Figure 6.11: Preliminary sub-framework for theme 2: Coping with the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author’s own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to explore the coping mechanisms adopted by the Millennial and Generation X participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these findings, a preliminary sub-framework was constructed. Figure 6.12 illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Subtheme 2.1 (Social support as a coping mechanism for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic) in ATLAS.ti. The figure shows the various categories and associated codes that emerged from Subtheme 2.1.

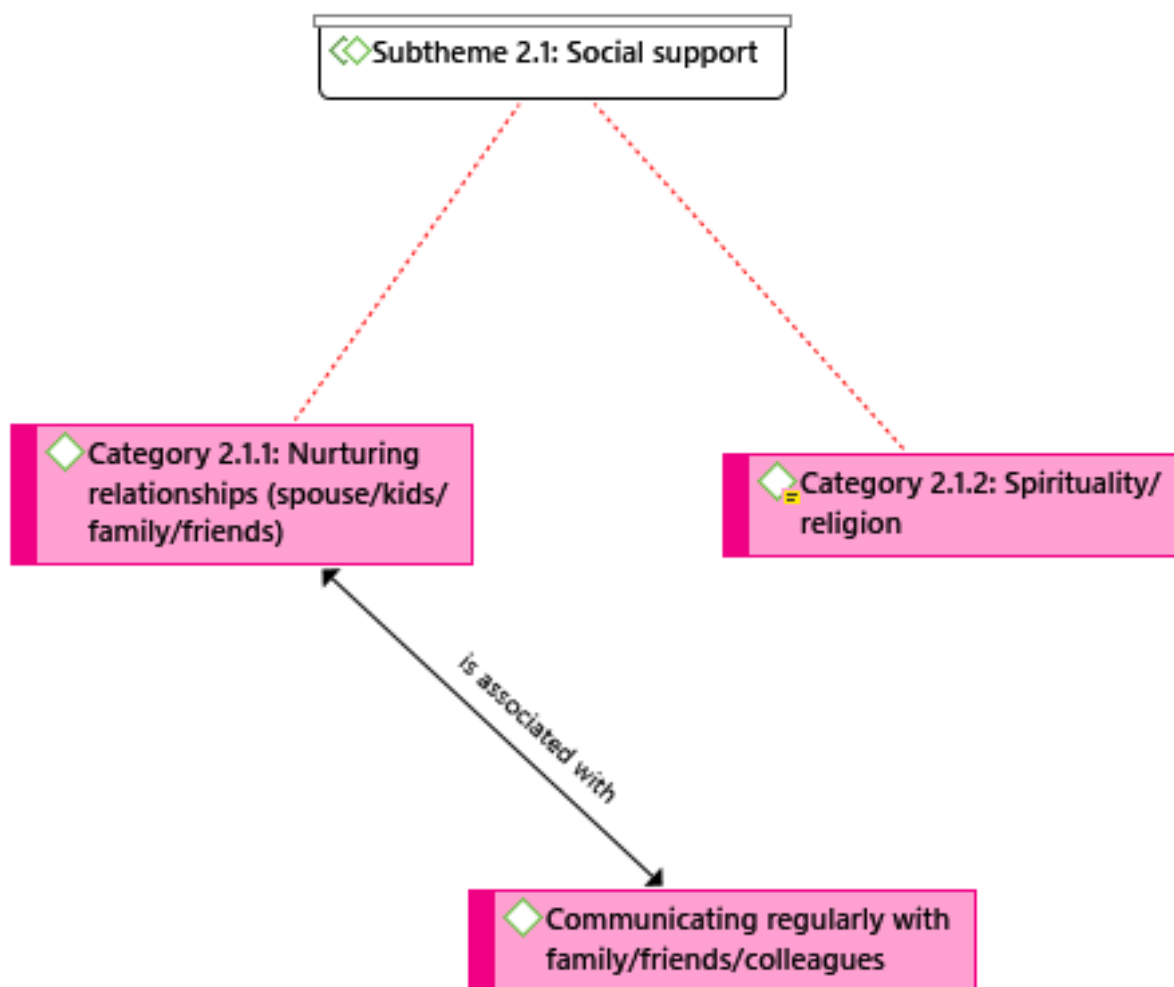


Figure 6.12: Preliminary sub-framework for Subtheme 2.1: Social support as a coping mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation using ATLAS.ti

Theme 2 (coping mechanisms to deal with COVID-19) developed into the following subthemes:

6.4.1 Subtheme 2.1: Social support as a coping mechanism

Social support refers to a network of family, friends, neighbours and community members who are available in times of adversity (Cherry, 2020a). Social support also refers the nurture and assistance that people receive as a result of their relationships with groups or a person (Bergh & Theron, 2003) (Section 2.2).

Social support is known to enhance quality of life and to harness individuals against adverse life events (Saltzman et al., 2020) (Section 4.5.1). Although social support can assume many forms, it was evident from the discussions that most participants referred to the emotional support from friends and family rather than instrumental support (financial support).

The participants discussed various aspects of how friends and family enabled them to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in a more positive manner and to overcome their fears and anxieties. Interestingly, almost all the research participants mentioned friends and family in at least one of the discussion topics each day. The participants expressed how they relied on friends and family during lockdown and how they invested more time and effort during lockdown to ensure that family and friends felt nurtured and safe.

Three Millennial participants (SA8, SA15, SA33) and three Generation X participants (SA16, SA38, GM25) discussed the importance of having the support of family and friends during the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, none of the German Millennial participants mentioned support from family and friends as a coping mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 6.13 shows the co-occurrence table created in ATLAS.ti with all the subcategories coded for coping mechanisms adopted by Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19. The table shows that more quotations were made by South African Millennial participants in the Subcategory 2.2.2 (positive thinking) than in any other category. The data in the figure also show that the South African Millennial

participants were much more inclined (19 quotations) to adopt positive thinking than the Generation X participants (6 quotations) to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

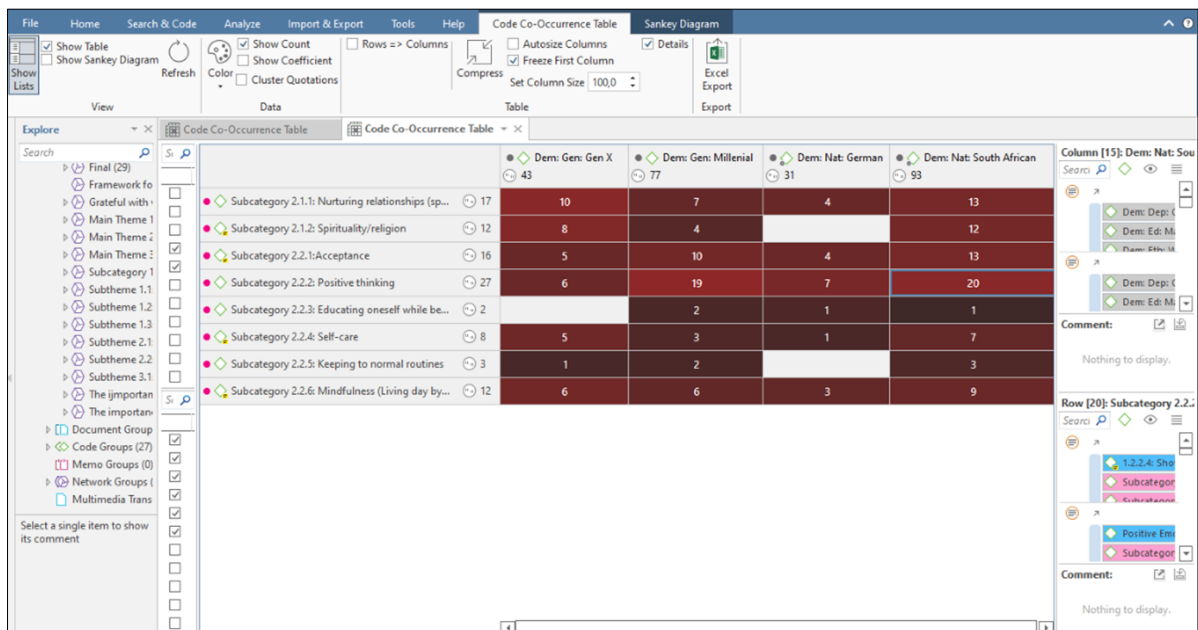


Figure 6.13: Theme 2 co-occurrence table of quotations coded for coping mechanisms

Source: Author's own compilation in ATLAS.ti

Figure 6.14 demonstrates the Sankey diagram generated from the data in Figure 6.13 in ATLAS.ti. The Sankey diagram clearly illustrates the difference in coping mechanisms adopted by the South African Millennial participants in contrast to the South African and German Generation X participants. The diagram also shows that although the Millennials applied several coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, positive thinking was the strongest coping mechanism, which is in contrast to the Generation Xers who adopted the nurturing of relationships and spirituality as preferable coping mechanisms.

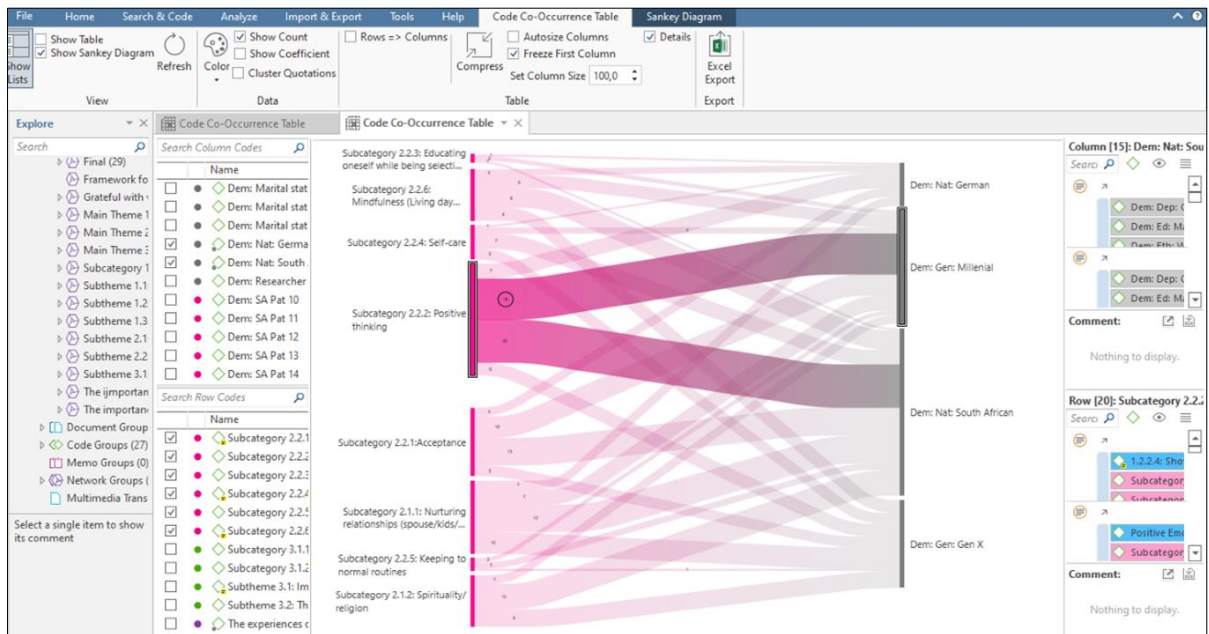


Figure 6.14: Theme 2 Sankey diagram of quotations coded for coping mechanisms adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation in ATLAS.ti

Table 6.13 includes quotations made by the Millennial and Generation X participants from Germany and South Africa regarding their experiences of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 6.13: Subtheme 2.1: Social support as a coping mechanism

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA8: And that I rely more on my loved ones than I realised. I need to see them and spend time with them to feel like myself.</p> <p>SA15: As long as my family is safe and healthy, then I am happy.</p> <p>SA33: Family need me more now than ever and I have found my need to reconnect – to be as great as my family’s need to reconnect with me and on a more constant basis. The pandemic has reshaped personal relationships because everyone is looking for comfort in their thoughts and feelings as well as an outlet for stress. Family relationships are the ‘safest and less critical’ way to vent.</p>	<p>SA16: I would say a good support system like your family, friends and work. In this difficult time, we must stand together and help each other where we can. We have to learn to stick together as family and also as work colleagues.</p> <p>SA38: We have to be there to support family and friends that have been severely affected by the lockdown</p>	Social support
German participants		<p>GM25: I learnt that it is important to rely on family and close friends and that</p>	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
		<p>our world is always changing.</p> <p>GM42: I tried to speak to other people, get to calm a bit down. You know, if you talk to other people about your problems, it already gets a bit easier. In this situation, actually everyone was affected by this same thing. So everyone was suffering from this lockdown and corona in every country and—the neighbour, everyone.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

6.4.1.1 Category 2.1.1: Nurturing relationships: friends/family/spouse/children

Eight participants (SA12, SA13, SA33, SA36, SA41, SA40, SA43, GM45) discussed in detail how the lockdown provided them with an opportunity to reconnect with their family and to nurture relationships that may have suffered as a consequence of lack of time, work and other responsibilities. Participant SA33 commented, “The pandemic has reshaped personal relationships because everyone is looking for comfort in their thoughts and feelings”. Participant SA36 added, “More now than ever, we need to forgive, forget and build strong relationships, create new and meaningful ones and repair/heal ones that may have been broken”. Participant SA12 agreed with the statements by adding, “We were always rushing somewhere, and we started to live pass [past] your own family, where now you had the time to connect again”.

Table 6.14 presents the comments that four Millennial participants (SA13, SA32, SA33, GM45) and four Generation X participants (SA12, SA16, SA36, SA40) made about the importance of nurturing relationships.

Table 6.14: Category 2.1.1: Nurturing relationships

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA13: I am now thankful for this time I was given to spend with my loved ones.</p> <p>SA32: I would be able to go spend three uninterrupted weeks with my parents, which I had not done since I was a student 10 years ago.</p> <p>SA33: The pandemic has reshaped personal relationships because everyone is looking for comfort in their thoughts and feelings as well as an outlet for stress.</p>	<p>SA12: We were always rushing somewhere, and we started to live pass [past] your own family, where now you had the time to connect again</p> <p>SA16: In this difficult time, we must stand together and help each other where we can</p> <p>SA36: More now than ever, we need to forgive, forget and build strong relationships, create new and meaningful ones and repair / heal ones that may have been broken</p> <p>SA40: It has put us as a family at a difference space.</p>	Nurturing relationships
German participants	<p>GM45: For the first time, I was home and had lots of</p>		

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	time with my family. I have a young boy at home. My wife is xx, so I could support her a bit more.		

Source: Author's own compilation

6.4.1.2 Category 2.1.2: Spirituality/religion

Spirituality is a “living, dynamic” process that is positioned around whatever a person may hold sacred (Lopez et al., 2013, p. 928). Spirituality can also be seen as value and belief systems that connect with the inner self (Section 2.9.2).

Six South African Millennial participants (SA8, SA9, SA13, SA18, SA33, SA35) and five South African Generation X participants (SA36, SA37, SA39, SA40, SA43) identified religion and faith in God as an important coping mechanism to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, over the three days, 42% of the South African participants discussed the importance of their faith, both as a coping mechanism and as a contributor to achieving fulfilment in life.

Table 6.15: Category 2.1.2: Spirituality

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA8: I have to add my faith to the list even though since lockdown, I have been struggling in that department. I know it is a	SA37: I set my intention on the one and only God who brought me through so much.	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>season that will pass and maybe I just miss the closeness of church and the community because I know that is something I need to achieve fulfilment</p> <p>SA9: Do [To] be honest, the only thing I need in my life to maintain fulfilment is Jesus.</p> <p>SA13: We can only stay on our knees and let God take care of the rest.</p> <p>SA18: Your faith is carrying you through the uncertain times.</p> <p>SA33: I manage the emotional concern with prayer.</p> <p>SA35: Prayer and believing in something bigger than me and bigger than the circumstances gave me (and still gives me) a sense of peace.</p>	<p>SA39: ... my faith you know. I'm gonna repeat this often because I think that is the main thing that pulls me through ... God just comes into my life; he blesses me and makes me think, '[W]ait, it's not that bad'.</p> <p>SA40: My wife and I, my family, we are Christians, and we believe in God and that is ultimately who we turn to. God is who we turn to. He is our only source of hope.</p> <p>SA43: My faith is how I cope with anxiety really. I am a Christian so in terms of coping with the unknown and with anxiety, I think I went into a lot of Bible study and listening to preaches and teaching about dealing with uncertainty.</p>	<p>Spirituality</p>
German participants			

Source: Author's own compilation

Noteworthy is that none of the German participants commented on spirituality or religion. However, conclusions should not be drawn from this because participants were not asked to respond about aspects of religion directly. Furthermore, it could be argued that it is uncommon for German individuals to discuss private matters such as religion and politics with 'strangers' and in open forums and, therefore, this result should be investigated in a further study if any conclusions need to be made about religion in particular. However, a study conducted by Joubert and Grober (2013) found that their participants (South African Police Service employees) felt comfortable expressing their opinions about faith and religion in their own lives but were hesitant to express opinions about faith and religion in other people's lives.

The findings from this study showed that spirituality and religion were found to be a significant coping mechanism, particularly for South African Millennials and Generation Xers. This is consistent with the view of Joubert and Grober (2013), Pargament et al. (1998), and Ribeiro et al. (2020) who argue that populations use religion and spirituality or faith as coping mechanisms to deal with the negative consequences of life's challenges.

6.4.1.3 Discussion of Subtheme 2.1: Social support

Social support (nurturing relationships and spirituality) and positive psychology (acceptance, positive thinking, educating oneself, self-care, keeping to normal routines and mindfulness) emerged as significant coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in this study.

