

**THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF
UNEMPLOYMENT ON YOUNG ADULTS IN
EKURHULENI METROPOLITAN AREA, GAUTENG.**

by

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Abstract

For many decades young adult unemployment has been - and still is - a massive problem throughout the world. The global economic crisis in 2008 led to a disproportionate increase in young adult unemployment around the world. The International Labour Organisation (2013) has warned of a “scarred” generation of youth facing high unemployment rates, characterised by increased inactivity and persistent poverty. Various complex and interconnected issues have collectively caused this crisis. South Africa is no exception. Some young people have become discouraged with the labour market, and they are not building on their skill base through education and training; thus, they are Not in Education, Employment, or Training - NEET. This situation poses a major threat to the country’s future economic prosperity. Furthermore, high levels of young adult unemployment are also associated with slower development progress, a lack of social trust, and a higher risk of social unrest.

A qualitative, phenomenological study that employed purposive random sampling was conducted to investigate the effects of unemployment on the psychosocial development of young adults in the City of Ekurhuleni, South Africa. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 participants. The results clearly indicate that unemployment has a devastating impact on the psychosocial development of unemployed young adults.

Unemployment does not only affect the individual but also their loved ones and society in general. The research participants reported low self-esteem, the disintegration of social relationships, marital conflicts, and a host of other negative effects. All these issues, in combination, necessitate the need to develop an intervention strategy to help young people increase their prospects of finding employment. This endeavour would help to reduce young adult unemployment - even though on a small scale.

Keywords: Young adult unemployment; psychosocial development theory; psychosocial development; stressor; psychosocial support; psychosocial crises; models of unemployment; worldview.

Declaration

I, George Mkuzelwa Skosana, declare that the thesis entitled “The Psychosocial Effects of Unemployment on Young Adults in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Area, Gauteng Province” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged using complete references.

I declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software. The result summary is attached.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at the University of South Africa (Unisa) for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



Signature

20 February 2021

Date

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List of Abbreviations

ANC - African National Congress

CEPR - Centre for Economic Policy Research

CSAE - Centre for the Study of African Economies

EMM - Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality

EPWP Expanded Public Works Programme

GEAR - Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

ID - Identity document

IFP - Inkatha Freedom Party ANC

ILO - International Labour Organisation

IOC - Illusion of control

IT - Information Technology

NEET - Not in Education, Employment, or Training

NDP - National Development Plan

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PA - positive affect

RDP - Reconstruction and Development Programme

SADC - Southern African Development Community

SASSA - South African Social Security Agency

SMME - Small, medium, and micro enterprises

Stats SA – Statistics South Africa

UN - United Nations

Table of contents

	<i>Abstract</i> _____	<i>i</i>
	<i>Declaration</i> _____	<i>ii</i>
	<i>Acknowledgements</i> _____	<i>iii</i>
	<i>List of Abbreviations</i> _____	<i>iv</i>
	<i>List of Tables</i> _____	<i>ix</i>
	<i>List of Figures</i> _____	<i>ix</i>
	<i>1 An Introduction to Unemployment of Young Adults in South Africa</i> _____	<i>1</i>
1.1	Definition of Terms _____	3
	1.1.1 Defining Young Adulthood _____	3
	1.1.2 Defining Psychosocial Development _____	3
	1.1.3 Defining Unemployment _____	4
1.2	The Nature of Young Adults' Unemployment in South Africa _____	4
1.3	Contextual Background to the Study – The City of Ekurhuleni, Gauteng Province _____	7
	1.3.1 The Townships _____	9
1.4	Statement of the Problem _____	10
1.5	Aims of the Study _____	11
1.6	Significance of the Study _____	12
1.7	Theoretical Framework - The Psychosocial Development Theory _____	12
1.8	The Organisation of the Study _____	14
1.9	Conclusion _____	15
	<i>2 Literature Review of Young Adults Unemployment in South Africa</i> _____	<i>17</i>
2.1	Types of Unemployment _____	18
	2.1.1 Frictional or Search Unemployment _____	19

2.1.2	Structural Unemployment	20
2.1.3	Cyclical Unemployment	21
2.1.4	Seasonal Unemployment	22
2.2	The Unemployment of Young Adults - The Global and South African Perspectives	23
2.3	Race and Gender Dimensions in Unemployment	28
2.4	The General Causes of Unemployment in Young Adults in South Africa	30
2.4.1	Low Quality of Education	30
2.4.2	Lack of Work Experience and Skills	32
2.4.3	Technological Advancement	34
2.4.4	Urbanization and Migration	35
2.4.5	Market Economy	36
2.4.6	Mergers and Acquisitions	37
2.4.7	Demographic Forces	38
2.5	The Effects of Unemployment	39
2.5.1	The Physical Effects of Unemployment	40
2.5.2	The Psychological Effects of Unemployment	40
2.5.3	The Social Effects of Unemployment	41
2.5.4	The Economic Effects of Unemployment	41
2.6	Conclusion	43
3	<i>Theoretical Models of Unemployment</i>	44
3.1	Unemployment as a Stressor	44
3.3	Different Theoretical Perspectives on Unemployment	56
3.3.1	The Theoretical Models that Explain the Causes of Unemployment	56
3.3.2	The Theoretical Models that Explain the Effects of Unemployment	63
3.3.3	The Theoretical Models that Explain how People Cope with Unemployment	66

3.4	Conclusion	74
4	<i>Research Methodology</i>	75
4.1	Qualitative Research Approach	76
4.1.1	The Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research Approach	77
4.2	Research Sample and Criteria	79
4.3	Participants' Background Information	80
4.4	Purposeful (Purposive) Random Sampling	89
4.5	Data Collection Method - Interviews	90
4.5.1	The Interview Process and Contexts	91
4.5.2	The Interview Schedule (Aide-Memoire)	92
4.6	Thematic Data Analysis	93
4.7	Ethical Considerations	94
4.7.1	Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent	94
4.7.2	Anonymity and Confidentiality	94
4.7.3	Non-Maleficence	95
4.8	Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research	96
4.8.1	Credibility	96
4.8.2	Transferability	97
4.8.3	Dependability	98
4.8.4	Confirmability	99
4.9	Conclusion	99
5	<i>Results and Discussions</i>	101
5.1	The Structure of the Aims of the Study	102
5.2	AIM 1: The Impact of Unemployment on the Psychosocial Development	102
5.2.1	Relationships Disintegration	103

5.2.2	Lack of Psychosocial Support	112
5.2.3	Negative Self-Esteem	116
5.2.4	Role Confusion	120
5.2.5	Disempowerment	123
5.2.6	Dependence	126
5.2.7	Readjusting One's Way of Life	129
5.3	AIM 2: The Impact of Unemployment on Worldview	132
5.4	Conclusion	136
6	<i>Conclusions</i>	137
6.1	Critical Analysis and Reflections on the Results	137
6.2	Limitations of the Study	142
6.3	Recommendations for Future Research	143
	<i>References</i>	144
	<i>Appendix A – Ethical Clearance Letter</i>	172
	<i>Appendix B – Informed Consent Form</i>	174
	<i>Appendix C – Interview Schedule</i>	175

List of Tables

Table 3-1 Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development. (Adapted from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.).....	47
Table 4-1 Summary of the research participants' demographic information. (Own construction, 2020)	89

List of Figures

Figure 1-1 Summary of labour market measures Q4: 2019 (Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2020).....	5
Figure 1-2 The City of Ekurhuleni (adapted from Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality [EMM], 2020b).	8
Figure 1-3 The organisation of the study (Own construction, 2019)	14
Figure 2-1 Types of unemployment (Own construction, 2019)	18
Figure 2-2 Quarter-to-quarter changes in unemployment, Q1: 2013 to Q1: 2019 (Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2019)	26
Figure 2-3 The general causes of unemployment (Own construction, 2019).....	30
Figure 3-1 Schematic representation of the theoretical models of unemployment (Own construction, 2019)	56
Figure 3-2 The Phillips curve (Adopted from Gottschalk, 2002)	59
Figure 3-3 A Supply and Demand Model for labour. (Source: Goodwin et al., 2006 p.1).....	60
Figure 5-1 The structure of the aims of the study (Own construction, 2020).....	102
Figure 5-2 Diagrammatic representation of the themes of the study (Own construction, 2020).	103

1 An Introduction to Unemployment of Young Adults in South Africa

Unemployment is a massive and rapidly escalating problem globally and in South Africa in particular. Before 1994, most black South Africans did not enjoy equal access to education, job opportunities and initiatives aimed at encouraging further development and training. On June 16, 1976, the Soweto uprising brought about far-reaching changes when multitudes of South African young adults emerged from township school classrooms to confront the apartheid system, especially within the context of education. This day and the events that unfolded contributed greatly to change the course of the country (GCIS Chief Directorate: Policy and Research, 2012). The apartheid government had intentionally put in place policies, regulations, and practices to ensure that most black people were faced with high levels of poverty, low level of education, skills, health, low access to services, and high unemployment rates (De Lannoy et al., 2018).

The South African new democratically elected government inherited a highly unequal society in 1994. At the outset, the new government committed itself to improve the quality of life and education for all South Africans (GCIS Chief Directorate: Policy and Research, 2012). In an attempt to overcome unemployment, the new government developed various approaches and policies such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Policy (GEAR), the National Development Plan (NDP), the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), and the Employment Tax Incentives Bill (also known as the youth wage subsidy) (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Hendricks, 2016). However, poverty and unemployment remain critical concerns. This is especially prevalent in some of the rural areas and townships. Today many young people still live in abject poverty due to unemployment (Mamabolo, 2015).

Since the African National Congress (ANC) came into power in 1994, there have been high expectations among the previously disadvantaged black population regarding better

living conditions and a more prosperous future. The government, in return, promised that poverty alleviation and income inequality through the reduction of unemployment would be two issues at the top of their priority list (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). However, 27 years later, the country and its citizens still suffer from crippling poverty due to unemployment and very little economic growth. South Africa's greatest challenges currently are low levels of human capital and rising unemployment, indicating that the post-apartheid policy aims and promises to young adults have not been effective or met (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Unemployment has become an unpleasant reality for a large part of the South African population (De Jongh et al., 2016) and presents a real threat to not only the social security of its citizens but also the long-term economic growth and future (Mncayi, 2016).

Currently, unemployment is one of the biggest challenges that young people aged 15 to 24 years face (Sharme, 2012). Every year school leavers face an uncertain future where the possibility of gainful employment is only a dream for most. Young adults represent a particularly vulnerable group in South Africa with one of the world's highest young adults' unemployment rates. In the last quarter of 2020, about 10.3 million young adults, aged 15 to 24 years, of which 29.8% were not in education, employment, or training - NEET. (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020).

According to De Lannoy et al. (2018), prolonged periods of unemployment among young adults have profound negative effects on their physical and mental well-being and feed the vicious cycle of exclusion and poverty. Therefore, the high levels of unemployment in South Africa are a key concern for young adults after leaving school, and the challenges in schooling and post-secondary education contribute to such levels of young adults' unemployment (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015).

This chapter serves as an introduction to unemployment in South Africa. It starts by defining the terms on which the study is based. Furthermore, it explores the nature of young adults' unemployment in South Africa. It traces the background of the present study in the

context of the City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan area, Gauteng Province. The study adopted Erikson's psychosocial development theory (1997) as its theoretical framework. Therefore, the results of this study are placed within this theoretical framework as a way of understanding the impact of unemployment on the psychosocial development of young adults in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan area.

1.1 Definition of Terms

1.1.1 *Defining Young Adulthood*

According to Erikson and Erikson (1997), early or *young adulthood* is between the ages of 18 to 40 years. This is an important developmental stage as the processes that occur during this stage, such as identity development and finding a purpose in life, can affect the rest of the young adult's life (Erikson, 1968). In much of sub-Saharan Africa, and specifically South Africa, the term young adult is associated with people from 15 to 35 years of age (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016; Provincial Treasury, 2015). Therefore, it should be noted that this conceptual definition of young adulthood or young adults is one of operational convenience. It enables us to cluster research results that relate to young adults. Both terms 'young adults' and 'young people' will be used interchangeably throughout the study. A detailed discussion on this stage is provided in chapter 3.

1.1.2 *Defining Psychosocial Development*

The term *psychosocial development* involves a person's psychological development and interaction with the social environment. It describes the relationship between the personal internal environment and the wider social world - thus, the influence of social factors on an individual's mind or behaviour. According to Bergh and Theron (1999), the psychosocial determinants of development include all social and psychological influences, which become part of the individual's socialisation and self-concept as a person and as a member of social grouping.

1.1.3 Defining Unemployment

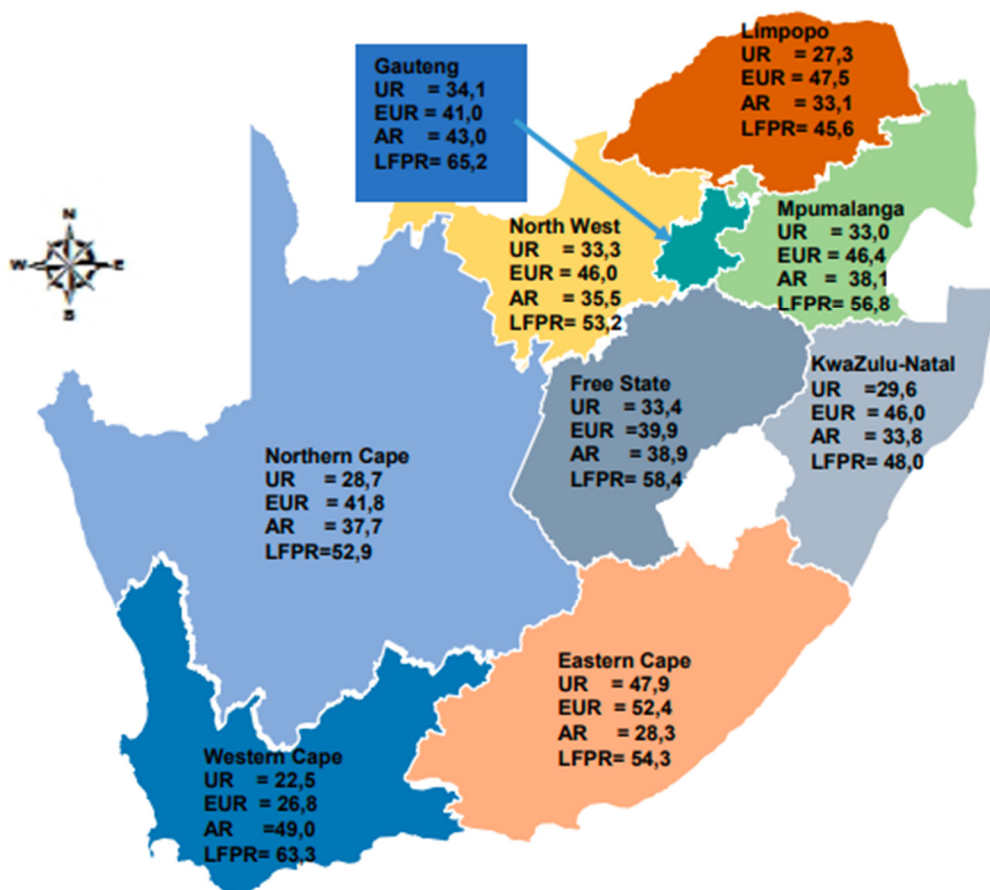
In South Africa, *unemployment* is usually defined in two ways: the restricted (the narrow) official definition and the expanded (broad) definition. In terms of the restricted definition, unemployment is a situation in which people are out of work, need to work, desire to be given work, actively looking for work, and are ready to start working (Xipu, 2009). The expanded definition includes people who have stopped searching for work because they are discouraged and perceive their chances of being successfully hired as slim (Mafiri, 2002; Xipu, 2009). To be considered unemployed in South Africa, an individual must meet the following three criteria simultaneously: (i) the individual must be without a job, (ii) currently available to work, and (iii) be actively taking steps to find a job (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2015a). In this study, both the narrow and broad definitions of unemployment are applicable.

1.2 The Nature of Young Adults' Unemployment in South Africa

The literature review on unemployment suggests that the major proportion of young adult unemployment in South Africa is structural in nature (Bonakele, 2016; Roberts, 2016). In South Africa, an individual is said to be in long-term unemployment if they are unemployed for a continuous period of one year or longer, whereas those unemployed for less than one year are considered to be in short-term unemployment (Nonyana & Njuho, 2018). The unemployment rate is defined as the ratio of the number of unemployed persons and the total economically active population or labour force, and it is expressed in a percentage format (Bonakele, 2016). In South Africa, high unemployment rates are observed even when the economy is doing well. This observation suggests that unemployment is more related to structural factors than economic factors. The two main structural factors are technological advancements and skills mismatch (Nonyana & Njuho, 2018). This is because young people are not acquiring the skills or experience needed to drive the economy forward. This inhibits the country's economic development and imposes a larger burden on the state to provide social

assistance. Furthermore, young adults may not be able to find work because they have no proven, tangible skills, which puts them at a disadvantage compared to older workers (National Treasury, 2011). Figure 1.1 below presents the summary of labour market measures for the first quarter of 2019 that indicate different aspects of unemployment.

Figure 1-1 Summary of labour market measures Q4: 2019 (Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2020).



Note: Labour market measures are expressed in percentage (%)

Legend

UR – The unemployment rate

EUR – The expanded unemployment rate

AR – Absorption rate

LFPR – Labour force participation rate

In the last quarter of 2020, South Africa had an overall unemployment rate of 32,5%, an expanded unemployment rate of 42,6%, an absorption rate of 38,2%, and a labour force participation rate of 56,6 %.

The challenge of unemployment among young people may be largely explained by the evolving nature of the labour market and the mismatch within the education system. Some studies indicate that a key difficulty facing young adults is that South Africa's labour market favours employees with specific skills (Van Broekhuizen & Van der Berg, 2013). The shift

towards more capital-intensive labour implies that there would be better employment prospects for educated and skilled people in various fields such as engineering, medicine, legal, and other essential services. Therefore, it is important for young adults to acquire some relevant skills and qualifications to improve their prospects of finding work (Rus, 2012). Furthermore, there are shortcomings in the labour market, especially the reluctance of business owners to appoint young adults due to their lack of skills, mainly due to an ineffective education system (De Jongh et al., 2016). It is therefore evident that the success of the economy is dependent on more educated and skilled workers.

A notable increase in graduates has been observed in South Africa. During 2014, Statistics South Africa recorded an increase of 109 000 in the number of unemployed people with a tertiary qualification (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2014). According to Oluwajodu et al. (2015), graduate unemployment in South Africa is rising with general unemployment. Lack of skills, industrial adjustment and unemployment duration are other structural factors that negatively impact South African unemployment rates. As stated above, these factors result from technological advancement and the skills mismatch. Also, several empirical studies have found a direct relationship between the level of educational attainment and employability. For example, Dagume and Gyekye (2016) reported a South African study that found that young adults with higher educational levels have lower levels of unemployment. Some studies also found that young adults with job training are better positioned to get employment than their counterparts who had never received any training (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016).

Young people unemployment also reflects spatial inequalities. Using the broad definition, young people unemployment around 2013 in rural areas was 82% compared to 58% in formal urban areas, suggesting that rural young adults are more likely to become discouraged in their search for employment (Ardington et al., 2013). African and Coloured young adults are far more vulnerable to unemployment than their White or Indian

counterparts. Just over 40% of African young adults and 32% of Coloured young adults were unemployed, compared to 23% of Indian and 11% of White young adults (Ardington et al., 2013). A range of reasons explains these differences, including the inequalities in the schooling system. Furthermore, young women are more vulnerable to unemployment than young men (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015).

1.3 Contextual Background to the Study – The City of Ekurhuleni, Gauteng Province

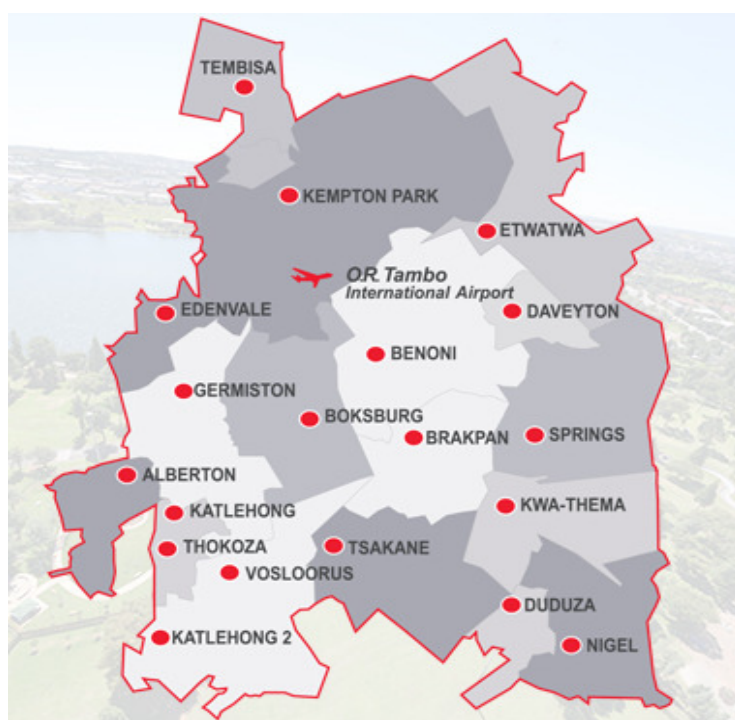
The City of Ekurhuleni emerged over seventeen years ago as a key Metropolitan Municipality in the Gauteng Province in South Africa. It comprised approximately more than three million people living in an agglomeration of nine small towns and seventeen townships. The amalgamation of two existing regional entities, namely Kyalami Metropolitan and the Eastern Gauteng Services Council, served as the beginning of the city (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality [EMM], 2018). The city is one of the fastest-growing areas in South Africa. With a population that is 28% of Gauteng, Ekurhuleni is the most densely populated city in the Gauteng Province (EMM, 2018).

The name Ekurhuleni means the place of peace in XiTsonga. It alludes to the fact that the former East Rand townships were the site of severe political violence between supporters of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the ANC in the early 1990s, before South Africa's first multiracial elections in 1994 (City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, 2020). The 2011 survey indicated that the most common native language spoken by its 3.9 million people is Zulu (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2012). In terms of gender composition, the population is closely balanced, with slightly more than half of the population being males. The survey further revealed a marginal increase in the poverty headcount, from 6.4% in 2011 to 6.6% in 2016 (EMM, 2018).

The city has the highest rate of young adult unemployment in the Gauteng Province (Shankar et al., 2015). Furthermore, population and poverty status growth place much

pressure on already ageing infrastructure (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality [EMM], 2020a). The municipality of Ekurhuleni is home to the OR Tambo International Airport, the busiest airport in Africa which services the entire continent and links to major cities throughout the world (Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality [EMM], 2014), and is also a manufacturing hub (Shankar et al., 2015). Figure 1.2 presents the City of Ekurhuleni in the Gauteng Province.

Figure 1-2 *The City of Ekurhuleni (adapted from Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality [EMM], 2020b).*



Ekurhuleni suffered a high demand for housing, and it has a huge housing backlog with 134 000 shacks in 122 informal settlements and 360 000 backyard shacks (EMM, 2014). According to the survey conducted in 2016, the city had 1 299 490 households (EMM, 2020a). About 18.7% of these households are informal dwellings in areas not suitable for housing and development. Increasing unemployment is one of the causes of informal settlements. These informal settlements act as arrival cities accommodating those seeking an entry point into the labour market (Marutlulle, 2017). In many areas of the City of Ekurhuleni, the magnitude of

poverty is high. The situation worsens with most of the shack dwellers being evicted by authorities and having their shacks and property destroyed. Since the City of Ekurhuleni has the highest rate of young adult unemployment in the Gauteng Province, it was a suitable location for the present study.

1.3.1 The Townships

This section provides a brief discussion on the three townships where the study was conducted. (See Figure 1.2 above).

Daveyton

The township of Daveyton borders Etwatwa to the northeast, Springs to the south and Benoni to the south-west. It was established in 1952 and achieved municipal status in 1983 (City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, 2020). Daveyton is also known as *Vutha* due to claims that it was the first township in the former East Rand to have access to electricity (EMM, 2020a). The majority of the people in Daveyton speak Zulu (37%), followed by Northern Sotho (13,3%), Xhosa (11.8%), Sotho (10.5%) and other languages (27. 2%). The Census report published in 2011 shows that the township had a population of about 128.000 people (Stats SA, 2012). The current population in 2021 is unknown.

Kwa-Thema

The township of Kwa-Thema is situated southwest of Springs. It was established in 1951 when Africans were resettled from Payneville because it was considered by the apartheid government to be too close to a white town. The new township's layout was designed with modernist principles and became a model for many subsequent townships, although the envisaged social facilities were not implemented. A black local authority with municipal status was established in 1984 (City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, 2020).

The township was named after Richard Victor Selope Thema, born in Ga-Mamabolo, Pietersburg district, in 1886. Also, the Selope Thema Community School in Orlando East was named after him. He was a South African political activist and a leader (EMM, 2020a). Like

other townships in South Africa, Kwa-Thema experienced violent unrest in 1985 and right-wing vigilante activities due to political unrest. The most commonly spoken languages in Kwa-Thema are Sotho and Zulu. The 2011 Census report showed that the township had a population of about 104 000 (Stats SA, 2012). The current population in 2021 is unknown.

Tsakane

Tsakane (also known as *Mashona*) is another township located in the Ekurhuleni region. Tsakane is a Tsonga word that means joy or happiness. The township was established during the early 1960s due to apartheid's segregationist policies and was formally founded as a designated area (City of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, 2020). The township has grown since then and is situated between Kwa-Thema and Duduza - another close by township (EMM, 2020a). Like other townships of South Africa, Tsakane is divided into different extensions and has one public hospital called Pholosong Hospital that serves a large population from Tsakane, Kwa-Thema, and Duduza. It also has smaller surgeries that take care of the people's health in and around the township (EMM, 2018). During the 2011 Census, the population of Tsakane was around 136 000 people. The common languages spoken are Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Setswana, XiTsonga, and Ndebele (Stats SA, 2012). The current population in 2021 is unknown.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Employment plays an important role in a young adult's physical, psychological health and psychosocial development because it promotes responsibility and independence while also providing stability, security, and status in society and economic freedom. Therefore, a lack of employment negatively influences people's lives on a personal, social and economic level. In South Africa, the problem of unemployment is more severe, especially among young adults, and if coupled with low levels of education, it leaves them marginalised and excluded from participating in the labour economy (Nonyana & Njuho, 2018). This scenario leads to

frustration that escalates daily as the young adults try in vain to find employment.

Like many other metropolitan areas in South Africa, the City of Ekurhuleni has its own share of young adult unemployment, and the number of unemployed young adults is still rising. Although studies indicated that unemployment has deleterious effects on the social, physical, economic, and psychological state of the unemployed, very few studies have explored the topic of unemployment from the psychosocial perspective. Therefore, there is a dire need to conduct a study on the psychosocial effects of unemployment on the young adults of Ekurhuleni. Viewing the effects of unemployment from the psychosocial development perspective gives a deeper and richer understanding of how unemployed individuals interact with others and how others respond to them. The lack of knowledge on this topic limits our understanding of what unemployed people go through once they lose their jobs or cannot find a job. This on its own has grave consequences.

1.5 Aims of the Study

Broadly stated, the main aim of the present study was to investigate the effects of unemployment on the psychosocial development of young people (age 25 to 39) in the City of Ekurhuleni in the Gauteng Province. More specifically, the study aimed to:

- explore the impact of unemployment on the psychosocial development of unemployed young adults - this was done to understand the experiences of young adults when they are unemployed;
- describe the extent to which unemployment has affected the perceptions of unemployed young adults on life (worldview) - this may help determine the extent of the psychological damage caused by unemployment on how the participants perceive the world.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Few studies draw clear inferences about the importance of losing a job and psychosocial development or the importance of past experiences that can influence the behaviour of the unemployed (Kalil, 2009). Studies conducted by Du Toit (2003) and Rankin and Roberts (2011) confirm the existence of the relationship between unemployment and psychosocial distress.

The present study can contribute to the literature by broadening our understanding of the intricate and complicated aspects of young people unemployment and psychosocial development. The study can also be used to form a basis for developing intervention measures, such as counselling for unemployed people. Such intervention would enable unemployed people to deal with their unemployment status more effectively. Furthermore, data obtained from this study can be useful to social and developmental sciences, as it may pave the way for more research on the topic. Additionally, the study would create awareness and help other people be sensitive and understand the problems facing unemployed people. Therefore, the significance of the study lies in its ability to provide rich verbatim accounts on the effects of unemployment not only from the individual, but also from the social perspective.

