

**MULTI-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT
EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYEES AT
MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY**

MATHAPELO MASISI

A field study submitted to the UFS Business School in the Faculty of Economic
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Supervisor: Mr. Lyle Markham

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to assess multi-generational conflict experienced by employees at Marga Mangrove Metropolitan Municipality. This was assessed by focusing on the definition of multi-generational conflict according to literature; identifying the causes of multi-generational conflict; determining how these conflicts manifest in the workplace and determining whether any strategies are used by employees to manage multi-generational conflict. The researcher adopted an interpretive paradigm as a philosophy and the study was qualitative in nature. The non-probability, purposive sampling strategy was used. The population consisted of employees working at Marga Mangrove Metropolitan Municipality and representative of three generational cohorts, namely baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials (Generation Y). Findings indicate that multi-generational conflict was defined as tensions or conflicts which cause uneasiness as different generations interact in the workplace. Multi-generational conflict at Marga Mangrove Municipality is caused by identity-based, value-based, and behaviour-based conflict. Identity-based conflict manifests at Marga Mangrove Local Municipality as the younger generation is perceived to be egocentric, meaning caring about their own selfish interests, needs, views, and goals; whereas the older generation is generally perceived generally as caring about the needs and views of others. Behaviour-based multi-generational conflict manifested when the younger generation was perceived as having an entitlement mentality, not having a work ethic, not going the extra mile at work, having a problem with late-coming; however, expecting a promotion, overtime pay, acting in a higher position when a vacancy becomes available. The older generation is perceived as being disciplined, hardworking, and dedicated to their work; consequently, causing a conflict in the workplace classified as earned vs entitled. Value-based multi-generation conflict manifested in the older generation being perceived as trying to maintain the status quo by sticking to old ways of doing things instead of being open to innovation and change like the younger generation. The conclusion reached was in line with the social identity theory and generational cohort theory, which seeks to explain how the individual develops their value system and how the era in which they grew up affects how they view the world.

DECLARATION

I, Mathapelo Masisi declare that this field study presented for the qualification Master's in Business Administration at the UFS Business School at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work, either as a whole or in part, for a qualification at another university or faculty.

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1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The workforce of today is made up of four generations, namely baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and a small percentage of Generation Z (Clark, 2017). The generation baby boomers is anyone born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X was born between 1965 and 1981; millennials, also called Generation Y, were born between 1982 and 2000. Generation Z was born between 2001 and 2015 (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010, p. 491; Jonck, Van der Walt & Sobayeni, 2017).

Different perceptions have been formed when these different generations interact with each other. It was noted that workers perceive certain generational cohorts in a particular way, based on what leaders in that generation expect of their colleagues (Kleinhans, Chakradhar, Muller & Waddill, 2015). Such perceptions can result in preconceptions, stereotypes, or tensions. Generational differences, whether perceived or real, can potentially cause conflict in the workplace (Carpenter & De Charon, 2014; Lyons, Urick, Kuron & Schweitzer, 2015; Stewart, Oliver, Cravens & Oishi, 2017).

Local government is a public organisation that governs the affairs of people falling within a specific jurisdiction or territory. All municipalities in South Africa are collectively known as the local sphere of government (Koma, 2010). Local government is also known as a municipality. Its core function is to render basic services such as water, electricity, sewerage, refuse removal, town planning, drainage, roads and storm water, emergency management, fresh produce, fire-fighting, libraries, security, licenses, and economic planning (Koma, 2010).

Municipalities are a local sphere of government that must be established throughout the whole of the country. The municipal council is vested with legislative and administrative authority over the municipality. The municipality has a right to govern the affairs of its community based on provincial and national legislations, as outlined in the Constitution. A municipality is expected to participate in the provincial and national programs, and to manage the planning and budgeting process in a manner

that will give priority to the needs of its community, while promoting and developing the economy within the municipality. Metropolitan municipalities, also known as cities, govern the largest metropolitan areas. The rest of the municipalities in the country are divided into districts each district consisting of local municipalities. Ever since the boundary reform, which took place during the 3 August 2016 elections, there are eight metropolitan municipalities, 44 districts, and 205 local municipalities.