The research participants discussed the importance of nurturing social relationships in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 6.4.1.1.), which formed part of the importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 6.5.1). The current findings agreed with the finding of a recent study conducted by Hamm et al. (2020) that research participants engaged in various activities during the pandemic to distract themselves from negative emotions. Similarly, both studies found that participants used mindfulness to focus on their immediate circumstances and needs

without being over concerned about the future. The research participants of the current study often communicated that because the future is unknown, they do not give it much consideration. The findings from this study also concur with the conclusions of Hamm et al. (2020) who argue the importance of maintaining a routine and being able to travel and experience leisure activities to address adverse situations.

The research participants in the current study confirmed the views of Bergh and Theron (2003) who argue the importance of nurturing relationships in enhancing self-esteem through the sharing of emotional concerns and the appraisal thereof (Chapter 2, Section 2.2). A study conducted by Brandley-Bell and Talbot (2020, p. 11) to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 on individuals with experiences of eating disorders found that social support serves as a coping mechanism against stressful events, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Saltzman et al. (2020) agree with this view by stating that social support not only plays a pivotal role in enhancing mental health and well-being but also serves as a coping mechanism during times of adversity.

6.4.2 Subtheme 2.2: Positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic

Several Millennial and Generation X participants from Germany and South Africa discussed adopting positive psychological resources such as acceptance, positive thinking, educating oneself, self-care, keeping to normal routines, and mindfulness to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 6.15) (Section 3.3.1.2) as suggested by Lopez and Snyder (2009) and Nelson and Cooper (2007). Furthermore, according to Bergh and Theron (2003), when individuals apply good coping mechanisms, they are able to deal better with stressful experiences (Section 3.5).

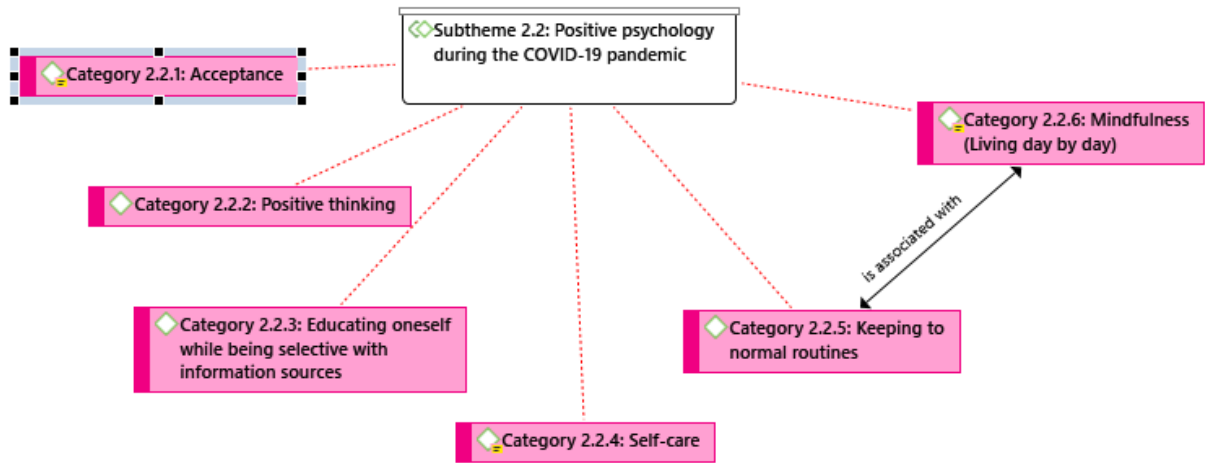


Figure 6.15: Preliminary sub-framework for Subtheme 2.2: Positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to examine adoption of positive psychology by the Millennial and Generation X participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these experiences, a preliminary sub-framework was constructed in ATLAS.ti. Figure 6.11 that illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Subtheme 2.2 (positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic) in ATLAS.ti. The figure demonstrates the various categories that emerged from Subtheme 2.2.

6.4.2.1 Category 2.2.1: Acceptance

Acceptance refers to one's ability to be mindful and to be aware of one's thoughts and feelings. Moreover, acceptance can be helpful as a coping mechanism for individuals to endure situations that they cannot control, thus aiding persons to cope with adversity (Bond & Bunce, 2003). Often, acceptance leads to an individual making peace with reality (Section 2.3.4).

Several participants discussed how they needed to accept the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic for what they were in order to 'make peace with' the situation.

Eight Millennial participants (SA9, SA13, SA17, SA18, SA35, SA41, GM23, GM45) and two Generation X participants (SA12, GM24) explicitly and implicitly linked acceptance to dealing with the unexpected and unknown nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be seen from the responses expressed in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16: Category 2.2.1: Acceptance

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA9: I realised that I can adapt to a new or different environment that I have at work.</p> <p>SA13: I was taught to accept and dodge and sometimes, one-handedly catch the curve ball that is being tossed at me daily.</p> <p>SA17: I had mixed emotions on the day the lockdown was announced. At first, I was in disbelief. I could not believe that this was happening; it felt so unreal. Once the reality of it all set in, I did experience some anxiety but that anxiety quickly turned into acceptance.</p> <p>SA18: I have learnt how to deal with plans changing</p>	<p>SA12: Firstly, I understood that it was necessary and kind of accepted it.</p>	Acceptance

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>unexpectedly and suddenly. I have learnt to appreciate time with friends and family as well as freedom of movement.</p> <p>SA35: We all knew we had no choice but to accept the circumstances.</p> <p>Acceptance definitely can help opposed to resisting a situation that is inevitable. Even though I felt quite down and 'melancholy', I had to dig deep and humbly accept the circumstances.</p> <p>SA41: I found that once it had happened and once we'd just accepted the fact that it was what it was, it got a little bit easier and we found ways around it.</p>		
German participants	<p>GM23: For me, it is important to realise which things I can change and which one not. During that time, it was important for me to remember it regularly. Accept disadvantages out of <i>force</i></p>	<p>GM24: I have accepted the lockdown itself from our government as there already existed some experiences from our neighbouring country that seemed to be a few weeks ahead, and there already</p>	Acceptance

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p><i>majeure</i> on the one hand, and on the other hand, invest its own power in things that are influenceable.</p> <p>GM45: We got some money from the government to support [the employees] but they all fully accepted. There was not a single one saying like yes, why? It was just because from the very first day, we were very much in communication and open with them and with that, we also gave them motivation, and they saw this is working; this is saving us now. So they saw it, and they accepted everything.</p>	<p>practised some restrictions to population with success.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

It is interesting to see from the discussions that the Millennial participants found acceptance of the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic easier than the Generation X participants. One South African Generation X participant (SA39) explained that she was finding acceptance of the COVID-19 pandemic particularly difficult because she was experiencing too much anger and frustration about the pandemic to accept the circumstances. She commented, "I am just angry because I'm

going back. I do not enjoy going back. Acceptance is another thing of this whole thing that I'm battling with".

Not only were the Millennial participants more accepting of the unknown and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic than the Generation X participants, but they were also more eager to discuss aspects of acceptance. A few Generation X participants discussed how they believed that they lost everything they worked for because of the pandemic and lockdown. On the contrary, the Millennial participants believed that although the pandemic had caused them much destruction and devastation, it had also provided them with some positive outcomes. The Millennial participants used much more positive affirmations to describe their hope and optimism for the future than the Generation X participants. Moreover, the Millennial participants were found to be more inquisitive regarding news and informing themselves about the COVID-19 pandemic than the Generation X participants.

6.4.2.2 Category 2.2.2: Positive thinking

Seven Millennial participants (SA11, SA13, SA14, SA15, SA33, GM22, GM45) and four Generation X participants (SA10, SA12, SA16, SA37) conveyed positive affirmations by accepting the COVID-19 pandemic for what it was, by acknowledging the value of family and friends during the difficult time and by expressing their hope that good things would happen in the future. None of the German Generation X participants discussed aspects of positive thinking, either explicitly or implicitly.

Table 6.17: Category 2.2.2: Positive thinking

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA11: Mental stability and positive thinking is one of the most important things in life for me. I am	SA10: The more interesting and positive information I seek out, the better I feel. That doesn't	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>quite optimistic and I always strive to see the good in everything.</p> <p>SA13: During this lockdown period, it was sometimes hard to see the good in things. I have come to realise that there is good in everything; you just need to reshape and refit the way you are thinking about things. Find the good in things.</p> <p>SA14: Thinking I actually have so much I have been putting off at home that I have enough to do now. Life might be a little uncertain now, but it can't rain forever</p> <p>SA15: You just have to stay positive at all times and believe. Surely, it's definitely not time to give up, and just the thought of supporting my family and friends who also need the assistance and help makes me feel it's not</p>	<p>mean ignoring bad news, but within the bad news or discussions of serious situations, my focus is on the positive reactions to it and the steps that people are taking to make it better.</p> <p>SA12: But there is still a long road ahead, and we need to try and stay positive as this will pass some day.</p> <p>SA16: We need to get back into our daily routine, keep busy and have positive thoughts.</p> <p>SA37: For as long as there is breath, there is hope. I have learnt to hope again, to have a confident expectation of good, to encourage others and to move forward and that opportunity will present itself again.</p>	<p>Positive thinking</p>

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>over yet and to take it day at a time.</p> <p>SA33: I went to sleep telling myself that life is 'long', and this will be memorable but it will be a past event soon enough.</p>		
German participants	<p>GM22: During this time, it was very important for me, ALWAYS THINK POSITIVE!</p> <p>GM45: I always say with every negative, there is also hopefully something positive to pull out. It is the only way for me to motivate myself again.</p>		

Source: Author's own compilation

Three Millennial participants (SA12, SA13, SA35) and one Generation X participant (SA16) linked positive thinking with avoiding negative thinking. Participant SA12 commented, "For me, is to try and surround myself with positive people and to try and avoid the negatives".

6.4.2.3 Category 2.2.3: Educating oneself

Four Millennial participants (SA24, SA33, SA44, GM23) discussed how they preferred to be selective with the type of information they read. Participant SA33 commented,

If I find that I'm getting overly worried about what's going on in the news, I just don't watch it for a couple of days, and the rule in the house is only if its critical, then it can be shared. (SA33)

Four other South African Millennial participants (SA7, SA33, SA37, SA46) explained how they preferred to avoid negative news completely. Participant SA37 commented, "However, it is important sometimes to take a break from the news and avoid negative voices".

In contrast to the above opinions, two German participants, one Millennial (GM45) and one Generation X (GM42), explained how they tried to read informative articles that positively explained the implications and progress of the pandemic to make sense of the situation in which they were finding themselves.

6.4.2.4 Category 2.2.4: Self-care

Table 6.18 illustrates that five Generation X participants (SA10, SA12, SA37, SA38, GM42) and two South African Millennial participants (SA7, SA35) discussed self-care as a coping mechanism to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is noteworthy that none of the German Millennial participants discussed self-care as a coping mechanism.

Adopting self-care as a coping mechanism was evident in the accounts provided by the research participants. These are presented in Table 6.18.

Table 6.18: Category 2.2.4: Self-care

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA7: I realised more than ever that I am okay with being alone/on my own.	SA10: Lots of quiet/down time during which I can read. The majority of my off-work time is spent like	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>SA35: Overall, I believe in also finding balance and working at these areas in life, namely Social, Family, Career/Work, Spiritual and Health (listed in no particular order).</p>	<p>this. A creative outlet—I write, and when I am mentally healthy, I draw, paint and make things. Time spent in nature, swimming in the sea and in rock pools, walking alone, forests with lots of time to examine the wildlife of all sizes.</p> <p>SA12: Also taught me more self-discipline and to improve on time management and work balance and start to enjoy a hobby that you once loved before.</p> <p>SA37: It helps to break away to a quiet place in the house and let go of the worries and fears. Perhaps to meditate on things that are good, lovely and of a good report [rapport]. Another word would be 'time-out'—however long it takes</p> <p>SA38: Having dreams is always something that keeps me moving forward</p>	<p>Self-care</p>

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
		but most importantly, having time to do things I enjoy, be it socialising with friends (which I am really missing), getting out into nature or just having half an hour to process my thoughts keeps me on the right track.	
German participants		GM42: I put my mind on other things. Like I read a whole book in two days where I usually did not have time to do that, so I had a lot of time.	

Source: Author's own compilation

6.4.2.5 Category 2.2.5: Keeping to normal routines

Two South African participants, one Millennial (SA44) and one Generation X (SA16), commented on the importance of having a normal daily routine during the COVID-19 pandemic to make them feel secure in their surroundings. Participant SA16 commented, "We need to get back into our daily routine, keep busy and have positive thoughts" and "When I was out of routine, the day and night was almost out when we were in full lockdown. That really upset me ... That affects me more. I need routine to experience normal".

6.4.2.6 Category 2.2.6: Mindfulness

Two Millennial participants (SA18, SA14) and two Generation X participants (SA16, SA39) explained how they were taking things 'day by day' because they were uncertain about the future. The following sentiments were expressed by South African participants only: SA18: "take things as they come", SA14: "survival mode, live day by day", SA16: "take one day at a time" and SA39: "there's survival at the moment".

6.4.2.7 Discussion of Subtheme 2.2: Positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic

The findings of this study confirm the views of Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) and Donaldson and Ko (2010) who contend that positive psychology manifests on three levels, namely positive subjective experiences (including positive emotions as discussed in Section 6.3.2.2), positive individual traits and positive institutions. Furthermore, according to Seligman (2003), individuals need to choose positive emotions, engagement, meaning, positive relationships and accomplishment (Section 3.2) to thrive in life. The research findings showed that participants relied on positive psychological resources to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and to become more resilient, hopeful and optimistic during the COVID-19 pandemic, as suggested by Davis et al. (2016) (Section 3.2).

In addition, the findings showed that the participants used the following positive psychological resources to flourish: acceptance, positive thinking, educating oneself, self-care, keeping to normal routines and mindfulness. Furthermore, the study supports the views of Lopez and Snyder (2009) and Frederickson (2013) (Section 3.3.1.2) who contend that positive emotions can build individuals' habitual ways of thinking through psychological resources to achieve fulfilment. Although Lopez and Snyder (2009) make provision for the building of psychological resources such as savouring, hope, mindfulness, quality of relationships and reduced illness symptoms, the findings of this study found acceptance, positive thinking, educating oneself, self-care, keeping to normal routines and mindfulness to be helpful psychological resources to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the coping mechanisms adopted by the research participants enabled them to be more optimistic and to experience the COVID-19 pandemic less

traumatically, to have more social connections, to avoid stressful events and to maintain support networks, as suggested by Carr (2004), Carver and Scheier (2014), and Saltzman et al. (2020). In addition, the adopted coping mechanisms enabled the participants to overcome the traumatic experiences of the pandemic and to persist in accomplishing their short-term goals (Hirsch & Conner, 2006) (Section 3.7.3).

Although many participants discussed their fear and anxiety regarding lockdown, the data showed that most participants were ready to respond and react to the perceived threat by implementing coping mechanisms. Furthermore, the participants in this study recounted how the coping mechanisms enabled them to drive positive changes in their lives to experience positive growth, as suggested by Chew et al. (2020), Donaldson and Ko (2010), Gurvich et al. (2020), and Polakovic (2020) (Section 4.6 and Section 4.7.) Moreover, the findings agree with the findings of Chew et al. (2020) who found that adopting positive coping mechanisms leads to increased compassion and empathy (Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2.2).

The data revealed that although Generation Xers appear to have more resilience in coping with adversity due to maturity and life experience, both generations indicated significant anxiety and fear of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly due to the unknown nature and uncertainty of the pandemic. Most participants showed evidence of mindfulness (Section 2.9.2) in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which could have redirected their fear and anxiety. This included understanding the impact of their actions on their friends and family (Section 6.4.1). Although a few participants found being mindful a challenge because they were caught up in personal trauma, most participants expressed that their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic had an influence on others and, therefore, they needed to be cognisant of their behaviour.

Consistent with the research findings of Gurvich et al. (2020), the research participants adopted emotion-focused coping mechanisms such as reframing, mindfulness and acceptance to decrease their fear and anxiety about the pandemic. Gurvich et al. (2020) found that positive reframing, acceptance and humour are associated with enhanced mental health and well-being (Section 2.9.2 and Section 4.6). The findings of this study showed evidence of both positive reframing and acceptance.

Bond and Bunce (2003, p. 3) define acceptance as “the willingness to experience thoughts, feelings, and physiological sensations without having to control them, or let them determine one’s actions”. Acceptance (Section 2.3) relates to an individual’s

ability to experience not only positive experiences and emotions but also the negative experiences that cause anger, fear, frustration and anxiety together with having control over them and without compromising one's future actions. The findings of this study support the findings of Chew et al. (2020) who claim that when participants place their trust in government's ability to manage a situation (as in the case of this study), it enables participants to make positive appraisals of the situation and as a result, experience enhanced well-being (Section 4.7).

There were no significant differences in the coping mechanisms applied by Millennial and Generation X participants to deal with the pandemic. Although the Millennial participants were more accepting of the situation, both generations agreed that family, friends and spirituality are the most important contributors to coping with uncertainty and adversity. Moreover, both cohorts discussed various aspects of how the pandemic allowed them to reconnect with family or friends, to restore relationships that were strained before the pandemic and to nurture developing relationships with their children.

Consistent with the findings in the literature, positive subjective experiences, positive traits and positive institutions are considered components of well-being. Chetna and Sharma (2019) argue that well-being is about 'living a good life' (p. 463) (Section 6.5). The research participants discussed various coping mechanisms such as accepting the reality of the situation, positive reframing, seeking information about the problem, trying to find benefits in the situation and applying problem-focused coping strategies as suggested by Lopez (2013) (Section 3.8.1).