1.7 Theoretical Framework - The Psychosocial Development Theory

Erikson (1968) proposed a life-span development theory that emphasised the role of social and cultural factors in development (Keenan et al., 2016). The *psychosocial development theory* is a theoretical approach that explores growth and development issues across the life cycle as a product of the personality interacting with the social environment (Sowers & Dulmus, 2008). According to the theory, human development is characterised by the interaction between the individual's (*psyche*) needs and abilities and societal (*social*) expectations and demands. Erikson became well known for his use of the term *identity crisis* -

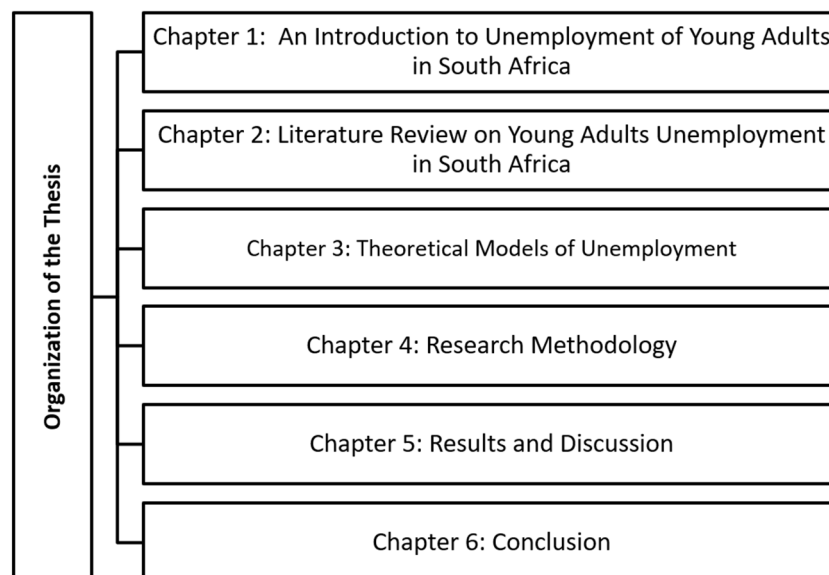
an acute period of questioning one's own identity directions (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). The domain of identity development relates to the content areas in which one's self-definition is formed, including the family, ideology, sex-role orientation, religious beliefs, and vocation (Zhang, 2015).

According to the theory, human development takes place in eight stages, and the successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues. Basic virtues are the strengths that the ego can use to resolve subsequent crises. Failure to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages, and therefore, an unhealthy personality and poor sense of self would emerge. However, crises in some stages can be resolved successfully later (McLeod, 2013). As the theoretical framework for the study, the theory provides a basis for discussing the study results (see Chapter 5) in relation to the developmental tasks that characterise the stage of young adulthood (18 to 40 years of age). The theory is further discussed in detail in chapter 3.

1.8 The Organisation of the Study

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Figure 1.1 presents the schematic organisation of the study.

Figure 1-3 *The organisation of the study (Own construction, 2019)*



Chapter 1: An Introduction to Unemployment of Young Adults in South Africa - This chapter provides context to unemployment of young adults in South Africa and particularly in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan area where the study was conducted. It lays the foundation for a more detailed discussion on the subject of young adults' unemployment and the psychosocial development of young adults in the preceding chapters. It furthermore discusses the psychosocial development theory as the theoretical framework for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review of Young Adults Unemployment in South Africa - Building on the first chapter, this chapter explores in detail the literature on young adults' unemployment. It looks at issues such as the types of unemployment, young adults' unemployment from the global and South African perspectives, the race and gender dimensions in unemployment, and the general causes of young adults' unemployment. The chapter ends by discussing the different consequences of unemployment in the lives of young

adults.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Models of Unemployment - This chapter looks at the different theoretical models of unemployment and stress. Since unemployment is a stressful condition for many people, these models are used to explain unemployment from different theoretical perspectives.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology - This chapter discusses the research method used in the current study. It includes details of the current study's research-related aspects, such as research criteria, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis, and ethics.

Chapter 5: Results and Discussion - the study results are presented and discussed in detail in this chapter drawing from the psychosocial development theoretical perspective.

Chapter 6: Conclusion - The thesis concludes with a detailed, critical analysis of the results of the study, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

1.9 Conclusion

From the discussion, it is apparent that unemployment is a socio-economic challenge globally that not only reduces economic welfare and output but also erodes human capital. In South Africa, a high priority is placed on the unemployment crisis, especially as the country has a high level of young adults who are unemployed. In order to reduce the unemployment rate among young adults, the South African government has implemented various incentives and programmes in the past two decades. The programmes and initiatives that target the NEET population are diverse and include educational training and learnership programmes, and incentives to entice employers to hire young adults and give them vocational experience. Research indicates that unemployment in South Africa is largely structural in nature and occurs mostly among young adults. The inability of the labour market to engage the young adults in the labour force is a serious concern for the government, the policymakers, and the business communities. Based on the discussion, it is also evident that South Africa needs

measures to boost job creation that will reduce young adults' unemployment to a large extent. The country's economy cannot thrive without the inclusion of young adults since they make up most of the South African population. Therefore, the combined efforts by the government, the private and public sectors, and other stakeholders can play a decisive role in reducing young adults' unemployment in South Africa.

2 Literature Review of Young Adults Unemployment in South Africa

For more than three decades ago, the world has been facing an unemployment crisis, and the young adults' generation is particularly vulnerable. Vogel (2015) maintained that various complex and inter-connected issues have collectively caused this crisis, and their resolution also requires a collective effort. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has warned of a “scarred” generation of young adults facing high unemployment rates, characterised by increased inactivity and persistent poverty. In 2013, the World Bank estimated that there were about 262 million unemployed young adults across developing countries (ILO, 2013).

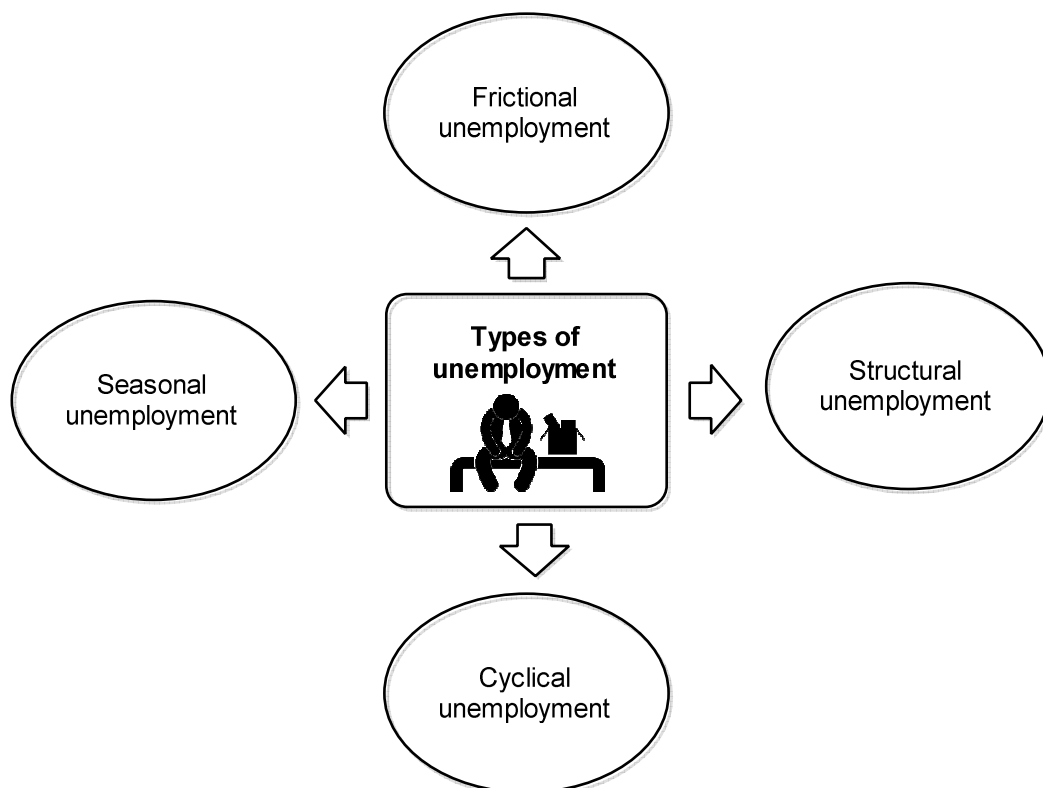
A high level of unemployment implies not just a loss to the individuals involved but also bears a broader social cost. An episode of unemployment when transitioning to work during a recession has large and persistent effects on lifetime potential wages. This situation raises the probability of being unemployed in later years and puts people in the early adulthood stage at risk of long-term social exclusion (United Nations [UN], 2018). Young adults who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) risk being left permanently behind in the labour market. This risk is especially high for the relatively large share of low-skilled NEETs (i.e., those who have not finished upper secondary schooling). Many young adults in this group live in households without any employed adults, suggesting that they are also at risk of poverty (OECD, 2016a). High levels of unemployment are also associated with slower development progress, a lack of social trust and a higher risk of social unrest. In this regard, engaging with young adults, smoothing the transition to work, and improving the quality of available jobs is a crucial policy priority (UN, 2018). Therefore, effective policies are needed to reconnect unemployed young adults with the labour market and improve their career prospects (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016b).

This chapter reviews the literature on unemployment. First, it starts by discussing the different types of unemployment. Secondly, it looks at unemployment from a global and South African perspective. Part of the discussion involves comparing the unemployment of young adults and adult unemployment, both within the South African and global contexts. Thirdly, the chapter looks at unemployment from race and gender dimensions by highlighting the inequalities embedded within each dimension. Lastly, the causes and the effects of unemployment are also discussed concerning the South African context.

2.1 Types of Unemployment

Many researchers and writers tend to categorise unemployment into four types. These types of unemployment are presented in Figure 2.1 and discussed below.

Figure 2-1 *Types of unemployment (Own construction, 2019)*



2.1.1 Frictional or Search Unemployment

Frictional (or search) unemployment is caused by the normal labour turnover whereby people move from one job to another (Bonakele, 2016), especially the people in the early adulthood stage, to search for greener pastures (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). Frictional unemployment includes workers who quit jobs before finding another one or unemployed graduates who are still searching for their first jobs (Levine, 2013). It is largely due to the mismatch that exists in the world of work between the demands of the companies and the skills and experiences of the young adults (Refrigeri & Aleandri, 2013). Such a mismatch can be related to skills, payment, work-time, location, seasonal industries, attitude, taste, and many other factors (Mouhammed, 2011). The more efficient the job market is to match people to jobs, and the better the economy, the lower the frictional unemployment would be (Xipu, 2009). Although both frictional and structural unemployment (see section 2.2.2 below) involve the worker-to-job matching process, frictional unemployment is more voluntary in nature and of a shorter duration compared to structural unemployment (Levine, 2013). Since the information about new employers and employees is imperfect, it takes time for employees to find work and employers to find new employees (Hendricks, 2016). Therefore, Malakwane (2012) maintained that frictional unemployment could be reduced by improving labour market information and placement services so that the employer and the job seekers can find each other sooner and more effectively.

According to Mafiri (2002), unemployed people do not just take the first job available but choose to remain unemployed while considering other opportunities and assessing their options. For example, semi-skilled day labourers may choose not to take certain jobs (e.g., garbage removal), hoping that they would get better job offers later. However, due to economic needs, the unemployed must commit to the first job available sooner or later (Xipu, 2009). Therefore, there will always be new entrants to the labour market and existing employees leaving the labour market, explaining why full employment cannot be reached

(Hendricks, 2016).

2.1.2 Structural Unemployment

Structural (or mismatch) *unemployment* refers to the overall inability of the economy - owing to structural imbalances - to provide employment even at the peak of the business cycle (Bonakele, 2016). In other words, it occurs when there is a change in the structure of an industry or economic activities due to rapid changes in technology which results in a mismatch between the skills of workers and skill requirements of available jobs (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016; Malakwane, 2012). Mismatch unemployment also includes people whose skills or geographic location do not match with the employers' desires (Bonakele, 2016). This means that unemployed people may lack the skills needed for the jobs or not live in the part of the country or world where the jobs are available (Mouhammed, 2011). It is generally considered to be one of the "permanent" types of unemployment, where improvement, if possible, will only occur in the long run (Mouhammed, 2011).

A common cause of structural unemployment is technological change. For example, many people studied basic computer technology in the 1990s as the World Wide Web (www) grew in popularity. This led to an over-supply of graduates in basic computer technology, making it more difficult to find a desired position in the field (Mafiri, 2002). Structural unemployment may also occur due to the rapid growth of the labour force, the use of capital or skill-incentive technology, and an inflexible labour market (Hendricks, 2016). According to Cebekhulu (2013), other factors that contribute to structural unemployment in South Africa are:

- a mismatch between skills supplied and demanded;
- insufficient access to effective education and skills development opportunities;
- deterioration of skills and motivation of individual job seekers caused by prolonged periods of unemployment;
- insufficient opportunities for the unemployed to learn by doing on-the-job training.

The major problem associated with structural unemployment is that even when business is doing well, the employment opportunities created cannot significantly reduce unemployment. Hence, Xipu (2009, p. 41) stated that “This phenomenon seems to be present in the South African economic system as the gains of economic growth do not enable the millions of unemployed people to find employment”. Therefore, structural unemployment has its greatest impact on women, black people, minorities and the disabled, reinforcing other social issues that tend to put these people on the disadvantageous side (Kates et al., 1990). Levine (2013) suggested that to overcome skill mismatch; displaced workers may require retraining or additional formal education. In some instances, however, structural unemployment may evolve into cyclical unemployment.

2.1.3 Cyclical Unemployment

Cyclical (or aggregate demand-deficient) *unemployment* occurs when the economy slows down, such as during times of recession (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016; Hendricks, 2016). During this period, few or no jobs are created for new entrants to the labour market, and even existing workers may lose their jobs because of retrenchments (Bonakele, 2016). Cyclical unemployment is associated with fluctuations in business activity. A decline in aggregate demand in the output market will result in a decrease in the demand for labour (Hendricks, 2016). In a sense, cyclical unemployment occurs in response to temporary declines in demand (such as consumption, investment, government spending, or exports) associated with the business cycle (Schmitt & Warner, 2011). Because most goods and services demand declines, the demand for production also becomes less and fewer workers are required. This may result in less remuneration, and mass unemployment occurs (Malakwane, 2012).

Cyclical unemployment seems to be more prevalent in contemporary society when companies are restructuring, when profit-making opportunities are good and when a company wants to decrease the staff during recession periods. Some companies tend to have minimal permanently employed staff and hire more workers temporarily when more workers

are needed (Xipu, 2009). When the economy begins to grow again, companies, in most cases, may be reluctant to resume hiring immediately and may first increase the hours of their existing workforce. Once companies feel confident that the economic growth would continue, many companies would be employing again, and many people are more likely to be reinstated in their previous jobs (Levine, 2013; Xipu, 2009).

2.1.4 Seasonal Unemployment

As the term implies, *seasonal unemployment* tends to be influenced by the seasons of the year, and people are retrenched during off-seasons (Bonakele, 2016; Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). This means that there is a limited need for the type of work to be performed during a particular period of the year (Hendricks, 2016). Most of the seasonal unemployment is less severe and tends to occur in certain industries. Certain jobs (for example, playing Father Christmas) tend to be in demand only for a short period of the year, and the rest of the year would be classified as seasonal unemployment (Xipu, 2009).

In winter, certain services and products - such as warm clothes and heaters - are in demand. Companies that manufacture these goods tend to have good profit-making opportunities in winter, and their business tends to slow down in the summer period (Mafiri, 2002). Industries that particularly suffer from seasonal unemployment include hotels, catering, tourism (Xipu, 2009), and agriculture (Bonakele, 2016; Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). In addition, businesses such as forestry, fishing, and construction are often affected by weather and are only viable during certain months of the year (Hendricks, 2016; Mafiri, 2002). Retail sales positions are also affected by seasons and holidays because of consumer shopping trends and patterns. For example, additional staff is required during peak shopping seasons such as Christmas (Mafiri, 2002). The effects of seasonal unemployment are often highly regionalized, as some areas suffer a great deal from this type of unemployment (Xipu, 2009). Seasonal farmers also appear to be affected by seasonal changes. This implies that their ability to create employment opportunities is dependent on seasonal factors.

2.2 The Unemployment of Young Adults - The Global and South African Perspectives

Over the past three decades, unemployment in general and young adults' unemployment, in particular, has been a major problem in many industrial societies (Axelrad et al., 2018). This section looks at the trends of unemployment of young adults worldwide and in South Africa in particular.

The global economic crisis in 2008 has led to a disproportionate increase in unemployment around the world, and young adults in both developed and developing economies are facing harsh labour market conditions (GCIS Chief Directorate: Policy and Research, 2012; Vogel, 2015). However, not all young adults face the same difficulties in gaining access to productive and rewarding jobs, and the extent of these difficulties varies across countries. Nevertheless, in all countries, there is a core group of young adults facing various combinations of high and persistent unemployment, poor quality jobs when they find work and a high-risk of social exclusion (Axelrad et al., 2018). The sharp increase in the unemployment of people in the young adulthood stage is rooted in long-standing structural obstacles that prevent many young adults in both OECD countries and emerging economies from making a successful transition from school to work (Axelrad et al., 2018). The ILO (2013) reported that in many developed and developing countries, the unemployment of young adults was not only high but increasing. This included countries in Africa. It is a concern because "unemployment experiences early in a young adult's career is likely to result in wage scars that continue to depress their employment and earnings prospects even decades later" (ILO, 2013, p.12).

Unemployment of young adults has manifested itself in many regions, contributing to immense socio-economic problems of both developed and developing nations (De Jongh et al., 2016). Africa, in particular, has the youngest and fastest-growing young adults' population in the world. Hence, the number of young adults aged between 15 - 24 is expected to be around 400 million by 2045. Young adults under the age of 25 represent 62% of sub-Saharan

Africa's unemployed population, and nearly three-quarters live on less than \$2 a day (UN, 2018). In 2013, there were about 290 million young adults throughout the world not participating in the labour market (August, 2013). Vogel (2015) maintained that even greater numbers were not considered in these statistics because they either dropped out of the system or never entered it. Almost half of the world's young adults live in the regions (such as South Asia, Middle East, and Africa) with the highest shares of youngsters out of work or working informally (August, 2013). The global young adult's unemployment rate increased from 12.3 % in 2006 to 13 % in 2017, reflecting a broad-based deterioration in relative prospects for young adults in 75% of countries worldwide since 2006. In South-Eastern Europe, unemployment remains staggeringly high at the rate of 22% in 2017. Average young adults' unemployment for the region was estimated at 48%. The labour force participation rate remains relatively low while certain social norms in the region create barriers for women to enter the workforce (UN, 2018).

In the developing world, where almost 90% of the world's young adults are located, many young adults live in poverty. Their only access to work is informal or under unacceptable employment conditions. As has been witnessed over the past years, young adults' unemployment is not only a problem of developing countries but a truly global problem, even in the developed world (Vogel, 2015). Approximately half of the unemployed group is young adults, and most countries are suffering from social unrest situations because of economic recession. Poverty rates continue to rise, with 200 million people at risk of joining the ranks of those living on less than \$2 a day (Pervaiz et al., 2018).

According to the United Nations, sub-Saharan Africa boasts the world's youngest population, with more than three-fifths of its inhabitants under the age of 25 years. The region's working-age population is estimated to rise from 522 million to 600 million by 2030. Although significant progress has been made on access to primary education in Africa, the quality of education remains low, as do levels of attainment (Boateng, 2018). There is

evidence that more than 40% of the working population in low-income countries live in extreme poverty. At the same time, more than 40% of the world's workers are in vulnerable forms of employment, with little or no access to social protection, low and volatile income, and high levels of job insecurity (UN, 2018). Therefore, it is suggested that Africa alone will need an estimated 74 million jobs over the next decade to address the issue of young adults' unemployment (GCIS Chief Directorate: Policy and Research, 2012).

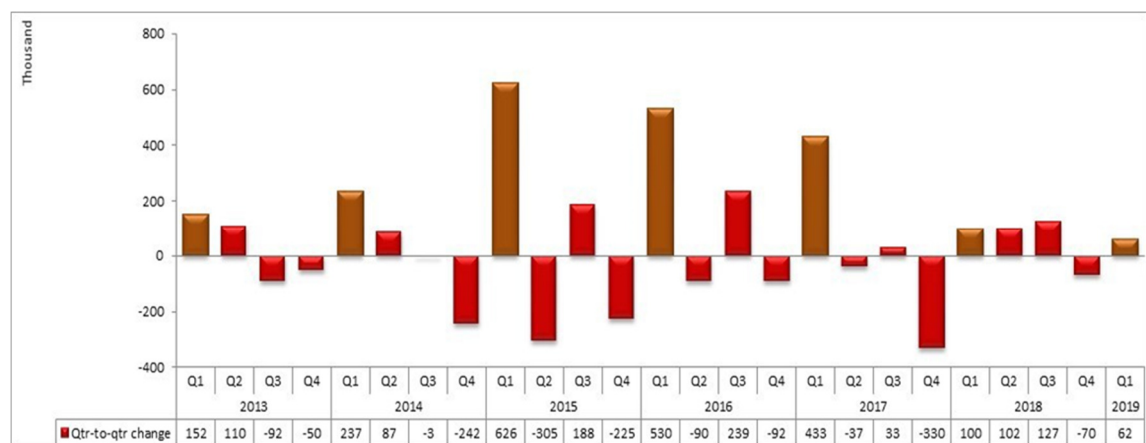
It is necessary to implement reforms to education systems and training geared towards the world of work to reduce young adults' unemployment to natural levels in European countries. It is also important to introduce scholastic and professional orientation schemes in addition to work placement programmes at every level of education. Therefore, European countries are called upon to reform their education and training systems to shorten the transition from education to employment (Refrigeri & Aleandri, 2013).

South Africa is no exception. South Africa is one of the sub-Saharan countries with the highest unemployment rate (Morton et al., 2014; Nonyana & Njuho, 2018). The unemployment of young adults has been high for many years and is one of the country's major socio-economic challenges. In 2008, the unemployment rate in South Africa was 33% for young adults between the ages of 15 to 34. In the first quarter of 2015, this rate increased to 37% (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). The unemployment rate for the same age cohort was 38,2% in the first quarter of 2018. This implies that more than one in every three young adults in the labour force did not have a job in the first quarter of 2018. Some of these young adults have become discouraged with the labour market, and they were also not building on their skill base through education and training; thus, they are not in education, employment, or training - NEET (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2019). This situation poses a major threat to the country's future economic prosperity and hampers its ability to lay the foundation on which a thriving and productive labour force could be built (De Jongh et al., 2016).

Furthermore, studies indicate that more than one in five young adults (aged 15 - 29) in

South Africa are low-skilled, compared to around one in twenty in OECD countries. Therefore, more support is needed for the young adults, including second-chance programmes and more learnerships and apprenticeships that are better aligned with labour market needs (OECD, 2016b). Figure 2.2 below indicates changes in terms of NEET status.

Figure 2-2 Quarter-to-quarter changes in unemployment, Q1: 2013 to Q1: 2019 (Adapted from Statistics South Africa, 2019)



After a decrease of 70 000 in the number of unemployed persons in Q4: 2018, the number of unemployed persons increased by 62 000 in Q1: 2019. Notable from the above Figure is that the number of unemployed persons has increased in every first quarter of each year since 2013. The largest increase was recorded in Q1: 2015 (up by 626 000), followed by Q1: 2016 (up by 530 000) and Q1: 2017 (up by 433 000) (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

A structural change observed in labour demand trends shifted towards high-skilled workers (Bhorat & Jacobs, 2010). This structural change led to the conclusion that the unemployment problem in South Africa is structural, in the sense that the poorly educated workers, who constitute the vast majority of the labour supply, cannot find employment due to insufficient demand for low-skilled resources (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). South Africa, the country with the most advanced economy in Africa and three-quarters of poor people living in rural areas, has a rural unemployment rate of about 70%. The 15 to 24-year-old age group constitutes 71% of the unemployed (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). The young adults who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) neither improve their future employability through investment in skills nor gain experience through employment. Therefore, this group is

particularly at risk of both labour market and social exclusion (Young, 2016).

Young South Africans enter the job market with a positive view of their employment prospects, and many soon experience disappointment. Out of a population of 20 million young adults between the ages of 15 and 34, about 7,9 million are neither working nor in any form of education or training. In the fourth quarter of 2018, about 4 million young adults reported having looked for work but could not find it (Centre for Development and Enterprise [CDE] , 2019). It is clear that South Africa did not escape the effects of the global economic downturn that started in 2008. In fact, the country lost approximately 770 000 jobs; 570 000 of which were among young adults aged 15 to 34, with the biggest job losses among those who had only completed secondary education or less (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Therefore, the statistics mentioned above show that the unemployment rate is high, reflecting a country that is in a state of distress. These statistics most definitely represent a crisis in South Africa because high levels of unemployment have dire consequences not only on the lives of young adults but on the overall growth of the country's economy. When the economy stagnates, it raises unemployment even further, sending the country into a dangerous cycle (Young, 2016).

A notable increase of graduates has been observed in South Africa but, Oluwajodu et al. (2015) maintained that graduate unemployment was also rising. Lack of skills, industrial adjustment and unemployment duration are other structural factors that negatively impact South African graduate unemployment (Nonyana & Njuho, 2018). A study conducted by the Department of Labour in 2012 found that although graduates have qualifications required to enter the workplace, they lack the necessary skills and experience needed in the workplace (Magagula, 2017). In addition, young adults' unemployment is prevalent not only because of inadequate job opportunities but also because young adults lack skills, work experience, job search abilities and financial resources to find employment (Provincial Treasury, 2015).

South Africa's current generation of young adults represent its next generation of leaders in business, government and civil society, and if too many remain unskilled and semi-

literate, socio-economic inequalities will persist and intensify. More specifically, as black young adults experience exclusion from the mainstream economy, not only are their skills progressively devalued but their capacity to exercise citizenship is simultaneously diminished (Mmesi, 2015). The nature of the challenge and the inequalities that shape unemployment suggest that policy discussions and a range of interventions implemented since the 1990s have not materially improved the position of young adults in South Africa. If left unchanged, the situation is expected to increase the levels of frustration and impatience among young adults. The NDP warns that the country must find ways to reduce alarming levels of young adults' unemployment and provide young adults with broader opportunities. Failure to act on this matter would threaten democratic gains (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016).

2.3 Race and Gender Dimensions in Unemployment

There is overwhelming evidence that unemployment in South Africa has race and gender dimensions. African and coloured young adults are far more vulnerable to unemployment than their white or Indian counterparts (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015). In support, Ardington et al. (2013) reported that unemployment amongst white young adults was 18% compared to 41% among African young adults some years before 2013.

Gender also plays a role in unemployment. A study by the ILO in 2013 pointed out that young adult's unemployment in South Africa is generally higher among females than males (Vogel, 2015). This assertion has also been confirmed in a study conducted by Msigwa and Kipsha (2013). During 2017, the likelihood of a young woman being unemployed became even more pronounced, with the young adult's female unemployment rate rising from 50.3 % in 2008 to 58.7 % in 2017, compared to a rise from 41.7 % to 49.3 % during the same period for young men (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2018). This means that job prospects for young women are more restricted than those for young men, resulting in higher

unemployment rates for young women. In support, a study on young adults' unemployment in Cape Town reports that the chances of young males getting a job are more than double those of young females (Mncayi, 2016). Even though women's education levels after democracy have increased, women still face higher unemployment rates than males, which is attributed to gender and race (Magagula, 2017).

Furthermore, the share of young adults not in education, employment or training (NEET) stood at 33.8 % in 2017 for young women compared to 28.6% for young men in the same year (ILO, 2018). In situations where more women are working, they continue to have worse jobs than men. Despite considerable progress, gender gaps in the labour market persist throughout the world and are especially marked in emerging economies (OECD, 2016a).

Furthermore, African women who had a tertiary qualification in 2003 were likely to earn less than a white male who had a matriculation certificate in the same year (Magagula, 2017). Unemployment continues to affect Black Africans and young female adults most and is highest for those living in rural areas (De Lannoy et al., 2018) because there are fewer job opportunities available for them and a lack of access to information (Magagula, 2017). According to Magagula (2017), another reason why African women may be unemployed is that most of them have qualifications in the fields of education and the humanities. There are limited women in professions considered 'male dominated' such as engineering, ICT, architecture, and law. Women are often found in service-oriented fields such as nursing, teaching and clerical work (Magagula, 2017). Therefore, unemployment is significantly higher among young women, Black Africans, and the poorest economic groups (OECD, 2015).

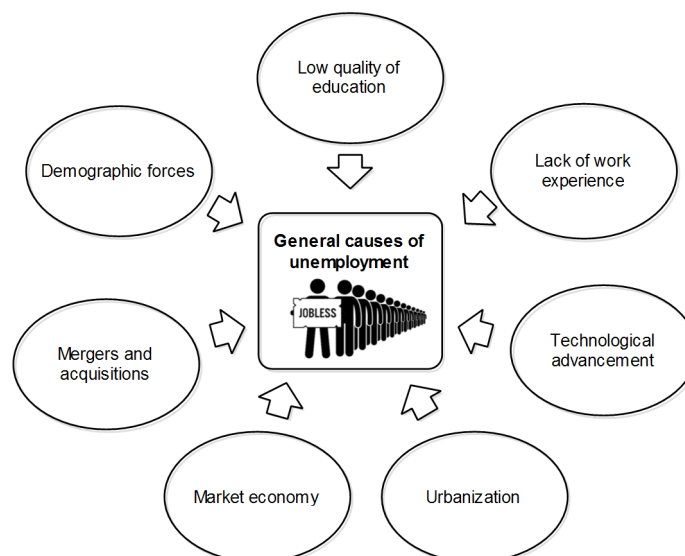
Therefore, racial and gender inequalities continue to contribute to unemployment in South Africa. The World Bank report on gender disparities in the world of work, published in 2014, found that women's employment can assist in raising the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by increasing the general productivity of their countries (Morton et al., 2014). The employment of women can also aid in the alleviation of poverty and better health outcomes

for their children. Nevertheless, even with these promising gains that could be made through women's employment, their productive potential remains minimal and is slightly declining compared to men globally (Morton et al., 2014). Therefore, an effective strategy to curb gender gaps needs to encompass several policy domains, including measures to help reconcile work with family responsibilities (OECD, 2016b).