Municipalities have unique challenges such as perceived corruption, nepotism, and maladministration, which result in the non-delivery of basic services to various municipalities (Madumo, 2015). An additional challenge that municipalities are experiencing is that of multi-generational conflict (Hubeis, Hermawan, & Djohar, 2018). Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality has a very diverse workforce of 4300 employees consisting of both males and females. The employees are from different racial backgrounds; namely, black, white, coloured, and Indian / Asian groups. The employees also have different skillsets and educational backgrounds ranging from lower than matric to postgraduate degrees, dependent on the job designation of the employee concerned.

Generational cohort theory seeks to explain how individuals develop their value systems and how the era in which they grew up affects how they view the world. According to the theory, an individual's value system is developed within the first decade of their life. It is influenced by their community, friends, families, and the era they were born in (Mencil & Lester, 2014). Conflict in organisations arises owing to the interactions between different heterogeneous employees with different generational identities (Comperatore & Nerone, 2008). Therefore, having different generations in the workplace can lead to conflicts owing to diversity within the organisation.

As groups interact, generational identities and differences emerge between employees, and conflict can occur. According to Urick and Crandall (2012), identity-based conflict is challenging and is quite prevalent in organisations. This is because identity is influenced by demographics like age, while diversity may lead to increased conflict (Urick & Crandall, 2012; Woodward, Vongswasdi & More, 2015). Social identity theory identified differences between generations, which result in multi-generational conflict in the workplace. These differences are caused by differences

that are identity-based, value-based, and behaviour-based (Hogg, 2016). Although multi-generational conflict often arises owing to generational differences, few researchers have given an explanation of why and how such conflicts emerge. Yet, it is imperative to understand these mechanisms to manage multi-generational conflict (Deal & Levenson, 2016). According to social identity theory, multi-generational conflict manifests in different ways in the workplace. Identity-based conflict manifest as 'single vs multiple' and 'me vs we' kind of conflict. This means conflict emerges based on how individuals define themselves and how they perceive that others define them. Value-based conflict manifests as 'traditional vs progressive'. This type of conflict emerges when one generation prefers to maintain the status quo while the other generation embraces innovation and change at work (Urlick, Hollensbe, Masterson & Lyons, 2017).

Behaviour-based conflict manifests as 'earned vs entitled', 'high-tech vs low-tech' and skilled- vs unskilled communication'. Behaviour-based conflict arises when the behaviour of one generation differs or conflicts with that of another generational group. A certain generation may perceive another to have an entitlement mentality and not be willing to earn everything in life through hard work. 'High-tech vs low-tech' conflict arises when the older generation perceives that the younger generation values technology more than traditional ways of doing things. Lastly, skilled- vs unskilled communication conflict was associated with differences in the way various generations communicate (Milligan, 2016; Hubeis et al., 2018).

Strategies that can be utilised to address multi-generational conflict according to social identity theory are achievement-oriented, image-oriented, and ego-oriented strategies (Urlick et al., 2017). An achievement-oriented strategy seeks to prove an individual's worth in the workplace by demonstrating to colleagues that an individual is capable of achieving results. This is achieved through communication style as well as through performing proficiently. An image-oriented strategy is achieved by managing information and being visible to control images. An ego-oriented strategy is achieved when individuals protect their needs or remove themselves from the situation when conflict arises by walking away or, in extreme cases, terminating interactions.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem is that Margaung Metropolitan Municipality may be experiencing unwanted multi-generational conflict. Employees of different generational cohorts are always in conflict, have perceptions of one another, and are not working together as a team. If this problem is not addressed there will be high staff turnover, low staff morale, lack of service delivery.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is multi-generational conflict?
- What are the causes of multi-generational conflict at the Margaung Metropolitan Municipality?
- How does multi-generational conflict manifest at Margaung Metropolitan Municipality?
- Are there strategies that can be recommended to address multi-generational conflict at Margaung Metropolitan Municipality?