According to Schneider (2001) (Section 3.7.2), individuals can develop positive thinking by (i) giving the 'benefit of the doubt' for the past, (ii) showing appreciation (Section 6.3.2.2) for the present, and (iii) seeking opportunities in the future. Participants described how they tried not to let the consequences of COVID-19 overly affect them because the situation was out of their control. For example, the participants explained how they tried to avoid negative thinking (Section 6.3.2.1; Subtheme 1.3) in order to cope with the unknown and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic (Section 6.4; Theme 2).

The research participants also used problem-solving coping mechanisms to deal with the uncertainty of the pandemic and to gain control over their mental health and well-being. This finding is consistent with the views of Chew et al. (2020) who

concluded that people engage in activities that they believe will protect their well-being, which include gathering adequate information and seeking social support (Section 4.5.1). The research participants of this study expressed how they felt bewildered by the excessive amount of media reports about the pandemic and how challenging they found it to stay positive with the constant onslaught of negative news reports. It is noteworthy that although participants were at first curious to read about the pandemic, they soon realised that more often than not, they were confronted with misinformation, false information or inaccurate information, and this caused them to feel more fearful and anxious and ultimately led to avoidance of information (Chew et al., 2020) (Section 4.5.1).

Self-care emerged in this study as another coping mechanism that is in agreement with the views of Saltzman et al. (2020) who found that self-care reduces the feelings of isolation and anxiety that need to be limited to enhance mental health and well-being. Self-care has three dimensions: physical self-care, psychological or internal self-care, and social self-care (Vidal-Blanco et al., 2019). According to the authors, physical self-care refers to activities such as rest, good nutrition, physical activity, recreational activities, walks and daily activities that involve work or the home, family and community (Section 2.9.2). Self-care is a key element in enhancing positive effects and reducing negative effects such as fear, anxiety and anger. It is known to enhance positive relationships with oneself and others. Moreover, self-care is about considering one's own needs in order to be able to care for others. While self-care may include reading, learning something new, gardening and taking a break from social media, it may also include adhering to normal routines to harness adverse situations while being mindful to focus on the present (Hamm et al., 2020). In this research study the participants discussed aspects of all three dimensions of self-care.

More Generation X participants than Millennial participants focused on self-care during lockdown and the pandemic. The data are consistent with the findings of Wise et al. (2012) who argue the importance of self-care to add a positive dimension to one's life that includes an "emphasis on flourishing (rather than surviving), intentionality, an awareness of mutual benefit in care of self and others, and integrating self-care into daily practices" (p. 487). According to Wise et al. (2012), acceptance-based therapies are one of the key aspects of mindfulness-based positive principles and practices. Furthermore, according to the authors, self-care complements and sustains ongoing well-being (Section 2.9.2). The Generation X participants discussed the various

activities that they used to cope with lockdown. The evidence collected supports the notion that Generation Xers understand the value and importance of self-care and intentionally apply self-care mechanisms to deal with adversity. The participants showed evidence of mindfulness by considering their actions and the effect they have on others (i.e. some participants discussed how they realised their families' dependence on them and their need to be more nurturing towards their parents or children).

Notably, the data of this study are also in direct contrast to the stereotyping and characteristics identified by Bernstein et al. (2008) who argue that Generation Xers are "self-centred, loafers, impatient and pessimistic" and Millennials are "spoiled, technologically dependent, disrespectful, and with a short concentration span" (p. 18) (Section 1.2.6). The data contradicted these assumptions and showed that both generations not only became more considerate, respectful and hardworking during the pandemic and lockdown but also more mindful of their actions and how these affected others. The only agreement with the characteristics presented by Bernstein et al. (2008) was that of Millennials being technology dependent. Although some Millennials underwent different stages of accessing and avoiding news about the pandemic, they were more inclined than Generation Xers to use technology to stay informed and connected with friends and family (Section 6.3.3.2).

The research participants provided limited evidence to support the views of Usher et al. (2020) who maintain that changes to day-to-day functioning and normal routines often make people feel anxious and fearful (Section 1.2.4).

6.4.2.8 Discussion of Theme 2: Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

Joseph (2011) discussed several coping mechanisms that can be applied to overcome adversity. The findings of this study agree with the views of Joseph (2011) who identified social connectedness, acceptance, self-discovery, hope and optimism, and self-care as possible coping mechanisms to deal with adversity. Hereinafter, the identified coping mechanisms are discussed in terms of the current study:

- The research findings strongly support the views of Benke et al. (2020), Brandley-Bell and Talbot (2020), Chaix et al. (2020), Galea et al. (2020),

Li et al. (2020), and Munck et al. (2020) (Section 1.2.4) who declare that the implemented preventative measures to slow the spread of the virus posed significant challenges to individuals' mental health and well-being and led to enhanced levels of distress (Bäuerle et al., 2020; Benke et al., 2020; Grover et al., 2020; Kimhi et al., 2020). However, in this study, the research participants identified various coping mechanisms that enabled them to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown. The findings demonstrate that Millennials relied more coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic than Generation Xers, particularly in terms of acceptance and positive thinking. Moreover, South African Millennials were much more inclined to adopt positive thinking as a coping mechanism than any other cohort. None of the German Generation Xers adopted positive thinking as a coping mechanism. South African Generation Xers mostly depended on social relationships and spirituality to cope with the pandemic. The South African participants were adopting more coping mechanisms, to deal with the pandemic, than the German participants. None of the German participants applied spirituality as a coping mechanism to deal with the pandemic. In addition, none of the German Millennials adopted 'support from family and friends' and 'self-care' as a coping mechanism during the pandemic.

- The coping mechanisms adopted by the participants agree with the invisible self-model (Section 2.9.3), which identifies the coping self-dimension as a combination of activities that regulate an individual's responses to significant life events and that manifest in various ways to deal with negative situations or circumstances. In this research study, the participants described leisure activities that enabled them to enjoy life and deal with the pandemic. Similarly, the participants discussed coping mechanisms to deal with the stresses of the pandemic, while recognising their strengths and weaknesses and accepting the situation for what it was (Section 6.4.2.1). Leisure activities were described as an important coping mechanism for Generation X participants. The findings also revealed that the Millennials not only found acceptance of the lockdown, during the pandemic, easier than the Generation Xers but that they were also more eager to discuss aspects of acceptance.
- The participants identified social support as a key coping mechanism to deal with the pandemic. The findings of this study support the findings of Saltzman

et al. (2020) (Section 4.5.1) who found that social support not only plays a key role in enhancing mental health and well-being but also serves as a core coping mechanism during times of crisis. The South African participants depended more on social support as a coping mechanism than the German participants. The Generation X participants relied somewhat more on social support than the Millennial participants.

- Positive psychology was also identified as a core coping mechanism during the pandemic and lockdown. The research findings support the views of Davis et al. (2016) (Section 3.2) who contend that individuals rely on positive psychological resources to cope with adversity and to become more resilient, hopeful and optimistic during such times. The findings demonstrate that the South African participants applied positive psychology much more as a coping mechanism (to deal with the pandemic) than the German participants did particularly in terms of 'positive thinking, acceptance, spirituality and nurturing relationships'. The Millennial participants embraced 'positive thinking and acceptance' much more as a coping mechanism than the Generation X participants.

6.5 THEME 3: ELEMENTS TO ACHIEVE FULFILMENT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The responses to the following question gave rise to Theme 3: Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Can you tell me about the things that you need to achieve/maintain fulfilment in your life?

Theme 3 (elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic) developed into the following subthemes and categories:

- Subtheme 3.1: Importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 3.1.1: Social support
 - Category 3.1.2: Spirituality
 - Category 3.1.3: Sense of security

- Subtheme 3.2: Importance of positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Category 3.2.1: Meaningful and purposeful life

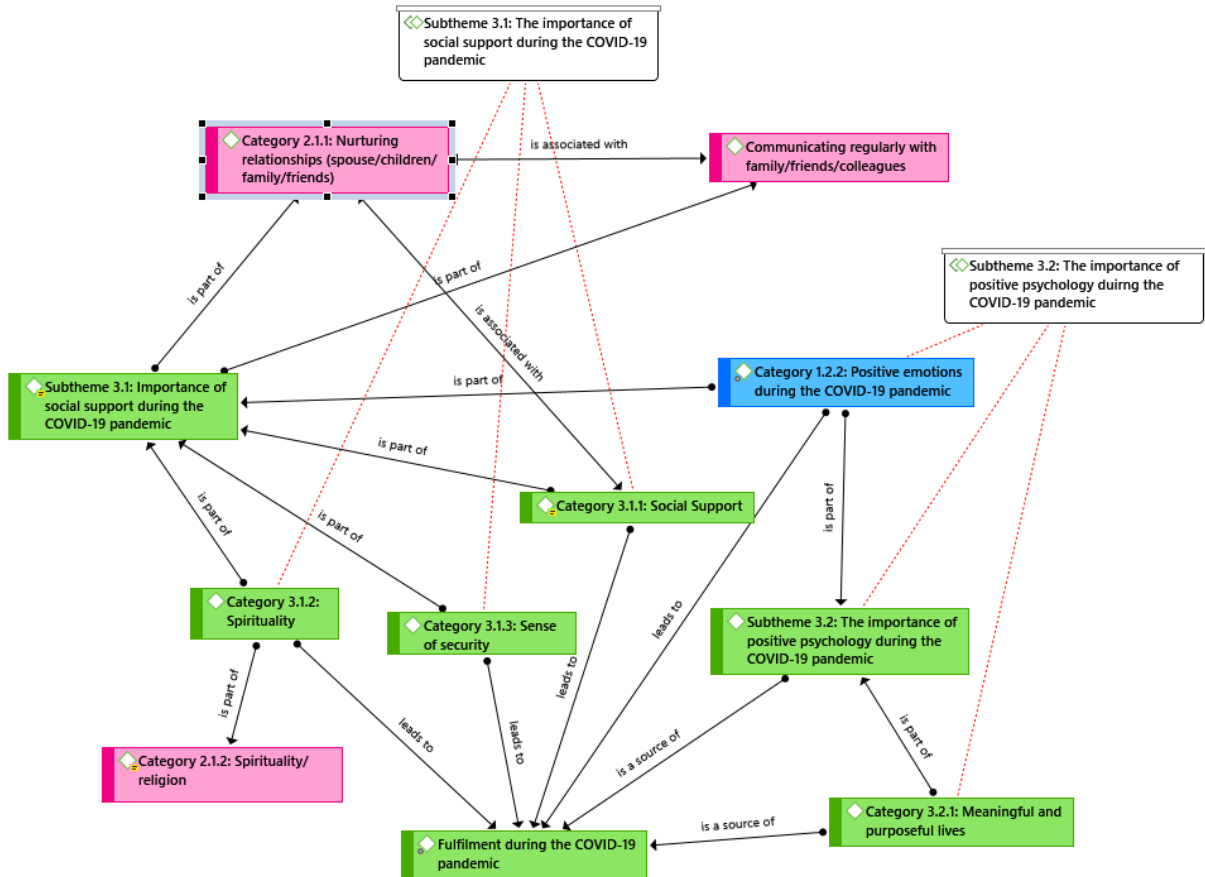


Figure 6.16: Preliminary sub-framework for theme 3: Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to investigate the elements that enabled Millennials and Generation Xers to experience fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these findings, a preliminary sub-framework was constructed in ATLAS.ti for Theme 3. Figure 6.16 illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Theme 3 (elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic) in ATLAS.ti. The figure shows the various codes that emerged from Theme-3.

6.5.1 Subtheme 3.1: The importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to understand the importance of social support experienced by Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these findings, a preliminary sub-framework was constructed in ATLAS.ti. Figure 6.16 illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Subtheme 3.1 (the importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic) in ATLAS.ti. The figure shows the various codes that emerged from Subtheme 3.1.

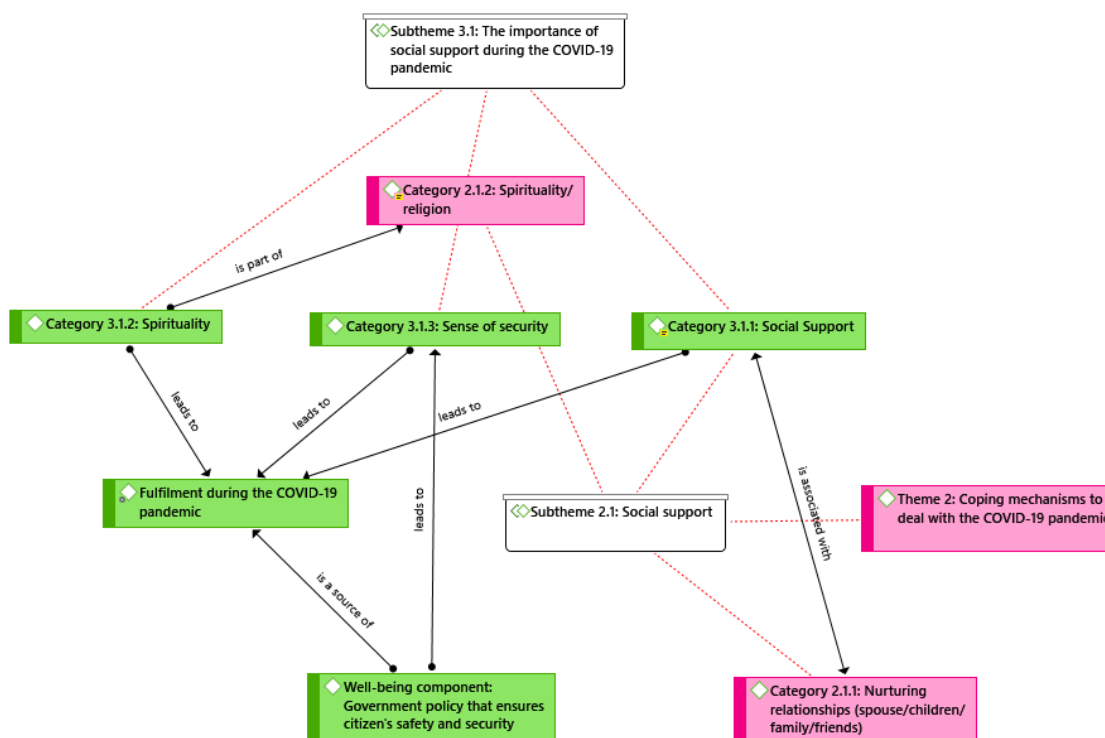


Figure 6.17: Preliminary sub-framework for subtheme 3.1: The importance of social support during the COVID-9 pandemic

Source: Author’s own compilation using ATLAS.ti

Most of the research participants discussed the importance of family and friends (social support), spirituality, financial stability and the need to live a meaningful life (by being able to enjoy leisure and travel, personal development) to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The elements that contributed to achieving fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic are discussed hereunder.

Considering the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on people’s lives, it is notable how barely participants commented on the importance of having good health. A South

African Millennial, Participant SA15, commented, “As long as my family is save [safe] and healthy, then I'm happy”. Other comments made by participants about their health included, “Being happy and grateful for what I have as there are many people that are not as fortunate, and to have good health” (Participant SA12). Participant SA38 agreed with the statement by stating, “That happiness comes about from being financially stable, healthy and mentally ok”. Participant SA35 confirmed these views, “Of course, having basic needs met, like food, shelter, money to pay bills and even more importantly being of sound health”.

6.5.1.1 Category 3.1.1 Support from family and friends

During the focus group discussions and the individual interviews, most of the participants discussed the importance of having the support of family and friends during the COVID-19 pandemic and particularly during the lockdown period. Several participants also described the support received from family and friends as a coping mechanism in dealing with the pandemic (Subtheme 2.1).

Of the participants, 12 Millennials (SA8, SA9, SA15, SA18, SA24, SA32, SA33, SA35, SA41, GM22, GM23, GM45) and 13 Generation Xers (SA10, SA14, SA16, SA18, SA36, SA38, SA40, SA43, GM25, GM28, GM29, GM30, GM42) explicitly discussed support from family and friends as an important element for achieving and maintaining fulfilment in their lives.

Significantly, 25 of the 29 research participants mentioned this factor as an essential element in achieving fulfilment during the pandemic. This can be seen from the responses presented in Table 6.19.

Table 6.19: Category 3.1.1: Support from family and friends

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA8: And that I rely more on my loved ones than I realised. I need to see them and spend time with them to feel like myself.</p> <p>SA9: ... a husband to snuggle up next to and my friends and family</p> <p>SA15: Well definitely in today's life, everybody needs a good happy family as we need to help each other in difficult times like this.</p> <p>SA18: ... spending time with friends and family.</p> <p>SA24: I think fulfilment will come when I can find a better balance between all the different parts of my life and myself, including a bit more of a focus on what feeds my soul and my friends and family.</p> <p>SA32: At the top and what is most important to me will definitely be my family, my</p>	<p>SA10: A small handful of close friendships.</p> <p>SA14: As long as I keep chasing a dream, I have my family and my work to look forward to everyday. I believe I am maintaining the fulfilment in my life.</p> <p>SA16: I would say a good support system like your family, friends and work. In this difficult time, we must stand together and help each other where we can.</p> <p>SA18: Loyalty, consistency, dedication, spending time with friends and family.</p> <p>SA36: For me, I find joy in my family, my religion, my friends and those who I love and care for.</p> <p>SA38: We have to be there to support family and friends that have</p>	Support from family and friends

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>friends and my animals. These are all great foundations/pillars to achieve/maintain fulfilment.</p> <p>SA33: Family need me more now than ever, and I have found my need to reconnect with my family and need to be as great as my family need to reconnect with me on a more constant basis.</p> <p>SA35: Having a support base of loving family and friends and maintaining these relationships is important mentally.</p> <p>SA41: My friends, we are a close group, a tight knitted group of friends. Family is the most supportive group of people in my life.</p>	<p>been severely affected by the lockdown.</p> <p>SA40: I need my family to get me through this difficult time.</p> <p>SA43: I depended on my wife.</p>	
German participants	<p>GM22: Health, family, friends, job, hobby, social and economic safety.</p> <p>GM23: To reach this, it is a balance between Family,</p>	<p>GM25: Fulfilment I reach through family and love. I learnt that it is important to rely on family and close friends and that our world is always changing.</p>	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>Work, Hobby (Sport), Holiday and Friends.</p> <p>GM45: My family in terms of wife and kids. It is very important to me to spend quality time with them.</p>	<p>GM28: My family and friends are also very important.</p> <p>GM29: This interaction with family, friends and colleagues was also quite important in the pandemic times.</p> <p>GM30: For me, being happy has a lot to do with satisfaction. An important factor is definitely friends and family.</p> <p>GM42: Family and friends and other people to talk to because they help you through the times—good and bad times.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

6.5.1.2 Category 3.1.2: Spirituality

Approximately half of the South African participants discussed the importance of spirituality in achieving fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as commented under Spirituality/religion (Category 2.1.2), none of the German participants mentioned spirituality as an element in achieving fulfilment in life.