2.4 The General Causes of Unemployment in Young Adults in South Africa

The causes of unemployment have been researched for many decades, and researchers have attempted to examine each cause and how it contributed to unemployment. Consistent in many studies is the fact that multi-faceted factors cause unemployment, and each factor has its own impact (or in combination) on the lives of the unemployed. This section, therefore, focuses on the main general causes of young adults' unemployment in South Africa. These general causes are presented in Figure 2.3 and discussed below.

Figure 2-3 *General causes of unemployment (Own construction, 2019).*



2.4.1 Low Quality of Education

For many years, *low quality of education* has been observed in South Africa. The shortcomings in the education system contributed to young adults' unemployment, leaving

the young adults ill-equipped for the workplace, and in many cases, without basic competencies (National Treasury, 2011). The uneven quality of South Africa's public schooling system further entrenches inequality in finding employment. For example, poor children at schools that are often under-resourced and ill-managed very quickly fall behind in their learning. These educational backlogs and widespread grade repetition set the stage for school dropout at a later stage (Graham & De Lannoy, 2016). Some of the young work seekers are not well educated and dropped out of school early due to reasons such as poverty and an inability to cope with studies (Yu, 2013). Other reasons for drop-outs include financial constraints, grade repetition, and early pregnancy for female learners (De Lannoy et al., 2018). In addition, the problem is accelerated by the lack of surety or guarantee that even those armed with diplomas and degrees can get employment (Cebekhulu, 2013).

Unemployment figures are rising almost every year, even for people who have matriculation certificates (Bonakele, 2016). Although Mncayi (2016) stated that many of South Africa's graduates still struggle to get a job even after graduation, Nonyana and Njuho (2018) maintained that unemployment tends to decline with the level of education. Thus, the more people are educated, the better their chances of securing a job. South Africa's future indeed lies on the shoulders of a generation that has been subjected to inefficiencies and shortfalls in both educational support and career guidance (Young, 2016). Hence, the dysfunctionality of the education system is clearly part of the problem. Many young adults who fail to find work will be condemned to a lifetime of exclusion from the main economic life (CDE, 2019). Given the magnitude of these factors, the reduction of young adult's unemployment is one of the major challenges the South African government is currently facing and will be facing even for decades to come (Vogel, 2015).

Education is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of poverty and unemployment. However, as it stands, the education system is just not preparing the school leavers and graduates for the working world (Young, 2016). In an attempt to curb

unemployment, the South African government is implementing several interventions to improve the quality of education and training and reduce the number of drop-outs. These interventions are critical for improved education and skills development and need to be evaluated to ensure they lead to satisfactory outcomes (National Treasury, 2011). Therefore, reformed curricula that are innovative enough to meet current and evolving labour demands, and a deliberate government policy that increases spending and allocates resources to technical and vocational training, needs immediate attention (Boateng, 2018).

2.4.2 Lack of Work Experience and Skills

While South Africa has achieved rapid progress in educational attainment, *a lack of work experience and skills* continue to hinder the progress of young adults from finding work (Bonakele, 2016). The young South African young adults struggle to gain work experience, which is an important signal of ability to potential employers (National Treasury, 2011). Even those who manage to get an adequate basic education may be unable to find work because they do not possess the skills needed by the employers. As acknowledged in the NDP, this situation is a cause for serious concern (Statistics South Africa [Stats SA], 2015b). Many young South Africans, having completed several years of education, do not exit the schooling system with the requisite skills. In a review of South African economic growth factors, De Lannoy et al. (2018) indicated that technological growth in South Africa mainly derives from human capital investment in mathematics, science and engineering, which the South African educational system finds most difficult to produce.

The weak propensity to acquire work experience leads young adults to have considerable difficulty in finding employment. Because of this, young adults are more likely to face dismissal (if they are working) during periods of economic crisis (De Jongh et al., 2016; Refrigeri & Aleandri, 2013). A study conducted by the South African Department of Labour in 2012 found that the graduates who had required qualifications lacked the skills and experience needed in the workplace (Magagula, 2017). Around the world, young adults'

unemployment is prevalent not because of inadequate job opportunities but mainly because young adults lack skills, work experience, job search abilities and financial resources to find employment (Provincial Treasury, 2015). The age of people in the young adulthood stage can influence employment status because employability goes with experience. This means that fresh graduates with no work experience find it difficult to access jobs since they lack relevant experience (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). In support, Graham and Mlatsheni (2015) maintained that because young adults lack work experience, they tend to wait longer in the labour market queue, especially before finding their first job. Skills shortage in South Africa is a threat to economic growth and development because the absence of skills means decreased productivity and investment. Investors may be afraid to invest in a country that will not efficiently produce the resources that will earn them returns on their investments (Magagula, 2017). Therefore, a lack of relevant skills has been consistently shown to be a contributor to unemployment. Hence, many employers are sceptical about young adult's ability to apply the skills they learn in schools and tertiary institutions to the practical challenges of the workplace (Stats SA, 2015a).

The National Treasury (2011) provides the following explanations for why young adults are unemployed. These include:

- employers look for skills and experience; they regard unskilled, inexperienced job seekers as a risky investment;
- education is not a substitute for skills. Schooling is not a reliable signal of capabilities, and low school quality feeds into poor workplace learning capacity; and
- given the uncertainty about the potential of school leavers, employers consider entry-level wages to be high relative to the risk of hiring the inexperienced workers (National Treasury, 2011).

The energy, skills, and aspirations of young adults are invaluable assets that no society

can afford to waste. With a significant and growing proportion of young adults at risk of prolonged unemployment, the potential negative long-term scars to their careers, earnings, health, and well-being could be profound (Stats SA, 2015a). Learnerships and internship programmes are some means of acquiring the necessary experience, but their efficiency has been under scrutiny. More skills development will increase the possibility of being employed and ultimately work towards improving the living standards of the poor (Bonakele, 2016).

2.4.3 Technological Advancement

There has been a renewed concern that *technological advancement* may displace much of the workforce (especially in manufacturing), creating widespread unemployment and human hardship. Technological advancement may increase the number of individuals who cannot participate in the labour force due to the decrease in the need for the workforce (Alptekin et al., 2010). According to Rankin and Roberts (2011), unemployment is also caused by structural changes to the economy - such as changes in production technology - and a shift from agricultural production to less labour-intensive sectors. According to De Lannoy et al. (2018), skill mismatch is a critical factor contributing to high unemployment levels and is driven by the current high technology.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is projected to disrupt manufacturing technology fundamentally, with significant implications for the future and the nature of jobs. The downside of disruption could be significant job losses owing to workers being replaced by technology and machines, as well as changes to the nature and location of work. Countries need to ensure that people have the skills they need to minimize these future impacts - and help drive transformation in the process (Boateng, 2018). As the economy demands highly skilled labour due to capital deepening and technological advancements, secondary education is often insufficient to guarantee employment (Yu, 2013). Therefore, better training can increase the potential productivity of young work seekers and play a positive role in reducing young adults' unemployment. Training interventions, however, will have a limited impact in

the absence of reforms to make the economy more dynamic and flexible. They will also do little for the employability of the millions of young adults who have already left the education system (CDE, 2019).

2.4.4 Urbanization and Migration

Urbanization and migration have long been associated with industrialization and development. Urban young adults' unemployment is further exacerbated by rural-urban migration, and many young adults migrate from rural to urban areas searching for better job opportunities (Cornwell & Inder, 2004), thereby increasing the number of people who are already jobless (Morake, 1997). Rural-urban migration is regarded as one of the major contributing factors to urban surplus labour and a force that exacerbates the urban unemployment problems (Cornwell & Inder, 2004).

The impact of immigration on unemployment has been central to the political debate for many decades. Despite its high unemployment rate, South Africa has the highest number of immigrants in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Labour migration in South Africa is motivated by the relatively high quality of life and healthy business environment in relation to other countries in Africa. In addition, Mabilia (2013) maintained that about 6% of the South African population in 2012 (comprising of legal and illegal immigrants) were foreigners.

Young adults' unemployment in urban areas is generally higher than in rural areas, where most employment is in small-scale agriculture. With incomes meagre due to low productivity, rural unemployment is high in countries with commercial farms and a formal agricultural wage sector (Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2004). Due to low literacy levels, rural young adults are disadvantaged relative to more educated urban young adults (Sommers, 2003).

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of migration on unemployment. Two studies cited by Mabilia (2013) report both positive and negative impacts of immigration.

On the one hand, a study conducted by the Centre for the Study of African Economies concluded that immigrants create employment by employing native South Africans. Some immigrants enter the country as entrepreneurs and business people, and many immigrants join the small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMME) sector, including clothing, salons, night clubs, and music shops. Immigration fills vacancies that would otherwise remain unfilled in needy sectors and counters the effect of the brain drain from emigrants departing South Africa (Mabiala, 2013).

On the other hand, Ferguson et al. (2007) cited a study led by the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) that found that immigrants tend to modify wages as they increase the labour supply. For example, in early 2000, Zimbabwean mining workers were paid US\$ 80 per month against US\$ 174 for South Africans. Furthermore, immigrants can worsen natives' welfare by displacing them in the labour market. Labour immigrants who hold skills similar to natives compete for jobs and may displace them in the process (Mabiala, 2013).

2.4.5 Market Economy

The South African *market economy* became reintegrated with the global economy in 1994, which allowed access to foreign capital, the expectation of economic growth and job creation (De Lannoy et al., 2018). However, there are some factors in the modern market economy that contribute to unemployment. These factors include, among others, the rapid changes in production technology, business cycle or recessions, and a shift from agricultural production to less labour-intensive sectors (Rankin & Roberts, 2011). Kingdon and Knight (2007) argued that this is caused largely by labour market regulation which has reduced the demand for unskilled labour. The South African economic growth in the past has been mainly restricted by the low level of stable investment that can be attributed to factors such as the political and social instability, a lack of clarity among investors concerning the government economic policy, the significant fluctuation in the interest and exchange rates, and high company taxation (Morake, 1997). These issues greatly influence the market economy,

leading to a high level of unemployment in the country.

In some labour markets, especially in the developing world, there is a simple demographic mismatch between the number of young adults seeking work and the level of local economic activity. Most available work may be in informal or underdeveloped industry sectors and, there may be a severe shortage of locally available jobs at entry-level (ManPower Group, 2012). Other inequalities at the community and individual levels also shape access to the labour market. Geographic location acts as a barrier to the employment of young adults, with those living outside the major metropolitan areas having to spend more time and money on looking for work. Other barriers are limited social capital and limited access to information (Graham & DeLannoy, 2016). As a consequence of these factors, many young adults face significant obstacles in obtaining decent work and thriving in their first jobs (ManPower Group, 2012).

Researchers pointed out that the South African labour market is also characterised by strict labour market regulations that make it more difficult to hire and fire and by rising wages (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Young adults are essentially more susceptible to market inefficiencies that result in a loss of employment. This results in long-term effects that hamper the development of a young labour force (De Jongh et al., 2016). An assessment by OECD showed that, among emerging economies, South Africa has not only the lowest earnings quality but also high job strain and labour market insecurity (OECD, 2015). Slow growth, a variety of malign effects of apartheid, and the structural characteristics of the South African economy have meant that the labour market has failed to create enough jobs to absorb entrants since the late 1970s. Part of the problem relates to government policy decisions, which have led to increased costs and risks for firms and investors. This, in turn, has led to slower economic growth, which inevitably means reduced employment creation (UN, 2019).

2.4.6 Mergers and Acquisitions

Mergers and acquisitions are a way for some companies to improve profits and

productivity while reducing overall expenses. When two companies merge, jobs are usually lost because of the elimination of duplicated services or processes. The closure of the less profitable part (or unit) of the new operation and the moving of the corporate headquarters of one of the companies involved leads to unemployment (Kates et al., 1990), as those who were employed in that unit will lose their jobs (Morake, 1997).

Although mergers and acquisitions may be good in a business sense, in some cases, however, they are not good for employees. Hence, from the public viewpoint, mergers and acquisitions are related to employment losses. For example, in their study, Conyon et al. (2002) found that mergers and acquisitions in the United Kingdom led to a significant decrease in labour demand by the merged entity following an acquisition compared to the pre-merger situation. In support, Margolis (2006) found evidence that mergers and acquisitions led to decreased employment, especially low-skilled workers. Also, a study conducted by Gugler and Yurtoglu (2004), using a large sample of mergers and acquisitions from Europe, found that, on average, European mergers significantly reduced the demand for labour by 10%.

The above statements clearly indicate the negative impact of mergers. Obviously, with a merger and acquisition often comes the possibility of lay-offs, leaving many employees worried about their positions or the company's changing culture.

2.4.7 Demographic Forces

Demographic forces can also cause unemployment. As the demographic balance of a population is changing, some workers tend to stay in employment for longer periods (Cawker & Whiteford, 1993). South Africans from poor households find themselves approaching the labour market with lower levels in literacy, numeracy and communication skills. Poverty restricts people from entering the mainstream economy because they lack finances to enable them to get to where the jobs are (Magagula, 2017; Young, 2016).

Another problem is that many educated people among the young adults relocate to other provinces because of a lack of job opportunities in their former areas (Bonakele, 2016).

For example, the Gauteng Province is known as the economic hub of South Africa, and as a result, there are more people from other provinces that migrate to Gauteng Province to find work. Young adults do not necessarily have sufficient networks to obtain information on job opportunities and financial resources, and mobility to seek work or relocate closer to the places where job opportunities exist (Young, 2016; Yu, 2013). With many black young adults living on the outskirts of economic centres of activity, travelling and administrative costs involved in a spirited job search quickly become expensive and unaffordable to those most in need of employment. Therefore, young adults must be able to access job opportunities where they live. However, at the moment, for those in poverty, the informal economy typically presents itself as an unavoidable first rung on the economic ladder to employment and financial independence (Mmesi, 2015).

The above discussion indicates that the causes of young adults' unemployment are multi-faceted and widespread. Each of the factors mentioned above is likely to increase the number of young adults facing a period of unemployment sometime in their lives. Therefore, the challenges faced by the government, other organisations, and stakeholders are to ensure that unemployment is reduced to a minimal level to maximize economic growth for the country. Job opportunities must be created, and individuals face a challenge to be ready to enter the labour force when these opportunities arise. The causes mentioned above of young adults' unemployment are more devastating in combination, and their effects are more likely to be chronic if not addressed properly.

2.5 The Effects of Unemployment

As the causes of unemployment, the effects of unemployment are also multi-faceted and varied. This section highlights some of these effects from different dimensions without going into many details.

2.5.1 *The Physical Effects of Unemployment*

The effects of unemployment on health and well-being have been studied since the rise of unemployment in the late 1970s. This has resulted in a substantial body of research that shows a strong association between unemployment and ill-health (Sharme, 2012). Unemployment is one of the most damaging individual experiences that affect the overall general well-being. The great body of sociological and psychological research dedicated to the subject reflects the central position of employment in people's lives, and unemployment is one of the most serious problems that can affect an individual during their life course. Therefore, unemployment puts health at risk, and the risk is higher in regions where unemployment is widespread (Sharme, 2012).

Moreover, unemployed individuals suffer greater physical illness and health complaints. They are often engaged in high-risk health behaviours such as alcohol abuse (Pervaiz et al., 2018). Furthermore, Sharpe (2012) asserted that unemployed people are becoming more anxious and concerned with bodily symptoms because unemployment tends to produce adverse physical health consequences.

2.5.2 *The Psychological Effects of Unemployment*

Many studies in psychological literature indicate that unemployment adversely affects people's psychological well-being. Unemployment aggravates negative psychological effects that may lead to high suicide risk and crime. Many studies also found high levels of depression, irritability, anxiety, and low mastery in unemployed people (Pervaiz et al., 2018). Unemployment is also associated with a marked decline in self-esteem. According to Rosenberg et al. (1995), the term "low self-esteem [...] means that the individual lacks respect for himself, considers himself unworthy, inadequate, or otherwise seriously deficient as a person" (p. 54). Most literature in the field refers either to the loss of self-esteem or to damaged ego, loss of self-worth, loss of self-confidence, feeling inferior and so on in the context of unemployment (Sharme, 2012). Pervaiz et al. (2018) agreed that unemployment

results in reduced self-esteem, which is considered an important trait of a stable personality. Other psychological effects of unemployment include frustration, aggression, regression, and resignation from life (Sharme, 2012). Furthermore, the International Labour Organisation [ILO] (2005) reports that in the 35 countries for which data exist, nearly 40% of jobseekers run significant risks of demoralisation, and various mental health problems exist in the unemployed people (Pervaiz et al., 2018).

2.5.3 The Social Effects of Unemployment

There are social effects associated with unemployment. Social unrest in many countries has been observed because of unemployment, even in emerging markets (Pervaiz et al., 2018). Unemployed people also experience lower levels of health and tend to engage in high-risk behaviours due to forced idleness, leading to negative outcomes such as involvement in crime, substance abuse and early pregnancy for women (Mmesi, 2015). Young adults today face increasing uncertainty in their hopes of gaining a satisfactory entry into the labour market. This uncertainty and disillusionment can, in turn, have damaging effects on individuals, communities, economies, and society at large (Stats SA, 2015a). The higher incidence of these situations in poor communities - those with the greatest number of unemployed - creates a vicious cycle whereby outside businesses are less inclined to enter into these communities, further depriving the young adults that live there of job opportunities (Mmesi, 2015).

2.5.4 The Economic Effects of Unemployment

An individual's well-being depends on many things, including health, leisure, family, social relationships, security, and income, to name a few. Nevertheless, income plays a vital role (Sharme, 2012). Therefore, from an economic perspective, unemployment results in the loss of output to the economy (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). Unemployed young adults are less able to contribute effectively to national development and have fewer opportunities to

exercise their rights as citizens. Furthermore, they have less to spend as consumers and less to invest as savers (Stats SA, 2015b). Arnett (2000) proposed that the transition to adulthood consists of taking responsibility for oneself, making independent decisions and being financially independent. Therefore, interruptions in transitioning from being an adolescent to an adult impede the development of young adults' independence. By 2013, an increasing number of South Africa's young adults depended on social grants, and one in three people received a social grant. This economic marginalisation puts pressure on government resources (Magagula, 2017) and creates concerns about social stability (Shankar et al., 2015).

The South African Social Security Agency [SASSA] (2016) reported that social grant recipients increased from 4 million in 1994 to 16.3 million in 2014. Even though social grants have had a positive impact on the lives of South African's in general, there is still a concern as to whether the country will be able to sustain them in the long run (Magagula, 2017). This situation clearly indicates that many people depend on the government's social grants for survival.

The magnitude of young adult's unemployment challenge facing South Africa means that a single employment policy cannot resolve it. Multiple policy options to support young adults' employment are needed to provide an additional lever for government to create jobs (National Treasury, 2011). In addition to a sustained period of accelerated and inclusive economic growth and a comprehensive set of short-term and long-term policy reforms and initiatives, job creation can alleviate the magnitude of unemployment. A combination of interventions, or a multi-pronged approach, is likely to offer the greatest solution for young adults to gain decent work opportunities and alleviate young adults' unemployment (National Treasury, 2011). The current study also investigates this matter by proposing an intervention strategy to assist young adults to find employment. The proposed strategy is discussed in chapter 6.

2.6 Conclusion

The problem of young adults' unemployment is a global phenomenon, and this has been a contentious issue over many decades. Young adults' unemployment is rapidly assuming dangerous proportions in many countries as their economies and educational systems cannot accommodate the growing numbers of young adults entering the labour market. In South Africa, young adults' unemployment is a serious concern as it continues to rise unabated.

The lack of job prospects and the likelihood of a desolate future for the unemployed young adults of South Africa may contribute to the development of social instability in the communities. In turn, this situation could reinforce the marginalisation of young adults from the labour market and society. Hence, large scale unemployment means the deprivation of a society. Being without work and social security threatens life itself. Psychosocially, unemployment leads to human suffering in many dimensions of life. While addressing the psychosocial impact of unemployment is clearly critical in general, the effects of unemployment on the psychosocial development of young adults are vital, especially in a developing country like South Africa. Employment is a key element in the psychosocial well-being of people. The following chapter looks at the theoretical models that are used to explain unemployment.

3 Theoretical Models of Unemployment

The high level of unemployment in the world, in general, necessitates looking at unemployment from different theoretical perspectives to broaden our understanding of this phenomenon. In this regard, various models and theories have been developed in various fields and literature to explain unemployment (Rodriguez, 2015; Vansteenkiste et al., 2005), and several of these theories speak to the potentially severe psychosocial aftermaths of unemployment (Georgiades, 2015). In their attempt to explain unemployment, these models rely on productivity growth, real interest rates, stock prices, institutional variables, or the interaction between institutional and macroeconomic variables (Caporale et al., 2016). Furthermore, these theoretical models provide insight into the factors and processes involved in creating and maintaining unemployment. In this regard, the extended literature dealing with labour economics consist of theoretical models that attempt to explain unemployment (Rodriguez, 2015).

This chapter is dedicated to the discussion on the theoretical models of unemployment. Firstly, the chapter discusses unemployment as a stressor in the lives of unemployed young adults. This serves as the foundational background for the preceding discussions. Secondly, it discusses the psychosocial development theory as the theoretical framework for the current study. It also looks at different theoretical models of stress and use these models to explain unemployment. These models are categorised as; (i) the models that explain the causes of unemployment, (ii) the models that demonstrate the effects of unemployment on the individuals and, (iii) the models that describe the coping strategies that people use to deal with their unemployment status.

3.1 Unemployment as a Stressor

Many people experience stress sometimes, and they have to make some adjustments.

Unemployment is one of the most obvious *stressors* that negatively affect people financially and threatens their security and self-concept (Pelzer et al., 2014). Folkman and Lazarus (1984, p. 19) defined stress as a “particular relationship between the person and his environment, that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.” This means that an individual’s cognitive appraisal is involved in mediating the experience of stress. Selye (1973) regarded stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it, and he named this set of responses the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS).

There are two common forms of stress: *acute* and *chronic* stress (Mahakud et al., 2013). Generally, chronic stress has far more serious negative effects, both mentally and physically (Baqtayan, 2015). Various sources produce stress. This involves the conflict emanating from high aspirations and goal attainment and failure to cope with the demanding situation, such as unemployment (Mahakud et al., 2013).

The degree that people experience stress varies, depending on various intra-psychic and interpersonal factors. People that are vulnerable to stress tend to experience more health-related problems and difficulties in interpersonal relations when compared to those that are less susceptible to stress (Baqtayan, 2015). Therefore, this means that stress affects people in different ways, depending on many dispositional and situational factors.

Lazarus and Cohen (1977) maintained that the demands made by the internal or external environments on the individual upset the balance by affecting the physical and psychological well-being and hence, require action to restore the balance. Therefore, a critical analysis of the stress caused by unemployment would help to determine what employment means to an individual - whether it is for money or other psychological benefits. This point is further discussed by the models of latent functions and economic deprivation (see section 3.2.2.1 below). According to meta-analysis, unemployment as a stressor tends to reduce an individual's subjective well-being and mental health (Zechmann & Paul, 2019). This means that

unemployment has devastating effects on the psychological functioning of young unemployed adults. This issue is evident in the current study as the participants showed reduced mental health due to stress caused by unemployment (see chapter 5).

3.2 The Psychosocial Development Theory

As stated in Chapter 1, Erikson's *psychosocial development theory* is discussed here because it is the theoretical framework for the study. The theory is used to show how unemployment affects the psychosocial development of young adults in the Ekurhuleni area in Gauteng. Reference is made to the psychosocial development tasks proposed by the theory concerning the results of the study. Erikson and Erikson (1997) believed that human development takes place in eight stages.

3.2.1 Stages of Psychosocial Development

The psychosocial development theory views development as comprising a series of eight stages that are connected. Thus, each stage builds on the skills learned in the previous stages (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011), and the resolution of earlier psychosocial issues forms the basis for resolution of subsequent issues (Sneed et al., 2012). Furthermore, each stage is distinguished by characteristics that differentiate it from preceding and succeeding stages (Sowers & Dulmus, 2008). These stages are presented in Table 3.1 below.

The theory states that successful completion of each stage results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues. Basic virtues are the strengths that the ego can use to resolve subsequent crises. Failing to successfully complete a stage can result in a reduced ability to complete further stages, and therefore, an unhealthy personality and poor sense of self would emerge. However, crises in some stages can be resolved successfully later (McLeod, 2013). Only the stage of young adulthood is discussed in detail here because it is the focal point of the present study.

Stage	Basic Conflict	Important Events	Key Questions to be answered	Outcome
Infancy (0 to 18 months)	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding/ Comfort	Is my world safe?	Children develop a sense of trust when caregivers provide reliability, care and affection. A lack of this will lead to mistrust.
Early Childhood (2 to 3 years)	Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt	Toilet Training/ Dressing	Can I do things by myself or need I always rely on others?	Children need to develop a sense of personal control over physical skills and a sense of independence. Success leads to feeling of autonomy, failure results in feelings of shame and doubt.
Preschool (3 to 5 years)	Initiative vs. Guilt	Exploration/ Play	Am I good or bad?	Children need to begin asserting control and power over the environment. Success in this state leads to a sense of purpose. Children who try to exert too much power experience disapproval, resulting in a sense of guilt.
School Age (6 to 11 years)	Industry vs. Inferiority	School/ Activities	How can I be good?	Children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feeling of inferiority.
Adolescence (12 to 18 years)	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Social Relationships / Identity	Who am I and where am I going?	Teens need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. Success leads to an ability to stay true to yourself, while failure leads to role confusion and a weak sense of self.
Young Adult (19 to 40 years)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Intimate Relationships	Am I loved and wanted?	Young adults need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success leads to strong relationships, while failure results in loneliness and isolation.
Middle Adulthood (40 to 65 years)	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Work and Parenthood	Will I provide something of real value?	Adults need to create or nurture things that will outlast them, often by having children or creating a positive change that benefits other people. Success leads to feelings of usefulness and accomplishment, while failure results in shallow involvement in the world.
Maturity (65 to death years)	Ego Identity vs. Despair	Reflection on life	Have I lived a full life?	Older adults need to look back on life and feel a sense of fulfilment. Success at this state leads to a feeling of wisdom while failure results in regret, bitterness, and despair.

Table 3-1 Erikson's psychosocial stages of development. (Adapted from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.).)

3.2.2 Exploring the Stage of Young Adulthood (18 - 40 years)

Young adults growing in modern societies are expected to develop a sense of personal identity. This involves finding out whom they wish to be, what their values are, what work will they do and with whom they want to share their lives (Chow et al., 2014). Erikson and Erikson (1997) stated that the experience of a *psychosocial crisis* - a crucial period in a person's life - is normative at the beginning of this stage because of diverse challenges in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Life events such as unemployment tend to have a strong impact on identifying formation and playing a central role in life script and the trauma experienced during this period compared to other periods of life (Ogle et al., 2013). Entry into full-time work, marriage, and parenthood are the major life events that have traditionally signalled a move into adult status (Martin et al., 2014). In this regard, psychosocial health is one of the main factors that facilitate the optimal development of young adults in the face of adversity. In this context, psychosocial health refers to a broad group of psychological assets that buffer the effects of adverse life circumstances such as unemployment (Lerner et al., 2000).

According to Erikson (1963), the main task of early or young adulthood is to achieve a stable and intimate sexual relationship with another person. He viewed intimacy or closeness and mutual sharing with another person as the basic strength of this stage, isolation as its core pathology (Fleming, 2004; McLeod, 2013). In Erikson's view, true intimacy involves mutuality and commitment, accepting another person with all his or her strengths and weaknesses in an interdependent, sexual relationship. Erikson believed that genuine intimacy requires a sense of identity to be firmly in place; otherwise, the relationship becomes merely a tool to help resolve identity concerns for each partner (Erikson & Erikson, 1997).

Although some young adults make successful transition to young adulthood, others often experience adulthood as a stressful stage of development. Some setback experiences involve becoming a parent too soon, failing to find work, or getting in trouble with the law

(Martin et al., 2014). According to the theory, young adults face some psychosocial development tasks that they have to deal with during this stage.

3.2.3 The Psychosocial Development Tasks in Young Adulthood

The generation of young people in modern society is facing several fundamental psychosocial development tasks. These tasks are defined as age-graded normative tasks based on societal expectations about the developmental milestones that should be reached in specific life phases (Roisman et al., 2004). The following sections briefly look at some of the most common developmental tasks in young adulthood.

3.2.3.1 Independence from Parents

One of the major central themes of young adult development is attaining *independence* from families of origin. Hence, living away from one's parents is considered a sign of independence. In this case, independence refers to freedom within the family to make one's own decisions, emotional freedom to form new relationships, and freedom to take personal responsibility in matters such as education, political beliefs, and future careers (Coleman, 2011). Although young adults are relatively independent of their parents, they have few enduring adult-like responsibilities. They are expected to explore several alternatives concerning relationships, their professional career, ideology and find their place in society (Klimstra et al., 2014). Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that much of the psychosocial development that occurs before this stage may be preparing the individual for autonomy from parents. In most cases, being independent would require that an individual is financially viable and can afford basic life necessities independently. The current research looks at this issue in detail.