1.4 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Primary objective

The objective of the study is to assess the multi-generational conflict experienced by employees at the Margaung Metropolitan Municipality.

1.4.2 Secondary objectives

- To define multi-generational conflict from literature.
- To identify the causes of multi-generational conflict at the Margaung Metropolitan Municipality from literature.
- To determine how multi-generational conflict manifests at Margaung Metropolitan Municipality.
- To determine whether there are strategies that can be recommended to address multi-generational conflict at Margaung Metropolitan Municipality.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research design

An interpretive paradigm has been adopted as a philosophy and a qualitative approach will be followed during the study. Qualitative research provides a deeper understanding of the human condition in different perceived circumstances.

The qualitative method is used to explain the meaning of different parts of human life experiences. This enables researchers to interpret people's experiences owing to their involvement in human activities (Sanjari et al., 2014).

1.5.2 Sampling strategy

A non-probability sampling strategy will be applied and purposeful sampling will be utilised. Non-probability sampling techniques involve selecting a sample from a population without utilising random selection. Non-probability sampling enables researchers to use their judgment to select the participants to include in the sample. While this gives the researcher greater control over the selection process, the trade-off is that such a sampling technique limits the ability to generalise the findings compared to a sample based on a wider population (Vehovar, Toepoel, & Steinmetz, 2016).

The purposive sampling technique is a careful choice of participants based on the qualities they possess. It is a non-random technique, it does not utilise underlying theories or a determined number of participants. Simply put, the researcher decides on the questions to be answered and finds people who are willing to provide the information based on their experience and knowledge (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

1.5.3 Population and sample size

The population consists of employees working at Margaung Metropolitan Municipality comprising the three generations, which are baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials (Generation Y). The total workforce size is 4300 employees. There are ten Directors (senior managers), 50 General Managers (second layer of management), and 115 Managers (third layer of management) in the entire institution. There is not a good representation of all three generations at the level of Directors and General Managers. The sample was, therefore, selected from the 115 managers across the municipality.

For the purpose of this research, the sample will consist of 15 managers selected throughout the municipality, divided up as follows:

5: Baby boomers

5: Generation X

5: Millennials (Generation Y)

The participants will be selected using the purposive sampling method. This sampling method involves utilising a predetermined selection criterion for the sample to be tested (Yıldırım & Simşek, 2008).

The managers who will be selected as part of the sample will have to meet the following criteria:

- An individual must have been an employee of the Margaung Metropolitan Municipality since January 2018.
- The age of the employee must range between 20-65 years, and the employee can be male, female, or gender nonconforming.
- The employee should have at least two years of working experience in the Margaung Metropolitan Municipality.

1.5.4 Data collection methods

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are characterised by a dialogue between the researcher and the interviewee, following a

flexible interview schedule to allow for follow-up questions and comments. This kind of method allows the researcher to collect data and explore the participants' feelings, thoughts, and beliefs regarding a particular matter and to probe deeply into private and sometimes sensitive areas (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

1.5.5 Covid-19 risk consideration

According to the World Health Organization (2020), Covid-19 is an infectious pandemic with no cure. Precautionary measures were taken to protect both the researcher and the participants from the Covid-19 pandemic since the interviews took place in an area where cases of Covid-19 have been identified. For the purposes of this study, interviews were held virtually with all participants via Skype, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams as a precautionary measure. Once the participant has agreed to take part in the study, the researcher arranged a virtual meeting on either Zoom, Skype, or Microsoft Teams for the time agreed with the participant and send the meeting link to the participant's email address.

According to Salmons (2012), qualitative studies conducted through virtual interviews follow the same fundamental steps and thinking as any research. The only difference is that with virtual interviews, there is technology involved. Some technology such as videoconferencing allows for full verbal and visual exchange that closely resembles the natural face to face and back to back communication including verbal and non-verbal signals that takes place during the physical interview.