Table 6.20: Category 3.1.2: Spirituality

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA9: Do [To] be honest, the only thing I need in my life to maintain fulfillment is Jesus.</p> <p>SA33: ... having a constant spiritual connection with my God.</p> <p>SA35: For me, having a relationship with God is important as it provides faith in something bigger than the circumstances.</p>	<p>SA36: For me, I find joy in my family, my religion, my friends and those who I love and care for.</p>	Spirituality
German participants			

Source: Author's own compilation

6.5.1.3 Category 3.1.3: Sense of security

Various participants discussed the importance of having a sense of security, particularly in terms of financial security. Notably, most of the comments in this category were made by Generation Xers with children (SA10, SA38, SA39, SA43, GM28, GM30) except for Participant SA10 who did not have any children. It was also noted that the two Millennial participants (SA46, GM45) who commented on the importance of financial stability had children and, therefore, it makes sense that financial security would be of concern to this group.

Table 6.21: Category 3.1.3: Sense of security

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	SA46: I would need financial stability for me to flourish. There is this business idea that I have.	<p>SA10: A sense of financial stability. (Financially, I am generally risk avoidant and have sacrificed or deferred the pursuit of other passions and interests to maintain this).</p> <p>SA29: I do need security [financial]. I need to know I can help whatever comes my way—that certainty. And for me, I'm not certain now. I feel like I don't even know who I am.</p> <p>SA38: That happiness comes about from being financially stable, healthy and mentally ok.</p> <p>SA39: My work gives me my joy; it gives me financial freedom.</p> <p>SA43: A sense of security is very important—knowing what's going to happen, that my job is certain.</p>	Sense of security

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
German participants	<p>GM22: Job ... and economic safety.</p> <p>GM45: A secure political social surrounding so in that is, let [let's] say COVID, that I can walk on the street without problems and just like have my infrastructure like I have.</p>	<p>GM28: I need satisfaction and security in all situations whereby the political and economic side is also very important. Good healthcare also contributes to a fulfilling life.</p> <p>GM30: Aspects such as financial security, professional situation or simply freedom can also contribute to satisfaction and happiness.</p>	

Source: Author's own compilation

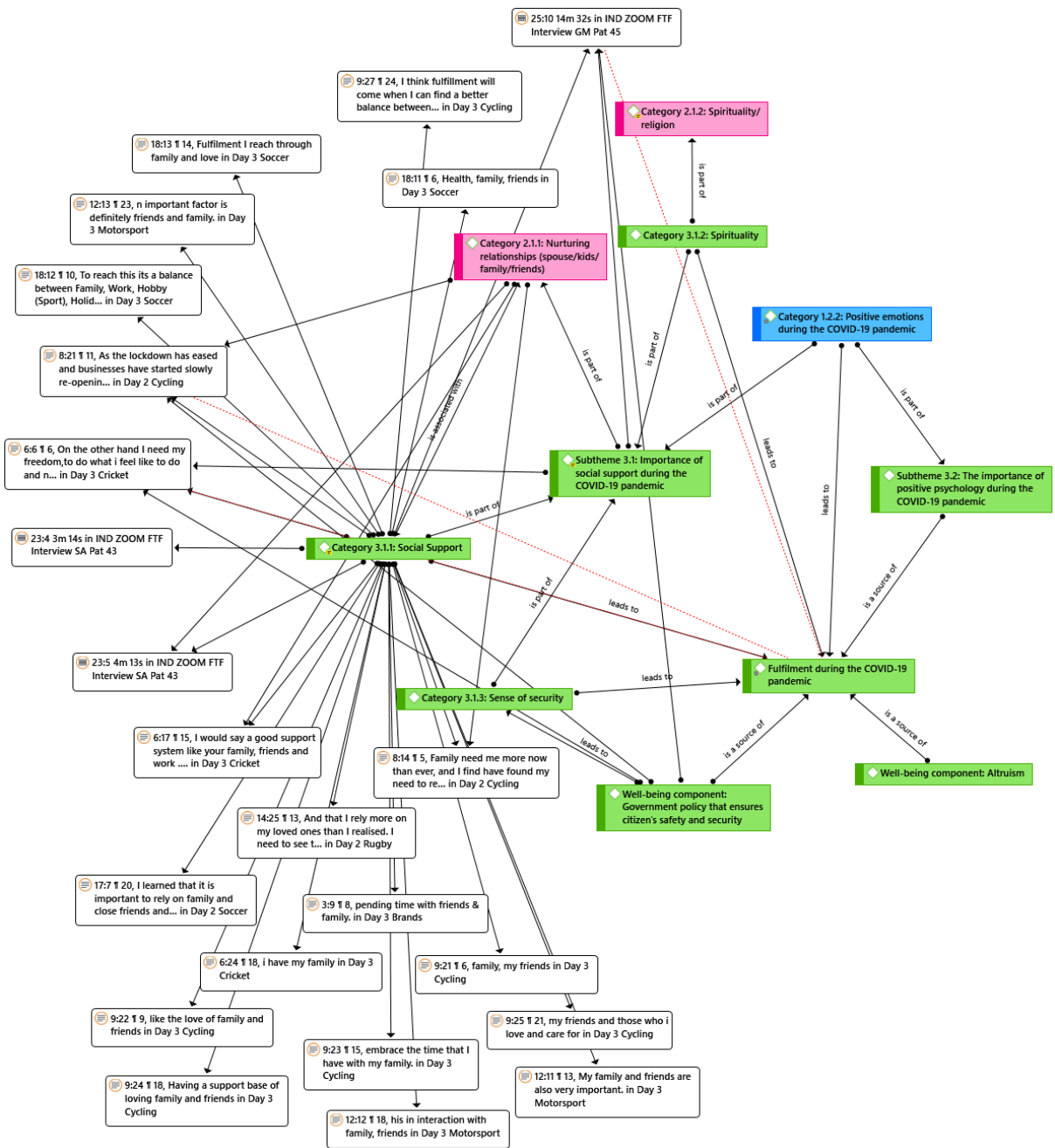


Figure 6.18: Network diagram of the elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation using ATLAS.ti

6.5.1.4 Discussion of Subtheme 3.1: The importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic

Figure 6.18 illustrates the quotations from participants regarding the importance of support (Subtheme 3.1) during the COVID-19 pandemic and the links to support from family and friends (Category 3.1.1), spirituality (Category 3.1.2) and sense of security (Category 3.1.3) in ATLAS.ti. The figure shows that there is a strong connection between participants' need for social support and having a sense of security to experience fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study confirms the findings of the study conducted by Saltzman et al. (2020) and Chew et al. (2020) (Section 4.7) who found that social support from family and friends plays a pivotal role in enhancing the mental well-being of individuals and acts as a predictor of resilience following adversity. The importance of social support was also discussed in Subtheme 2.1: Social support as a coping mechanism (Section 6.4.1).

The wellness model of Myers and Sweeney (2004) proposes that the further away the life tasks are from the centre of the model, the less influence the factor has on the individual's well-being. Spirituality was placed in the centre of the wellness model and spirituality and sense of security were mentioned together with social support as key factors in enhancing well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this study concurs with the findings of Joubert and Grober (2013) who found that religion and spirituality play a significant role in improving well-being and have an ameliorative effect on well-being, particularly during times of adversity (Section 2.9.2).

The findings of this study further agree with the views of Sweeney and Witmer (1991) who identified purpose and meaning in life, hope and optimism for the future, and values as key dimensions of spirituality. The findings also confirm the views of Pfeffer (2018) who identifies meaning and purpose (Section 6.5.2.1) and positive relationships (Section 6.5.1) as key components of spirituality.

The findings of this study support the findings of the earliest Wheel of Wellness model developed by Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992). These researchers identified various tasks that relate positively to enhanced well-being (Chapter 2, Section 2.9). The tasks closest to the centre of the wheel (e.g. spirituality and self-direction) were considered more significant and having a greater influence on

the longevity and quality of human life than the tasks located around the rim of the wheel (e.g. global events).

Accordingly, the findings of this study found spirituality to be a powerful coping mechanisms for facing adversities (Garg, 2017; Joubert & Grobler, 2013) (Section 2.9.2) and for achieving fulfilment in life (Section 6.5.1.2).

Participants experience a sense of security through government policy that ensures citizens' health and safety. The findings of this study include various similarities to the Wheel of Wellness model (Section 2.9.2) developed by Myers and Sweeney (2004). Similar to the Wheel of Wellness model, the participants of this study expressed the importance of social support from friends and family, spirituality and government (to create a sense of security) in enhancing their well-being.

6.5.2 Subtheme 3.2: The importance of positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic

'The importance of positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a subtheme from the interviews conducted with the research participants. Several Millennial and Generation X participants from Germany and South Africa discussed the positive subjective experiences that enabled them to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Positive psychology made a valuable contribution to the study because it enabled the researcher to discover participants' positive emotions, engagement and meaning in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, as suggested by Davis et al. (2016) and Seligman (2007) (Section 3.2).

The participants' positive subjective experiences, positive emotions (Section 6.3.2.2) and applied coping mechanisms (Section 6.4) enabled them to overcome the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The content analysis function in ATLAS.ti was used to understand the importance of positive psychology for the Millennial and Generation X participants during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these findings, a preliminary sub-framework was constructed in ATLAS.ti. Figure 6.19 illustrates the preliminary sub-framework developed for Subtheme 3.2 (the importance of positive psychology during the

COVID-19 pandemic). The figure shows the various categories and codes that emerged from Subtheme 3.2.

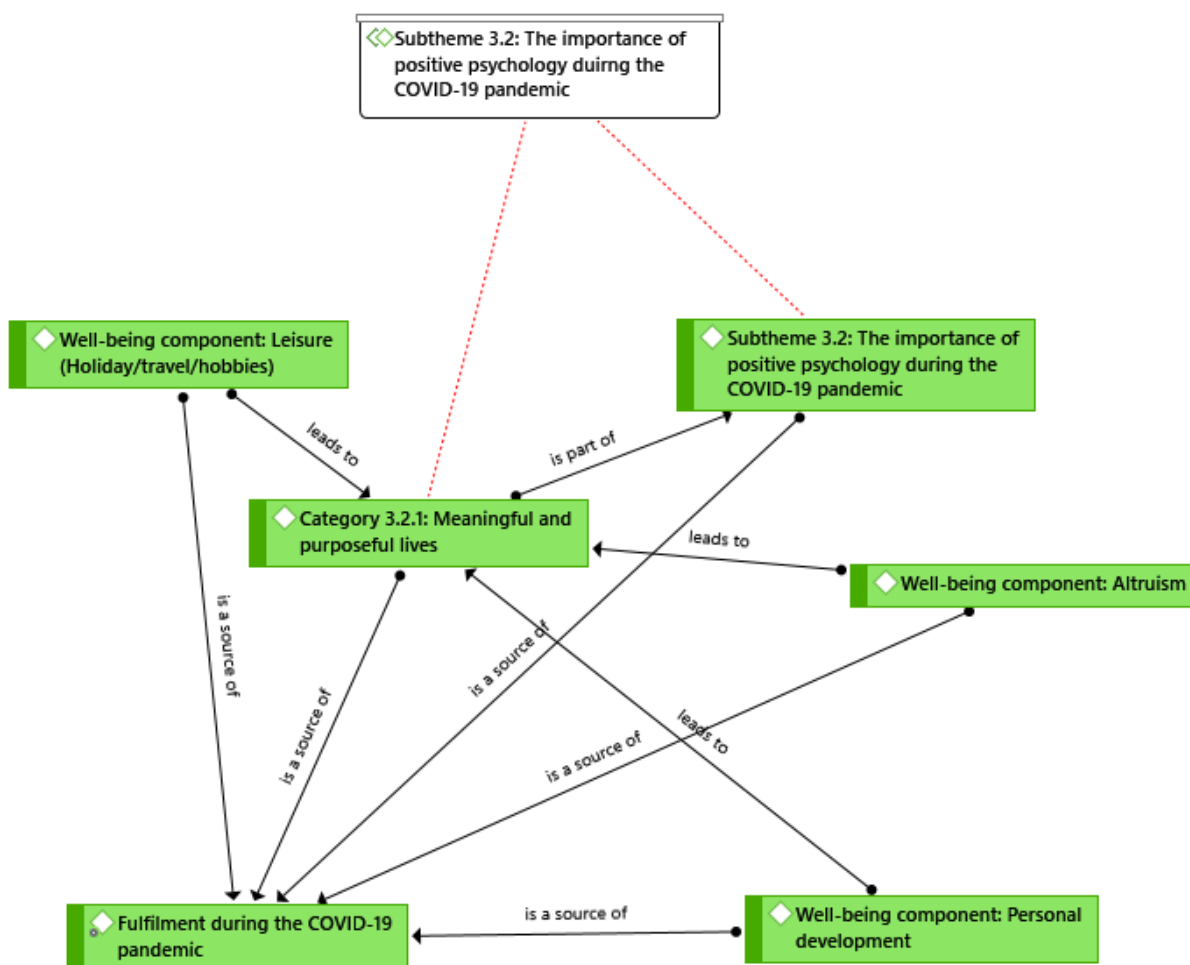


Figure 6.19: Preliminary sub-framework for subtheme 3.2: The importance of positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author’s own compilation in ATLAS.ti

6.5.2.1 Category 3.2.1: Meaningful and purposeful life

People often question what leads to fulfilment in their lives (Lopez & Snyder, 2009) while others evaluate their own success and well-being through a comparison with those around them (Section 2.2). These appraisals lead to either negative emotional reactions such as fear, disappointment and resentment or positive emotions such as satisfaction, contentment, joy, happiness, hope and optimism. Participant SA9, a South

African Millennial, made the following comment about achieving fulfilment in her life, “I want always to be humble and appreciate that which I have because there is always someone out there that have things worse.”

Various participants discussed the importance of having a meaningful life. Most of the participants discussed the influence of enjoying freedom of movement, being able to travel and reaching personal goals on attaining a meaningful life. Only two Millennial participants—“finding ways to care for others” (SA33) and “If I can actively see people trying when I help them, it makes me feel good” (SA7)—and one Generation X participant (SA43) discussed the importance of engaging in acts of kindness to achieve fulfilment in life.

Ten Millennial participants (SA8, SA13, SA15, SA33, SA34, SA35, SA41, SA44, SA46, GM45) and nine Generation X participants (SA10, SA12, SA14, SA36, SA38, SA39, GM24, GM28, GM29) explicitly and implicitly discussed the aspects that contribute to providing meaning and purpose in their life. This can be seen in the responses expressed in Table 6.22.

Table 6.22: Category 3.2.1: Meaningful and purposeful lives

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
South African participants	<p>SA8: I need to have a sense of purpose—to know that I am working towards something.</p> <p>SA13: Find your purpose. If you have not found it today, strive to find it tomorrow or the next day and live to strive towards better things, and not just</p>	<p>SA10: Just the fact that I am accomplishing something towards one of my lockdown goals (maintaining a healthy environment and working towards a healthy body).</p> <p>SA12: Setting goals to work to and once reach[ed], to celebrate my success and</p>	Meaningful life

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>for yourself but for other people too.</p> <p>SA15: On the other hand, I need my freedom, to do what I feel like to do and not to be questioned around each and every corner or at all the places I used to go to. As long as my family is safe and healthy, then I am happy.</p> <p>SA33: I feel that fulfilment comes from witnessing your own growth, real substantial changes in your life that give you a sense of meaning and purpose. Then there is the ways that do not require material means like contributing to others and having meaningful connections to others, which fulfilment opens our hearts and changes our perspective on life.</p> <p>SA34: I think fulfilment comes from a life well lived, and a well-lived life is a balanced one.</p>	<p>find areas in my life to improve. Being happy and grateful for what I have as there are many people that are not as fortunate, and to have good health.</p> <p>SA14: The things we need will depend on what we want to fulfil. If it's a job position, I will have to work harder, put more hours and learn a lot faster. We decide [what] we want.</p> <p>SA36: Everyday, when we wake up with a new opportunity and chance to do things better, to live life better than what we did the day before.</p> <p>SA38: Having dreams is always something that keeps me moving forward but most importantly, having time to do things I enjoy, be it socialising with friends (which I am really missing), getting out into nature or just having half an hour to process my</p>	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
	<p>SA35: Fulfilment often stems from having inner peace. It is important to know what it is that brings that inner peace. I believe gratitude is huge! It allows a person to see the blessings in their life and helps shift the focus from only the negative.</p> <p>SA41: Being able to do things, travel a little bit and the little things in life to make memories that I'll cherish for ever.</p> <p>SA44: Doing a job I love, getting the satisfaction out of it, showing the difference.</p> <p>SA46: I need every now and then for me to sustain myself and be happy in my life. Every year, I go to, I go out, I go to weekend—always three times in a year. I haven't done none of that this year.</p>	<p>thoughts keeps me on the right track.</p> <p>SA39: My work gives me my joy I need life to go back to normal. I cannot accept this as normal ... the little joys that made it all worth it because you work hard, you love hard, that's all in place. What else is there to do for fun, for joy, for things gone? It's terrible actually. This life has become terrible.</p>	

	Millennials	Generation Xers	
	Verbatim evidence		Code
German participants	GM45: I could not live without my work and my team.	GM24: To give and receive humility in private and professional life, to have a[n] exciting job, to have a high degree of independency, [t]o have the possibility to develop my own skills and to follow my interests und [and] where applicable, to bring it into daily life as an additional benefit within society. GM28: To call my life fulfilled, I need the freedom to be able to do whatever I can I also need the feeling of being needed. GM29: It is the combination of success based on one's own work with phases of hard work, joy, relaxation and fun.	Meaningful life

Source: Author's own compilation

Five Millennial participants (SA8, SA10, SA41, SA46, GM23) and two Generation X participants (GM29, GM42) explicitly discussed the importance of travel to achieve fulfilment in life. The participants related how being able to travel locally and

internationally allows them to experience a sense of freedom, broadens their views on life and enables them to enjoy life to its fullest.