3.2.3.2 Sex-role identity

The term *sex-role* refers to the characteristics and behaviours defined by a society or culture as appropriate for members of each gender (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). In many societies, traditional notions of what constitutes masculinity and femininity govern gender role identity and the behaviour of men and women (Toller et al., 2004). Hence, the sexual development of young adults involves an acceptance of sexual identity. The traditional roles of males and females have undergone much change within the last few decades. Our concepts of masculinity and femininity have largely been influenced by other forces such as the women's movements, changing attitudes about sexuality, and the increasing proportion of women who combine work and parenting simultaneously. Currently, many of the activities viewed as appropriate for one gender are now seen as more or less acceptable for the other gender as well (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006).

Erikson (1963) considered sexuality as an important aspect of identity formation for both genders, as the young adults must cope with their bodily changes, develop a sexual ideology, and consolidate their sex roles and sexual orientation. As young people progress through late adolescence to young adulthood, societal expectations still determine and guide their behaviour for mature sex-role identity (Moore & Rosenthal, 2006). The current study also investigated this aspect in terms of the impact that unemployment has on the participants' sex-role identity.

3.2.3.3 Career Choices

The choice of occupation during adolescence sets the stage for an independent adult lifestyle. Finishing school opens the possibility of diverse educational pathways, such as deciding to invest in further education (Wagner et al., 2013). Erikson and Erikson (1997) stated that occupational choice is perhaps the major decision leading to a sense of identity formation, and the occupation that people choose influences many aspects of their lives,

perhaps more than any other factor. Studies of career development highlight the importance of finding a good 'fit' between individual values, needs, abilities, and the experiences and rewards to be found in occupations (Vuolo et al., 2012). Ideally, a young person should choose a career that matches his or her abilities, interests, personality and promotes the development of a positive self-image. Unfortunately, such an ideal situation is not always easily achieved because choosing a career is influenced by factors such as psychosocial and socio-economic status (Newman & Newman, 1978), gender differences, parental influences, the peer group, teachers, and the school (Liao & Ji, 2015).

Early careers are particularly unstable in most cases as young adults move from "survival jobs" to "career jobs" in their quest for a good person-job fit. Difficulties during this period also reflect the deteriorating job market for young adults and weak institutional connections between schools and employers. In this context, young adults must rely on their own resources and social connections as they complete school, seek full-time jobs, and become established in the world of work (Vuolo et al., 2012). In the current study, this issue was evident and discussed in detail.

3.2.3.4 Marriages and Partnerships

As part of their quest for intimacy, many young adults tend to get married in their mid-twenties, although this may vary considerably across settings (Duncan et al., 2007). For many young adults, *marriages and partnerships* enhance their relationships, their sense of identity and fulfilment. Having a stable intimate relationship has been found to contribute to well-being throughout adulthood. Young adults will be subjected to loneliness if they fail to form meaningful relationships with family, friends, or community (Vaillant, 2002).

The formalization of partnerships in institutionalized arrangements, such as marriage, is often followed by having children, and parenting children are associated with young adulthood (Swartz et al., 2012). While raising very young children can be stressful, the

research suggests that parents reap the rewards down the road, as children tend to positively affect parental well-being (Umberson et al., 2010). Nonetheless, many young adult marriages could also result in relationship conflicts, disillusionment with partners, constraint attachments, and even violence. For example, family violence may interfere with a young adult's development and expression of intimacy, as well as his or her general psychosocial development (Swartz et al., 2012).

3.2.3.5 Work

Entry into adult employment is one of the major developmental tasks of young adulthood (Chow et al., 2014). In many societies, *work* plays a crucial role in the development of young adults. It provides a source of income and thereby allows for a measure of self-sufficiency. It also provides an outlet for creative accomplishment and serves as a source of stimulating relationships with colleagues and increased self-esteem (Swartz et al., 2012). Some writers asserted that people need to have and continue to find meaning throughout their lives. For people in young adulthood, such meaning is often found in family life (Markus et al., 2004) and work (Sterns & Huyck, 2001). Thus, many young adults find meaning in and define themselves by what they do - their careers (Mohr & Zoghi, 2006). Moreover, Vogel (2015) maintained that work is far more than a source of income - it is a source of dignity.

Studies have indicated that work values play a vital role in adult career outcomes and relate to later marital status and parenthood, and consequently, contribute to resolving important developmental tasks in transition to adulthood. Although normative age-graded events, such as leaving high school, could change work values and beliefs, non-normative life events - such as unemployment - may be a turning point that put an individual on a positive or negative trajectory (Chow et al., 2014). Therefore, the current study discusses the impact of unemployment on the lives of young adults and places it in relation to the psychosocial theory of development. As mentioned before, the theory asserts that young adults also face

psychosocial crises as they navigate through the stage of young adulthood.

3.2.4 Crises in Young Adulthood

According to the psychosocial theory, the first years of adult life are often characterised by instability in relationships, identity crisis, social networks, living arrangements, and a heightened vulnerability to mental illnesses compared to other stages in the lifespan (Robinson & Smith, 2010). This period, which typically involves a re-evaluation of the lifestyle and life structure of earlier years, can become a crisis if a person finds that the life structure that they developed during their 20s is causing them distress (Robinson & Wright, 2013).

A psychosocial crisis is a crucial period or turning point in a person's life. These crises are psychosocial in nature because they involve the psychological needs of the individual (i.e., psyche), conflicting with the needs of the society (i.e., social) (McLeod, 2013). Crises in the first decade of young adulthood (25 - 40 years) are known as *quarter-life crises* (Robinson & Smith, 2010), and those that occur during middle adulthood are known as *mid-life crises* (Lachman, 2004). Since the present study focused on the participants between the ages of 25 to 39, the discussion is on "quarter-life" crises. A quarter-life crisis often revolves around the challenges that arise from young adults newly living life on their own and feeling overwhelmed with new responsibilities. It can also happen after the birth of a child or if a person graduates from college and cannot find a job (Erikson, 1963).

Erikson and Erikson (1997) maintained that the crises that are more likely to occur in the young adulthood period include the initiation of a career, the commencement of the long-term partnership, and the start of parenthood. Erikson (1968) also proposed that psychosocial crises accompanying each developmental stage are universal, occurring in every culture but, each culture offers unique solutions at each life stage (Sowers & Dulmus, 2008). If a crisis is managed successfully, the positive component - for example, achievement of intimacy in young adulthood - is absorbed into the emerging ego, and further healthy development of an

individual is assured. Conversely, failure to manage a crisis will result in a negative component - such as isolation in young adulthood (Hornberger, 2006).

While crises are difficult and stressful life episodes, turning points in one's life may include positive episodes such as fulfilling a particular dream (Robinson, 2012). Some people who experience a quarter-life crisis struggle with coping and may engage in harmful behaviours, such as substance abuse (alcohol or drugs) or excessive spending of money (Robinson & Smith, 2010). However, some writers have proposed that crises can play a functional role in positive adult development. Firstly, crisis episodes can act as stimuli for change when a person is living in problematic or unhealthy ways. Secondly, a resolved crisis often leads to self-evaluations of personal strength for having resolved a difficult and emotionally challenging life episode successfully, leading to heightened self-esteem and an enhanced sense of autonomy. Thirdly, the experiences of crises may help a person to better empathize with others who are going through difficult times in their lives (Robinson & Wright, 2013).

Looking at the crises of young adulthood, it is apparent that unemployment presents a serious crisis to many young adults in South Africa and the world generally. Unemployment affects many dimensions in the lives of young adults. A sense of independence, career choices, a sense of self, one's role in society, marriages and partnership are all affected - one way or the other - when a person is unemployed.

3.2.5 Contributions and Limitations of the Psychosocial Development Theory

It is imperative to look at both the contributions and the limitations of the theory in question to provide a balanced discussion. One of the strengths of the psychosocial development theory is that it considers the role of social and cultural factors in development (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011), and has wide applicability across cultural contexts and highlights the ongoing nature of identity development throughout adulthood (Kroger et al.,

2010). The theory explains the whole aspect of social development, from infancy through adulthood (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011). Erikson also stimulated a renewed interest in topics such as identity development in adolescence and generativity in adulthood (Keenan et al., 2016). Furthermore, the theory accounts for both transition and continuity in personality development by drawing connections between early childhood experiences and the aspects of adult personality (Weiten, 2013).

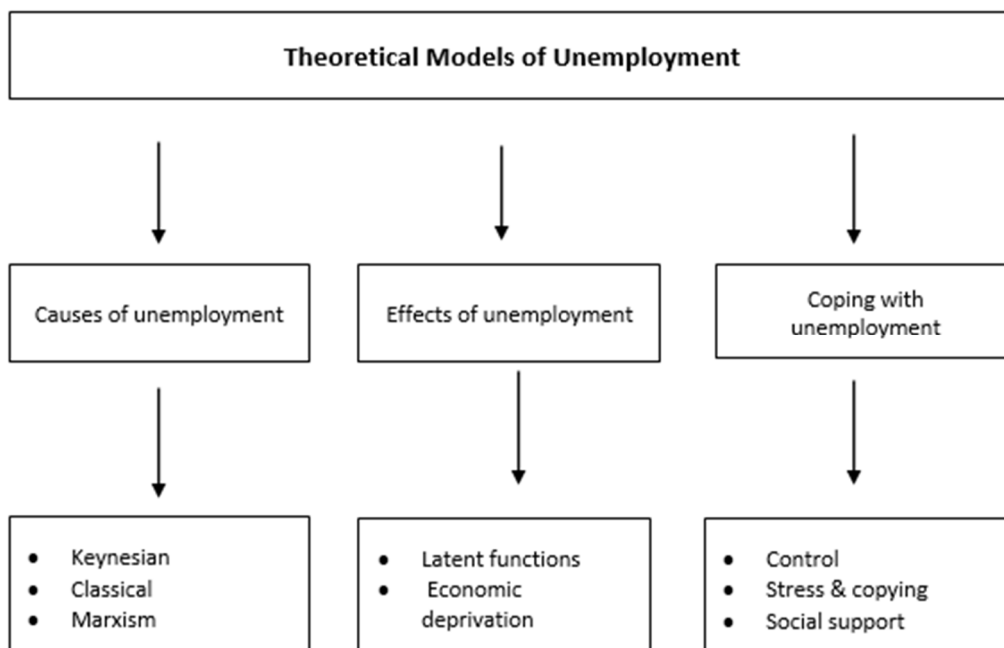
Despite its strengths, the theory has been criticized for being a loosely connected set of ideas that lack a systematic quality rather than as a coherent theory of development. Some concepts, such as generativity, are used in a way that is different from their ordinary meaning and are somewhat difficult to understand. In addition, concepts such as trust and autonomy are more descriptive than explanatory and are difficult to verify or test experimentally (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian, 2011). Furthermore, the theory proposes no specific mechanisms for how development occurs, thus, how a person moves from one stage to the next (Keenan et al., 2016). Moreover, the theory depends heavily on illustrative case studies that are open to various interpretations. Hence, it provides an “idealized” description of “typical” development patterns and is not well suited for explaining the enormous personality differences that exist among people (Weiten, 2013).

Nevertheless, Erikson’s theory is a useful theory that focuses on the role of society and culture in human development. By considering cultural factors, an individual’s development is viewed with the society in which they live. This provides an understanding of the cultural influence on a person’s behaviour. The strength of the theory lies in its contribution to the study of human development. This theory was chosen as the theoretical framework for the present study because it views human development, especially in terms of the fundamental psychosocial development tasks. Therefore, the results of the present study are discussed in relation to these tasks, where applicable.

3.3 Different Theoretical Perspectives on Unemployment

This section focuses on different theoretical models used in the psychological literature to explain various aspects of unemployment. As stated previously, these theories are divided into three categories: Firstly, we discuss the models that focus on the causes of unemployment. Secondly, the discussion focuses on the models that demonstrate the effects of unemployment on the development of young adults. Lastly, we look at the models that explain people's coping strategies when dealing with unemployment. The relevance of these theories is that together they provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of unemployment from different theoretical perspectives. Therefore, to understand unemployment, we have to examine the causes, effects, and coping strategies that people use to deal with the ordeal of unemployment. These models are presented in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3-1 Schematic representation of the theoretical models of unemployment (Own construction, 2019)



3.3.1 The Theoretical Models that Explain the Causes of Unemployment

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are various causes of unemployment. This section, therefore, looks at the theories that attempt to answer the question: "What causes

unemployment”? I selected three theories for discussion. These are Keynesian theory, the classical economic theory, and the Marxian economic theory.

3.3.1.1 The Keynesian Theory of Unemployment

According to Blinder (2008), the Keynesian economic theory explains the total spending in the economy (called aggregate demand) and its effects on output and inflation. From the Keynesian perspective, unemployment results from deficiencies in aggregate demand in the business cycle because jobs created are inadequate for everyone who wants to work (Keynes, 1936). In a sense, this means that when the market fails to create adequate demand for labour, unemployment results (Katrakilidis & Tsaliki, 2008).

Keynes (1936) used the term ‘full employment’ to signify the absence of any involuntary unemployment. The theory described full employment as the condition which would prevail “when output has risen to a level at which the marginal return from a representative unit of the factors of production has fallen to the minimum Figure at which a quantity of the factors sufficient to produce this output is available” (Viner, 2011, p. 150). Furthermore, the theory states that unemployment is cyclical and involuntary because there are limited employment opportunities. The underlying viewpoint of the theory is that the lack of aggregate demand would lead to falling sales which lead to a fall in investments, creating a vicious cycle of unemployment (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). This means that the labour market fails to create more employment opportunities, and therefore, people become unemployed. According to Gottschalk (2002), the assumption of sticky wages, in theory, makes it possible that labour demand does not equal labour supply quantities. This allows for involuntary unemployment to take place.

Therefore, the key ingredients of the Keynesian theory are:

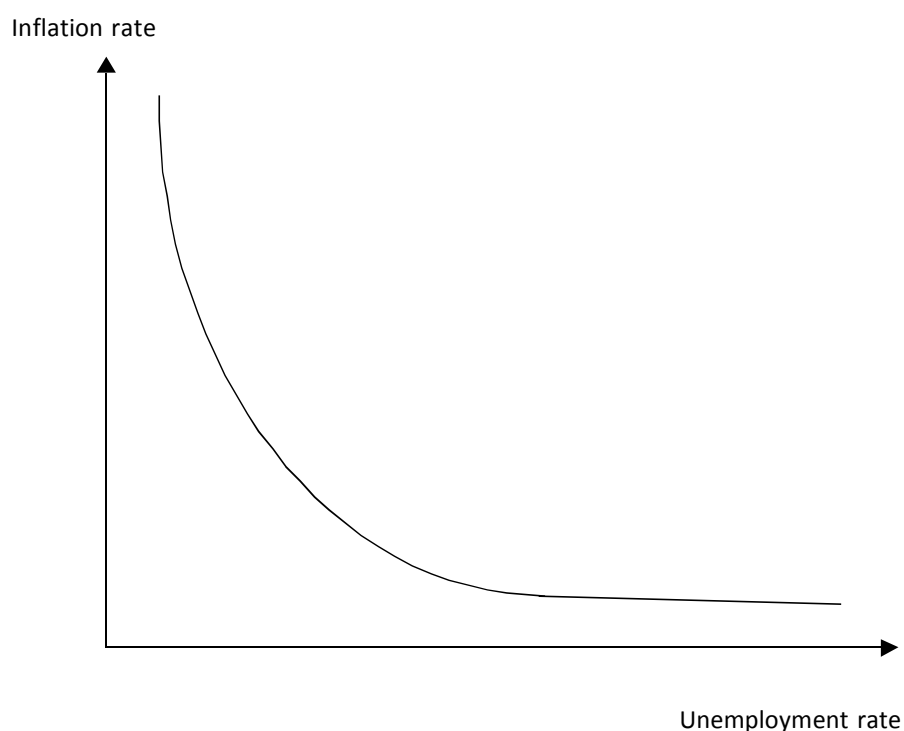
Labour demand - The theory postulates that the quantity of output (total income or

production) that companies produce, and assuming that prices are fixed, determines employment. Therefore, the companies' production depends on the demand of the product by the customers (Rodriguez, 2015). This results in aggregate demand for goods that influence income at a certain price, leading to a new level of employment. This happens because companies hire new employees based on the production needs of the companies. Therefore, the implication is that aggregate demand is the mechanism through which employment situation can be changed (Rodriguez, 2015).

Wage equation - The wage equation reflects the total amount of wages determined over the competitive level. Wages in the labour market can be fixed by unions, employers' associations, or the government. The theory is conceived as a downward sloped curve because it assumes a decrease in employment when companies fire workers. This happens when companies do not increase production because there is insufficient demand for the product because people are unemployed (Rodriguez, 2015). The advocates for the theory believe that since prices are relatively rigid, fluctuations in any component of spending, such as investment, or government expenditures, cause the corresponding fluctuations in the output (Blinder, 2008). Therefore Rodriguez (2015) asserted that when firms have already employed all the workers, then real wage can be determined by the wage equation.

Phillips (1958) provided a link that explains nominal wage as a function of conditions prevailing in the past, and he suggested that the current values of the unemployment rate can be used to explain the nominal wage rate (see Figure 3.2 below). Moreover, Phillips (1958) asserted that if the demand for labour were much higher than labour supply, companies would increase wages rapidly. In a sense, this means that additional workers would be hired, resulting in a low unemployment rate in the economy. The more discrepancy exists between labour demand and supply, the more upward pressure on nominal wages would become.

Figure 3-2 *The Phillips curve (Adopted from Gottschalk, 2002)*



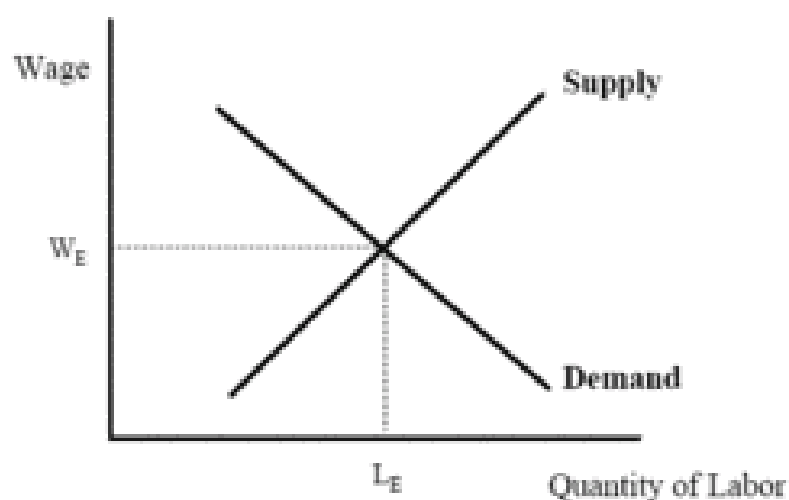
The Phillips curve is also used to indicate the link between monetary policy and inflation since monetary policy can exercise control over inflation (Gottschalk, 2002).

Keynes (1936) asserted that the governments need aggressive action to stabilize the economy and resolve unemployment. This should be based on the judgement and the beliefs that: (i) the fluctuations of macroeconomic significantly reduce economic well-being; and (ii) the government is capable and has sufficient knowledge to improve on the free market (Blinder, 2008). In addition, Keynes (1936) stated that the government could encourage investment (or undertake its own investment) and expand consumption to speed up recovery from the economic depression that can lead to more or less full employment. Therefore, the theory calls for the government to use appropriate policies to eliminate unemployment and the high level of unemployment in the economy (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016).

3.3.1.2 The Classical Economic Theory of Unemployment

The theory simply asserts that the labour market consists of the demand and supply of labour. Demand for labour is obtained from the declining portion of the marginal product of labour, whereas labour supply is derived from workers' choice of whether or not to offer their labour. When the equilibrium (the steady-state) is achieved, the demand and supply of labour intersect at a clearing point that determines the real wage rate and full employment (Mouhammed, 2011). This is depicted in Figure 3.3 below. The availability of labour is important for producing any goods and services in the economy. This is important for understanding how unemployment operates in the market. Therefore, in the classical literature, the theory of value appears as a fundamental determinant of commodity price movements (Shaikh, 2015).

Figure 3-3 A Supply and Demand Model for labour. (Source: Goodwin et al., 2006 p.1)



Furthermore, the theory maintains that unemployment (apart from frictional obstruction) would not exist if the wage-earners were not demanding wages higher than the ongoing wage rate in the economy (Mouhammed, 2011). Therefore, this theory perceives unemployment as an indication that smooth labour market functioning is obstructed in a negative way (Goodwin et al., 2006). Therefore, according to classical economists, the

interferences in the market labour functioning can lead to the development of unemployment. In this case, the economy may provide less than the optimal number of jobs because:

- (i) Government regulations imposed on businesses reduce their growth thereby, restricting growth in the demand for labour;
- (ii) Labour-related regulations (such as safety regulations and mandated benefits) and union activities increase the cost of labour to businesses, causing them to turn towards labour-saving technologies and thus reducing job growth; and
- (iii) Policies such as disability insurance and unemployment insurance increase unemployment by causing people to become less willing to seek work (Goodwin et al., 2006).

Therefore, classical economists believe that unemployment is a short-term phenomenon and the free market would eventually restore the economy to full employment. However, when full employment does not happen because the market did not clear up, this may lead to classical involuntary unemployment. Therefore, in the classical theory, involuntary unemployment can occur only due to distortions (such as the legal minimum wage) in the labour market functions (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016). The theory also maintains that cyclical unemployment does not exist because unemployed people are in involuntary unemployment because they have made a conscious decision to be out of work. According to the theory, such people are either part of frictional or structural unemployment (Dagume & Gyekye, 2016).

The theory posits that unemployment is exacerbated by the three variables: the dynamic interactions of the rate of capital accumulation, the movement of the labour force participation, and the mechanisation of the labour process. Within this framework, these variables are responsible for the development of unemployment, and each variable exerts a particular effect on the functions of the labour market (Katrakilidis & Tsaliki, 2008).

The classical approach to unemployment believes that companies are free to engage

in competition for their survival. Competition forces companies to increase productivity and reduce the unit cost of production through the use of fixed capital in the production process (Katrakilidis & Tsaliki, 2008). The theory also believes in the possibility of having full employment but, it does not mean that there is no unemployment. For example, if an individual thinks that being unemployed is better than the benefit of work, then this individual may decide not to work. This is called voluntary unemployment (Mouhammed, 2011).

3.3.1.3 The Marxian Theory of Unemployment

In his first volume of *Capital*, published in 1867, Karl Marx explained how capitalism works and why unemployment is necessary to capitalism (Hardcastle, 2007). The basic premise of Marxian theory is that capitalism both creates and needs unemployment to survive (Myers, 2014). The theory maintains that capitalism is characterised by private ownership of the means of production. This ownership deprives people of their sense of self-worth and identity and expropriates the products of their labour that are sold for profit (Peters & Besley, 2013). Furthermore, Marx argued that labour plays an important role in the self-concept and well-being of an individual (Helmedag, 2019).

In addition, Marx observed how the capitalists exploited the workers for profit, and he maintained that labour creates value in the production process, while the capitalists take the surplus-value in the exchange process (Helmedag, 2019; Shaikh, 2015). Therefore, there is a uniform rate of exploitation that characterises equilibrium in capitalism (Helmedag, 2019). This is one of the important elements of Marxism that helps to understand the workings of capitalism and its effects on labour demands.

According to Marxism, the cause of unemployment is that capitalism strives to increase productivity. By definition, greater productivity means that companies produce a large number of products from a smaller investment. This is done by lowering the wages and increasing the working hours. The other simple way is to switch to efficient machinery. The

introduction of machinery displaces the employees by transferring the labour to the industry that manufactures the machines (Myers, 2014). This makes the labour cost-effective because the labour employed in making and maintaining the machine is usually less than the labour displaced by it; otherwise, there would be no point in substituting labour for machinery. Therefore, machines have replaced workers. In this regard, competition occurs and leads to concentration. Basically, when two or more companies merge, one worker can operate a larger amount of the company's capital. This ensures the retrenchment of other workers that were doing the same job (Myers, 2014). This point has some implications for the studies of unemployment. For example, in the current study, some participants also touched on this subject as the reason for the high unemployment rate in the country. The theory shows that capitalism attempts to reduce production costs by utilising labour-displacing machinery or other means to achieve the same output with less labour, creating unemployment (Hardcastle, 2007).

3.3.2 *The Theoretical Models that Explain the Effects of Unemployment*

This section looks at the models that explain the relationship between unemployment and health. I selected two models here. Thus, the models of latent functions and economic deprivation. The relevance of these models is the fact that unemployment has some effects (psychological, financial, and social) on young unemployed people. These theories would eventually shed some light on the present study results (see chapter 5).

3.3.2.1 The Models of Latent Functions and Economic Deprivation

There is a huge psychological literature that focuses on the link between unemployment and psychological well-being. Most of the literature depicts unemployment as extremely stressful, leading to anxiety, depression and ill-health (Peters & Besley, 2013). The models of latent functions and economic deprivation focus on the benefits of employment to explain psychological problems arising from unemployment. Although formulated in the

1980s, the foundation of the models goes back to the time of the Great Depression in the 1930s (Zechmann & Paul, 2019). The models differentiate between manifest and latent functions.

On the one hand, manifest functions are the intended functions of a phenomenon in a social system. They are the consequences that people observe or expect and are explicitly stated and understood by the participants. Therefore, manifest functions relate primarily to monetary reward in the work environment through the production of goods and the delivery of services (Paul & Batinic, 2010). On the other hand, latent functions are the unintended functions of a phenomenon in a social system and are associated with meeting psychological needs (Waters & Moore, 2001). According to these models, therefore, meeting psychological needs is the key function of employment.

The idea behind these models is that work or employment contributes to five latent functions that correspond to the basic human needs (Batinic et al., 2010; Paul & Batinic, 2010). The latent functions relate to the positive side-effects of paid work conducive to well-being (Sage, 2018). These latent functions are:

- (i) *Time structure* - In their working lives, individuals have to adhere to a certain time structure (Zechmann & Paul, 2019). Therefore, work provides a daily structure on what to do, when, and how (Paul & Batinic, 2010).
- (ii) *Social contact* - Employment broadens the scope of social relations (Paul & Batinic, 2010). Maintaining regular contacts with others outside the nuclear family is important for an individual's functioning (Paul et al., 2007).
- (iii) *Collective purpose and shared experiences* - Employment enables people to strive for meaningful goals by co-operating with others and contributing to a collective purpose (Zechmann & Paul, 2019). The feeling of being useful and needed by other people in their social environment and shared experiences is important for an individual's mental health. If this need for meaning in life is deprived, a sense of purposelessness

will result, leading to feelings of distress (Paul & Batinic, 2010).

(iv) *Status and personal identity* - A person's occupational identity defines a certain status that informs people about their position in society (Zechmann & Paul, 2019). The social status of an individual is, therefore, important for identity development. The models' further state that even a low status is better than having no status, which is how unemployed people often experience their situation (Paul & Batinic, 2010).

(v) *Activity* - Employment requires regular activity. The models maintain that being active (even due to external forces such as the need to earn a living) is better for a person's psychological well-being than being passive (Paul & Batinic, 2010).

Furthermore, the models also state that unemployment deprives people of the manifest benefit function of work - thus, earning a living (Georgiades, 2015), and makes the unemployed people passive (Perttilä & Ek, 2010).

One particular theory worth mentioning here is Jahoda's economic deprivation theory (Jahoda, 1982). This is the most influential theory that explains the adverse correlation between unemployment and psychological health (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009). Deprivation generally depicts a lack of some status, commodities, abilities or capabilities. It implies a standard of living or quality of life below that of the majority in a particular society to the extent that it involves hardship, inadequate access to resources, and under privilege (Khan & Hassan, 2012). In her seminal work in the 1930s, Jahoda found that unemployment resulted in a loss of access to five important psychosocial benefits of employment (thus, latent functions), which accounts for the poor mental health experienced by the unemployed (Paul & Batinic, 2010). The theory furthermore states that although work provides both manifest and latent functions, it is the loss of the latent functions that operate to reduce the well-being of an individual (Creed & Reynolds, 2001; Waters & Moore, 2002a) and ill-health may result (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009; Paul & Batinic, 2010).

Therefore, according to these models, unemployed people would have less money

that would directly or indirectly worsen the prerequisites for good health (Monsef & Mehrjardi, 2018). In a sense, this explains the important role that paid work plays in the lives of employed people. Zechmann and Paul (2019) mentioned that the distress experienced by unemployed people essentially results from deprivation of important psychological experiences related to the latent functions of work. Furthermore, Jahoda's model states that people can sometimes have experiences of meeting their psychological needs similar to those provided by work (De Witte et al., 2012), but not with an intensity compared to being employed (Creed & Reynolds, 2001). The theory further speculated that even jobs with unfavourable working conditions - as long as they are not completely dehumanizing - are better than having no job at all. This is the reason why the theory asserts that "Employment is psychologically supportive, even when conditions are bad" (Paul & Batinic, 2010, p. 47). Moreover, the theory suggested a potential solution to the problem of unemployment: Through the provision of subsistence support for the unemployed, the most deleterious effects of unemployment could be alleviated (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009).

From the above discussion, it is evident that unemployment robs people of the opportunity to fulfil some of their basic and psychological needs, which is more likely to lead to social disturbance (for example, crime) and psychological problems (for example, depression). Work, in general, fulfils many needs that are not easily fulfilled outside the work environment. The fulfilment of the latent functions is more likely to enable individuals to function optimally within their social environment and contribute to the development of their society.