1.5.6 Data analysis

Content analysis was used for the purpose of analysing the data collected. Content analysis is utilised to organise data and to extract meaning from it; furthermore, to draw accurate conclusions from it. In qualitative content analysis, data collected from participants is presented in words and themes which enables the researcher to draw conclusions from the information collected. The choice of the analysis method depends on how deep the researcher seeks to present the statements of the participants when responding to the research question. This in turn affects the number of participants and how the information should be collected (Bengtsson, 2016). A

seven-step model of the research process was developed for content analysis, namely: establishing a concrete research question; linking the research question to appropriate theory; defining the research design; defining the sampling strategy; discussing methods of collecting data and analysing it; pilot-testing; the processing of the data and presentation of results in respect of the research questions; and drawing conclusions (Krippendorff, 2018).

1.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The protection of participants through observing appropriate ethical principles is imperative in all research studies. In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular role owing to the detailed nature of the study. These ethical principles include voluntary participation, confidentiality, permission obtained, informed consent, and no harm (Tracy, 2019, p.234).

1.6.1 Permission obtained

According to Watson (2006), permission obtained is about getting access to people or data. This means the researcher needs the approval of the gatekeepers or organisation involved before getting permission from the participants themselves. For the purposes of this research, permission was obtained from Margaung Metropolitan Municipality to conduct this research relating to the multi-generational conflict experienced by its employees. A letter requesting permission to conduct the study was written by the researcher to the City Manager and the Administrator of Margaung Metropolitan Municipality of which permission was granted (see Appendix A: Letter of permission).

1.6.2 Informed consent

According to Kaiser (2009), informed consent allows participants to engage freely with researchers without undue coaching or being threatened. Manson and O'Neill (2007) agree that, as part of obtaining informed consent, participants should be made aware of their rights including the right to withdraw during the research process. The

participants should also understand how issues of anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained.

For the purposes of this research, informed consent was obtained from all research participants. The participants are the researcher's subordinates. They were contacted by Human Resources officials via email to request their participation in the study. Appendix G was also provided to participants as a recruitment strategy and an information leaflet. Before conducting the interviews, the purpose and the nature of the study were explained to the participants by the researcher. They were requested to sign an 'informed consent' form, which outlines the rights of participants including their right to pull out of the study at any time.

1.6.3 Confidentiality

In research, confidentiality entails the management of private information. This is in respect of the participants' independence and right to keep certain matters private and in secrecy, as they deem fit. They also have the right to share secrets as they choose. The researcher should, however, be aware that the promise of confidentiality is binding and should not be taken lightly, but must also acknowledge a person's right and desire to share information (Bryman et al., 2014, p.122).

For the purposes of this research, the information provided by research participants was treated as strictly confidential at all times. Furthermore, information obtained during the research that may reveal the identity of the participants was kept confidential at all times. To ensure that access to confidential information is restricted, information was encrypted and kept in a password-protected laptop.

1.6.4 Voluntary participation

According to Tracy (2019), researchers should inform the participants of what they will encounter during the research process and should try to persuade them to participate. Studies show that if participants get accurate and complete information, they are likely to participate. If participation is imposed, it will lead to morally unacceptable choices.

Bryman et al. (2014, p.129). agree that both intimidation and oppression violate the principle of volunteering, which could lead to participants not expressing how they truly feel. Voluntary participation enhances research validity and reliability. For the purposes of this research, all participants were made aware that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to pull out at any time during the research.

1.6.5 No harm

Researchers need to consider the principle of 'no harm' with regard to the study subjects to ensure that no potential harm is inflicted on the participants. Conflict may occur between the right to know, which will be beneficial to the society at large, and the right to protect the right of the individuals (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001; Tracy, 2019, p.234)

For the purpose of this research, all participants were assured that they will not suffer any harm whether financial or otherwise by participating in the study. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the interview questions asked of participants were structured in such a way that they did not cause reputational harm to the municipality, the participants, or the individuals to whom the participants referred to during the interview. The same was ensured when reporting the outcomes of the study.