Three Millennial participants (SA13, SA33, SA35) and five Generation X participants (SA10, SA12, SA14, SA38, GM24) explicitly discussed the importance of having goals to achieve fulfilment in life. Participant SA12 commented, “Setting goals to work to and once reach[ed], to celebrate my success and find areas in my life to improve”. Participant SA13 agreed with the statement by commenting, “Keep your focus on your goals no matter what they are”.

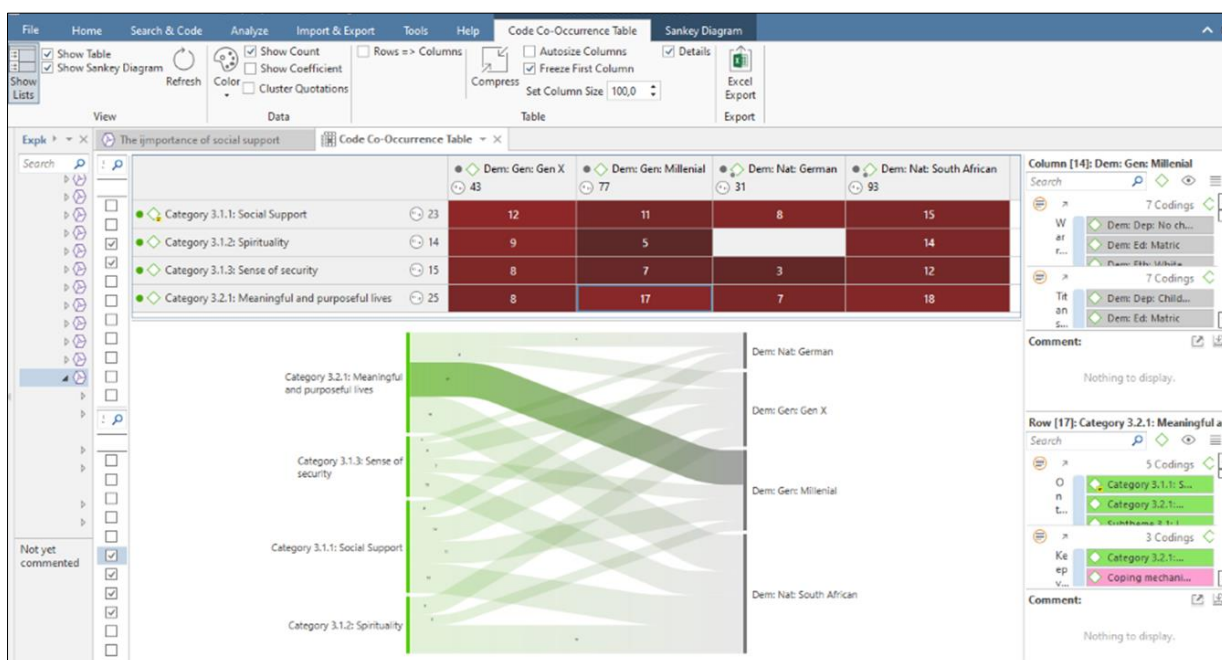


Figure 6.20: Theme 3 co-occurrence table and Sankey diagram of quotations coded for elements sense to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author’s own compilation in ATLAS.ti

Figure 6.20 shows the co-occurrence table created in ATLAS.ti with all the subcategories coded for elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The co-occurrence table shows that most quotations were made by South African Millennial participants in the Subcategory 3.2.1 (meaningful and purposeful life). Additionally, both German Millennial and Generation X participants discussed the importance of meaningful and purposeful lives to achieve fulfilment. Notably, the data

show that South African Millennials and Generation Xers regard support from friends and family, spirituality and sense of security to be almost as important as leading meaningful and purposeful lives to achieve fulfilment in life. However, the German Millennials and Generation Xers considered support from friends and family and security as crucial factors but did not mention spirituality as a factor to achieve fulfilment during the pandemic.

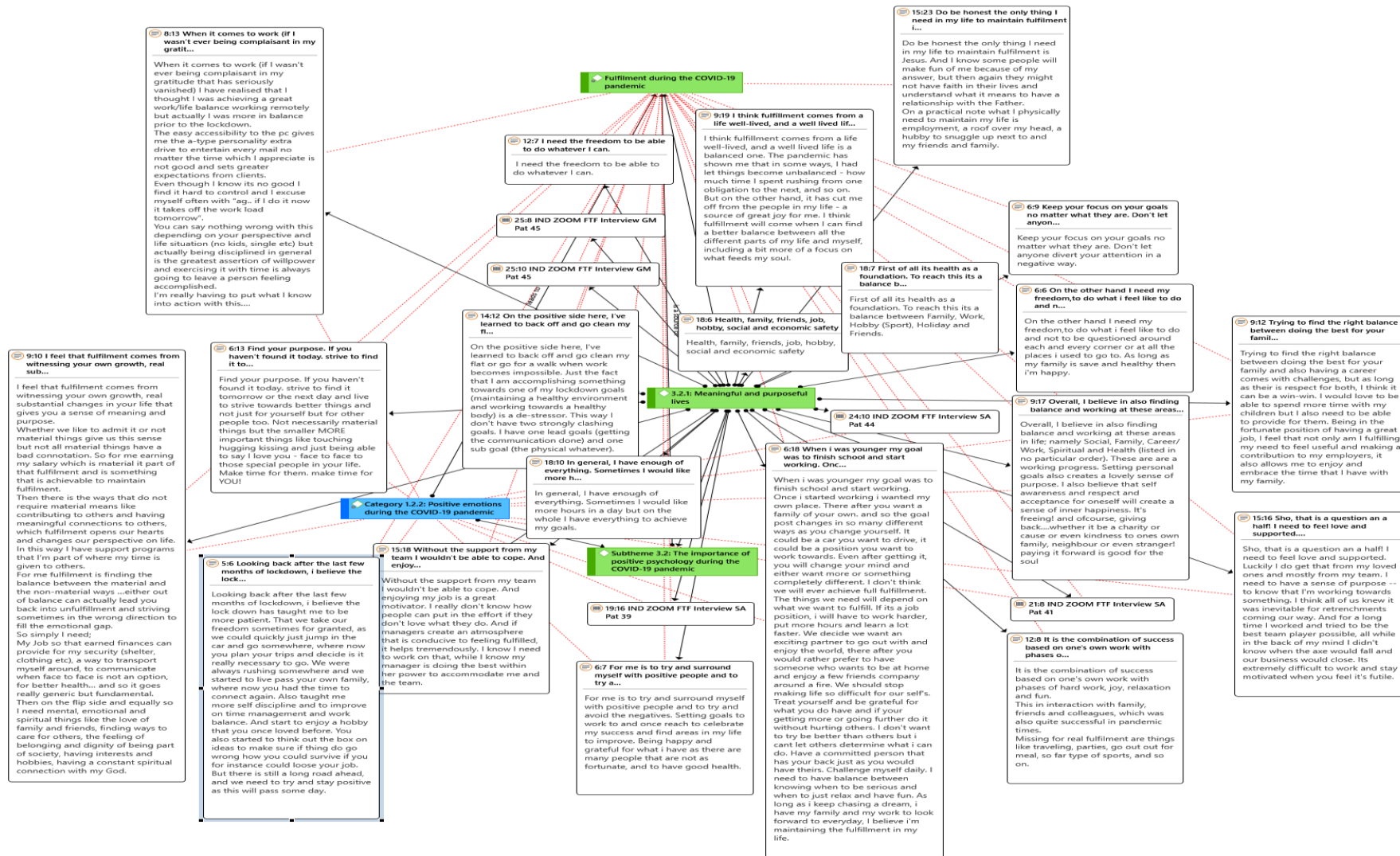


Figure 6.21: Network diagram of the importance of positive psychology

Source: Author's own compilation in ATLAS.ti

6.5.2.2 Discussion of Subtheme 3.2: The importance of positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic

The findings of the study agree with certain elements presented in Ryff's (1989b) model of PWB (Chapter 2, Figure 2.7) that was developed in the quest for longevity (Section 2.10.1). The model consists of six dimensions to evaluate eudaimonic well-being, an aspect of PWB. The dimensions comprise self-acceptance, positive relations with others (Section 6.5.1), autonomy, environmental mastery (Section 6.4.2), purpose in life (Section 6.5.2.1) and personal growth (Section 6.4.2). Apart from self-acceptance and autonomy, the research participants in this study discussed several of these dimensions. For example, in Quotation 9:10 in Figure 6.21, Participant SA33 states, "I feel that fulfilment comes from witnessing your own growth, real substantial changes in your life that gives you a sense of meaning and purpose", which relates well to Ryff's (1989b) model of eudaimonic well-being.

By means of the PERMA model (Section 2.10.2), Seligman (2011) demonstrates that well-being consists of five elements, namely positive emotions (Section 6.3.2.2), engagement, meaning (Section 6.5.2.1), positive relationships (Section 6.4.1.1) and accomplishments (Seligman, 2011). The findings of this study agree with three of the well-being elements suggested by Seligman (2011), namely positive emotions, meaning and positive relationships.

Joseph (2011) argues that people begin to reappraise their lives once adversity strikes, leading them to experience more meaningful lives. Furthermore, Maslow (1995) maintains that adversity is often a reason for self-actualisation, which involves the ability to self-assess in a realistic and positive way (Section 4.5.9). The research findings of this study are consistent with the views of the authors such as Joseph (2011) and Maslow (1995), as many participants discussed how the pandemic caused them to introspect (Section 6.3.1 and Section 6.3.3) and to reevaluate the aspects of their lives that contribute meaning and purpose (Section 6.5.2.1). The current study further confirms the views of Cooper and Hesketh (2019) and Guest (2017) who state that in order to experience PWB, individuals need to experience positive emotions, and purpose and meaning in their lives (Section 2.2).

Joseph (2011) uses the words positive change to refer to post-traumatic growth or stress-related growth following adversity. Joseph (2011, p. 1) argues that the word 'growth' in post-traumatic or stress-related growth relates to how growth arises through

strain between “pre-existing assumptive worlds and the new trauma-related information” and thus prefers the words positive change to describe positive modifications following adversity more accurately. Joseph (2011) and Joseph and Butler (2010) contend that positive changes are challenging for research and according to the authors, the findings are often open to criticism due to diversity of the context and the populations of the studies. However, a systematic review of 39 studies conducted by Linley and Joseph (2004) to assess the positive changes that are made by people following adversity found that mental evaluation variables (threat, harm, controllability), problem-solving coping mechanisms (Section 6.4), acceptance (Section 6.4.2.1), positive reinterpretation coping (Section 6.4.2), optimism (Section 6.4.2.2), religion (Section 6.5.1.1), cognitive processing (Section 6.4.2.6) and positive affect (Section 6.3.2.2) were consistently associated with positive changes. Astonishingly, all the identified factors listed by Linley and Joseph (2004) were evident in this study.

6.5.2.3 Discussion of Theme 3: Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic

Both cohorts were in agreement regarding the elements that provided fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were also no significant differences in the extent to which the Millennial and Generation X participants valued social support, spirituality, sense of security and experiencing a meaningful and purposeful life. This is interesting because although South Africans are known for being “socially divided and fragmented” due to their apartheid history and many other political changes (Jonck et al., 2017, p. 4), there was sufficient agreement between participants about the elements that contribute to well-being (Section 6.5).

This study is consistent with the findings of Jonck et al. (2017) who investigated the differences in work values between different generational cohorts. Although Jonck et al. (2017) found differences between the generational cohorts based on altruism, prestige and variety, the greatest differences that were identified in achieving fulfilment were in terms of Millennials’ need for authority, creativity, cultural identity, risk, economic security and social relationships and Generation Xers’ need for physical activities, social interaction and spirituality (Section 2.9.1). Similarly, in the current study, Millennials discussed the need for financial security and social relationships

while Generation Xers expressed their need for physical activity, social interaction and spirituality:

- The current research findings agree with the dimensions of the wellness model proposed by Hettler (1984) that comprise the physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, occupational and social dimensions (Section 2.9.1). This research found that to experience fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants adopted aspects of emotional wellness, spiritual wellness and social wellness to cope with the pandemic and to enhance their mental health and well-being. The findings revealed that the South African participants adopted more aspects of emotional wellness, spiritual wellness and social wellness than the German participants did to deal with the pandemic.
- The participants' emotional wellness was enhanced by their ability to acknowledge and share feelings of happiness, anger, fear, sadness or stress, and hope in a productive manner. In addition, by recounting positive emotions and by managing their behaviours, the participants were able to implement coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic, as suggested by Chew et al. (2020) and Gurvich et al. (2020) (Section 4.7). The findings demonstrate that the South African participants were more open to share their feelings in relation to the German participants and as a result the South African participants were also able to draw on more coping mechanisms to deal the pandemic.
- The participants' spiritual wellness was enhanced by seeking spiritual support, engaging in collaborative religious coping activities and making spiritual connections during the COVID-19 pandemic, as maintained by Pargament et al. (1998) (Section 2.9.1 and Section 2.9.2). The findings demonstrate that only South African Millennials and Generation Xers applied spirituality as a coping mechanism. Moreover, half of all the South African participants regarded spirituality as an important element to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The participants' social wellness was enhanced through acceptance, as suggested by Botha and Brand (2009) and Keys (1998) and through positive thinking, self-care, staying informed, mindfulness and by sharing their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic with friends, family, colleagues and the researcher (Section 2.9.1). The findings revealed that social support was

the most significant element, for all participants, in achieving fulfilment during the pandemic.

- The study agrees with the research findings of Bharti and Rangnekar (2019), Donnelly (2017), and Peterson and Bossio (2001) who suggest that optimistic individuals demonstrate better coping mechanisms and are generally more healthier and happier (Carr, 2004; Schneider, 2001). This research study found that because research participants selected positive psychological resources to cope with the pandemic, they were able to deal with the adversity caused by the pandemic. The study revealed that both generational cohorts from Germany and South Africa needed purpose and meaning in their lives to achieve fulfilment. South African Millennials and Generation Xers regarded support from family and friends, spirituality, and sense of security as the most important elements to maintain a meaningful life and to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. German Millennials and Generation Xers considered support from family and friends and security as the most important elements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consistent with the findings in literature discussed above, the participants discussed various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic that enabled them to make positive changes in their lives. The most significant positive change that emerged from the study was participants' increased appreciation (Subcategory 1.2.2.3). Both generations expressed appreciation for social support, freedom of movement (prior to the pandemic), and the ability to travel where and when they wished. Both generational groups discussed how the pandemic caused them to be more considerate of others and to be more patient.

In conclusion, achieving fulfilment in life is closely associated with growth and human fulfilment, which have significant consequences for human health (Ryff & Singer, 2008) and well-being (Guest, 2017). In order to experience well-being, individuals need to experience purpose and meaning in their lives in addition to positive emotions (Cooper & Hesketh, 2019; Guest, 2017). Furthermore, well-being can be enhanced through habitual commitment (Seligman, 1998) and intentional activity (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006) and behaviours such as gratitude, kindness (Frederickson et al., 2008) and reframing situations (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Moreover, healthy environments build prosperous nations and societies. Various wellness models

(sections 2.9 and 2.10) have been developed over the years to encourage people to become more aware of their lifestyle choices in order to enhance their well-being.

This research study confirmed many of the dimensions of previously developed wellness models such as the Wheel of Wellness model of Sweeney and Witmer (1991) (Section 2.9.2), which identified spirituality and self-direction as core elements of well-being. In addition, several elements of Ryff's (1989a) six dimension model (Section 2.10.1) were accepted, namely positive relationships, environmental mastery, purpose in life and personal growth. The study also recognised several elements of Seligman's (2011) PERMA model (Section 2.10.2), namely positive emotions, relationships and meaning. Finally, the study supports the views of Johnson et al. (2018) who maintain that overall well-being is achieved through good physical, social and psychological well-being (see Figure 2.3, Section 2.2).

In the following section, the researcher proposes a new framework to enhance the overall well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.6 PROPOSED FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE WELL-BEING OF MILLENNIALS AND GENERATION XERS FROM GERMANY AND SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The objective of the research was to investigate the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from Germany and South Africa and the coping mechanisms that they adopted to deal with the pandemic and to enhance their well-being during this time. To this end, the generated data were thoroughly analysed using ATLAS.ti to uncover emerging themes. The emerging themes are presented in Section 6.3 (Theme 1), Section 6.4 (Theme 2) and Section 6.5 (Theme 3). Finally, a new framework is proposed to enhance generational well-being following adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as illustrated in Figure 6.22 in ATLAS.ti. The final framework is presented and discussed in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.