3.3.3 The Theoretical Models that Explain how People Cope with Unemployment

This section looks at the models that explain people's reactions to the adversity of unemployment in terms of coping. I selected three models here. Thus, the control models, the stress and coping models, and the social support models. The relevance of these models is that they correlate with the results of the present study (see chapter 5) by shedding some

light on the coping mechanisms and processes that unemployed people use to deal with their unemployment status.

3.3.3.1 The Control Models

The control models help answer the following questions: Do unemployed people conceptualize their situation as out of their control? Does exposure to unemployment foster feelings of helplessness? If so, a link may exist between a lack of control and helplessness.

The control models state that the possibility to control, or the feeling that an individual can control the environment, is crucial to respond to the adversity of unemployment (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009). Therefore, from the perspective of the control models, the negative effects of unemployment can be understood as a consequence of decreased control over life (Sharme, 2012).

The concept of the *locus of control* is central to the control models. On the one hand, individuals with an internal locus of control (also called internalisers) believe that they are the masters of their own fate and hence take personal responsibility for what happens to them. They also believe that future outcomes are determined by their own actions (Caliendo et al., 2010; Goldsmith et al., 1996). Therefore, an internal locus of control gives an individual a sense of mastery over stressful situations such as unemployment that can promote the development of psychosocial resilience. For example, the unemployed internalisers tend to blame themselves for being unemployed and do something about their situation since they feel that they can control their situation (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009). This is an important factor that mitigates the negative effects of unemployment on the individual.

On the other hand, individuals with an external locus of control (also called externalizers) believe that their fate or whatever happens to them is controlled by outside forces. Therefore, life's outcomes are attributed to forces such as fate or luck rather than to one's own actions (Caliendo et al., 2010; Goldsmith et al., 1996). For example, the

unemployed externalizers tend to blame others or some external forces for being unemployed. In a sense, the locus of control (whether attributed internally or externally) to a large extent determines what action would be taken by an individual in any given situation. Two theories are selected to illustrate this point. Miller and Seligman (1975) developed the theory of learned helplessness to explain how people feel when the situation is perceived as being out of control. The theory suggested that an individual's reactions to being unemployed are largely influenced by whether the cause of unemployment is seen as internal or external, stable or unstable, global or specific, and whether outcomes are seen as contingent upon responses or independent of responses (controllable or uncontrollable) (Feather, 1990). In addition, the theory stated that individuals who perceive that they have no control over their life situations tend to develop helplessness, apathy, anxiety, and depression (Hammarström, 1994).

Moreover, this perception persists even though the conditions that are responsible for their feelings of helplessness may have changed substantially. Therefore, the damaged psychological health resulting from this perception may affect an individual's subsequent job-seeking behaviour. In the long run, unemployed people tend to become more externalizers because their unemployment situation is increasingly viewed as an event beyond their control (Goldsmith et al., 1996).

Feather (1990) argued that the expectation of uncontrollability develops in the unemployed people over time as they unsuccessfully try to find a job. Every effort to find work seems futile. Based on this learning, the unemployed people may shift to a condition of helplessness, believing that obtaining employment is not determined by what they can do. This, in turn, deepens their sense of helplessness (Goldsmith et al., 1996). Therefore, people must understand how they perceive events so that they can manage their behaviours and adapt to enhance the likelihood of desirable outcomes – such as finding employment.

A similar theory called the attribution theory is concerned with how individuals

explain outcomes, what determines their attributions (thus, locating the cause of action either internally or externally), and how their attributions influence what they believe might happen in the future, how they feel, and what they do (Feather, 1990). Like the previous theory, attribution theory asserted that the result of action normally depends on two conditions: factors within the person and factors within the environment (Perrewé & Zellars, 1999). Therefore, the perceived causes of success and failure in any task are analysed on three dimensions:

- (i) *Locus* – whether the cause of the outcome is perceived to be located internally (within the individual, such as ability or effort), or externally (outside the individual, such as luck);
- (ii) *Stability* – the individual's perception that the cause will continue over time; and
- (iii) *Controllability* – whether or not the cause is under the control of an individual (Perrewé & Zellars, 1999).

For example, an individual could experience diminished self-esteem and hopelessness following job loss if the cause was attributed to internal, stable, uncontrollable factors and if the expectation of finding another job in the future was very low. This pattern of affect would be different if unemployment were attributed to external, unstable, controllable factors, in which case the person might experience dissatisfaction, but no loss of self-esteem and might remain angry but hopeful about finding another job (Feather, 1990). Furthermore, if many people are unemployed in a particular area, it becomes more plausible to blame unemployment on external causes - such as socio-economic conditions and poor government. Conversely, if very few people are unemployed, it becomes more plausible to blame unemployment on internal causes - such as a person's lack of effort to find work (Feather, 1990). Individuals engage in causal analysis when they experience an unexpected or cognitively challenging outcome as a means to regain some sense of control over their environments and, thereby, make it more predictable (Perrewé & Zellars, 1999). Activities leading to self-attribution reinforce a powerful feature of personality that should be sustained.

However, an environment that repeatedly fails to appear to respond to individual action will frustrate the drive to exercise control.

3.3.3.2 The Stress and Coping Models

Many theories have been put forth concerning stress and coping (Baqtayan, 2015). Stress is a common phenomenon of modern life and is generally due to conflict emanating from high aspirations and goal attainment. Stress may also result from failure to cope with the demanding situation (Mahakud et al., 2013), such as unemployment. The stress and coping models attempt to relate social stimuli to the health effects on the individuals using physiological mechanisms as an intermediating factor. A clear perspective on stress and coping comes from the work of Folkman and Lazarus. Folkman and Lazarus (1984, p.19) define psychological stress as “. . . a particular relationship between the person and environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being.” According to these models, stressors are demands made by the internal or external environment that upset the balance, thus affecting physical and psychological well-being and requiring action to restore the balance (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977). Therefore, unemployment and uncertainty about one’s work situation in the future may act as a psychosocial stressor (Hammarström, 1994).

The concepts of cognitive appraisal and coping are of central importance to the stress and coping models. Cognitive appraisal refers to how an individual evaluates a particular transaction between the person and the environment in relation to well-being (Feather, 1990). Coping refers to the ways that people respond to and interact with the problem situation. In a sense, coping behaviours denote the efforts made by an individual to manage stress (Chan et al., 2018). The manner in which people deal with these situations can determine whether they surmount them or suffer various undesirable consequences (Baqtayan, 2015). Therefore, an event such as unemployment will have one meaning for the

individual who has resources sufficient to meet the demands and will have another meaning for the individual who does not have the necessary resources (Jacobson, 1987). In many instances, before real coping can occur, the situation (for example, unemployment) is normally evaluated as potentially stressful by the individual (Berjot & Gillet, 2011). Coping strategies such as job-seeking activities and retraining are some of the adequate strategies to cope with unemployment (Christensen et al., 2006). In this regard, there are two main forms of coping:

- (i) *Problem-focused coping* - involves dealing with the problem that is causing the distress (Baqtayan, 2015; Lorenzini & Giugni, 2010). Problem-solving forms of coping are often used more in situations where an individual's causal analysis suggests that something can be done to change a negative situation (Perrewé & Zellars, 1999). This may include behaviours such as playful problem-solving, positive reappraisal, and instrumental support seeking (Chan et al., 2018).
- (ii) *Emotion-focused coping* - This is coping directed toward regulating the emotional response to the problem (Baqtayan, 2015; Folkman & Lazarus, 1984; Lorenzini & Giugni, 2010). This may include escapism, self-control, and emotional support seeking (Chan et al., 2018).

Although both forms of coping are used in most stressful encounters, they are nevertheless dependent on how an individual appraises the situation, thus, either as a threat or a challenge (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Mark and Smith (2011) mentioned other coping methods such as self-blame, escape/avoidance, wishful thinking, and seeking advice. Therefore, coping is influenced by the person-environment relationship, which changes continuously and, thus, influences the coping strategies (Perttilä & Ek, 2010).

3.3.3.3 The Social Support Models

Of all the factors that mediate the adverse impact of stress on psychological and emotional well-being, social support is usually the primary focus (Guba & Lincoln, 2006) and is considered one of the most important types of problems experienced in emotion-focused coping (Baqutayan, 2015). The models of social support are closely related to the stress perspective. Social support is defined as “the functions performed for the individuals by significant others, such as family, friends, and co-workers” (Thoits, 1995, p.64). Generally, social support has been found to promote well-being in individuals suffering from stress and reduce negative outcomes (Graham & Barnow, 2013), and is a good resource for coping (Orford et al., 2010), especially during stressful periods such as unemployment (Lorenzini & Giugni, 2010). Social support may include financial assistance, companionship, advice (Roberts et al., 1996), and instrumental, informational, or emotional assistance to the individual (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009). However, the importance of each of these factors varies according to the needs of the individual or the demands of the situation (Roberts et al., 1996). Kates et al. (1990) see supportive relationships as helping to maintain a sense of self-worth for the unemployed who cannot make instrumental accomplishments in social activities. The absence of these relationships would lead to low self-esteem and a greater likelihood of emotional difficulties.

There are two different but complementary social support mechanisms: the direct (or main) effect and the buffer effect (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009). The direct effect model postulated that an increase in social support would result in an increase in well-being, irrespective of the current level of support (Baqutayan, 2015; Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). Furthermore, the model states that a high level of social support is associated with fewer depressive symptoms and a decreased likelihood of suffering from various psychiatric disorders (Graham & Barnow, 2013). The model predicts that a variable (such as coping style) has direct and uniform effects on mental health, irrespective of the levels of adversity

experienced (Beasley et al., 2003). In these models, the presence of human contact is seen as a fundamental need. When this is lacking, it will result in unfavourable reactions. Therefore, the lack of social networks is supposed to have immediate detrimental consequences for health.

The hypothesis that social support may act as a buffer against the harmful psychosocial effects of stress stems from extensive research into the relationship between negative life events and psychological distress (Lorenzini & Giugni, 2010). The stress-buffering model proposed that social support has a more substantial and beneficial impact on those who experience higher stress levels than those who experience less stress (Benhorin & McMahon, 2008). Hence, the buffering model describes how social support can protect an individual's well-being from the negative impact of stress (Graham & Barnow, 2013).

Advocates of the buffering effect argue that individuals with strong social support are better equipped to cope with stressors, whereas those with less support may be more vulnerable to the adverse effects of stress, such as depression (Roberts et al., 1996). In this regard, social resources have a particularly marked effect on how well individuals cope with unemployment. For example, an individual facing unemployment would cope more successfully if he/she has a supportive social support network (Kroll & Lambert, 2009). Therefore, social integration and social support seem most critical for promoting health and buffering the negative impact of unemployment (Janlert & Hammarström, 2009).

Taken together, the discussion of these models of unemployment indicates how different theoretical perspectives contribute to our understanding of unemployment. Every model provides a way of looking at unemployment, whether in terms of its causes, the effects, or how people cope with unemployment. Therefore, these models are useful as they broaden our understanding of unemployment in general.

3.4 Conclusion

It is evident that unemployment has fallen under the auspices of stressful life events, and it can be considered a chronic stressor in its own right. Substantial research indicates that stressful life events, including those associated with job loss, contribute to the onset of depression and anxiety. Unemployment as a stressor does not affect only the individual, but their families and the society also suffer largely.

The vast literature in psychology and many other fields is composed of many theories and models that look at unemployment from different theoretical perspectives. Nevertheless, these theoretical models unanimously agree that unemployment as a stressor has a devastating impact on the lives of the unemployed, and they all speak to the potentially severe psychosocial aftermaths of unemployment. Therefore, an understanding of the causes and the effects of unemployment would help people to cope better with the adversity of unemployment on a large scale.

4 Research Methodology

Research is an integral part of scientific enquiry and knowledge. According to Mellish et al. (2009), research is essential for developing a unique scientific body of knowledge, the hallmark of a profession, and could be used to provide the basis for professional theory and practice. Research in many different fields of study focuses on finding and validating new ways of investigating and understanding reality. The methods adopted to define and measure aspects of the natural, material, and social worlds depend on the individual researcher's background, training, interests, and familiarity with the subject. At the same time, researchers may have fundamentally different ways of thinking (theories) about the social and material world around them (Kielmann et al., 2012).

Research involves an explicit, systematic approach to finding things out, often through a process of testing out preconceptions (Hancock et al., 2009). In many instances, the researchers tend to use the terms 'research approach' and 'methodology' interchangeably. This is understandable because, for some people, these terms mean the same thing. The research process is systematic because it clarifies the objective, indicates how to manage the data, and communicates the findings within established frameworks and existing research guidelines. The frameworks and guidelines provide the researchers with an indication of what to include in the research, how to conduct the research, and what types of probable inferences based on the data collected can be made (Williams, 2007).

This chapter discusses the research approach used in the present study. It also describes the aspects of research such as the sample and procedure of sampling, data collection method, and data analysis. It explains the research ethics embedded in the study and how these ethics were addressed during the study. Lastly, the chapter addresses the reliability and validity of qualitative research.

4.1 Qualitative Research Approach

Creswell and Creswell (2020) defined the research approach as a plan and procedure for research that spans the steps from broad assumptions to detailed data collection methods, analysis, and interpretation. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are the two most recognised methods of research. These approaches are used to investigate and explore different claims to knowledge, and each method is designed to address specific types of research questions (Phiri, 2014; Williams, 2007). On the one hand, researchers tend to use the qualitative approach for research questions requiring textual data. On the other hand, researchers typically use the quantitative approach to respond to research questions requiring numerical data. While the quantitative method provides an objective measure of reality, the qualitative method allows the researcher to explore and better understand the complexity of a particular phenomenon (Williams, 2007), such as unemployment. These approaches are therefore complementary to one another. The discussion here focuses only on the qualitative research approach because it was deemed suitable to study the topic of unemployment using a phenomenological design.

Furthermore, qualitative research usually occurs in natural, real-world settings that facilitate sustained contact between the participants and the researcher (Chikoka, 2015). Kielmann et al. (2012) agreed that methods in qualitative research are generally open-ended and in-depth, and naturalistic; thus, they attempt to study things, people and events in a natural setting. For example, in this study, the investigation focused on how the experiences of unemployment affected the psychosocial development of the research participants.

Qualitative research is based on the fundamental idea that reality is subjective: Every human being constructs a personal view of the world based on their specific interactions with the external world. Therefore, qualitative research aims to gain insight into these constructions of reality as they are experienced, structured and interpreted by people in the course of their everyday lives. The core principle of qualitative research is to examine the way

people make sense out of their own concrete real-life experiences in their own minds and their own words (Cropley, 2019). In addition, qualitative methods are used to answer questions about people's experiences, beliefs, and meanings from the people's perspectives (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Mohajan, 2018). Therefore, qualitative methods typically refer to a range of data collection and analysis techniques that use purposive sampling and semi-structured, open-ended interviews (Choy, 2014).

Phenomenology explores people's everyday life experiences (Masetshaba, 2016; Mohajan, 2018). The purpose of a phenomenological study is to describe and interpret the participants' experiences regarding a particular event to understand how the participants ascribe meaning to that event (Masetshaba, 2016) and, in so doing, develop a worldview (Huysamen, 2001). In the current study, phenomenology allowed the research participants to describe and interpret their unemployment experiences and construct their individual meanings. The research data are the accounts that the researcher codes for emergent themes, looking for connections, and constructs -order themes (Hancock et al., 2009). Furthermore, this method considers the contexts of the research participants, and it is most appropriate for small samples that produce qualitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, this method is suitable for the present study as it allows the participants to narrate their own stories in their own ways and construct their individual realities.

4.1.1 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Qualitative Research Approach

It would suffice here to provide a fair, balanced discussion on the qualitative approach to justify its suitability for the study. One of the advantages of the qualitative approach is that it offers a complete description and analysis of research participants without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of the participants' responses (Langkos, 2014). Furthermore, a qualitative research approach produces detailed descriptions of participants' feelings, opinions, experiences and interprets the meanings of their actions (Rahman, 2017). The qualitative approach is specifically effective in obtaining culturally specific information

about the values, opinions, assumptions, behaviours, and social contexts of particular populations since it seeks to understand a given research problem from the participants' perspectives (Choy, 2014; Masetshaba, 2016). A qualitative approach is broad and open-ended, allowing the participants to raise issues that matter most (Choy, 2014). Moreover, a qualitative research design (interactive approach) has a flexible structure as the design can be constructed and reconstructed to a great extent (Rahman, 2017).

However, there are some disadvantages of the qualitative approach to research. The main disadvantage is that the findings cannot be generalised to the wider populations with the same degree of certainty that quantitative analyses can (Ochieng, 2009). Therefore, in terms of the research method, a smaller sample size raises the issue of generalisability to the whole population of the research (Rahman, 2017). In support of this assertion, the contexts, situations, events, conditions, and interactions cannot be replicated to any extent, nor can generalisations be made to a wider context with any confidence than the one studied (Mohajan, 2018). In essence, this means that the results in qualitative data are not objectively verifiable (Choy, 2014; Mohajan, 2018). Because qualitative inquiry is generally open-ended, the research participants have more control over the content of the data collected (Choy, 2014). Although the qualitative inductive approach produces generalised theories and conclusions based only on a small number of observations, the reliability of qualitative research results becomes questionable (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Based on the nature of the current study, qualitative research was deemed appropriate due to its strengths mentioned above. The qualitative method allowed the participants to explain how they were affected by unemployment in their own words. It also allowed the participants to play an active role during the interviews rather than react passively to the researcher's questions.

4.2 Research Sample and Criteria

A sample is the part of the population considered suitable for the study (Balfour, 2007), and sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Masetshaba, 2016). The present study comprised ten young adults (5 males and 5 females) between the ages of 25 and 39 from the City of Ekurhuleni. The literature review clearly indicates that young black South Africans are most hit by unemployment compared to other races. They are subject to inadequate living conditions and hosts of other social inequalities. Furthermore, they are also not in education, employment or training - NEET. This is the reason that made them suitable for the present study. Most participants come from relatively large families and have not progressed beyond matriculation. The living conditions are poor, and some participants lived in rented rooms or shacks in the townships. They have responsibilities towards their families and find it hard to meet their daily needs. The lack of employment was a serious concern as it caused much stress and unhappiness in their lives.

Hancock et al. (2009) stated that sometimes qualitative researchers might determine their sampling strategy beforehand by devising the sampling frames that have to be filled. This means that the researchers identify important criteria for the study and select cases that meet these criteria. Hence, the present study comprised participants who met the following research criteria:

- Participants were Black South African males and females between the age of 25 to 39 years. According to the psychosocial theory of development, this age category falls within the early or young adulthood stage of development (See chapter 3) and is the focal point of the present study;
- Participants must have been unemployed for the past six months or more and have had a job for more than a year (12 months) before being unemployed; and
- Participants were residing in the City of Ekurhuleni townships of Daveyton, Kwa - Thema, and Tsakane.

The research criteria allowed me to contextualise the study results and work within the psychosocial development theoretical framework as it defines the stage of young or early adulthood. Therefore, the study results are analysed and interpreted within the parameters (of young adulthood) of the psychosocial theory of development.

4.3 Participants' Background Information

Although the research participants come from the different townships of the City of Ekurhuleni in Gauteng Province, they share similar backgrounds marked by poverty, poor service delivery, and low levels of educational attainment. The participants' background information is important because it gives us a broad picture of their lives. The study comprised ten participants (five males and five females) from Daveyton, Kwa-Thema, and Tsakane townships of the City of Ekurhuleni. To protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant in this study.

Research Participant 1: Sonto

Sonto is 28 years of age. She grew up in Eshowe in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, and she does not have children. Sonto comes from a family of four siblings, and she is the third born in the family, with one brother. Unlike other children of her age, Sonto did not have a normal childhood. She lost her mother in a taxi accident when she was about eight years old. She reported that her mother's death was very difficult for her father, and he started to drink excessively. He neglected the family, and he would come back home late at night, drunk and demand food. When Sonto was ten years old, her older sister took to stay with her in Soweto, Johannesburg. When Sonto's sister struggled financially, she took Sonto to her aunt in Kwa-Thema to raise her. Sonto lost contact with her sister and has been living a miserable life. She reported that she grew up under difficult conditions, and she had no one to turn to for help.

She attended school only up to grade three. As time went by, her aunt became rude and abusive towards her. Eventually, Sonto quit school because her aunt could not afford to send her to school anymore. Sometimes, Sonto would go to bed hungry. She was forced to do all the house chores while her aunt's children lavishly enjoyed their lives without doing anything. She felt discriminated against and not loved by her aunt and her family.

Eventually, Sonto grew up and met a boyfriend who is a foreigner, and they lived together in a rented room in Kwa-Thema township. Sonto is now looking for work, but she does not have an identity document (ID). Sonto used to do part-time jobs that did not pay much. The lack of an ID is a serious issue that prevents her from getting proper employment. Being unemployed has made Sonto's life hard because she could not afford to live a normal life. She stated that they are struggling to pay rent and buy food as her boyfriend could not find employment either. Financially they survive because her boyfriend does some recycling work of plastic, boards, and steel that he gets by cleaning the people's yards in the nearby suburbs. Sonto has been unemployed for the past 16 months and was still looking for a job during the research interview.

Research Participant 2: Sibusiso

Sibusiso is a 31-year-old man. He grew up in Mpumalanga province and was raised by his grandmother. As a young boy, Sibusiso herded the cattle on the farm after school. He had a dream of being a businessman. He wanted to own taxis and make money to support his mother and his own family. He wanted to be rich and drive expensive cars such as BMW and Mercedes Benz. However, his dream was shattered when his father died when Sibusiso was still young, and he had to stay with his grandmother in the rural area of Delmas in Mpumalanga. He left Mpumalanga in the early 2000s to stay with his mother in the township of Daveyton. He attended school in Daveyton and passed grade four. Due to family issues, he could not finish his schooling.

Currently, he is a father of three children from two partners. The youngest child is four months old. He described himself as a man of peace, and he regularly goes to church. When he attends church services, he often acts as an usher (a person who welcomes people and helps them get seats in the church). He does not use drugs, and he lives a normal life. Although Sibusiso reported that he does not have many friends, he gets along well with other people in society.

Sibusiso worked for many companies doing different jobs such as deliveries and merchandising in a retail shop. His last job was in a printing company that specialises in printing signs and advertising billboards. Losing a job had a serious blow in his life, and he has been struggling with several issues. These include paying the crèche fees and buying school uniforms for his children. He is also struggling to support the children financially and finds it difficult to meet his daily needs. Currently, he is still living in his parents' house with his mother, sister, and brother. He stays alone in one of the backrooms, and the other four rooms have tenants. Sibusiso has been unemployed for the past two years.

Research Participant 3: Sipho

Sipho is 31 years of age and was born in Emalahleni (former Witbank) in Mpumalanga Province. When Sipho's parents died in a car accident in 1994, he moved to Tsakane township to stay with his uncle. He stated that he has painful childhood memories brought about by losing his parents at an early age. Sipho completed grade twelve in Tsakane, and he had a dream to own a construction company and have much money. Unfortunately, Sipho's dream ended when his uncle could not afford to send him to university or college. His uncle has a large family, and Sipho had to move out of the house to find his own place.

Currently, Sipho stays in his own RDP house in Tsakane township. He has two daughters (aged nine and twelve) from two partners. As a young man, Sipho struggled to find employment. He usually found employment that lasted for less than four years on average.

During the unemployment periods, Siphso gained some experience and developed some skills by helping other people such as builders, painters, electricians, and motor mechanics in the township. These skills helped him to negotiate some work opportunities for himself in order to support his family. He reported that he had a qualification related to his previous job.

Unemployment has made life difficult for Siphso, and he does not have sufficient support from his family of origin. During the time of the interview, Siphso has been unemployed for the past twenty-one months.

Research Participant 4: Grace

Born in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, Grace is 32 years of age and comes from a family of six siblings. She is the second-born in the family. She attended school until grade seven in Umlazi township. Grace was not performing well at school, and eventually, she quit school because of the influence of her friends. She was married at the age of 23 and had a son. Unfortunately, the marriage ended in a divorce a year later. She stated that she used to fight with her husband over money issues and her drinking problem until her husband filed for a divorce. Grace struggled financially after the divorce. She could not afford to maintain herself and her son. Eventually, Grace's parents decided to raise the son while Grace tried to find work in Johannesburg.

When her marriage ended, Grace went to Johannesburg and stayed with her sister in the township of Kwa-Thema. Grace was offered a job as a cleaner in a retail company in Benoni, where her sister worked. Three years later, the company merged with another company, and Grace lost her job due to the merger. After losing her job, Grace sold roasted chicken on the streets (also known as chicken dust in the township language) to lessen her sister's financial burden. Unfortunately, the business did not do well. She stated that life was difficult, and she has to rely on her sister for financial support because she does not have a partner to support her financially. Grace has been unemployed for the past two years.

Research Participant 5: Thandi

Thandi is 34 years of age and grew up in the township of Daveyton. She has a five-year-old son. Thandi did not want to talk about her parents, except that her father and aunt raised her, and she never knew her mother personally. During the interview, Thandi was staying with her aunt in Daveyton. The aunt is working, but it is difficult for her to look after Thandi and her own children. When the husband of the aunt died, Thandi could not finish school because of financial problems. She attended Nyathi High school in Daveyton up to grade eleven. She reported that life is very tough, and she wants her son to grow up taken care of but, it is difficult to do so because she is unemployed.

As a young girl, she had a dream of being a nurse to help sick people. She likes children, and sometimes she would ask people if she could look after their children for a fee. Thandi uses the little money she receives to help her aunt to maintain the family. She also had to look after her sick father, and the situation became unbearable for her because of the lack of finances. Her father died in June 2012 due to a terminal illness.

Thandi worked for a company called Stein for three years. She also worked at a take-away food store for two years. Thandi lost her job two years ago when the take-away store was sold to an Indian woman who brought her own staff to work in the store. Since then, Thandi has been struggling financially, and only her aunt was helping her in terms of financial assistance and providing her with a place to stay.

Research Participant 6: James

James was born in Limpopo province, and he is 35 years of age. When James was about nine years old, his family moved to Gauteng Province to the township of Tsakane, where he attended school until he passed grade nine. James comes from a family of seven siblings and is the second-born in the family. He comes from a low-income family, and his late

parents could not afford to take all of them to school.

James is married and has two boys. While he was still working, he managed to save money and bought a stand in Tsakane, where he built a shack for his family. Since James became unemployed, his life has changed dramatically. The main challenge for James is that he cannot plan for his future and that of his children. James is concerned about not being able to provide for his children's education. He is afraid that the children would end up like him if they are not educated. This is causing him a tremendous amount of stress, and he worries about their future. He wakes up early almost every day to go to the robot junction to ask people for work. A lack of finances has been a constant reality for him because they have to live off the little money he gets from part-time jobs - if he gets an offer. He also believes that the children see him as a failure in life, a father who could not provide for his family. Nevertheless, James is trying his best to look after his family so that they can live a decent life. It has been over a year since James has been unemployed and was still looking for a job during the research interview.

Research Participant 7: Mphokazi

Mphokazi was born in Qwa-Qwa in the Free State Province. She is 35 years of age and has four siblings. As a young girl, she attended school in Qwa-Qwa and dropped out of school after failing grade eleven. A few years later, she got married, and she has two children - a boy and a girl. Due to poor economic conditions at home, Mphokazi and her husband moved to Johannesburg in 2010 in search of a better life and settled in Kwa-Thema township. They stay in a rented room. The children are staying with Mphokazi's mother in Qwa-Qwa.

Mphokazi used to make a living by selling Avon beauty products on a part-time basis. Unfortunately, the Avon business collapsed and eventually, she found herself facing unemployment with no source of income. Her husband is doing part-time jobs, and he is earning very little money. Mphokazi's main concern relates to finances. The fact that she

cannot plan for the family's future is causing her much stress. They are struggling to meet necessities such as paying for the rent and buying food. She also worked as a domestic worker for some years, but the job ended when the employer moved to another province. During the interview, Mphokazi was still looking for work, and she was hopeful that she would eventually find employment because she has been searching in various places. Mphokazi has been unemployed for the past eighteen months.

Research Participant 8: Lizzy

Born in Mzumbe in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, Lizzy is a 36-year-old woman and comes from a family of nine siblings. Unfortunately, four of her siblings have passed away. Lizzy's family left Mzumbe to live in Mthwalume near Potchefstroom when she was still a young girl. She attended school in Mthwalume under difficult conditions up to grade six, but she did not pass it. Lizzy and her elder brother made a living by selling sugarcane on the streets. Due to poor finances in the family, Lizzy dropped out of school and started to work in order to help her elder brother support the family. Two years later, she went back to school, but Lizzy developed an eye problem that interfered with her studies during her second schooling. Her parents were poor, and they did not have money to take her to the doctor or hospital to get help. This led to her dropping out of school for the second time.

Lizzy has three children that are staying with her grandmother in Mthwalume. Life became even more difficult when Lizzy lost her mother in June 2007. In addition to the family's pain, Lizzy's marriage ended in a divorce, and she had to go back home to Mthwalume. Lizzy then moved to Gauteng Province in 2013 in search of a better life. Lizzy and her new partner are renting a shack in an informal settlement in Tsakane township. She has worked for several people as a domestic worker. Her last job ended in May 2015. Since then, Lizzy has been unemployed. During the interview, she reported that she survives by doing odd jobs and her partner just started a job as a taxi driver in the township.