1.6.6 Power differential threat

Power differentials are common in organisations including academic ones since they are structured hierarchically with some positions being senior and having more authority over others, resulting in a structure of seniors and subordinates (Gibson et al., 2014). The powerful individuals can influence the well-being of their subordinates, placing them in vulnerable positions. Ideally, seniors should guide, support, and develop their subordinates in terms of their training needs. Research studies suggest that these relationships are important, especially regarding ethical decision-making (Bhattacharya, 2016). The power differential can bring about certain complications regarding ethical decision-making (Råheim et al., 2016).

For the purposes of this research, the power differential threat was mitigated by specifically excluding the two managers reporting directly to the researcher from the 115 managers when the sample of 15 was selected. The rest of the 113 managers were from other departments. They did not work directly with the researcher; therefore, they did not experience a power differential threat. Furthermore, Human Resources personnel was appointed as a third party to send written invitations (Appendix G, Information leaflet and consent form), which also includes interview questions via direct email to all 115 managers, with a request to make contact with the researcher should they wish to participate in the study.

1.6.7 Loss of work time/ study time

If interviews/ questionnaires are held or completed during office hours the permission of the employer should be obtained. Additionally, the informed consent form should indicate how long the questionnaire will take to complete (UFS, 2020).

For the purposes of this research, semi-structured interviews took place during office hours. The interview took 30–60 minutes. Permission was obtained from the relevant authorities to conduct the interviews during working hours.

1.6.8 Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest refers to a situation where someone's professional judgment in a matter may be influenced by a secondary interest, such as financial gain. Although the literature has mainly focused on financial considerations, many interests may also affect behaviour (MacKenzie & Cronstein, 2006).

For the purpose of this research, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality is the employer of the researcher; however, this relationship did not undermine the integrity of the research in any way as the employer did not have a vested interest in the outcome of the research. Furthermore, the employer was funding the university fees of the researcher through a bursary scheme, which was available to all employees.

Additionally, there were no conditions linked to the bursary which could influence the independence of the researcher or the outcome of the research.

1.6.9 Trustworthiness and rigour of the research

Historically, qualitative research was viewed as 'soft' science and was disapproved of for lacking scientific precision compared to quantitative research, which uses new, unbiased methods (Mays & Pope, 1995). Commonly known criticism is that qualitative research is subjective and lacks generalisability (Koch & Harrington, 1998; Cope, 2014; Amankwaa, 2016).

The expectations of qualitative research are credibility and trustworthiness. To develop trustworthiness in qualitative research instruments, Lincoln and Guba (1985) initially presented four criteria: credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability. In 1994, Guba and Lincoln added a fifth criterion, which is authenticity (Cope, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

1.6.9.1 Credibility

A qualitative study is regarded as credible if the experiences described are immediately recognised by people who share the same experience (Sandelowski, 1986). To demonstrate credibility when reporting the findings of a qualitative study, the researcher should present the engagement and audit trails (Cope, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher ensured that the study was credible by having audio recordings and process notes, which were later transcribed.

1.6.9.2 Transferability

When readers automatically believe that research outcomes resemble something important in their own world, then resonance has been achieved through transferability. A qualitative study meets the criteria if the results obtained resonate with people who were not involved in the study and when readers can relate the results to their own experiences (Tracy, 2019, p.239). This aspect allowed the researcher to

understand whether the findings could be generalised, and to address specific issues regarding how the researcher can go about making specific claims.

For the purpose of this study, transferability was achieved by using purposive sampling; it was also achieved by providing detailed descriptions of findings that were interrelated with specific literature.

1.6.9.3 Dependability

Dependability relates to the consistency of the information or results over comparable conditions (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This can be accomplished when another researcher agrees with the findings at each phase of the research process. The study would be considered dependable if the findings are replicated when testing similar participants under similar conditions (Koch, 2006; Cope, 2014).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that researchers should implement an auditing approach to determine the merit of the study in terms of trustworthiness. For the purposes of this study, complete records will be securely locked away in a cabinet in the office of the researcher at the municipality. This will include information obtained in all phases of the research process, that is a selection of research participants, interview audio recordings, interview transcripts, fieldwork notes, and information data analysis decisions, etc. Furthermore, recordings of the participants will be encrypted and saved in a password-protected laptop, should an audit be required (Bryman et al., 2014, p.45).