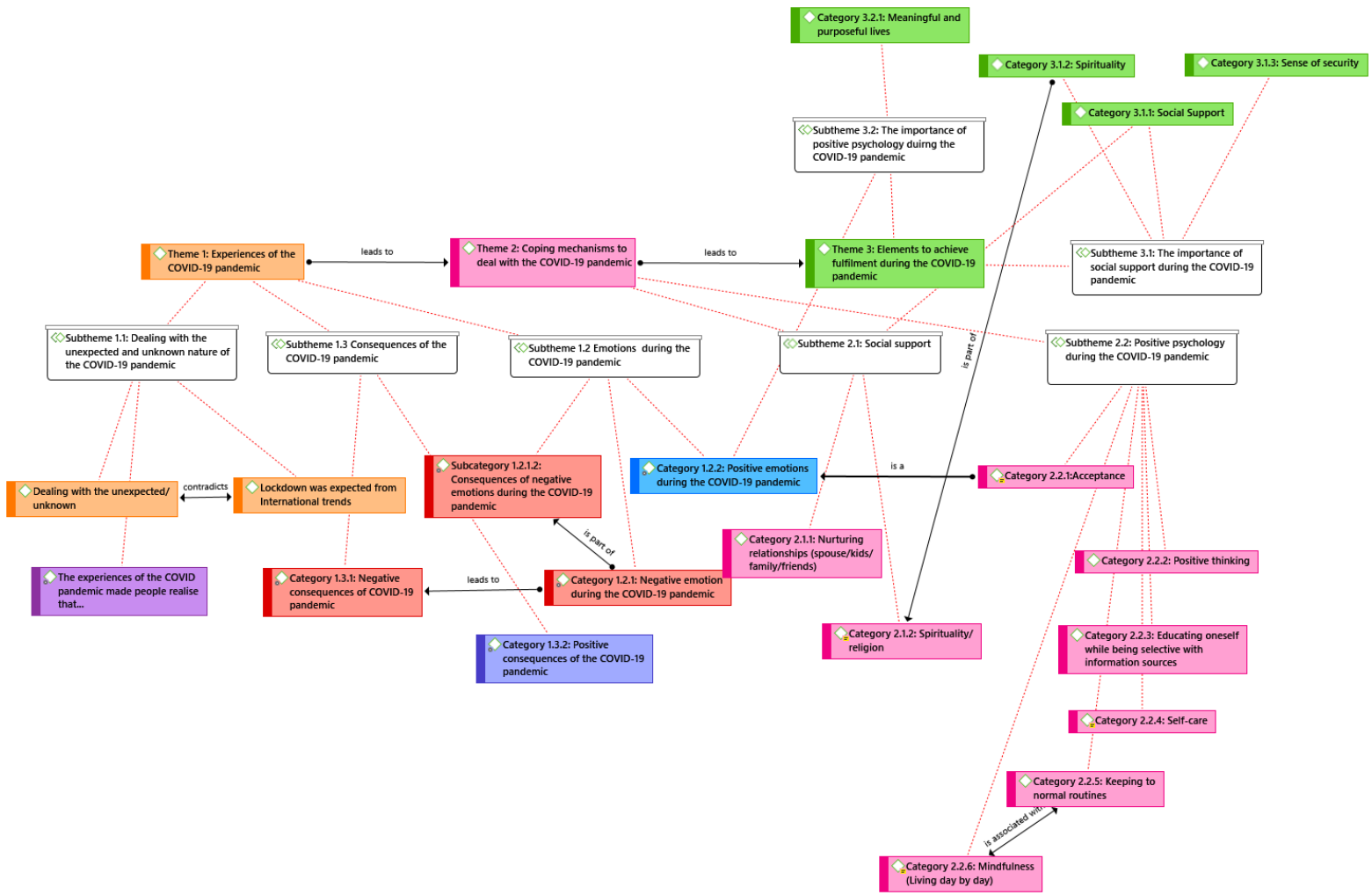


Figure 6.22: Preliminary framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Authors own compilation using ATLAS.ti

The proposed theoretical framework considered the experiences of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) and their adopted coping mechanisms to deal with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Not surprisingly, there were differences in the demographics of the Millennials and Generation Xers who participated in the research. Although marginally, amongst the Millennials who participated in the research, there were more postgraduate and undergraduate qualifications than amongst the Generation Xers. Additionally, there were approximately equal numbers of participants in both generational cohorts with and without dependents.

Considering the above and the geographical data discussed in Table 5.6, the most significant aspect that emerged from this research was that although there were differences in terms of the participants' geographical and demographical data, the COVID-pandemic was unfamiliar and unknown to both generational cohorts. Thus, the participants had no previous experience or 'frame reference' regarding how to deal with the pandemic (adversity) and yet they responded in similar ways to the adversity.

Finally, the preliminary theoretical framework regarding the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic of the two generational cohorts (Figure 6.22) developed in ATLAS.ti illustrates that although Millennials and Generation Xers are born in different eras, they experience adversity and uncertainty similarly when circumstances are unknown, unfamiliar and unexpected.

The final framework to enhance Millennials and Generation Xers well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic is presented in Chapter 7, Section 7.4.

6.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher discussed the three main themes and the subthemes that emerged from the data. The three main themes were: experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic, and elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main themes and subthemes within the associated categories were presented and discussed by using extracts from the focus group discussions, the individual interviews and several diagrams constructed in ATLAS.ti. Subsequently, the identified themes, subthemes and categories were

compared with the findings in the literature reviews (chapters 2, 3 and 4) and discussed in terms of the relevance and findings of the current study.

The researcher used the content analysis function in ATLAS.ti to present the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on these experiences, the researcher constructed several preliminary sub-frameworks for each of the subthemes. Each subtheme was then discussed in terms of significant findings revealed in this study. The subthemes' discussion was followed by a discussion of the main findings concerning the three main themes.

The data findings and discussion chapter enabled the researcher to meet the objective of the research which was to investigate the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic of two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation Xers) from Germany and South Africa and the coping mechanisms they adopted to deal with the pandemic and to enhance their well-being during this time. To this end, the researcher thoroughly analysed the data using ATLAS.ti to propose a new framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposed framework considered the experiences of two generational cohorts and their adopted mechanisms to deal with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic.

The researcher's proposed framework illustrates that although Millennials and Generation Xers were born in different eras, they experience adversity and uncertainty similarly when circumstances are unknown, unfamiliar, and unexpected.

In chapter 7, the final framework, to enhance Millennials and Generation Xers well-being during the pandemic, is presented together with a discussion on how the researcher achieved the research objectives, conclusions relating to the participants' experiences, and strengths and limitations of the study. The chapter concludes with the research contribution, personal experiences of the researcher during the study and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7: PRÉCIS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the realisation of the research objectives and provides a summary of each chapter of the thesis. The limitations are discussed together with recommendations for implementing the framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during times of adversity. In addition, recommendations are made for future research and the final conclusions are presented.

Figure 7.1 is a graphical representation of the layout of Chapter 7 and the topics under discussion in the chapter.

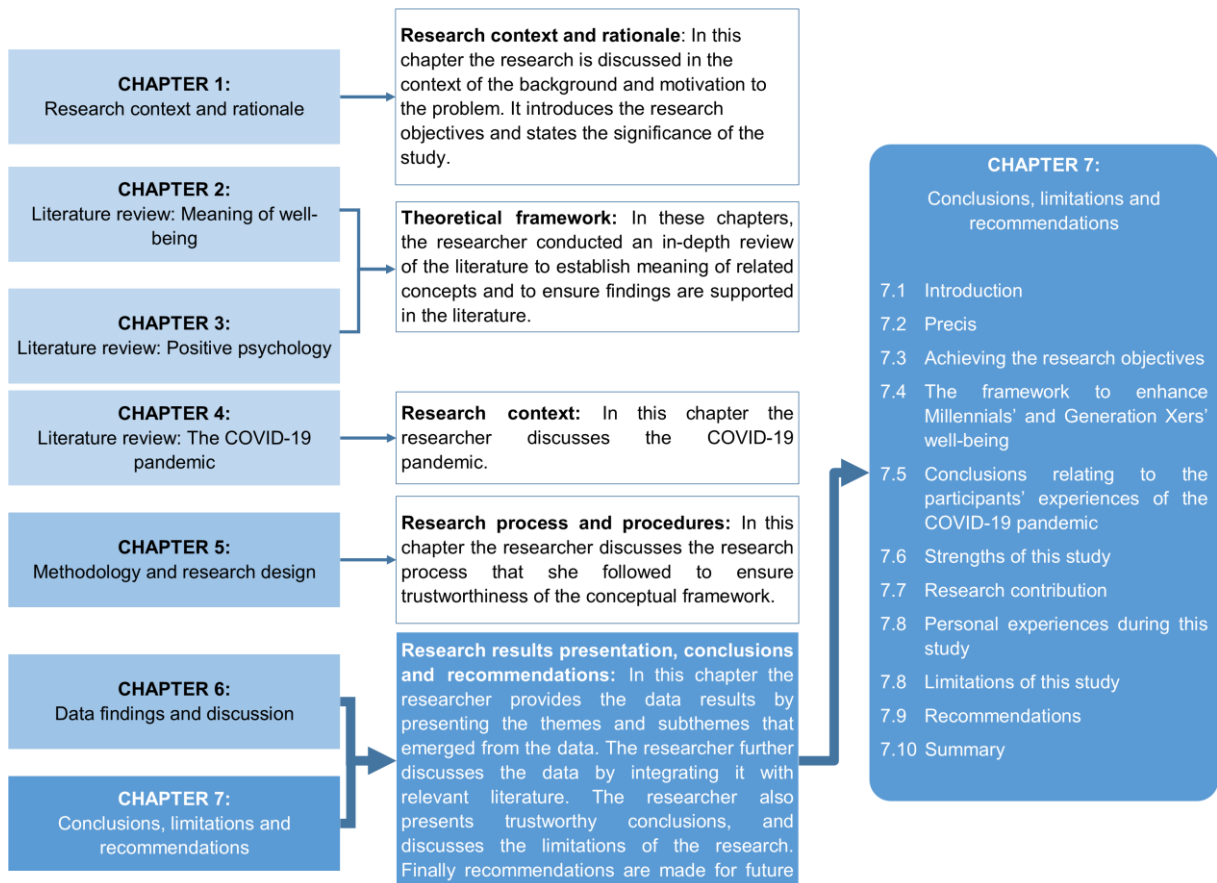


Figure 7.1: Structure of Chapter 7

Source: Author's own compilation

The researcher completed her research proposal in 2019 with the intention to develop a framework for hope and optimism to improve employee well-being in higher education institutions. However, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared by the WHO. The researcher immediately realised the need to change the focus of her study to investigating the experiences of individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on well-being since no published research regarding this was available at the time. The researcher subsequently requested permission from her supervisor to change her study slightly to include the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of individuals. Once permission was granted from the supervisor and the university, the researcher started to prepare for the research interviews.

This research presented a novel opportunity to investigate the unprecedented experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may continue to have an impact on individuals' lives for generations to come. Moreover, the findings of this study may enable future generations to be more prepared for the next disease outbreak and its consequent impact on individuals and organisations. Finally, the researcher hopes that the findings of this study may contribute to the body of knowledge on coping mechanisms to deal with adversity in order to enhance and support well-being.

This research was conducted during July 2020 when most countries were experiencing their peak of COVID-19 infections. In addition, at the time of the interviews, South Africa was in Level 3 of lockdown while in Germany, citizens were required to adhere to strict preventative measures short of lockdown.

The research sample comprised employees representing six organisations of which four were South African organisations and two were German organisations. The eight individuals involved in the one-on-one Zoom interviews did not represent the six organisations from the focus groups but were independent volunteers reached through snowballing methods. The focus of the research was not on specific organisations or industries but rather on individuals (Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa) and, therefore, it is irrelevant that the eight individuals were not representative of the six focus group organisations.

The findings and recommendations are based on the experiences of 29 Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa.

The research objectives of this study were as follows:

- Primary research objective:
 - To develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during adversity
- Secondary research objectives:
 - To investigate the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - To determine the coping mechanisms of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance their well-being.
 - To develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic will be investigated and based on their experiences (positive and negative) and adopted coping mechanisms to deal with the pandemic, a framework will be developed to enhance generational well-being during adversity.

To address the research problem, a literature review was conducted to examine the existing literature on the topics of well-being, positive psychology and the COVID-19 pandemic. This review was used to build a conceptual framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic and to produce reliable research findings.

A research problem was identified, and research objectives were subsequently formulated. The researcher employed two non-probability sample selection techniques, namely purposive and volunteering sampling to identify 29 participants for the focus group discussions and eight independent individuals for one-on-one interviews. These discussions were conducted to gather relevant information to address the research objectives.

Circling reality was used to sample several participants in six different organisations and to achieve greater diversity in terms of opinions and perceptions in order to portray a stable view of the participants' experiences. The three main themes that emerged

during the focus groups with Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa were the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the coping mechanisms adopted to deal with the pandemic, and elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19. Subsequently, a number of subthemes and categories emerged from the main themes (Annexure D). Finally, guidelines were formulated for transferability.

Four criteria were used in the pursuit of trustworthiness as proposed by Guba (1981). These were credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The trustworthiness criteria ensured that the research findings were reliable and scientifically sound.

7.2 PRÉCIS

Chapter 1 provided the research context and rationale. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a need developed worldwide to investigate the psychological impact of the pandemic on individuals' well-being. The research questions were rooted in the need to understand the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic and the coping mechanisms that they adopted to enhance their well-being after experiencing the impact of the pandemic. For this reason, the primary objective of the study was to develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic by exploring their emotional experiences, coping mechanisms and the associated elements to achieve fulfilment during the pandemic. The research was also conducted to advance knowledge regarding the benefits of positive emotions experienced during times of adversity.

Chapter 2 provided a literature review of the meaning of well-being. The literature review on well-being enabled the researcher to investigate the various models on well-being to conceptualise the significant constructs that affect well-being, particularly during times of adversity. Gratitude, savouring, BPS and acceptance emerged as key constructs to enhance well-being. The literature review on well-being enabled the researcher to make sense of the experiences of the research participants and to interpret the data and derive meaning in relation to the findings of previous well-being models.

Chapter 3 provided a literature review of positive psychology that enabled the researcher to interpret the participants' experiences in relation to the three pillars of positive psychology, namely positive subjective experiences, positive traits and positive institutions. The literature on PsyCap constructs hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy was reviewed, and a link was established between these constructs and coping with adversity and the importance of positive psychology.

Chapter 4 presented the context in which the research was conducted, namely the COVID-19 pandemic. It was important to provide a background to the COVID-19 pandemic because the experiences of the participants were rooted in the context of the pandemic. It was also important to understand the impact, effects and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to make trustworthy interpretations of the research findings.

Chapter 5 presented the research methodology and design that enabled the researcher to achieve the research objectives. The researcher applied a qualitative approach to fill a gap in research methodology since most of the current studies about the COVID-19 pandemic were conducted using a quantitative approach. Although the narratives provided subjective experiences of research participants, the research method allowed for substantial and rich descriptions of participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the qualitative data collection method allowed the research participants to recount what they believed was significant about their experiences, to explain what they were doing to cope with the pandemic, and to relate what they believed they needed to maintain their well-being during the pandemic. After the three-day research period, some of the research participants expressed to the researcher how the research process enabled them to find healing through self-talk during the interviews.

Chapter 6 presented the data findings and discussion. Three main themes and subthemes emerged from the data. The main themes were Theme 1: Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Theme 2: Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, and Theme 3: Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The three developed themes and the subthemes enabled the researcher to construct a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The three research

objectives listed in Chapter 1, Section 1.5 were realised and achieved through trustworthy data collection and interpretation (see Section 7.3).

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the research process and the trustworthy findings. The chapter also presents and discusses the framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers. In addition, this chapter focuses on the importance of understanding the implications of the COVID-19 on future generations and continuing our daily lives within the 'new normal'. The findings highlight that although COVID-19 had major consequences for the research participants, these consequences may contribute to significant lifestyle changes, and these lifestyle changes may positively influence the way people live life post COVID-19 for generations to come.

7.3 ACHIEVING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective One: To investigate the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective One was achieved with a thorough investigation into the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic. The investigation involved focus group discussions over three days with 29 employees representing two generational cohorts (Millennials and Generation X) from six organisations in Germany and South Africa. The data were gathered by means of a custom-designed internet-based platform with 'Moodle' interfacing. Additional data were gathered from eight individuals representing the two generational cohorts in one-on-one Zoom interview sessions. The investigation revealed the experiences of the participants during the pandemic, particularly during the lockdown period, and the consequences (positive and negative) that were evident during the lockdown period on the participants' well-being. The negative consequences included the limitation on freedom of movement, the impact on the economy and the challenges in taking care of children while working from home. On the contrary, the positive consequences enabled individuals to make positive changes to their lives to deal with the pandemic such as finding new ways of doing things, enhancing their relationships with family members, spouses or friends, and savouring meaningful experiences during such challenging times. These findings concur with Brandley-Bell and Talbot (2020),

Brooks et al. (2020), Grover et al. (2020), Kimhi et al. (2020), Peng et al. (2020), and Usher et al. (2020), as discussed in the literature review and particularly in Section 6.3.3.4.

Objective Two: To determine the coping mechanisms of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance their well-being.