Research Participant 9: Senzo

Senzo is 37 years of age and was born in Daveyton township. He attended school in the same township and has two children, a boy and a girl that are both attending school. Senzo comes from a family of five siblings, and he is the last-born in the family. The death of Senzo's father in 1995 brought many changes and difficulties in his life. Senzo's mother was a domestic worker when his father died, and she could not afford to maintain the family. Fortunately, all Senzo's siblings managed to finish school, and now they have their own families. Senzo is left at home with his mother, son, and sister's son (nephew). Senzo's daughter stays with her grandparents from her mother's side. One of the challenges that Senzo is facing is that his nephew is abusing drugs such as nyaope, and he becomes violent towards the family. The nephew steals items such as cell phones, cutlery, and clothes from other family members and sells them to buy drugs.

After finishing school, Senzo registered for a certificate in Public Relations with INTEC College, but he could not finish it due to financial constraints. However, he managed to obtain a short course qualification related to quality control, safety, and maintenance. As a young man, Senzo worked for DHL Courier Company. He also worked for the First National Battery Company. Unfortunately, he developed lung sickness because the company was dealing with dangerous chemicals. After consultation with the doctor, Senzo's health condition forced him to quit working, and he had to undergo treatment in a hospital for two years. He stated that since his unemployment, he had lost friends, and his family is not supportive. It has been five years since Senzo lost his job.

Research Participant 10: Peter

Peter is a 39-year-old man from Daveyton township. He comes from a family of eight children and is the third born in the family. He is married and has two daughters (14 and 9

years old). He loves his family very much, and he is doing his best to maintain them. Peter's parents were struggling financially, and they could not afford to send him to good schools. He attended school in Daveyton township and completed grade twelve. After completing school, he worked on a part-time basis for some companies. He managed to save some money so that he could continue with his studies on his own. He obtained an Information Technology (IT) diploma in 2004. Unfortunately, up to now, he has not found work in the field of IT. He also obtained a qualification in carpentry from Ekurhuleni Skills Artisan School.

Peter stated that unemployment had caused much hardship in his life, and he has lost some friends, including the people he had previously assisted in terms of finances. He has a dysfunctional relationship with his family of origin. There is no communication between them, and he is just living with his own family. He stated that his life has deteriorated because of his unemployment, as he could not afford the lifestyle he used to live. Peter used to get part-time job offers such as house painting and plumbing. Sometimes he would get a contract job that usually lasts for about six months. These jobs helped him to support the family. He also worked for a roofing company that fixes house roofs. The roof-fixing job ended in June 2015. He mentioned that he travelled from Daveyton to Brakpan almost three times a week to look for a job at the robot junction. This takes too much time travelling, and he gets tired and hungry most of the time without getting any job. During the research interview, he was unemployed for more than a year, but he was hopeful that he would find a job one day so that he can support his family.

The above-mentioned life accounts depict the harsh realities of many young adults facing unemployment in South Africa. Poor living conditions, scarcity of resources, and low level of educational attainment are some of the issues that hinder young adults from getting employment to improve their living conditions. Within the context of this study, such harsh realities are shared with the world in general as they depict the hardships and the shattered dreams of many young adults in dire financial situations. Below is the presentation of the

participants' demographic information.

Table 4-1 Summary of the research participants' demographic information. (Own construction, 2020)

Pseudonym	Age	Gender (Male/Female)	Township	School grade passed
Sonto	28	F	Kwa-Thema	3
Sibusiso	31	M	Daveyton	4
Sipho	31	M	Tsakane	Post-matriculation
Grace	32	F	Kwa-Thema	7
Thandi	34	F	Daveyton	11
James	35	M	Tsakane	9
Mphokazi	35	F	Kwa-Thema	10
Lizzy	36	F	Tsakane	5
Senzo	37	M	Daveyton	12
Peter	39	M	Daveyton	Post-matriculation

The participants' background information indicates that all the participants came from relatively large families and with low-socio-economic status. In terms of educational attainment, only two participants have post-matric qualifications. One participant passed grade twelve, and the rest have passed only lower school grades. This information, therefore, makes it clear why the participants are struggling to get employment. It is clear that a lack of education, experience, and skills largely contribute to their unemployment status.

4.4 Purposeful (Purposive) Random Sampling

Sampling refers to selecting a group of people, events, behaviours or any other relevant element with which to conduct a study (Bhembe, 2014). The current study employed non-probability, purposive sampling. In this type of sampling, the sample is chosen with an intention (or purpose) of representing certain characteristics. This approach reduces the role of judgement within a larger sample and provides a credible cross-section from that sample (Kielmann et al., 2012). Although 'purposive' selection involves quite deliberate choices, this should not suggest any bias in the nature of the choices made. The purposive sampling

process requires clear objectivity so that the sample stands up to independent scrutiny (Ritchie et al., 2013). In the current study, the participants were selected based on their unemployment experiences and how unemployment has affected their psychosocial development.

A total of 17 individuals (9 males and 8 females) were approached randomly at the Malls and on the streets of Daveyton, Kwa-Thema and Tsakane townships of the City of Ekurhuleni, Gauteng Province, South Africa. First, I provided the potential participants with relevant information, such as the nature and the purpose of the study. Questions such as “Are you between the ages of 25 and 39”? “How long have you been unemployed?” and “Which township do you stay in?” was used to determine the eligibility of the potential participants to take part in the study. I separated the males from the female participants to form two categories. Using the participants’ cell phone numbers, I randomly selected 5 males from the male category and 5 females from the female category. Hence a total of 10 participants comprised the study. This method eliminates the possibility of selection bias, and it accords every potential participant an equal chance of being selected for the study. Hence, Ritchie et al. (2013) maintained that the sample is not intended to be statistically representative but that the population's characteristics are used as the basis for selection. This feature of qualitative research makes the non-probability sampling well suited to small-scale and in-depth studies (Ritchie et al., 2013). I contacted the participants to arrange for individual face-to-face interviews.

4.5 Data Collection Method - Interviews

An interview is one of the main methods of collecting qualitative data on a specific theme or topic (Kielmann et al., 2012). Moreover, Punch (2014) maintained that interviewing in qualitative research is a good way of accessing people’s meanings, definitions of situations, perceptions, and constructions of reality. People use different names for semi-structured

interviews. For example, some writers refer to semi-structured interviews as unstructured or in-depth or open-ended survey interviews (Ritchie et al., 2013). Semi-structured interviews involve several open-ended questions based on the topic of interest. Open-ended questions allow the participant to provide a comprehensive response by telling their stories in their own words and construct their own meanings (Masetshaba, 2016). The open-ended nature of the questions also allows the researcher or the participant to diverge an idea or response in more detail (Chikoka, 2015).

The present study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions to gather qualitative data on the psychosocial effects of unemployment from the participants' perspectives. The advantage of a face-to-face interview is that it involves personal and direct contact between the researcher and the participant and eliminates a non-response rate (Langkos, 2014). In this study, individual interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission for easy accessibility and review.

4.5.1 *The Interview Process and Contexts*

The participants in the present study were unemployed when the study was conducted around October 2017 and February 2018. Before each interview began, I provided all the relevant information concerning the study, and the participants signed the informed consent forms to participate in the study. The informed consent form explains the nature of the study and the ethical issues about the study. Furthermore, it explains the rights of the participants and the confidentiality of the research information (See Appendix B).

Many participants preferred to be interviewed at their own homes in the current study, while a few were interviewed at their friends' homes. Two participants chose to be interviewed in a quiet classroom environment after school. The interview environments chosen by the participants helped them to relate their stories with ease and feel free to do so. Eight participants were interviewed in their home language; thus, Zulu, while one participant was interviewed in Xhosa and the other participant in Sesotho even though they understand

Zulu. To put the participants at ease and establish rapport, I asked the participants some general questions that were easy to answer, such as “Tell me more about yourself.” and “Where do you come from”?

Many interviews lasted between 40 to 60 minutes. Although some participants experienced sadness while telling their stories, however, they were keen to continue sharing their unemployment experiences. For example, two female participants were overwhelmed with emotions of sadness during the interviews, and they needed some minutes to calm down before continuing. I made some arrangements to allow the participants who were overwhelmed with emotions during the interviews to reschedule the interview or referred them for professional assistance.

4.5.2 The Interview Schedule (Aide-Memoire)

Regardless of the nature of the research, the use of interview schedules (also known as interview guides or aide-memoire) in qualitative research is highly recommended (Ritchie et al., 2013). The interview schedule ensures that relevant issues are covered systematically and with some uniformity while still allowing flexibility to pursue the detail salient to each participant. Ritchie et al. (2013) asserted that this does not mean asking the questions the same way or asking the same questions to each individual interviewed. The interview schedule consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions that aimed to elicit general information about the participants. The second part of the aide-memoire consisted of specific questions that aimed to elicit information regarding the study's aims. A detailed interview schedule is presented in Appendix C.

Gill et al. (2008) asserted that it is often wise to first field test the interview schedule on several participants before data collection for the study. I followed this suggestion by field-testing the aide-memoire to seven individuals first before using it for the study. This allowed me to establish if the schedule was clear, unambiguous and understandable. I also used the services of an experienced researcher in terms of providing advice on the clarity of the

questions. This helped me determine which questions were unclear or ambiguous and which questions need to be replaced or rephrased for better understanding by the participants.

4.6 Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis is the type of data analysis whereby data is categorised in themes and sub-themes to be comparable. Thematic analysis is highly inductive, and the themes are derived from the data rather than derived beforehand or imposed upon by the researcher. As the data analysis continues, the patterns begin to be developed into several thematic categories of descriptions (Mohajan, 2018). This analysis method allows the researcher to sort, focus, and organise data to identify the core consistencies, emerging themes, categories, and patterns to draw conclusions based on the data (Miles & Huberman, 2009). The qualitative data gathered in the current study allowed me to identify recurrent themes related to the psychosocial effects of unemployment. After collecting the data, I coded and categorised the collected data into themes and sub-themes. Each theme was analysed based on its occurrence in the study. Before data were analysed, all the semi-structured interviews were transcribed, allowing me to become acquainted with the data. The meaning of narrative was used as a unit of analysis for coding and thematic correlations. I applied the codes for keywords and used them to organise data. I used all the themes to conduct the cross-case analysis. The themes salient across all cases and those considered significant were kept and formed part of the thematic analysis.

Although I speak Zulu fluently and I understand Xhosa and Sesotho languages very well, I enlisted the services of a language translator to enhance the quality of the research data. Langkos (2014) maintained that the main advantage of thematic analysis is that it helps to reduce and simplify the collected data while at the same time producing results that may then be measured later on using quantitative techniques. Therefore, common themes were grouped and analysed as part of thematic data analysis.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research approaches raise ethical issues because they tend to encroach on the personal lives of the research participants. Ethical guidelines or standards guide the professional practice since they constitute what acceptable behaviour is (Masetshaba, 2016; Mehr & Kanwischer, 2008). The following ethical principles were adhered to during the execution of this study.

4.7.1 *Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent*

A fundamental ethical principle of voluntary participation requires that the participants must not be coerced into taking part in a research study (Mehr & Kanwischer, 2008; Thumbadoo, 2013). Informed consent involves giving the participants accurate information about the study so that they can make an informed and voluntary decision whether or not to take part in the study (Masetshaba, 2016). An informed consent form contains, among other things, a brief description of the procedures and the purposes of the research, the topics to be covered (Ritchie et al., 2013), a guarantee of confidentiality, and information about the rights of the participants (Balfour, 2007).

In the current study, the participants were fully informed that their participation must be voluntary, and they were not coerced in any form to participate. Also, the participants were provided with all the relevant information about the study, and they signed an informed consent form to take part in the study. (See Appendix B). I explained their right to withdraw from the study anytime, should they wish to do so. Also, the ethical clearance to conduct the study was received from the University of South Africa (See Appendix A).

4.7.2 *Anonymity and Confidentiality*

One of the main ethical concerns in the social research process is the protection of the identity of the participants. Anonymity is different to confidentiality, although both terms are often used interchangeably. Anonymity means that the identities of the research participants

are unknown outside the research project (Ritchie et al., 2013), whereas confidentiality relates to assuring the participants that identifying information will not be made available to a third party not directly involved in the study (Mehr & Kanwischer, 2008; Roth & von Unger, 2018). In other words, there should be no reference to any real names and other personal details of the participants (Kielmann et al., 2012). Therefore, in qualitative research, pseudonyms are used to protect the participants' identities and safeguard their anonymity and confidentiality (Saunders et al., 2015).

In this study, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by not revealing the true identities of the participants in the transcripts, the research report, or any material attributed to a specific participant. The participants were also assured that their responses to the questions would be treated as confidentially as possible and used only for the purpose of the research. The storage of raw, in-depth interview data was in the form of audio-recorded conversations and interview transcripts after data analysis. The transcripts were stored electronically on a computer and protected with a specific password known only by me. The transcripts were labelled with pseudonyms used to protect the identity of the participants in the transcripts and the final report.

4.7.3 Non-Maleficence

The ethical standards of social research also require that the participants not be subjected to any risk of harm due to their participation in the study (Bhembe, 2014). According to Balfour (2007), the best way to protect the research participants from harm is to inform them of all the possible consequences of the research. This is related to informed consent. The current study involved face-to-face conversations with the participants, and they were not subjected to any form of physical or emotional harm. However, had such unforeseen circumstances occurred, then referral for professional assistance would have been considered. Only two female participants that become emotional during the interviews were allowed to take a break to calm down before they continued with the interviews. Therefore, no serious

physical or emotional harm occurred as a result of participation in the study.

4.8 Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research

According to Noble and Smith (2015), reliability in qualitative research describes consistency within the employed analytical procedures, whereas validity refers to the integrity and application of the methods undertaken and the precision in which the findings accurately reflect the data. There are debates about the appropriateness or relevance of the terms 'validity', 'reliability', and 'generalisability' to evaluate qualitative research. Researchers such as Guba and Lincoln (2006) suggested that the terms credibility/trustworthiness, transferability, dependability, and confirmability should be used instead of validity and reliability by qualitative researchers to pursue a trustworthy study.

4.8.1 Credibility

The term credibility refers to the fact that the researcher portrays accurately what the participants conveyed during the study (Theron, 2016). Credibility is the criterion for evaluating the truth value or internal validity of qualitative research. A qualitative study is credible when its results, presented with adequate descriptions of context, are recognisable to people who share the experience and those who care for or treat them (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Guba and Lincoln (2006) argued that ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. In support, Shenton (2004) mentioned several strategies that qualitative researchers should consider to ensure the 'trustworthiness' of the findings. The strategies that were utilised in the current study include:

- Accounting for personal biases, which may have influenced the findings. In the present study, I tried to be as objective as possible. This included checking the manner in which the interviews were conducted with both male and female participants, the presumptions, and my personal beliefs. Therefore, I ensured that these factors did not influence the results of the study in any way.

- Meticulous record-keeping. I kept all the records of the interviews and ensured that data interpretation was consistent and transparent.
- Rich and thick verbatim descriptions of participants' accounts to support findings. Detailed descriptions help to convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them. Without this insight, it is difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings are true. In the present study, such descriptions are in the form of recorded raw data and transcribed text.
- Engaging with other researchers to reduce researcher bias. In the present study, I enlisted an experienced researcher's services to check how the study was conducted from the beginning to completion. The experienced researcher assisted with issues such as the compilation of the semi-structured questionnaire.

The points mentioned above helped to ensure the study's credibility as each strategy was utilised to reduce the chances of any confounding factors that may influence the results. Hence, the trustworthiness of a qualitative study is important if the results are to be accepted as valid and reliable.

4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability (or applicability) refers to the degree to which the research can be transferred to other contexts (Shenton, 2004) and is the criterion for evaluating external validity (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Since the findings of qualitative studies are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions apply to other situations and populations (Shenton, 2004).

In this regard, Guba and Lincoln (2006) stated that qualitative researchers should ensure that sufficient contextual information about the study is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer. Shenton (2004) also concurred and stated that researchers should provide sufficient detail of the context of the study for a reader to be able to decide whether

the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to other settings. In the present study, the research contexts are discussed in detail so that the reader can form an accurate perception of the contexts and link the results to each context. This would enable the reader to make such a transfer, if possible.

4.8.3 Dependability

Guba and Lincoln (2006) used the term dependability in qualitative research, which closely corresponds to the notion of reliability in quantitative research. The quantitative paradigm in research employs techniques to show that if the study were repeated in the same context, with the same methods, and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained. The changing nature of the phenomena studied by qualitative researchers renders such provisions problematic in their work but, researchers should at least strive to enable a future investigator to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). This does not mean that the same results would necessarily be found in other contexts but that, given the same data, other researchers would find similar patterns (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

In order to address the dependability, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results. Such in-depth coverage also allows the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed (Shenton, 2004). The current study consists of clear, detailed steps to enable the reader to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and the processes involved in the execution of the study. Raw data was captured in the form of interviews. Then the data was transcribed in writing, analysed and categorised in terms of themes and sub-themes. Matching themes were paired together to form a category, and each category was labelled differently from others. Therefore, the detailed steps enhance the study's dependability should another researcher want to verify the study.

4.8.4 Confirmability

The concept of confirmability in a qualitative investigation is comparable to the concept of objectivity in quantitative research. Confirmability relates to how the collected data support the research findings. This is a process to establish whether the researcher has been biased during the study. An external researcher can judge whether this is the case by studying the data collected during the original inquiry (Shenton, 2004). Critical to this process is the 'audit trail', which allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described (Shenton, 2004). In the present study, confirmability was enhanced by documenting all the procedures used for checking and re-checking the data throughout the study. The audit trail was ensured by the description of the data gathering and data analysis process.

4.9 Conclusion

In most cases, research usually originates with at least one question about one phenomenon of interest and the researcher engages in a research process to answer the question. Research questions help the researchers focus thoughts, manage efforts, choose the appropriate approach or perspective to make sense of each phenomenon of interest. Qualitative studies tend to be rich with descriptions and narration as researchers attempt to capture conversations, experiences, personal perspectives, and meanings that people construct in their lives. A qualitative study is concerned with non-statistical methods and small samples, often selected purposefully. This allows the researcher to work better with small samples and manage information much easily. The main factor of qualitative research is the social phenomenon being investigated from the participant's viewpoint. In this regard, the research participants' understandings and constructions of meanings play a central role in the data collection process. The nature of the current study lends itself to the qualitative research approach as it focused on the participants' experiences concerning unemployment. The

results of the study are, therefore, presented in Chapter 5.

5 Results and Discussions

Although the living conditions of young Black South African adults have improved in certain aspects since 2005, they still face significant challenges such as high unemployment rate, poverty and high HIV infection rates. The literature review (Chapter 2) showed that the high unemployment rate of young adults creates a social problem of grave concern due to the added complications such as the risk of physical and psychological health problems and future loss of income (Hällsten et al., 2017).

The influence of unemployment on physical and psychological health is complex as each individual's experience of unemployment is different. Characteristics such as age, gender, education, socio-economic status, and social support may act as mediating factors on an individual's physical and psychological health in addition to the effect of unemployment (Möller, 2011).

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the results of the interviews conducted with young adults in the City of Ekurhuleni in Gauteng about their experience of being unemployed. Since this is a qualitative study, the results are neither intended for generalisations to the entire population nor are they intended to apply to every individual in a similar situation. This is underpinned by Erikson's view on young adult development and expressed by Sokol (2009, p149) that the "Individual and society are intricately woven, dynamically related in continual change". For that purpose, the results discussed here and the interpretation thereof should be viewed within the socio-cultural context of the study itself. These results strive to reflect on the uniqueness of each participant's individual circumstances in their lives. The results would help us comprehend what participants struggle with due to unemployment.

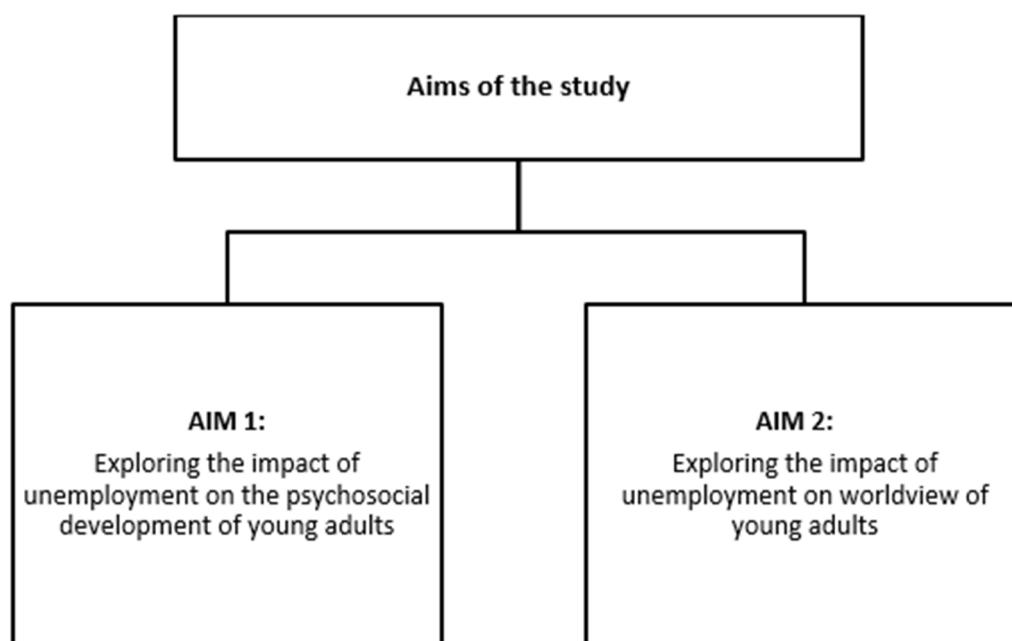
5.1 The Structure of the Aims of the Study

As mentioned in chapter 1, the current study is organised over many aspects related to the two aims of the study. Firstly, it explores the impact of unemployment on the psychosocial development of young adults through several themes. These themes help us to fully comprehend what the young adults in the City of Ekurhuleni in Gauteng are going through in their lives when they become unemployed.

Secondly, it discusses the worldview of unemployed young adults. This would help us understand how they perceive the world around them and their beliefs regarding the future.

Figure 5.1 below illustrates the structure of the aims of the study as explained above.

Figure 5-1 *The structure of the aims of the study (Own construction, 2020).*

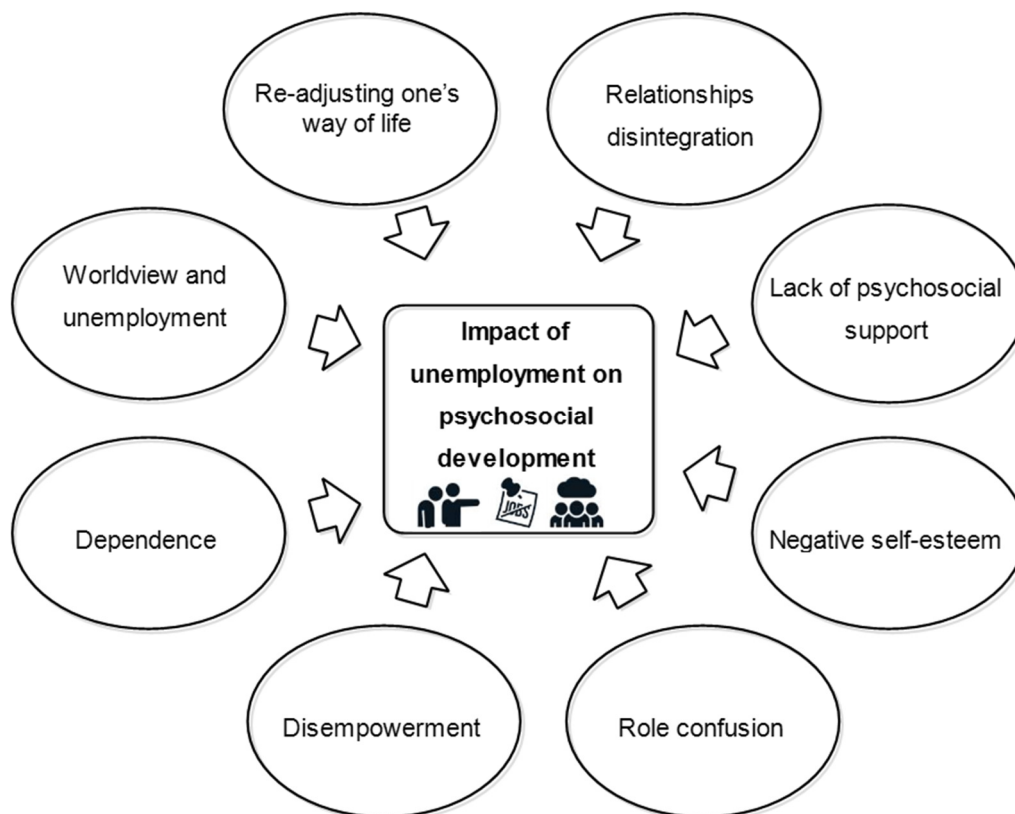


5.2 AIM 1: The Impact of Unemployment on the Psychosocial Development

The qualitative data gathered in this study produced many themes presented in Figure 5.2 below. As mentioned in chapter 1, the results are discussed in reference to the psychosocial development theory. Erikson's theory has some implications for the manner in which distressing developmental problems (or crises) that arise during young adulthood can

be identified and understood.

Figure 5-2 Diagrammatic representation of themes of the study (Own construction, 2020).



5.2.1 Relationships Disintegration

The data analysis results indicate that unemployment not only affects an individual in particular but also takes its toll on interpersonal relationships in general. In the present study, the disintegration of relationships occurred mainly in three domains: family, interpersonal conflict, and social isolation. It is necessary to differentiate amongst these domains to determine the impact of each domain in the lives of young, unemployed people.

5.2.1.1 Family Disintegration

The role of the family as a social support system is well-documented in the literature relating to stress and hardship (Graham & Barnow, 2013; Lorenzini & Giugni, 2010; Smith et al., 2013). Stressors such as unemployment, serious illness or family disruption can decelerate

an individual's psychosocial development (Hornberger, 2006). Many participants in the current study indicated having dysfunctional relationships with their families due to their unemployment status. For example, Senzo reported that his family was not supportive during the time of financial hardship.

Researcher: "Describe your relationship with other people BEFORE and AFTER you were unemployed such as your spouse (in marriage and partnership), children, extended family members, and friends".

Senzo stated that:

Eehhh, fundamentally no. Let me put it like that . . . another thing is that my family looks down on me because I do not have money. . . So, when I cannot make financial contributions in the family, people do not give me that respect. . . and they do not support me. Especially people like parents and friends, I do not get any support. I am just alone. So, things like these may eventually lead to negative thoughts such as depression.

Some other participants in the study also shared similar statements. For example, Lizzy stated that:

I am not OK with my family since I am here. I left my house because the children of my husband from another woman chased me out of the house after my husband died and I became unemployed. My brothers are going to do the cleansing ceremony at home for my late father. But me as a person, they do not like me at home.

Peter indicated how dysfunctional his relationship was with his siblings by saying:

Ok, I come from a family of eight siblings. Our relationship is non-existent. We should not beat about the bush. For example, I have a sister in Emalahleni, Mpumalanga Province. If you ask me about her cell phone number, I do not want to lie; I do not know it. (A pause). Moreover, I do not believe that they know my cell phone number either . . . So, the relationship is like people I could just meet on the street so, we do

not call each other, and the relationship is non-existent.

From the above extracts, it is evident that some research participants lack support from their families of origin. Clearly, family disintegration puts more strain on unemployed people as they have to find ways to live independently. Some writers, such as Croezen et al. (2012), asserted that individuals have reported deteriorating physical and psychological health as a result of the disintegration of family relationships. Another participant, Siphon, was also frustrated by the tension in the family due to his unemployment. He felt that he was abandoned and must make his own plan to live. He stated that:

No. I am not getting any support. What happened is that I told people, including my family, that I was no longer working. Eventually, I had to wait for my UIF money, and that was all . . . even worse is that my family gets irritated with me because I am unemployed. But there is no specific kind of support that I get from anyone.

These sentiments clearly indicate that some families do not support the unemployed member. This result implies that family conflict and stress tend to escalate during an individual's unemployment, leading to strenuous family interactions. However, in some instances, it is unclear whether the relationships became dysfunctional before or after the participants became unemployed. In this regard, it is reasonable to say that unemployment may have exacerbated an already dysfunctional family relationship, or it may have been the cause of it. The psychosocial theory of development emphasises the role that the family plays in shaping the psychosocial development of the young adult. When family relations are dysfunctional, a maladaptive personality emerges, which, according to Erikson and Erikson (1997), adversely affects the psychosocial development of young adults.

Another participant, Mphokazi, reported that she even tried to commit suicide because of the suffering she had to face from her brothers during her unemployment. She stated that: "So, my relationship with my family, especially my brothers, is not good at all because on several occasions I even tried to commit suicide . . . ". Furthermore, she

elaborated that her relationship with her own family was also disintegrating. She said:

The thing that affects me the most about me not working is the relationship at home. I get into arguments with my children and my husband and . . . sometimes there is no food in the house . . . so, it is difficult . . .

The statement of Mphokazi echoes the sentiment that the lack of familial support during unemployment has a negative effect on the psychosocial development of an individual. Individuals must receive adequate support during the period of unemployment to cope well under stressful conditions. In support, Pettersson (2012) maintained that facing stressful events such as unemployment without adequate social support is detrimental to an individual's health. From the psychosocial development perspective, the participants in this study clearly face a psychosocial crisis in their lives which also indirectly affect their spouses or partners, their children and extended family members. In order to explain the ripple effect of being unemployed, it is important to take into account that self-identity is developed in a social setting, and it is this setting that influences an individual's alignment toward or against 'constructive communal living' and societal interaction (Erikson, 1963).