Objective Two was achieved through the investigation conducted with Millennials and Generation Xers about their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The investigation enabled the researcher to identify various coping mechanisms adopted by the two generational cohorts to deal with the pandemic such as acceptance, social support and spirituality. These findings concur with the findings of Saltzman et al. (2020) and Davis et al. (2016) discussed in the literature review and particularly in Section 6.4.2.8, which identified social support and positive psychological resources as coping mechanisms to deal with adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective Three: To develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic will be investigated and based on their experiences (positive and negative) and adopted coping mechanisms, a framework will be developed to enhance generational well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective Three was achieved through the investigation conducted with Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa into their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The investigation enabled the researcher to develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Social support from friends and family, spirituality, sense of security, and a meaningful and purposeful life were identified as key elements in achieving fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings concur with the findings of Cooper and Hesketh (2019), Frederickson et al. (2008), Ryff and Singer (2008), Seligman (1998), and Sheldon and Lyubomirsky (2006) discussed in the literature review and particularly in Section 6.5.2.3.

7.4 FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE THE WELL-BEING OF MILLENNIALS AND GENERATION XERS

In this section, the researcher discusses the three main themes that were presented and discussed in Chapter 6 according to the preliminary framework developed in ATLAS.ti (Figure 6.22). The elements that shape the final framework are now discussed, and justification is provided for the inclusion of all the elements in the final framework.

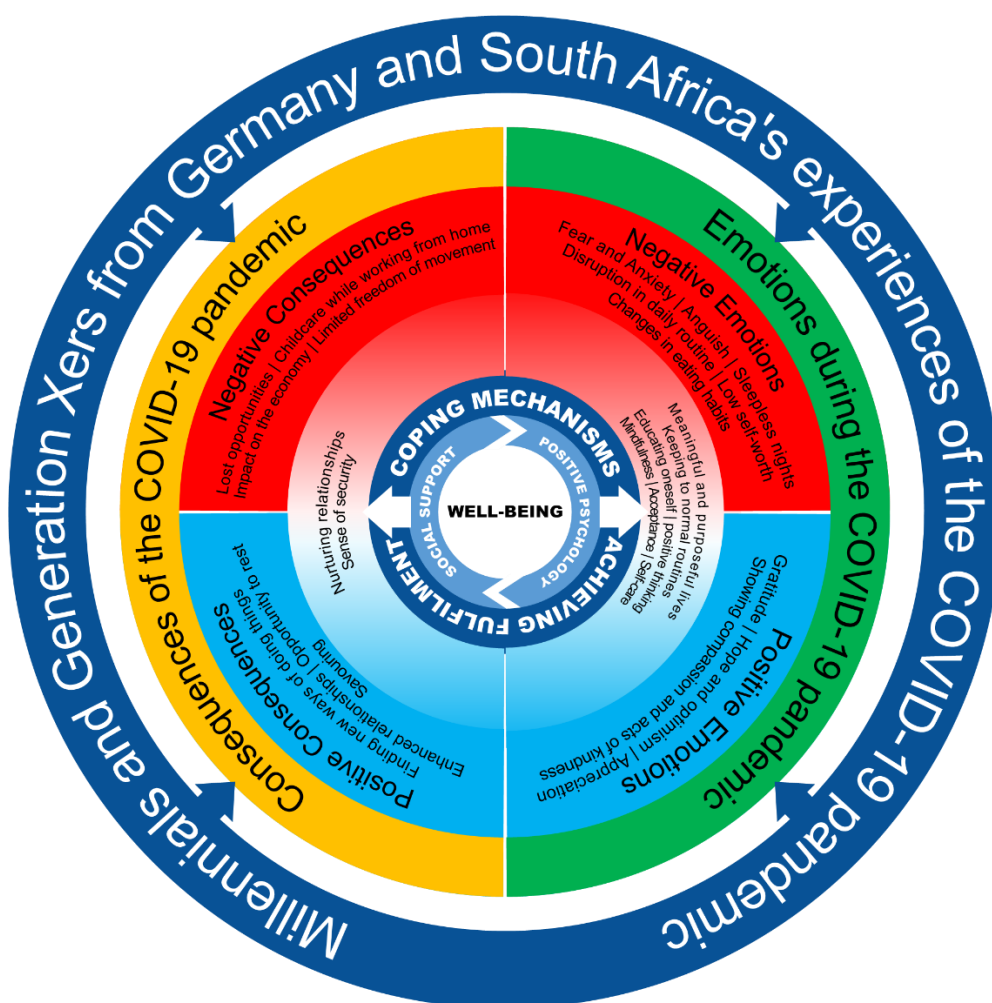


Figure 7.2: Framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic

Source: Author's own compilation

This framework is based on the Indivisible Self Model (Chapter 2, Section 2.9.3), which highlights the integrated nature of human functioning and the interdependent-positive relationship between all areas of the model. Similarly, in this framework (Figure 7.2), all the elements of both social support and positive psychology illustrate an

interdependent relationship between the coping mechanisms and the means to achieve fulfilment.

Furthermore, the framework (Figure 7.2) illustrates that during times of adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic, social support and positive psychology to cope with the adversity and to achieve fulfilment lie at the centre. Consistent with the finding in literature and the data findings presented and discussed in Chapter 6, the framework further illustrates that social support and positive psychology are valid coping mechanisms to deal with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and that social support and positive psychology are core elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The elements included in the framework are representative of the experiences of both the German and the South African participants. However, there were significant differences in the experiences of German and South African participants regarding spirituality as a coping mechanism and as an element needed to achieve fulfilment. Hence, the findings concerning spirituality are excluded from the framework.

In addition, Figure 7.2 illustrates that the top half of the circle (red sections) represents the negative emotions and negative consequences of dealing with the unfamiliar and unexpected nature of adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The bottom half of the circle (blue sections) represents the positive emotions and positive consequences experienced as a result of dealing with adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant aspect of the framework is how the opposing elements are in fact interconnected and interdependent and contribute to achieving overall well-being. Moreover, the elements included in the framework are representative of the experiences of both the German and the South African participants because there were no significant differences in the emotional experiences and consequences experienced by the participants.

The left-hand side of the framework (Figure 7.2) represents the elements of social support (nurturing relationships, sense of security and spirituality) that enhance well-being. The right-hand side of the framework represents the elements of positive psychology (meaningful and purposeful lives, acceptance, keeping to normal routines, educating oneself, self-care, positive thinking and mindfulness) that enhance well-being. All the elements of both social support and positive psychology can be applied as coping mechanisms and means to achieve fulfilment.

In the following section, the researcher discusses the conclusions and provides an explanation for the interconnectedness between the themes and subthemes by conducting a final reflection on the framework illustrated in Figure 7.2.

7.5 CONCLUSIONS RELATING TO THE PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The research was conducted to investigate the experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa of the COVID-19 pandemic to develop a framework to enhance their well-being. The current study was carried out using a qualitative interpretivist approach.

The researcher reached similar findings and conclusions through the application of ATLAS.ti and Tesch's (1990) content analysis techniques. The researcher integrated the various sub-frameworks that were developed and discussed in sections 6.3 to 6.5 to present the final framework that is demonstrated in Figure 7.2. The framework presents a summary of the specific conclusions of the content study and illustrates the different themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework illustrates the coping mechanisms that enabled participants (Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa) to deal with the pandemic and includes the elements needed to achieve fulfilment during the pandemic.

The developed framework (Figure 7.2) confirms that coping mechanisms such as social support and positive psychology enable Millennials and Generation Xers to deal with adversity and play a key role in achieving fulfilment during adversity.

7.5.1 Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Theme 1)

It is concluded that both Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa experienced lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic as unfamiliar, unexpected and unpleasant, which is consistent with the findings of several research studies on the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 6.3.1). Consistent with the findings in literature, the research participants also experienced much fear and anxiety due to the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic and lockdown (Section 6.3.1.1). Although the

unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic was discussed more frequently by the South African Millennials, there were no significant differences in the degree of uncertainty experienced by the Millennials and the Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa.

It is further concluded that the Millennial participants experienced greater fear and anxiety than the Generation X participants during lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, although all the participants experienced some negative emotions such as fear and anxiety (Section 6.3.2.1), they also experienced several positive emotions (Section 6.3.2.2) such as gratitude, hope and optimism, appreciation, compassion and engagement in acts of kindness.

Although both generational cohorts experienced gratitude during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be concluded that the level of gratitude was higher amongst the South African Millennials than amongst the other cohorts and that overall, Millennials are more grateful than Generation Xers. All the generational cohorts had similar experiences of hope and optimism, appreciation, compassion and engagement in acts of kindness. The participants also agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has several negative (Section 6.3.3.1) and positive (Section 6.3.3.2) consequences. The participants' views were supported by the reviewed literature in which the concepts relating to well-being were comprehensively discussed and supported by the findings.

Thus, the evidence provided in the literature for Theme 1 suggests that isolation causes anxiety or depression. Also, positive emotions enable individuals to become more grateful, which is beneficial in overcoming unexpected and unfamiliar circumstances.

7.5.2 Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic (Theme 2)

It is concluded that all participants adopted coping mechanisms to deal with the stresses of the pandemic while recognising their strengths and weaknesses and accepting the situation for what it was (Section 6.4.2.1). Amongst the several supporting mechanisms to deal with the pandemic that were mentioned, social support (Section 6.4.1) and positive psychology (Section 6.4.2) were identified as two key coping mechanisms.

Social support was not only identified as a core factor in enhancing the mental health and well-being of the participants during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was also identified as a core coping mechanism that underpins the nurturing of relationships and spirituality (sections 6.4.1.1 and 6.4.1.2).

Furthermore, participants used the following positive psychological resources: acceptance, positive thinking, educating oneself, self-care, keeping to normal routines and mindfulness (section 6.4.2.1 to section 6.4.2.6) to cope with the pandemic. It is concluded that South African Millennials were more inclined to adopt positive thinking as a coping mechanism than South African Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Generation Xers were more inclined to embrace nurturing relationships and spirituality as coping mechanisms. Furthermore, it can be concluded that spirituality played a significant role as a coping mechanism for South African Millennials and Generation Xers during this research study. Because none of the German participants discussed spirituality or related experiences of adopting spirituality to cope with the pandemic, this element was excluded from the final framework.

7.5.3 Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic (Theme 2)

Several participants discussed various aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic that enabled them to make positive lifestyle changes that enhanced their well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. These aspects were consistent with the findings in literature and were indicated in the emerging themes.

It is concluded that the achievement of fulfilment in life is strongly associated with social support and human fulfilment. Both generational cohorts agreed that having close connections with friends and family, being spiritual and having a sense of security are important factors in experiencing fulfilment during the pandemic (Section 6.5.1). The research participants also agreed that it was important for them to experience purpose and meaning in their lives (Section 6.5.2.1) in addition to social support (Section 6.5.1.1) to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the participants acknowledged how their experiences of gratitude, kindness and reframing the COVID-19 pandemic (Section 6.3.2.2) enabled them to make positive lifestyle changes that affected their well-being and led to greater fulfilment during the pandemic.

Although both generational cohorts agreed on the importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was no absolute agreement reached on the importance of spirituality for German participants because none of them mentioned this factor. Furthermore, although Millennials highlighted the importance of having a sense of security in order to achieve fulfilment during the pandemic, it is concluded that Generation Xers with children value 'a sense of security' much more than any other cohort.

It is finally concluded that although both generational cohorts from Germany and South Africa highlighted the importance of having a purposeful and meaningful life, South African Millennials stood out as the generation that values a meaningful and purposeful life to achieve fulfilment the most.

Finally, the most significant conclusion from the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the true value in life lies not in the experiences of the own self but in being able to make a meaningful contribution to another person's life during times of adversity.

7.6 STRENGTHS OF THIS STUDY

A significant strength of this study was that the data-gathering process was conducted by means of an e-research approach, which enabled research participants to participate in the study with minimal disturbance and complete anonymity. During the time of the focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews, strict social distancing measures were still in place and, therefore, most of the research participants logged into the research platform while working from home.

The research participants were very cooperative and expressed their gratitude to the researcher for allowing them the opportunity to vent their frustration and deal with their emotions during a challenging time of their lives. The research participants shared their deepest thoughts and concerns with the researcher once they realised that the researcher was truly interested in their experiences and concerns regarding their well-being and was not in any way judgemental. The researcher was someone with sympathy whom they could talk to without fear of expressing their concerns.

Moreover, because the researcher identified with the participants' experiences, she was able to understand their emotions and, therefore, was better able to interpret their experiences. However, the researcher did not allow any preconceived ideas to influence her findings and conclusions; she kept a reflexive diary and made regular notes about her discussions with the participants to ensure trustworthiness of the findings.

7.7 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

The aim of this research was to construct a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic. The experiences of the Millennials and Generation Xers of the COVID-19 pandemic were investigated, and based on their experiences (positive and negative) and the coping mechanisms that they adopted to deal with the pandemic, a framework was constructed to enhance generational well-being during adversity. In the following section, the researcher explains the contribution of the research at theoretical, practical and methodological levels.

7.7.1 Theoretical level

Theoretically, this study contributed to the body of knowledge through the construction of a framework to create a better understanding of generational well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the theoretical contribution includes a better understanding of the various constructs that contribute to well-being such as social support, spirituality and sense of security in addition to a meaningful and purposeful life and the various coping mechanisms that can be adopted during times of adversity.

Through the research study, the researcher was able to achieve the primary objective, which was to develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during adversity. The secondary research objectives, to explore the participants' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and to determine the coping mechanisms that they adopted in order to develop a framework to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic were also achieved.

The literature review enabled the researcher to make meaningful interpretations. Theoretical links were established between the various themes that developed in the data such as experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic, coping mechanisms that were adopted to deal with the pandemic, and elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, a foundation is provided for the understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa.

7.7.2 Practical level

It is important to understand that the COVID-19 pandemic had an enormous impact on the way people work and live and that the consequences of the pandemic will be felt by generations to come. This means that lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic should be used to allow for more flexible jobs and work arrangements to achieve better work-life balance. The many positive lifestyles changes implemented as preventative measures during the COVID-19 should be continued long after the initial fear and anxiety surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided.

7.7.3 Methodological level

At methodological level, the researcher provided an audit trail regarding the construction of the framework by including the various sub-frameworks that contributed to the development of the final framework. Thus, the researcher constructed the framework by integrating the various themes into the final framework.

7.8 PERSONAL EXPERIENCES DURING THE STUDY

In this section, the researcher reflects on her personal journey and how it influenced the development of the current research study, including her experiences of doctorateness as suggested by Trafford and Leshem (2012). Furthermore, the experiences of the research participants and of her sons who contracted the virus during December of 2020, influenced the researcher's view of life significantly. The

participants' traumatic experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the experiences of her sons, who contracted the virus, made the researcher value life, family, friends and her work so much more and made her realise that everything can change in an instant and particularly without warning or notice. The researcher echoes the sentiments of the research participants that nothing should be taken for granted!

7.8.1 The researcher's lens

This research enriched the researcher's personal life and enhanced her academic competence. The participants' traumatic experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic gave the researcher a new appreciation for life and through their experiences, she developed deep empathy for individuals who are experiencing adversity. Furthermore, the researcher gained first-hand experience of the severity of the pandemic when her sons', who are professional sportspersons, contracted the virus and were extremely ill from the virus. These events enabled the researcher not only to be sympathetic towards victims of the pandemic but also to show empathy towards the victims and their families of the pandemic.

7.8.2 Reflecting on doctorateness

On completion of the thesis, the researcher reflected on the 12 components to achieve synergy between the components and to demonstrate doctorateness as suggested by Trafford and Leshem (2012). In chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4, the researcher initiated the research process by posing "explicit" research questions, by identifying the gaps in the literature and methodology and by elucidating the research context (Trafford & Teshem, 2012, p. 38). Chapter 5 described the 'appropriate' methodology to conduct the current research and in Chapter 6, the researcher presented 'clear and precise' data and findings by presenting coherent and relevant arguments supported by the findings in literature. Chapter 7 ensures that all research questions are answered and trustworthy recommendations and conclusions are made. In addition, the themes are linked to the framework that was constructed to enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond in preparation for future waves of the COVID-19 pandemic or as predicted by several scientists, for the start of an endemic disease (Section 1.3).

The researcher would value the opportunity to conduct further research on the mental well-being of the research participants during the second and third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the unknown, unfamiliar and uncertain nature of the first wave of the pandemic, the experiences of the participants are likely to be unique to the participants interviewed during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and not necessarily how one would respond or behave during other adversities or during the future waves of the pandemic. It is also believed that the new Coronavirus mutation discovered in South African, could be more infectious than the previous strain, causing more deaths and may continue to harm people's well-being in several other ways.

Furthermore, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown period, the sample consisted of participants who had access to the internet for the focus group discussions and individual interviews. Additionally, the researcher wanted to conduct the interviews during the peak period of infections and thus had limited time to reach participants. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants who declined participation after initially agreeing may have experienced challenges during the pandemic with technology, chaotic work schedules, finances or even depression, causing them to avoid conversations about the pandemic. In addition, data collected from participants without access to technology may have yielded different outcomes.

Furthermore, the sample consisted of mostly urban, white individuals although people from all cultural backgrounds were invited to participate. Furthermore, the researcher could not gain access to Baby Boomers due to COVID-19 social distancing measures and restrictions. A more diverse sample with the inclusion of Baby Boomers and participants from rural communities who do not have access to technology may have produced different outcomes.

Due to the qualitative nature of the research study, the researcher's judgement was essential during the data-gathering and data analysis process. For this reason, the researcher was the primary data collection instrument during the focus group discussions and the individual interviews. Researcher bias was overcome through

applying trustworthiness (Section 5.8), reflexivity (Section 5.7.3) and bracketing (Section 5.7.1) to all the different stages of the research.

The current study found no significant differences in experiences based on ethnicity and gender, which may be due to the unfamiliar and unknown nature of the pandemic. Because all participants experienced the pandemic similarly, it should not be interpreted that there are no differences amongst other populations.

Since the study was conducted on Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa, the findings cannot be generalised to other generational cohorts such as Baby Boomers. Furthermore, when transferability of the findings is considered, the context in which the study was conducted, namely during the peak period of coronavirus infections, should be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, although the findings of the research show that coping is possible, it must be noted that not all participants have access to similar coping mechanisms.

7.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the findings of this study were based on the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, one should be cautious to generalise the findings to the greater population as the context of the study must be closely considered.

While the research was conducted to determine the experiences of participants during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequential lockdown period, it is recommended that follow-up interviews are conducted with the research participants to investigate indications of improved or declined mental well-being since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Tivani Mashamba, a professor of diagnostic research at the University of Pretoria, (Businessstech, 2021), South Africa is likely to experience a third and fourth wave of the pandemic as a result of the country not fully participating in the “widely expected vaccine-induced global growth acceleration” programmes (para. 13) and the changes in seasons.

Based on the conclusions that were drawn from the findings and discussed in Section, 7.4, recommendations can be made for the implementation of the framework to

enhance the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework is based on the experiences of the participants during the first wave of the pandemic, the coping mechanisms that they adopted to deal with the pandemic and the participants' need to achieve fulfilment during the pandemic.

7.10.1 Recommendations for further research

The following recommendations are made for potential future research:

- The researcher recommends that this study is repeated to include the generational cohort of Baby Boomers.
- A follow-up study with Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa, particularly during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, is recommended. A comparative study is recommended to investigate the impact of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa, particularly because Germany was experiencing higher daily infection rates during their second wave. It must be noted that at the time of submitting this thesis to the University for ratification in January 2021, South Africa was starting to experience a second wave.
- The researcher further recommends investigating the attitudes (i.e. positive or negative) of research participants towards vaccinations against the coronavirus and the subsequent effect of these attitudes on the mental well-being of the research participants.
- A study should also be conducted to investigate the impact on employee well-being of the various social distancing measures (e.g. working from home strategies, limitation on physical meetings and brainstorming sessions) implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

7.10.2 Recommendations regarding enhancement of the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic

The following recommendations are made regarding the enhancement of the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- The researcher recommends using the framework as a guideline to enhance generational well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic and similar times of adversity.
- The researcher recommends the appointment of a well-being facilitator to monitor generational well-being in organisations during times of adversity.
- It is recommended that human resource managers closely monitor employees' emotions during times of adversity and develop structures to engage regularly with employees. Furthermore, human resource managers should develop strategies that support employees socially and provide positive psychological networks to keep employees positive during times of uncertainty.
- It is imperative that generational cohorts are supported appropriately during times of adversity in order to enhance their well-being and, therefore, human resource managers should be sensitive towards each generation's needs if they wish to create positive change for organisations and individuals during difficult times.

7.11 SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic presented the research participants with some of the greatest challenges in their lifetime for them to overcome. The focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews with the participants revealed the extent to which they experienced severely traumatic circumstances during the pandemic and particularly during lockdown. The participants recounted several instances of experiencing extreme fear and anxiety due to the unfamiliar and unknown nature of the pandemic. Several participants related distressing incidences of how the pandemic affected their daily lives and livelihoods through loss of income and lost opportunities. However, in spite of these negative experiences, the COVID-19 pandemic presented several participants with positive experiences. These included developing a new outlook on life because participants realised the vulnerability of human life and thus made many lifestyle changes that may continue to have a positive influence on their work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this chapter, the researcher provided a précis, discussed the achievement of the research objectives, provided conclusions for each of the three themes that emerged

in the research and discussed the strengths of the study. The research contribution was highlighted, and a discussion about the researcher's subjective experiences during the research study was presented. The chapter concluded with a section that presented the research limitations and thereafter, recommendations were made for further research for enhancing generational well-being.

The study highlighted the importance of positive emotions to assist generational cohorts to adapt to the new lifestyle changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and to develop new capabilities needed during times of adversity for a brighter future despite living with COVID-19 as the 'new normal'.

Moreover, the findings highlight that although COVID-19 had major consequences for the research participants, these consequences contributed to significant lifestyle changes, and these changes may positively influence the way that people live life during the COVID-19 pandemic and the lives of many generations to come.

Furthermore, it is the researcher's hope that the current research enabled the research participants to find closure after a very traumatic event in their lives. It is also hoped that their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic will contribute to significant positive lifestyle changes that will enhance their well-being.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE A: LETTER OF CONSENT (COMPANIES IN SOUTH AFRICA/GERMANY)

Dear Potential Participant

Title of the study: Towards a framework to enhance Millennials and Generation Xers well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am doing research in fulfilment of my PhD Degree in Business Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and would really value your organisation's input to the research.

The purpose of the study

The aim of my study is to investigate the COVID-19 pandemic experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa and to establish the relevant impact of these experiences on their well-being. Once the impacts and coping mechanism have been identified, the aim is to develop a framework to enable Millennials and Generation Xers to improve their overall wellbeing.

Reason for your organisation's selection

As an organisation in South Africa or Germany you clearly understand the importance of positive organisational behaviour to improve productivity, employee engagement and customer relations. In addition, your employees have most probably experienced first-hand the importance of having hope and optimism in dealing with calamities,

diversity and social challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate it, if you will be willing to allow five of your organisation's employees to participate anonymously in an on-line focus group discussion to be conducted from the 7th to the 9th of July 2020.

With your permission, the online discussions will take place with five of your employees on an online platform developed for this purpose. The five employees will have to meet the following selection criteria:

- The research participants (employees) must be knowledge workers who are employed full-time.
- These research participants may present any level of your organisation but should have access to a computer to participate in the text-based interview.

Please note, although five organisations will be participating simultaneously in the focus group discussions, no persons' identity or organisations' identity will be revealed.

The interview

The focus group interviews will be conducted over a three-day period on a Moodle Learner Management System (LMS). Participants will be required to log into the LMS system (when convenient to them) to respond to questions posted by the researcher on the forum. The total discussion time should not exceed one and a half hours over three days. During these discussions, the researcher will post the same questions to all five groups (organisations) about employees' experiences relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. An important goal of the study is to keep participation completely anonymous. Therefore, participants within organisations are also requested to refrain from informing each other of their participation. Participants will be able to log into the dedicated platform from anywhere and anytime it suits them. There will be no video recording or voice recording, as the platform only makes provision for text-based

responses. Your organisation's privacy and reputation will be protected by making use of encrypted data, password protection on the ICT system and person specific protected access on the Moodle LMS.

What is your role (as the gatekeeper of the organisation) in the research project?

Once you agree in principle to participation, you will be requested to submit a list of employees that are willing to participate including their geographical information such as male or female, ethnicity, their age, and position in the organisation. The process that I will use to register participants on the Moodle LMS will be explained in detail to you in a follow-up email, including the security measures and confidentiality protocols of data and any other concerns you might have.

What is a Moodle LMS?

Moodle is an online learning management system (LMS) that supports learning and training needs for various organisations and is used worldwide by over 90 million users. This online platform has strict user-privacy settings, which will ensure that the internet-mediated focus group interviews are conducted in a secure online environment. I have selected this platform based on its user-friendly functions and the privacy settings that can be customised.

Your employees can rest assured that the researcher will be able to give them the necessary support to navigate their way through the 'Moodle' platform. Moreover, the researcher has access to expert technical support to assist you and your employees with any queries you might have regarding the platform and to ensure your information remains private and secure.

Please note, although all precautionary steps will be taken to keep your information confidential, such as making use of password protection, it cannot be guaranteed that the Moodle LMS system cannot be 'hacked', thus leading to a breach of the system.

Can you withdraw from the study at any stage?

Participation is voluntary and your employees will not experience any penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Keep in mind that your employees may also terminate their participation at any time during this study without the obligation to provide a reason. It will however not be possible to withdraw from participation after the information is collected from the focus group discussions.

Are there any benefits of participating in the study?

Your organisation will have the opportunity to contribute to the framework for hope and optimism to improve the well-being of employees. Your valuable contribution may assist to improve well-being practices or enhance positive organisational attitudes in various industries. As a participating research organisation, you will have the opportunity to gain insights into current well-being practices and positive psychology trends that may enhance the overall well-being of your employees. Furthermore, I believe the study will assist in identifying the significance of hope and optimism and its impact on organisations and its customers in particular.

Are there any negative consequences should your organisation decide to participate in the research study?

This study has a low risk, as there are no negative consequences for participation.

Will my employees' and organisation's information be kept confidential?

Confidentiality of information will be strictly maintained. Your privacy and anonymity will be assured by not providing your organisation's name on any documentation. Furthermore, your employees' responses will be coded, and pseudonyms will be used to refer to employees in the data. In addition, no personal information will be made available to any third party. However, their answers may only be reviewed by stakeholders in the research project, which include the supervisor and Moodle IT specialist. Records that identify a participant will only be made available to people directly involved in the research project unless direct permission is obtained from the employee.

How will the researcher(s) protect the security of the data?

All electronic information will be password protected, encrypted on a 128-bit secure server, and the Moodle LMS will be access restricted to only research stakeholders. After the prescribed period, the electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the computer hard drives.

Will there be any financial benefit or incentives for participating in the study?

No payments or incentives will be provided for participating in this study.

Has this study received ethical clearance?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Economic & Management Science at Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

How will I be informed of the findings and/or results?

If you would like to receive a copy of the research finding kindly send an email to me at bernie@vanderlinde.co.za. Should you have any objections to the research you may contact my supervisor, Professor Y.T. Joubert on 012 429 3399 or email joubeyt@unisa.ac.za.

If you are willing to participate, please respond by completing the attached consent form.

Thanking you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bernadine van der Linde', with a decorative flourish extending to the left.

Bernadine van der Linde

+2782 901 8343

Consent to participate in the research study of Bernadine van der Linde

I, _____(name and surname),
representing _____(name
of the organisation) herewith confirm that the researcher (Bernadine van der Linde)
informed me about the nature, procedures, potential benefits and anticipated
inconvenience of participating in her PhD study titled: **Towards a framework to
enhance Millennials and Generation Xers well-being during the COVID-19
pandemic**

I agree that:

- I have read and understood the extent of the study as communicated in the e-mail and the accompanying attachment.
- I give consent to five (5) employees to participate in the study *if they are willing to participate*.
- Our organisation's participation is voluntary, and we can withdraw at any time without penalty.
- Our employees' participation is voluntary, and they may withdraw at any time without penalty.
- The finding of this study may be published in a report, journal publication and/or conference proceedings, and that our participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise agreed.
- The researcher may use the online interview data for the purpose of conducting research.
- No voice or video recording will be made.
- I will keep a copy of this signed informed consent agreement.
- I have no further questions at this point, but should I have any new questions, I will contact the researcher immediately.

Signature:_____Date:_____

ANNEXURE B: LETTER OF CONSENT (INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS – SOUTH AFRICA/GERMANY)

Dear Potential Participant

Title of the study: Towards a framework to enhance Millennials and Generation Xers well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am doing research in fulfilment of my PhD Degree in Business Studies at the University of South Africa (UNISA) and would really value your input to the research.

The purpose of the study

The aim of my study is to investigate the COVID-19 pandemic experiences of Millennials and Generation Xers from Germany and South Africa and to establish the relevant impact of these experiences on their well-being. Once the impacts and coping mechanisms have been identified, the aim is to develop a framework to enable Millennials and Generation Xers to improve their overall wellbeing.

Reason for your selection

As a Millennial or Generation Xer, from South Africa or Germany, you are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, you have first-hand experienced how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on your plans and how it affected your hope and optimism for the future. Therefore, I would appreciate it if you would be willing to engage with me in a ZOOM session, which is a cloud-based video conferencing application, on a one-on-one basis.

The Zoom interview

Zoom is a cloud-based video-conferencing application (app) that houses a full spectrum of modern videoconferencing sessions. The system allows participants to freely communicate with the host (researcher) during a video conferencing session on a one-on-one basis. The total interview time should not exceed forty-five (45) minutes.

During this interview, I will ask you questions about your experiences during lockdown, how you managed to deal with the pandemic and what actions you are taking to cope with the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Can you withdraw from the study at any stage?

Participation is voluntary and you will not experience any penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. You may terminate your participation, at any time during the interview, without providing a reason. However, it will not be possible to withdraw from the study once your interview data has been coded.

Are there any benefits of participating in the study?

You have the opportunity to contribute to the framework for hope and optimism in order to improve the well-being of Millennials and Generation Xers. In addition, your valuable contribution may assist to improve well-being practices or enhance positive organisational attitudes in various industries. As a participant, you will have the opportunity to gain valuable insights into current well-being practices and positive psychology trends that may enhance the overall wellbeing of Millennials and Generation Xers. Furthermore, I believe the study will assist in identifying the significance of hope and optimism and its impact on Millennials and Generation Xers during times of adversity and particularly post COVID-19.

Are there any negative consequences should you decide to participate in the research study?

This study has a low risk, as there are no negative consequences of participation.

Will my information be kept confidential?

Confidentiality of information will be strictly maintained. Your privacy and anonymity will be assured by not providing you real name on any documentation. Furthermore, your responses will be coded, and a pseudonym will be used to refer to you in the data. In addition, no personal information will be made available to any third party. However, your answers may only be reviewed by stakeholders in the research project, which include the research supervisor. Records that identify a participant (video recording) will only be made available to people directly involved in the research project unless direct permission is obtained from you.

How will the researcher(s) protect the security of the data?

All electronic information will be password protected, encrypted on a 128-bit secure server, and access will be restricted to the researcher's personal computer to only include research stakeholders. After the prescribed period, the electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the researcher's computer hard drive.

Will there be any financial benefit or incentives for participating in the study?

No payments or incentives will be provided for participating in this study.

Has this study received ethical clearance?

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Economic & Management Science at Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

How will I be informed of the findings and/or results?

If you would like to receive a copy of the research finding kindly send an email to me at bernie@vanderlinde.co.za. Should you have any objections to the research you may contact my supervisor, Professor Y.T. Joubert on 012 429 3399 or email joubeyt@unisa.ac.za. If you are willing to participate, please respond by completing the attached consent form.

Thanking you for your consideration,



Bernadine van der Linde

002782 901 8343

ANNEXURE C: GUIDED QUESTIONS FOR THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Day 1:	Can you explain how you felt and what your thoughts were, the day lockdown was announced?	
Day 2:	Looking back at the last three months, since lockdown started, what have you learned?	How did lockdown affect your plans for the future? How do you see the future?
Day 3:	Can you tell me about the things that you need in order to achieve/maintain fulfilment in your life?	Please explain your ideal work-life after COVID-19.

The questions below may not be asked in the exact sequence as in the focus group discussions. The purpose of the individual interviews are to allow participants to discuss their experiences of lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic and for the researcher to only interrupt if the participants move to much off topic.

	Can you explain how you felt and what your thoughts were, the day lockdown was announced? Looking back at the last three months, since lockdown started, what have you learned? Can you tell me about the things that you need in order to achieve/maintain fulfilment in your life?	How did lockdown affect your plans for the future? How do you see the future?
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ANNEXURE D: THEMES, SUBTHEMES AND CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED IN THE STUDY

Theme	1	Experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic
Subtheme	1.1	Dealing with the unexpected and unfamiliar nature of the pandemic
Subtheme	1.2	Emotions during the COVID-19 pandemic
Category	1.2.1	Negative emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic
Category	1.2.2	Positive emotions experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic
Subtheme	1.3	Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
Category	1.3.1	Negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
Category	1.3.2	Positive consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic
Theme	2	Coping mechanisms to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic
Subtheme	2.1	Social support as a coping mechanism
Category	2.1.1	Nurturing relationships: Friends/family/spouse/children
Category	2.1.2	Spirituality
Subtheme	2.2	Positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic
Category	2.2.1	Acceptance
Category	2.2.2	Positive thinking
Category	2.2.3	Educating oneself
Category	2.2.4	Keeping to normal routines
Category	2.2.5	Mindfulness
Theme	3	Elements to achieve fulfilment during the COVID-19 pandemic
Subtheme	3.1	The importance of social support during the COVID-19 pandemic
Category	3.1.1	Support from family and friends
Category	3.1.2	Spirituality
Category	3.1.3	Sense of security
Subtheme	3.2	The importance of positive psychology during the COVID-19 pandemic
Category	3.2.1	Meaningful and purposeful life

ANNEXURE E: ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



UNISA HRM ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 12 June 2020

Dear Ms Bernadine van der Linde

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
July 2020 to December 2025**

NHREC Registration #: (if applicable)

ERC Reference #:
2019_HRM_017

Name: Ms B van der Linde

Student: #62056646

Researcher(s): Name: Mrs Bernadine van der Linde

E-mail address, telephone #bernie@bmtcollege.ac.za, 082 901 8343

Supervisor (s): Name: Prof Y Joubert

E-mail address, telephone #joubeyt@unisa.ac.za, 012 429 3399

Working title of research:

Towards a framework for hope and optimism to enhance employee wellbeing in the workplace

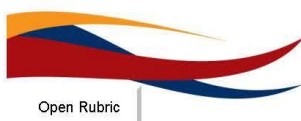
Qualification: PhD

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa HRM Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for B van der Linde for 5 years.

*The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by a Sub-committee of URERC on 5 December 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on 12 June 2020.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the HRM Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
8. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **December 2025**. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2019_HRM_017** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Signature
Chair of DREC: Prof IL Potgieter
E-mail: visseil@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429-3723



Signature
Executive Dean: Prof MT Mogale
E-mail: mogalmt@unisa.ac.za
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