5.2.1.2 Social Isolation

In the current study, some research participants expressed concerns concerning their friendships. For example, some of the participants stated that their friends were supportive during unemployment, while others felt isolated from their friends. James stated that:

My relationship with my friends is different now because I am not working. You see, when you have friends, sometimes you have to go out and spend money and enjoy yourselves. Now that I am unemployed, I cannot go out with them anymore because I cannot afford to buy anything so, that is bad." (He continued) "They used to come to visit me when I was still working. Now they do not come at all. It is like they have deserted me because I am not working anymore . . .

Peter shared the sad fact that he does not have friends anymore since he became

unemployed. He said:

Let me put it like this - I had friends when I was still working, and now, I do not have friends. The people I used to call friends disappeared when I lost my job. So now, there are people that I just talk to. They are not the people that would come to my house and visit me, and so I do not have friends or someone who would knock on my door and says he is my friend.

These statements reflect that the participants felt isolated from their friends, attributing it to their unemployment status. This connects to the viewpoint of Hartup and Stevens (1997), which described the role of friendships as somewhat supportive during various developmental tasks but not altogether always beneficial. Due to the level of maturity in young adults, some friendships can be demoralising for unemployed individuals. In the current study, some participants reported that some of their friends blamed them for being unemployed, made a mockery of their situation and eventually, the friends distanced themselves from the participants.

Creed and Reynolds (2001) explained that unemployment might lead to decreased social integration because the individual does not belong to the same social status group anymore. Also, the focus and interests of the unemployed young adult now differ from their peers, which leads to increased social loneliness. A study conducted by Rosenberg in 1965 found that unemployed individuals often suffered from low self-esteem and felt isolated. These results are therefore consistent with those in the current study. The importance of social interaction in meeting our needs for love, acceptance, and belonging has been long recognised by Maslow's (1943) theory of needs. In the event of failing to satisfy these needs, our psychosocial development may suffer considerably. To confirm this, Lizzy stated that:

"You see, my brother" (A long pause) "I grew up without friends, and I do not like to have friends at all. The people that I socialise with are the older women who would give me advice about life generally. So, currently, I do not necessarily have friends

who are my peers."

In his theory, Erikson (1968) emphasised social variables such as peer groups and family and the important role they play in developing both the individual's ego and personality. These variables aid in shaping our personality and self-identity as separate individuals with a core sense of personal identity. The above extracts indicate that some people feel isolated by members of their social group during unemployment, which adversely affects their social interactions. Senzo also provided a statement that indicates the poor relationship he has with friends. He stated, "To these people like family and friends, you know, I was a person when I was still providing for them, but since I am unemployed, it is more like I became a thing to them." Sonto also confirmed that she does not have friends since she became unemployed. She stated that "I do not have friends. I am just living in the company of young children, but actually, I do not have people that I regard as friends."

Losing friends due to unemployment is one of the hardships that young adults have to endure. It is, however, interesting to note that some research participants chose to isolate themselves from their friends. This is due to several reasons, such as not wanting the friends to feel pity for them and to avoid questions about their unemployment status. Peter stated that:

Sometimes they [the friends] would just go out with me for the first time or the second time, but for the third time, they complained about me becoming a burden. So eventually, I decided that the best option is to remove myself from them because I am not working. But if I get employment again, I know they will come back quickly. But for now, I would not say I have friends, I am just living my life.

Grace added that:

The relationship with my friends is fine because I choose only the friends that are not working, just like me. Because the ones that are working are the top-class ones.

Therefore, I do not associate myself with friends that are working because they will

feel pity for me.

Another participant, Sibusiso, echoed a similar statement of self-alienation from friends. He stated that:

After I lost my job some of my friends disappeared. They no longer came to visit me, and they could hardly greet me on the streets. I could see that I was no longer welcome to socialise with them. Eventually, I decided to stay away from them. . .

In a sense, the self-alienation of the participants from their friends can be an impediment to their employment opportunities. This is because jobs are often found through the individual's social network (Ali et al., 2013). If such connection or network is non-existent, it becomes difficult for the unemployed individual to find work. Therefore, it is important to maintain contact with friends and other social ties that would connect the unemployed with job opportunities. Consequently, this would greatly increase their chances of finding work. The conclusion that can be drawn from the result is that friendships fail when one party is unemployed. Some employed individuals do not want to associate themselves with those that are unemployed. This creates a difficult situation for the unemployed, and eventually, self-isolation becomes the obvious option.

5.2.1.3 Interpersonal Conflict

According to Erikson's (1963) psychosocial theory, one of the tasks during early or young adulthood (age 18 to 40 years) is to achieve high quality, stable, committed and intimate sexual relationship with another person without fear of ego-loss. Beyers and Seiffge-Krenke (2010) describe this as a developmental marker for young adults. Erikson (1968) proposed that if a young adult is confident of their identity, they can achieve better relational intimacy at a later stage as they mature.

Although some participants in the study reported that they receive support from their partners, this does not mean that their relationships were smooth or easy. Incidents of disagreement, fuelled by unemployment, were common in many of these relationships. Such

incidents tended to ignite the fights and tensions that led to interpersonal conflict in the relationships. This sentiment is echoed by Siphso, who stated that:

With my partner, we tend to fight and argue because I am unemployed. It is difficult because I need money to sustain the life with my partner. This is one of the reasons why you find girls end up having the blessers (men that offer women money to gain sexual favours) because their boyfriends do not have money to take care of them . . .

Another participant, James, was also concerned about the impact of unemployment in his family life. He shared this sentiment:

Oh, my wife. We are OK but sometimes we disagree and get into arguments . . . The fight starts with the lack of food in the house because I am the one who must provide for the family, and I am not working." (He paused). "We end up fighting because of things like these.

The frustrations expressed by the research participants demonstrate what some people go through once they become unemployed or could not find work. Broman et al. (1990) stated that frustrations, tension and disagreements in a relationship often increase as their financial state deteriorates due to the unemployment of one spouse or partner. Financial difficulties due to the lack of financial contribution of the unemployed spouse often lead to decreased social activities of the couple as the money needs to be spent on necessities (Creed & Reynolds, 2001). When a spouse or partner gets frustrated because they are the sole breadwinner and feel that the other person does not contribute to the household, they may stop communicating and withhold affection. This is critical because unmet emotional needs affect the development of a young adult. Thus, if love and acceptance are withheld, it can negatively affect a young adult (Magagula, 2017).

Senzo experienced a similar situation, and he stated that:

"I am not in good terms with my partner because we argue a lot over money issues. She is very demanding, and she puts a lot of pressure on me to marry her. I want to marry her

but, how can I marry her in this situation?" (He paused and continued). "She knows that I have children to look after but, she does not care. So basically, she is part of the problem . . . we end up fighting about a lot of issues in our relationship."

These statements clearly indicate that unemployment has a negative impact on intimate relationships. In support, Kalil and Wightman (2009) also reported that job loss adversely affects marital relationships and increases the likelihood of a divorce. For unemployed people, there are often strong disagreements with spouses, with children, sexual problems, separation, and worries about children's future (Morake, 1997). Another participant, Sibusiso, was concerned that unemployment had accelerated the arguments with his partner. He maintained that:

You know . . . (A pause). Being unemployed is tough. (Another pause). As a man, I have a responsibility towards my family. I must provide for them . . . but my partner has lost respect for me, and she tells me whatever she wants. We fight too much about finances, and more often, she does not involve me in the decisions about the children . . .

Interestingly, only male research participants reported that their relationships with their partners were under strain due to them being unemployed. None of the female participants reported any disintegration in their relationships with their partners. Some conclusions can be drawn from this result: (i) men are more tolerant towards their female partners or spouses when the partners are unemployed, and (ii) cultural conditioning plays a role as women are not necessarily expected to take financial responsibility for the family. This implies that men should always provide for their families, and failing to do so may result in a man losing his social status as the provider. In terms of the psychosocial theory, the formation of a man's self-identity is related to this role as the provider for the family. This is important for adequate psychosocial development as an individual and as a member of society.

From the above, it is clear that intimate and marital relationships are strained when

one of the partners is unemployed. The study results indicate that many of the arguments tend to centre on the lack of finances in the family. These arguments indicate the deep-seated root of unemployment that tends to crop up in arguments and tension in the relationships.

5.2.2 Lack of Psychosocial Support

Studies on stress have revealed that social support is an important factor that mediates to reduce the adverse impact of stress on psychological and emotional well-being and psychosomatic complaints (Croezen et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 1996). Such studies also agree that social support is an important determinant of health and a good resource for coping, especially during stressful periods such as unemployment (Lorenzini & Giugni, 2010; Orford et al., 2010). In the present study, psychosocial support was also evident in some of the cases. While some participants reported that their families did not support them, a few participants in the study credited family members as a significant source of strength. Grace stated that:

My relationship with my family is OK. They help me here and there. . . They are helping to pay for my child's crèche fees, to buy food, and stuff like that. . . My sister is also helping me because even though I am not working, she is taking care of me. She helps me financially.

Sibusiso also confirmed that his family was supportive in the time of financial hardship. He stated that "My family is supportive very much. . . They try to help me in any way they can."

The above statements indicate that support from family members plays an important role to neutralise the debilitating effects of unemployment on young adults. Social support during unemployment is reported to have contributed positively to young adults' physical and mental health (Croezen et al., 2012).

However, it is interesting to note that Peter did not receive support from his family of origin but his wife's family. His explanation indicates that familial support can come from a

different source. He stated that:

Yeah, in terms of support, I would say I do not receive it from my family but from my wife's family . . . They try to help me and tell me where I can go to look for work.

Nevertheless, they have their own reservations, you know. I guess they do not want their family member to suffer with me. (He said jokingly, but seriously).

Although Senzo has a dysfunctional relationship with his siblings, he still stays with his mother, and he receives some support from his mother. He stated that:

First of all, I am still living with my mother in my parents' house. . . I need money, and there should be someone to help me with that money. Surely, I depend on her for financial support. She is not earning a lot, but she helps me sometimes . . .

These extracts indicate the importance of familial support during unemployment.

According to Graham and Barnow (2013), social support mitigates the damaging effects of stressful events and high-stress levels caused by unemployment. In addition to family support, Mphokazi also stated that although she was not on good terms with her brothers, she received support from her mother. She stated that “Yes, I do get a little bit of help from my mother. With the pension money that she gets, she is helping here and there so that I can make ends meet to be able to buy some food.”

Social support is crucial during unemployment so that unemployed individuals can function better and have some strength to face hardship - be it financial or otherwise. Not only did some of the families in the study play a significant role in supporting the unemployed, but some partners and spouses also contributed positively to alleviate the debilitating impact of unemployment on the participants. Only one participant stated that she was not intimately involved with anyone because she was stressed by being unemployed. Another participant, Lizzy, stated that “Actually, I get support from my partner . . . since he started working as a taxi driver recently. He is trying his best, but it is difficult”. James also shared a similar sentiment. He stated that although they tend to fight about money issues, his wife was

supportive and provided words of encouragement at times. He said:

Sometimes I get support from my wife... (A pause) ... She used to tell me that I am not the first person to become unemployed, and she gives me hope. . . She tells me that I should take things easy, and she gives me hope that I will find a job one day. She encourages me to go out and look for a job even when I feel discouraged by the situation.

These extracts indicate that spousal support is significantly important during unemployment. Individuals facing unemployment may gain strength and hope from supportive spouses. This would alleviate the stress associated with being unemployed.

Thandi also related how supportive her partner was in terms of financial assistance for her and her son. She stated that:

So, it is difficult . . . he is trying, so he would buy some food and some clothes so that we can wear and look nice. Sometimes he would encourage me that I should not worry too much and I will get the job. Sometimes he would buy me some food such as sugar, mealie meal so that we can cook.

Another participant, Sonto, stated that "My partner tries to help, but he is unemployed too. Sometimes when . . . he gets part-time jobs such as building, then he gives me some money." These extracts indicate that the support from a partner or spouse tends to promote psychological and emotional well-being in the unemployed individual. This indicates that the support from a spouse serves as a cornerstone to hope for a better future and a foundational component for a supportive structure. This result confirms the research findings of Liem and Liem (1988) that spousal support in difficult times contributes to a stronger relationship even though unemployment affects not only the unemployed but also their spouses or partners. This is corroborated by Marcus (2013), who describes the influence of an unemployment situation on the psychological well-being of a spouse or partner. The challenges that the unemployed person faces also affects the spouse or partner. In young

adults who have small children, this adds strain to the situation. Some participants reported that the support came in different forms, such as the money for day-to-day needs and verbal support. When referring to the support from his wife, Peter stated that:

Yes, it is verbal support because she is still with me . . . Even when she is goes home normally, she comes back and does some washing and cooking if there is mealie meal. I can say she is supportive because she has not left me so far." (He laughed and continued). "Yeah, this is support because many women would actually leave their men in a situation like this. But because she has not left me so I would think that she is supportive.

This indicates that the research participants drew strength from such support, relying on their spouses for future support. While some participants relied on family and spouses for support, as indicated above, others turned to their friends for support. Therefore, not all friends were lost during the period of unemployment. According to the psychosocial theory of development, a social support network can consist not just of a family, but solid friendships are highly beneficial (Çelik & Ergün, 2016).

Some of the participants stated that their friends played an important role in assisting them to deal with the negative effects of unemployment. Thandi stated that:

Some of my friends comfort me and assure me that I will eventually get the job. They comfort me . . .so that I will not despair but to have hope. I hope that I will get a job so that I can avoid stealing and doing all those funny things, so my friends are supportive.

Sibusiso shared a similar sentiment. He stated that:

However, I still have two or three old friends that are still visiting me. They help me a little bit financially and with other things . . .These are my true friends that I can count on when the days are dark.

In addition, Grace stated that:

Therefore . . . I will not change my friends because these are my true friends. They are

with me when I am down and out. So, I will not trade them for anybody" (she laughs and continues) "They are my true friends.

The above extracts indicate that friendships are important in our lives, and there are benefits to friendships. The participants in the study expressed gratitude to their friends that did not desert them during unemployment. Such friends are regarded as the haven of hope that the participants draw strength from. This clearly shows that some friendships are not based on material gains but true love and consideration for the well-being of the parties involved. Therefore, Janlert and Hammarström (2009) confirmed that the significant others might provide instrumental informational or emotional assistance to the individual during the stressful period of unemployment. In addition to spouses or partners, friends play a valuable support role by bringing a positive soundboard (Lorenzini & Giugni, 2010).

From the above discussion, it is evident that the results of the study are complex. Such complexity is introduced because some dimensions of social support are supportive, while others are not. For example, the results clearly indicate that some families, partners, and friends are supportive toward the unemployed member while others are not supportive. This phenomenon necessitates the need to investigate further why such differences exist to uncover the mechanisms involved in the process.

5.2.3 Negative Self-Esteem

One of the recurrent themes in studies of adult unemployment is the effect of unemployment on the individual's self-esteem. Baumeister et al. (2003) defined self-esteem in terms of not only the individual's self-worth and their belief in their own abilities but also the self-appreciation and value they attribute to themselves. Therefore, a positive attitude towards oneself equates to high self-esteem. Low self-esteem reflects no belief in one's own abilities, a feeling of no self-worth and undervaluation of self. The study participants explained how unemployment had eroded their self-esteem to the point that they felt worthless. Peter echoed this statement:

You know what? The truth is that it [unemployment] kills my self-esteem. I am not working, and I do not regard myself as a human being because when I look at other people, and I look at myself, they are better than me . . . I do not have anything to offer, and that kills my self-esteem. Unemployment really destroys it.

Grace also confirmed this sentiment that she felt worthless and did not appreciate herself as a woman. She stated that "Yoh!" (She exclaims). "Being unemployed makes me feel sick. I feel bad because when I look at me now, I am not happy because I used to have make up, to change my hairstyle, and look nice, but now I just look the way I do." (Looking at herself unappreciatively). "Therefore, I am under. . . a lot of stress right now for not working. Even now, when I come across my friends that I used to know before I became unemployed, I just feel ashamed of myself, and I want to run away and hide from them."

Sipho shared a similar statement that being unemployed has reduced his social status and eroded his dignity as a man. He proclaimed that:

I think that the basic thing about a man's pride is to be able to provide and protect his family and to be respected in the society . . . So, since I am not working even my self-esteem has become low. Basically, being unemployed lowers my dignity because I end up feeling that . . . I am not man enough in my family and in the society.

The above extracts clearly show that the research participants experience low self-esteem due to their unemployment. They feel ashamed about themselves for not being able to earn a living. This corresponds with the study of Willemse (2015) conducted in Worcester, Western Cape, where participants admitted to similar feelings of shame and low self-esteem. The increased feeling of 'being worthless' and decreased self-esteem occurs because they feel a diminished status as a valuable member of society. Generally, self-esteem decreases because of joblessness. This especially occurs when people have internalised the attitude that work confers status and makes an individual a valuable member of society. Senzo concurred with this statement when he said:

Being unemployed makes me feel bad because I am not physically or mentally disabled. At my age, I have needs . . . that I am supposed to meet as a person. Another painful thing is that if my children ask for any financial help from me, how am I going to help them if I cannot even do anything for myself? Being unemployed makes me feel very bad about myself.

Clearly, the participants are negatively affected by unemployment, and their self-esteem has suffered. Furthermore, some of the participants reported that they felt they had lost control over their lives, as seen in the study by Williams (2015). The belief that one has control over the stressful situation can offset the debilitating effects of unemployment and contributes to positive feelings about self-worth. Therefore, Pettersson (2012) argued that continued close contact with a social support system positively affects the individual's ability to cope. Therefore, the research participants must believe and feel that they are in control of the situation. This would increase their self-esteem and make them cope positively with the situation. Sonto stated that "I do not feel OK about myself . . . because I am not working. I do not feel right at all. It is very bad."

These statements indicate that unemployment has devastating effects on the participants' sense of worth. Unemployment affects how they feel and think about themselves as individuals and was already found in the historical study of Rosenberg in 1965. Other writers have indicated that unemployed people exhibit psychological symptoms such as despair, a sense of personal worthlessness (Dawson, 1993), and diminished self-esteem (Waters & Moore, 2002b; Willemsse, 2015). Furthermore, self-perceptions of failure are also common among unemployed people. For example, Grace stated that "I really feel bad because my mother is raising my son and I am useless in life. Really . . . I am a failure". Peter also expressed a sense of failure that makes him feel worthless as a person. He stated that "Being unemployed makes me see that I am a failure in life because people that are working, even if they are doing a small job or useless job but they are able to provide for their families."

These statements concur with the observation of Kates et al. (1990) that unemployment can reinforce a sense of failure and a diminished sense of self-worth, which in turn may impair the individual's ability to use coping skills available at their disposal. Morake (1997) also maintained that feelings of helplessness and shame are common amongst unemployed people and can elicit feelings of depression and anxiety.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that low self-esteem inhibits the participants from finding employment because it influences the negative feelings they have about themselves, thereby not only letting themselves down but also society as they do not conform to the expectation of being a contributing member. Such expectations are more prevalent for males than for females and may include being a provider for the family. The feelings of shame, in turn, may lower their level of motivation and perseverance to look for work and thus interfere with their 'self-esteem and mental health' (Willemse, 2015, p.19).

From the psychosocial theory perspective, the lack of self-esteem would have an adverse effect on the ego development of an individual. Erikson (1968) maintained that positive ego development is a driving force to our personhood and helps us to foster successful relationships in societies. This is important because work seems to bind people to reality and helps them adjust adequately to the expectations and demands of society. Although he equated the development through the psychosocial stages with the possibility of change, unemployment brings about disruptive changes. These changes can negatively affect the person's ego identity, hinder the development of positive self-esteem, and increase feelings of inferiority (Çelik & Ergün, 2016). From the psychosocial theoretical perspective, unemployment presents as one of the psychosocial crises that adversely impact the self-esteem and a sense of self for an individual (Waters & Moore, 2002c). Therefore, unemployment has a negative influence on our psychosocial development from different spheres of existence.

5.2.4 Role Confusion

Erikson and Erikson (1997) stated that belonging is a core need during the young adulthood stage of development. If this need is not met, it leads to identity issues and role confusion and increased uncertainty about their place in society (Keenan et al., 2016). In the present study, all the participants reported that unemployment made it difficult for them to play their role as parents and members of society. Siphon stated that "The same thing happens with the children . . . I am not able to provide for them, so they cannot depend on me financially. That is the painful thing that children can experience." In support, Peter stated that:

Being unemployed really affect my ability to play any role in the society . . . Because for instance, when the people in the society need physical things that I should provide as a man and I find that I am not affording that.

From Erikson's psychosocial perspective, a strong sense of identity is linked to well-being, belonging and ultimate purpose in life (Erikson, 1963). Therefore, during young adulthood, the person's identity is affected and defined by their choices in interpersonal issues, their career, political affiliations, and sexual orientation (Sokol, 2009). These choices all contribute to help them find their purpose in life, and uncertainty and self-doubt lead to the feeling of loss and role confusion. For that reason, unemployment which affects the pursuit of a career negatively affects self-identity development and the person's ability to contribute to society positively. The extracts from participants speak to their perception of the importance of preserving one's manhood status in society for men. The societal and cultural perception of being a 'real man' is linked to the exhibition of masculine roles such as being the provider, head of the household and role model in society. Society makes it difficult to fulfil these roles when the spouse is the breadwinner, and due to being unemployed, the man is now reduced to be the house-husband by taking on what is perceived to be 'work or role of the woman' such as taking over household duties and taking care of the kids. Therefore, it can be inferred

that unemployment not only negates their manhood status and gender role expectation but also cast aspersions on their gender status (Michniewisz et al., 2014).

James shared a similar sentiment and mentioned that he does not play his role in society. He stated that “I am not able to participate because I don't have a job . . .”. From these statements, one can conclude that unemployment poses a more serious threat to the ego and role definition of men than to women. The present results suggest that a feeling of emasculation is a common occurrence in unemployed men. In the study, female participants also expressed their concerns that unemployment affects their ability to play their roles in society. Mphokazi stated that:

Being unemployed really affect me because it happens that most of the time, I cannot do anything for a society . . . I cannot attend the meetings and all those things because all those things need money so that I can go here and there. You see, I cannot do things for the community since I do not have money.

Thandi also shared this sentiment:

I am not able to play any role in the society because it is difficult when I am not working. It is difficult for me to participate in the community . . . So, I am not able to play any role. . .

Sonto also mentioned that being unemployed makes it difficult for her to participate in many community activities. She proclaimed:

Yes, being unemployed does affect my ability to play my role in a society . . . I am not sure how to explain this.” (A pause.) “I am not able to participate at all to any committee or the structure of the community where I live.

According to the psychosocial theory, work contributes significantly to the development of a person's identity, even to the extent to define themselves by their vocation (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). Therefore, Gallie et al. (2003) maintained that unemployment places young adults more at risk of social exclusion. After all, if the definition of themselves is

based on their career and is suddenly no longer valid, they are at a higher risk of withdrawing from society because they can no longer assume the same role. Not only is their role affected, but one cannot rely on their income. Grace related how difficult life is without a steady income. She maintains that:

It is more like my son does not know me now. He does not know me because I do not have money to go and visit him at home. Sometimes I miss him very much, but I cannot afford to call him and say "Hi boy." I really feel bad because my mother is raising my son, and I am useless in life.

On the individual level, this indicates that the participants, as parents, cannot meet certain expectations and demands concerning their children's needs. Children look up to their parents for the satisfaction of their needs. On a social level, failure to provide for one's own children violates society's expectations about the adult individual. This also relates to a lack of fulfilment of a basic age norm. All of these come with repercussions about the subjects' self-esteem, personality, and identity (Rus, 2012).

From the psychosocial theoretical perspective, the participants are clearly experiencing a psychosocial crisis - the dilemma relates to being unable to play one's role in society and their families. According to psychosocial theory, dealing with the critical dilemma successfully would result in an adequate development of an individual. On the other hand, failure would result in a sense of loss and confusion about one's role in society (Erikson & Erikson, 1997).

However, Senzo had a different perspective. He maintained that being unemployed does not prevent him from playing his role in society. He proclaimed that:

I do volunteer to the community policing forum (CPF), and I also take part in their meetings whenever they are held. So, I am able to play a particular role in the society. I also do other things in the community and I belong to a number of social clubs . . . I like doing things for the community . . . This is how I spend time rather than sitting at

home doing nothing. It is better that I spend time doing community services.

Therefore, fulfilling one's social role as a responsible parent and a contributing member of society is important for an individual's identity development.

5.2.5 Disempowerment

The choice of occupation during adolescence sets the stage for an independent adult lifestyle. This process starts by completing an education that allows the individual to have a choice not only of continued education but also in terms of career options (Wagner et al., 2013). This pathway enables young adults to find their purpose or meaning in life. As partly discussed in the previous section, in early adulthood, the young adult's life is defined by their career choice, which gives them purpose (Sterns & Huyck, 2001) or they find purpose in their family life (Markus et al., 2004). Chow et al. (2014) stated that entry into adult employment is one of the major developmental tasks of transitioning to young adulthood. When young adults fail to find work, they feel disempowered. This indicates that work plays an important role in the psychosocial development of young adults.

In the present study, many participants expressed the desire to study further to find work and improve their lives. However, unemployment was cited as the most disempowering factor that prevented them from doing so. Mphokazi stated that:

Yes, being unemployed affects me a lot because now my children want to continue with education, and I have to take care of them to make sure that they study. So, in my case, I cannot do that for myself because I am now old." (She laughs). "I wish that I can continue with studies . . . but I am not able to continue with education for myself because I need to find work.

Another participant, Grace, stated that:

Unemployment is affecting me because I even thought that maybe I would register for a short course so that I can improve myself and find a job. However, since I do not have money, I cannot afford to register for any course to improve my life . . . My sister

cannot support me and pay for my studies. That would be too much for her, and she is struggling too.

The psychosocial theory surmises that occupational choice is perhaps the major decision leading to a sense of identity formation, as it affects all other aspects of the person's life (Lin, 2011). The most important factor contributing to the research participants' wish to study further was the desire to secure a better future for themselves and their families. The psychological literature indicates a correlation between the level of educational attainment and unemployment. Skilled and educated workers are more employable because they can adjust to market demands by retraining (Samiullah, 2014). Therefore, this indicates that the participants in the present study would have better chances of finding work had they have better education. However, family background and poor socio-economic status are some of the factors leading to a lack of education in some young adults. Therefore, it seems that unemployment leads to feelings of disempowerment in the participants. Hence, Phago and Thwala (2015) stressed the importance of higher education.

From a psychosocial point of view, individuals make a series of decisions regarding work throughout the life cycle. People go through their childhood, adolescence, and part of their young adults preparing for productive activity during adulthood (Rus, 2012).

Unemployment has disempowered them, and therefore, they could not access such opportunities and hence remain disadvantaged. Senzo expressed a desire to get a better education in his life. He stated that:

It [unemployment] affects me a lot because there are job opportunities out there that I cannot reach because I do not have the necessary qualifications . . . I think it would be much easier for me to study a course related to work. For example, since I want to be an artisan, it would be helpful to get somebody to help me financially then I can study for the qualification of being an artisan.

Statements like this show that the participants are willing to study further but are

disempowered by their unemployment status to reach their desired goals in life as they do not have the financial means. This has serious implications for their families as they cannot find their way out of poverty. Unfortunately, this situation creates a vicious cycle of poverty that not only traps the discouraged participants but their offspring as well. On a personal level, this situation creates psychological and emotional trauma that may lead to self-doubt, low perceptions about oneself, and ineffective efforts to find employment.

In the present study, Peter was frustrated that he made a wrong career choice by studying towards a diploma in IT, and now he cannot find a job in the IT-related field. He shared this sentiment:

I think that on a personal level, I feel that I made a wrong choice, especially with the IT qualification. It was a wrong career choice, and maybe I would have done something else such as electrical work or engineering of some kind . . . IT was attractive, but then when I get to the reality of the IT, I realized that I made a mistake and that is the biggest problem.

It is apparent that Peter's choice of a career makes it difficult for him to find a job and, in the process, disempowers him. In support, Hällsten et al. (2017) acknowledge that young adults still lack an extensive contact base that could assist them in finding a job. Lizzy was also concerned about the missed opportunity to study further. She stated that "Yes, being unemployed affects me because in my situation . . . I could not continue to study. When I was a child, I had a dream of being a police officer . . ."

The above extracts indicate the desire of the research participants to continue with their education. Obtaining a higher qualification would undoubtedly improve the participants' economic position and help them acquire some skills. However, the high level of unemployment, especially among young adults, is disempowering because it strips them of opportunities to improve their lives. Therefore, it is important that the participants have to acquire some skills and qualifications to improve their prospects of finding work.

The psychosocial theory of development emphasises the importance that work plays in developing an individual's identity. Rus (2012) describes it as the 'link' between the young adult and their personal objectives, society, and goals and norms. Therefore, the lack of employment significantly contributes to difficulties young adults encounter in their quest for identity, security, and self-worth (Thompson et al., 2013). This is the situation with all the participants in this study.

5.2.6 Dependence

One of the major central themes of young adult development is attaining independence from families of origin. Unemployment has created a situation whereby young adults in South Africa find it more and more difficult to have a place of their own and live independent lives, apart from their families of origin. Hence, living away from one's parents is considered a sign of independence, which refers to independent decision making about relationships, vocation and other life aspects (Coleman, 2011). Some of the participants in the study reported that they depended on their families, spouses or partners for support. Grace explained that she depended on her sister for financial support. She stated that "Yes obviously . . . I depend on her financially because she is the one who is paying the rent. And she buys food, and sometimes she gives me some money."

Senzo has the challenge of getting his own place because he is still living at his parents' house. Due to being unemployed, he could not afford to move out and find his own place. He stated that:

First of all, I am still living with my mother in my parents' house. The fact that I am not working eventually makes me dependent financially on my mother. . . Surely, I depend on her for financial support . . . I feel like a prisoner at home because anything that I want to do, I have to ask someone [referring to his mother] for permission. So, if I can get a job, I would be able to move out of my parents' house and find my own place, and the life will be better.

In line with the current study, Du Toit (2003) acknowledged that unemployment might necessitate an extended period of dependence on families. Furthermore, Peter also indicated how he depended on his cousin for quite some time in the past. He stated that:

At first, there was a cousin of mine that I depended on because he was still working but, you know people change . . . He was the one that . . . I could call and ask for help, but currently, I have to make my own plan, or I fail. It is as simple as that.

However, when the situation changed later, and Peter's cousin could not help him anymore, Peter had no one to turn to for help. He added that:

Currently, there is no one. What happened is that at my mother's house there are people that are renting in the backrooms . . . Sometimes we had a discussion that I should take the money from renting and support my family. That has not happened . . . I thought I would be able to buy some food like 10kg of mealie meal, but that has never happened as simple as that. And there's no one I can call, and even if I call someone, they will tell me about their own problems.

Thandi also expressed her concern about dependency on her aunt. She maintained that "My aunt helps me because she buys food for us. So, it becomes difficult that I depend on her for everything."

From the above statements, it is obvious that unemployment makes it difficult for young adults to become independent since they have to rely on their families of origin for various support, such as financial support. Adversely, this puts a strain on their psychosocial development, and it affects their interpersonal relationships. Hence, Moerane (2016) maintained that young adults unemployment produces dire social deficits such as low self-esteem, poor social integration, and increasing dependency on the family.

However, it is interesting to note that none of the research participants reported that they are dependent on friends for financial support. Friends were supportive sometimes, but such support was only verbal. This is not surprising since the above-mentioned results on

social support (friendships) indicate that many friends distanced themselves from the participants because of their unemployment status. The emotional and verbal support from the friends is appreciated, but it is not enough. The participants in the study needed more tangible support that can help them get through the day and be able to feed their families.

Although Arnett (2004) posited that young adults need to take responsibility for themselves, their decisions and be financially independent, Rodgers (1994) pointed out that the transition into young adulthood could be affected by economic, political, and other life conditions which would require additional social support. In the current study, the most salient factor was the economic factor. Therefore, one can conclude that being economically inactive prevented young adults from establishing independent lives. From the psychosocial perspective, this is important for adequate adult development and ensuring a positive self-identity and social identity (Erikson, 1968).

Sibusiso was also concerned about not having his own place. He has three children that are not staying with him, and when they visit, it becomes a problem in the house. He stated that:

Not having my own place is a problem as I am staying in the back room at my mother's house. As a man . . . I want my children to have a proper home. Even when my partner visits me, she does not feel comfortable because of the living arrangement at home.

Sonto, who was renting a room in the township during the interview, was also concerned about not having a place of her own. She stated that:

The most difficult thing for me is not having a place to stay. Sometimes the husband of the landlord would chase me out of the room because I am not able to pay the rent . . . I can go to my neighbours and ask for help, but they cannot always help me all the time. So, the main thing is the place to stay.

The above extracts show that a lack of proper accommodation is a serious concern for

the participants. In this regard, renting a room or indefinitely staying with one's parents is not convenient for the psychosocial development of young adults. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, this situation represents a quarter-life crisis for developing young adults. The challenge for the research participants is to resolve this crisis successfully to ensure adequate development of their sense of self.

Based on the above discussion, the obvious question now is how do the research participants cope with unemployment? The issue of coping becomes relevant here because of the importance of work (hence, money) in our lives. Therefore, this section explores some of the mechanisms that the participants used to readjust their lives to meet the demands of the situation.

5.2.7 *Readjusting One's Way of Life*

Unemployment demands a major readjustment of the person's life. It is a stressful financial and emotional situation that affects all aspects of the young adult's life. The manner in which people readjust their lives during unemployment varies from person to person (Perttilä & Ek, 2010). This depends on a number of the individual's dispositional factors (such as personality and temperament) and environmental factors (such as the availability of social support). In the present study, some research participants reported that they received social support from their families, spouses (or partners), and friends to readjust their lives accordingly. For example, Thandi expressed gratitude that her partner was supportive by stating that:

You see . . . sometimes he would encourage me that I should not worry too much and I will get the job. Sometimes he would buy me some food such as sugar, mealie meal so that we can cook. He helps me . . . He is supportive.

In discussing the role of social support in unemployment, Kroll and Lambert (2009) stated that individuals faced with unemployment would cope more successfully if they have supportive social networks than those individuals without such networks. Except for social

support, participants in the current study readjusted their lives in different ways specific to each participant. For example, Mphokazi stated that:

It was very difficult, and my life changed a lot because I cannot do the things that I wanted to do. I had the accounts that I could not pay, so I was blacklisted. Eventually, I managed to pay off the accounts and closed them . . .

Sipho confirmed this by stating the changes he had to make to readjust his life in the face of adversity. He declared:

I had to make some changes because I cannot afford the things like when I was still working. I had to give priority to the things that are more important." (A long pause). ". . . I had to close some of my accounts that I had, such as Edgars and Markham, because I could no longer afford them.

The above extracts show that closing the accounts was a strategy that the participants used to readjust to the demands of the situation. This enabled them to save some money and to spend it on important things such as food. This strategy lessened the financial burden on their lives. This does not mean that the accounts were less important but rather that the more pressing issues should be prioritised. Some participants stated that they had to settle for cheap food and cheap stuff to readjust their lives in relation to unemployment. Grace shared this sentiment:

When we have money, me and my sister, we buy cheap food because we cannot afford nice, expensive food. In addition, when I have some money too . . . I buy cheap clothes as well because I cannot afford expensive clothes, cosmetics, everything had to change because I cannot afford the expensive ones. So, I had to settle for the less expensive ones.

Good quality food is essential for the optimal daily functioning of the body because the body needs a certain amount of nutrients to function properly. The lack of these nutrients is detrimental to physical and mental health. The results show that people do not necessarily

have many choices in a situation of unemployment but to settle for less expensive beverages. This means that unemployed people can resort to buying less expensive food in order to sustain their lives. The danger involved here is the possibility that some of the food may have expired. Therefore starvation, as a consequence of unemployment, puts people's lives at risk for developing a host of diseases that could have been prevented. Sonto confirmed that one could readjust one's life in relation to unemployment by purchasing cheaper items from the market. She stated that:

I had to change . . . other things such as not buying expensive clothes, not to waste money buying useless things . . . Even now, if I have some money, I would buy things that are on special.

Statements like this emphasise the devastating effect that unemployment has on the individual's consumer spending and ultimately on the economy. Bangane (1999) discusses the impact of decreased spending on the economy due to the lower demand for luxury goods. This affects the manufacturing industry, which can again contribute to more unemployment, which further exacerbates the economic situation. The study shows that participants felt strongly about spending their money on essential items such as food and shelter and doing what they could to survive. Some participants reported that they survived by doing odd jobs in their neighbourhoods or the nearby suburbs. This enables them to meet some of their daily needs. For example, Lizzy stated that:

You see, my brother, currently I just cope by doing part-time jobs that normally pay around R150 per day. Every now and then, I get a part-time job only for a couple of days . . . but I do not work every day so it is difficult . . . but it is better because the children are not staying with me, they are in Durban. In most cases, I get a job for a day or two just to buy food or some of the things that I need.

Peter also confirmed that he readjusted his life by doing odd jobs in the suburbs or the township. He made use of the carpentry skill that he developed while he was working for

the roofing company. He stated that:

Sometimes I get the offer for odd jobs from the people when they see me at the robot. I get the jobs like painting, building, or carpentry. . . It is hard as a man, but these jobs help me put the food on the table for my family.

Some research participants stated that they are very cautious about how they spend their money. Thandi's statement clearly illustrates this point. She stated that:

I had to give up many other things that I was doing before I became unemployed. Things like, you know, I do not go to the salon and do my hair or manicure anymore, or to buy some nice clothes . . . because I do not have money and it is very difficult to adjust to a situation like that.

Being cautious requires some form of discipline with money matters. Prioritising for important things becomes essential, and it needs careful planning on how much to spend and the reasons for such spending. Eventually, the participants have to differentiate between their needs and their wants. Knowing the difference between these aspects would enable young adults to plan for their finances properly.

The above discussion addressed the first aim of the study. The discussion identified the common themes amongst the research participants and the impact unemployment has on their psychosocial development. Therefore, these themes help us understand what the unemployed young adults of the City of Ekurhuleni had to go through when they became unemployed or could not find work. The next discussion addresses the second aim of the study, thus, how unemployment affects an individual's perception of the world.

5.3 AIM 2: The Impact of Unemployment on Worldview

One of the psychosocial effects of unemployment is that it shapes people's world views - for better or worse. Therefore, unemployment does not only affect people's well-being, but it also affects their perceptions of life in general. The second aim of the study was

to describe the extent to which unemployment has affected the perceptions of unemployed young adults on life (worldview). Addressing this aim would help us understand how unemployed people tend to perceive the world around them and their beliefs regarding the future. Despite all the challenges in terms of the themes discussed above, some of the participants remained hopeful about the prospect of finding employment and hoped for a better future. For example, Peter stated that:

You know, (a pause). I am going to tell you one simple thing. Personally, I have decided that I am not going to lose hope . . . I know it [unemployment] tends to make me lose hope, but I have decided not to lose hope. I am going to try my best and do whatever I can to make my life a success.

Grace was also hopeful that she might find work in the future and improve her life. She stated that "I do have hope . . . that my life will improve somehow. Maybe one day I will get a job and start living a good life . . . "

The ability to cope and triumph over the challenges created by unemployment is a testimony to the resilience and strength of the human spirit. This implies that being hopeful about the future is an indication that the participants are optimistic that the future will get better with time. It seems that hope provides some strength to face the challenges and conquer them. This optimistic attitude enables the participants to continue to search for work despite previous attempts that have proved futile.

Mphokazi stated that:

I am hopeful that one day things will get better . . . Maybe I will find a nice job and be able to uplift my family from poverty. Anyway, I will keep searching and searching until I find a job. Who knows, maybe God will help me as the Bible says: "God help those who help themselves."

In these extracts, the participants show that they have hope for a better future and finding employment is the most acute psychosocial crisis that they must deal with

successfully. According to the psychosocial theory, a person's coping style influences the development of their attitude and interactions as well as their worldview. Every developmental stage that a young adult successfully master influence their mastery of the next stage (Armstrong, 2013). Therefore, the main challenge for the research participants is to successfully deal with the unemployment crisis to maintain their families and their spouses or partners.

Senzo was also hopeful that he would find employment one day and be able to move out of his parents' house. He mentioned that:

Generally, being unemployed affects almost everything in my life. It also affects my life standard, the clothes that I wear, and the places that I go to. Everything depends on whether I am employed or not . . . So being unemployed really limits my world and the kind of life that I can live in that world. Right now, my world looks dark but, despite all these challenges, I am hopeful for a better future . . .

For these participants, the spirit of resilience was evident in their statements because the situation of being unemployed did not crush them. These statements indicate the courage and willingness of the participants to go on searching for work in the hope of a better future.

However, few research participants felt that the future was too distant and gloomy. They believed that the prospect of getting a job was slim and too far away. For them, it becomes difficult to make future plans when the future looks like a daunting shadow. These participants reported that they have lost hope and have nothing to look forward to. For example, James stated that:

Being unemployed made me look at life in a different way - emotional and psychological (yeah). I am not OK so, that caused a blow in my life . . . Even now, I can still feel the effects of being unemployed in terms of what I have lost with regard to relationships, my spirituality, with regard to me as a man. (Yeah). I really do not know what future holds for me, and I am really doubtful about my future.

These statements support the assertion that Crawford (2005) makes that unemployment lower the expectations that young adults have about their futures. In addition to James' belief that the future is not promising, Sonto stated that "Life is boring if you are not working. It is boring. I cannot talk about or see any future because I do not see how the situation will change for the better." (A long pause and she continues). "Even in the news and TV, we see that companies are retrenching every day. So, there is no future to look forward to."

From these extracts, it is clear that unemployment has created a situation whereby the participants are doubtful about their own future. Certainly, life is different when one is not working, especially if the person had worked before. This allows people to compare the life they lived before and after unemployment. Such comparison may influence their perceptions of themselves as individuals and that of the world in general. Rus (2012) mentioned that work helps form the self-concept by giving meaning to the image that others have of us or the image we hope to portray as the person we seek to emulate. However, it becomes difficult for unemployed individuals to derive meaning in their lives when they are still caught up with the possibility of facing long-term unemployment.

Thandi also declared that she has no hope for a better future. She stated that:

Life is very painful and . . . eventually I question myself as to why I am living, you know. I feel so bad, and I even think why God gave me this life to live. . . I even think maybe it would be better if I am dead. There is no future for someone like me.

Losing hope and failing to see a way forward is not uncommon with some of the people experiencing unemployment. The results of the present study concur with a study by Wanberg (1997), which found that unemployed people become disheartened when they experience rejection and frustrations. Consequently, this influences the manner in which they perceive themselves and their future. From the above extracts, it seems that the participants experienced diminished life satisfaction because unemployment makes it difficult for them to

satisfy their basic needs. A variety of issues may cause diminished life satisfaction but, unemployment seems the most salient factor that weighs heavily on the lives of the unemployed. To confirm this, Pittau et al. (2010), Selim (2008) and Willemse (2015) all reported the link between unemployment and reduced well-being and reduced life satisfaction. The diminishing life satisfaction was reported as situational attribution and not dispositional attribution, implying that the young adults feel that external social influences are responsible for their situation.

From the above discussion, it is clear that some participants have hope for a better future while others are devastated by unemployment. A reasonable explanation would be that a combination of various environmental and individual dispositional factors interact with each other in shaping the participants' perceptions - for better or worse. Since no two individuals are the same, their perceptions about themselves in particular and the world, in general, are bound to differ considerably.

5.4 Conclusion

It is evident from the psychological literature that unemployment has negative effects on the well-being of young adults. It not only adversely affects their psychological health, their social lives, but it also erodes their sense of self-worth. Unemployment also appears to test the young adults' capabilities to function adequately in their environment and society. The current study delved into the impact that unemployment has on the psychosocial development of young adults and the manner in which unemployment affects their worldviews. This helps us to understand how they perceive the world and their future in it. This aspect is important because it reveals the deep-seated beliefs that the participants have about their situation. Since unemployment affects people in different ways, there is no simple, quick solution. Continued research that is multidisciplinary and effective policy guidelines on long-term interventions and serious job creation are needed to reduce unemployment.

6 Conclusions

Critical analysis of the literature indicates that the high unemployment rate, the weak economic growth, and a large proportion of black South Africans being marginalised are just some of the tough challenges that South Africa faces in the future. The high level of unemployment started in the early 1970s and escalated rapidly after the democratic elections in 1994. The official unemployment rate of 32,5% in the fourth quarter of 2020 means not only decent work deficits and poverty but also a low GDP per capita when compared to other countries (ILO, 2020).

In accordance with other developing countries, the unemployment of young adults in South Africa is a matter of grave concern. The high level of unemployment among young South African adults is a function of the overall level of unemployment in the economy (Moerane, 2016) and a structural and social phenomenon. This phenomenon is shaped by a host of factors such as the country's education system, labour market policies, and political dimensions.

The current study results show that it is necessary to explore further the impact of unemployment on young adults' psychosocial development to identify the challenges and needs that young adults face in their quest for employment. Therefore, this study sought to capture and describe the unemployment experiences of young adults of Ekurhuleni, Gauteng, in a safe environment. This chapter provides the conclusion of the present study. Firstly, it provides a critical analysis of the results and reflections on them. Secondly, it looks at the limitations of the study. Lastly, it looks at the recommendations for future research as a way forward.

6.1 Critical Analysis and Reflections on the Results

The literature review presented in Chapter 2 indicates that the unemployment of

young South Africans is partly due to the structural and technological changes in the economy, which have led to an increase in demand for skilled workers. There seem to be various reasons why people in the early adulthood stage are unemployed. This involves, among other things, the low quality of education, inappropriate ways they employ when searching for a job, and their lack of experience. These issues set serious limitations on their prospects to find employment. In support, many statistics from different studies also confirm the challenges of unemployment of young adults in South Africa (August, 2013; Vogel, 2015).

Several conclusions can be drawn looking at the results of the current study. The results indicated that unemployment has a debilitating impact on social relationships, leading to the disintegration of supportive structures, such as families. Some researchers, such as Graham and Barnow (2013) and Baqutayan (2015), indicated that social support was the most important factor that mediated the adverse impact of unemployment on an unemployed person's psychological and emotional well-being. The results of this study indicated that while some research participants received support from their families, others reported dysfunctional relationships with their families. Such differences exist due to the familial, individual, and environmental factors that influence their individual unemployment experiences. Supportive families tend to be financially better off than their counterparts. Supportive families often have more resources and capabilities to provide financial and psychological support to their unemployed family members than unsupportive families. This is a matter of socio-economic status.

In some instances, harsh conditions of unemployment negatively impact families as they struggle to support their unemployed family members. This clearly has implications for the adequate psychosocial development of young people, and the importance of a supportive structure (family, spouses or friendships) cannot be overemphasized. Erikson's psychosocial theory of development stressed the importance of family and peers and the role of socio-cultural factors in shaping the development of young people. These factors were also evident

in the findings of the current study.

The results also indicated that unemployment has a devastating impact on friendships. The phrase “when days are dark, friends are few” has a direct meaning for the research participants that have lost their friends because of their unemployment. For some participants, unemployment helped them to separate true friends from fake ones. Participants that lost friends were as devastated as those without family support. This clearly indicates that social support plays an important role in mitigating the negative effects of unemployment. Researchers such as Graham and Barnow (2013) and Lorenzini and Giugni (2010) support this assertion.

The role of self-esteem has received much attention in studies on unemployment. Studies reported a negative effect on the self-esteem of unemployed people (Pervaiz et al., 2018; Sharpe, 2012). Not only does self-esteem affect many areas of our lives, but low self-esteem perpetuates negative attribution of people and events. Unemployment is no exception. Low self-esteem, which usually manifests in low self-confidence and negative attitudes, may have played a role in the research participants' inability to find work. For most people, it is difficult to believe and be optimistic about finding work when their self-esteem is low. Feelings of shame and doubt are common in young adults facing prolonged periods of unemployment. This finding implies that young adults must maintain positive self-esteem and be mindful of their abilities to change their lives for the better. Unemployment erodes a sense of self-worth; hence, the individuals become doubtful not just about their skills and abilities but also about their prospects of finding work. Therefore, maintaining positive self-esteem would undoubtedly promote a sense of self-worth and the belief that one can change their own circumstances in the face of adversity. Intervention strategies can play a significant role in increasing self-esteem in young adults to believe in their own abilities in their quest to find work.

The results also indicate that unemployment undoubtedly has a negative impact on an

individual's self-identity. Individuals' self-identity suffers during unemployment and this, in turn, affect their psychosocial development. According to the psychosocial theory (Erikson & Erikson, 1997), self-identity is important for adequate adult functioning in society.

Unemployment adversely impacts self-identity and robs people of a chance to provide for their families. Such individuals are therefore facing a psychosocial crisis that may lead to maladaptive development. Therefore, young adults are challenged to resolve this crisis to function adequately in society. Erikson's psychosocial theory of development emphasises the importance of developing a positive self-identity during adolescence and young adulthood as an anchor to one's life. This has implications for young people, as failure to develop a positive self-identity may lead to role confusion and doubts about one's place in society. Therefore, it is important that individuals strive to develop and maintain a positive sense of self in the face of adversity to function adequately and fulfil their role in society.

Being employed is associated with capital. A lack of a job or employment means a lack of capital in an individual's life. The results of the study signify that unemployment leads to financial insecurity, which in turn may lead to a poor standard of living. In families that are crippled by unemployment, poverty and subsequently hunger become the order of the day. Generally, it is difficult for people to go out and look for a job on an empty stomach. Not having enough food in the house also reduces the chances of searching for a job.

Unemployment also escalates the tension in the relationships between spouses and other family members. Obviously, money spent on transport to look for a job could be used to buy food. This is a dilemma that some research participants faced. This situation was perceived as more difficult by men who are regarded as breadwinners. Failing to support one's family as a man violates societal expectations and renders one a failure and not 'manly enough', as some male participants reported. Therefore, unemployed young adults must be supported financially in order to meet some of their basic needs, such as food.

The results denote due to unemployment, not only the individual's personal well-

being but also the wellness of the larger society is at stake. Many poor individuals in society result in a poor society. The fact that unemployment is crippling the country's economy is a serious concern for the citizens of South Africa. Unfortunately, being unemployed is no longer only a social stigma but also a way of life for many people. Many people, both young and old, struggle to find a way to survive while being unemployed. Therefore, employment in South Africa has now become a privilege. This statement is reiterated by the research participants who attribute their feelings of isolation due to a lack of inclusion and social integration to their state of unemployment. In terms of the economy, the success of any society is influenced and measured by the buying power of its members. Unfortunately, unemployment denies people this buying power, resulting in poverty.

Another serious matter experienced by research participants in the current study was the issue of being dependent on others. Clearly, unemployment makes it difficult for the participants to be self-sufficient and live independently from their families of origin. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, independence is one of the important milestones that marks the beginning of adult life. Living away from one's parents is challenging for some, but it accords the developing young adult the opportunity to live life independently and make important decisions. Unemployment deprives young adults of this opportunity and makes them dependent on their families, which negatively impacts their psychosocial development as they have to rely on their family members to provide for them. Young adults are therefore more likely to experience feelings of failure and discontent about life in general. While young adults must have support structures such as family and friends to enable them to establish their independent living, they should not be completely dependent on them.

From the study results, it is apparent that unemployment affects how people perceive the world around them or their worldview, which is driven by their current and foreseeable future situations. When people are in a dire situation and do not see a possibility to escape, they are more likely to perceive themselves and their future negatively. However, hope is

always restored when people believe that the current situation can and will improve for the better. Several factors contribute to a negative perception of the future, such as the lack of education or skills and negligible or no work experience, as reported by most research participants in this study. Since the results indicate that while some research participants were pessimistic about their future, others were optimistic, one can conclude that unemployment affects our perceptions about the world differently.

Based on the current study results and the current political and economic situation, young adults of South Africa have a challenging road ahead to make an economic contribution to the country. The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Bonakele (2016) and Magagula (2017), who argued that the skills crisis experienced in South Africa is one of the greatest challenges facing governments' attempts to reduce youth unemployment. It seems that the most plausible solution would be for the government to increase their efforts in order to train and up-skill young adults to allow them to take their rightful place in the world of work and drive the economy forward. Until this is achieved and the unemployment issue is suitably addressed, the 'long walk to freedom' proposed by the late President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela will remain a far-distant dream that will slowly fade away like a shadow.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

Like many other studies that involve human participants, the present study has its limitations. Addressing these limitations is important for future research on the topic of unemployment affecting young adults. The small number of ten participants is a limiting factor, but it is in line with the requirements for qualitative research. The complication of the small sample size is that it does not allow for the generalisation of the results to the larger society, and if the study is replicated somewhere else, the results may either be similar or different. Therefore, the present results are constrained within a particular setting and time.

A further limitation may be that the study focused only on black unemployment. It is

recommended that future studies consider more diversified samples as this would endorse the generalisation of the results to a larger diverse population.

Another limitation of the current study may be the phenomenon of interviewer bias. The gender, ethnicity, level of education, and professional background of the researcher may affect participants' responses to questions. These characteristics and the fact that the interview topic is sensitive to most participants may result in them conveying more situational attributions in order to account for the position they find themselves in.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the current study emphasise the need for future research on the topic. It is a fact that many young adults in South Africa are unemployed, and this situation has been an ongoing concern for decades. Future studies need to focus more on effective intervention strategies. Quantitative research or even a mixed methods research using alternative methods of data collection and analysis can prevent the imitations of the present study by involving a larger sample, whose results can be generalised to the larger population.

It is also necessary to further explore the themes that emerged from this study to contribute and deepen our understanding of the phenomenon of unemployment and the psychosocial development of young adults. Young people are the building blocks in the economy of any country, and their inclusion in the labour market can be the driving force toward economic development and prosperity.

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Appendix A – Ethical Clearance Letter



Ethical Clearance for M/D students: Research on human participants

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa has evaluated this research proposal for a Higher Degree in Psychology in light of appropriate ethical requirements, with special reference to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Psychologists of the HPCSA and the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Student Name: George Mkuzelwa Skosana **Student no.** 45073414

Supervisor: Prof. M. C. Matoane **Affiliation:** Facilitation of Tuition and Learning, Unisa

Title of project:

Towards a psychosocial support model for the unemployed youth in South Africa

The proposal was evaluated for adherence to appropriate ethical standards as required by the Psychology Department of Unisa. The application was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology under the following conditions –

- Care should be taken when participants are recruited to respect their rights to confidentiality and all participation should be voluntary. A way must be found to request potential participants to volunteer without making use of any confidential information regarding their employment status.
- Ethical principles related to informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and the right of participants to withdraw from the research should be strictly enforced. These rights should be explained to them and the researcher must make sure that the rights are understood.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Kruger'.

Prof P Kruger

[For the Ethics Committee]
[Department of Psychology, Unisa]

Date: 10/10/2015

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) *The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2) *Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Psychology Department Ethics Review Committee.*
- 3) *An amended application should be submitted if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*
- 4) *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.*

Please note that research where participants are drawn from Unisa staff, students or data bases requires permission from the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (SENRIC) before the research commences.

Appendix B – Informed Consent Form



INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I consent to take part voluntarily in the research conducted by Mr Khuze G. Skosana. I understand that my answers will remain confidential. I also consent to the audio recording of the interview for the purpose of data capturing. I understand that no identifying information or recording concerning me will be released in any form and that the recording will be kept in a safe environment. I also understand that I can withdraw from this research at any time and this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. The study has been explained to me and I understand what is expected of my participation.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C – Interview Schedule

Demographics

Name :

1.	Age:	<input type="text"/>							
2.	Gender:	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
		<input type="checkbox"/>							
3.	Home language:	Zulu <input type="checkbox"/>	SeSotho <input type="checkbox"/>	isiXhosa <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>				
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4.	Ethnicity:	Black <input type="checkbox"/>	Coloured <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>					
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>					
5.	Marital status:	Single <input type="checkbox"/>	Divorced <input type="checkbox"/>	Married <input type="checkbox"/>	Widowed <input type="checkbox"/>				
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6.	Highest educational qualification:		Grade 11 / Std 9 or lower <input type="checkbox"/>						<input type="checkbox"/>
			Grade 12 / Std 10 (Matric) <input type="checkbox"/>						<input type="checkbox"/>
			Post-Matric Diploma or Certificate <input type="checkbox"/>						<input type="checkbox"/>
			Baccalaureate Degree(s) <input type="checkbox"/>						<input type="checkbox"/>
			Post-Graduate Degree(s) <input type="checkbox"/>						<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Previous occupation:								

General questions

(These questions are aimed at eliciting the general information about the participants and to establish rapport).

1. Tell me about yourself

1.1 Where are you from? / Where did you grow up?

- 1.2 Where do you live now?
- 1.3 Do you have kids?
- 1.4 Boys or girls?
- 1.5 How old are they?
2. What is your highest educational qualification?
3. Where did you work before becoming unemployed?
4. For how long did you work there?
5. What kind of job were you doing?
6. How long have you been unemployed?
7. How did you lose your job?
8. What kind of job are you interested in?

Specific questions

(These questions are aimed at eliciting the research information that forms the basis for the discussion).

1. Describe your relationship with other people BEFORE and AFTER you were unemployed such as your:
 - 1.1 Spouse (marriage and partnership)
 - 1.2 Children
 - 1.3 Extended family members
 - 1.4 Friends
2. How does being unemployed influence how you feel about yourself? (self-esteem)
3. How does being unemployed influence how you feel about your role in the society? (Sex-role identity)
4. Are there any changes that you had to make to cope with being unemployed? If so, what are they?

5. How does being unemployed affect your ability to make a financial contribution to your family?
6. How does unemployment affect your ability to be independent from your parents/significant others?
7. How does unemployment affect your chances of getting a better education (career choice)?
8. Explain how being unemployed has affected the way you see and experience life (worldview on life)
9. How do you feel about the people that are working as compared to you? Please explain
10. What is the most difficult thing about being unemployed? Please explain
11. Did you get any support after being unemployed?
 - 11.1 If so, what kind of support?
 - 11.2 From whom did you get the support?
12. What do you think can be done to reduce unemployment in South Africa?
13. What kind of support do you need to find employment?
 - 13.1 Do you have a CV?
 - 13.2 How often have you submitted your CV to companies?
 - 13.3 Where do you look for jobs?
 - 13.4 Have you ever been invited to attend an interview?
 - 13.5 How do you prepare for an interview?
14. Do you have any other issues that you wish to address in this interview?

Thank you