1.6.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the investigator's ability to prove that the data collected reflects the participants' responses and not the researcher's preconceptions or viewpoints (Tobin & Begley, 2004; Cope, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, confirmability was achieved when the researcher ensured that the results were not altered for the satisfaction of the researcher and showed that the truthfulness of the study lied in the data, which was collected and

analysed accordingly. It was achieved through the submission of transcripts and the description of the methodology used.

1.6.9.5 Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the degree to which the researcher accurately registers and expresses the emotions and feelings of the participants' experiences. (Cope, 2014). Tracy (2019, p.162) suggests that it is important to consider the researcher's non-verbal communication during the data collection process. Mostly, facial expressions and body language can convey warmth and neutrality. The participant might be talking about something that the researcher finds repugnant, disturbing, or devastating. Although not giving rise to a lack of authenticity, the interview is primarily intended as a forum for participants' thoughts and emotions, not for the opinion of the researcher. Displaying judgment or shock will most likely reduce the confidence and level of transparency of the interviewee.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher made the interviewees aware that the recorder as well as note-taking has been used from the beginning of the interview. Careful consideration was taken relating to note-taking practices during the interview. According to Patton (2002), if the researcher unexpectedly begins jotting down more notes than normal, the participant might assume that the researcher is expressly amazed or pleased by the answer. Note-taking will be introduced at the beginning of the interview, as part of the process.

At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the interviewee for their time and expertise. The researcher also offered participants a transcript of their interview. Finally, at the end of the interview, depending on the situation, the researcher asked whether there were any issues that the participant wanted to raise since the recorder was turned off.

1.7 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The study will be conducted at the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality head office in Bloemfontein. There is a total of 4300 employees. A sample of 15 managers will be selected from a population of 115 third-level managers. The sample will consist of 15 managers selected throughout the municipality, who encompass baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. This study falls within the discipline of Human Resources Management.

1.8 CHAPTER LAYOUT

This study is outlined in the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This particular chapter introduces the reader to the research topic and gives a brief overview of concepts, such as problem statement, research objectives, research methodology, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 2: Multi-generational conflict literature review

The objective of this chapter is to provide the reader with the literature on multi-generational conflict.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter summarises the methodology which will be used for the study. These methods include the understanding of the research approach, research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis, ethical considerations, and the trustworthiness of the study. The objective is to ensure that the research objectives are achieved with the methodology chosen.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretations

This chapter will discuss the findings from the semi-structured interviews which will be analysed using content analysis, and the outcomes will be linked to the applicable literature outcomes.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter will summarise the results and report on strategies recommended to address multi-generational conflict.

1.9 CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter was to provide the reader with an overview of the background to the research, problem statement, research objectives, preliminary literature review, research methodology, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations. In the next section, the focus in Chapter 2 will be the literature on multi-generational conflict.

2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this chapter is to provide the reader with the literature regarding what multi-generational conflict is. This will be done, firstly by outlining the generational cohort theory and defining baby boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y. This will be followed by a definition of multi-generational conflict according to social identity theory. The chapter will also discuss the causes of multi-generational conflict, how it manifests in the workplace and strategies which can be utilised to resolve it.

2.2 DEFINITION OF MULTI-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

According to Rahim and Bonoma (1979), a conflict that occurs in organisations can be classified into intrapersonal-, interpersonal-, intergroup- and intragroup conflict.

Interpersonal conflict occurs between two individuals. This type of conflict is caused by different personalities, choices, and opinions. Intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual. This is a type of psychological conflict that takes place in the mind caused by conflicting principles, values, and emotions.

Intragroup conflict arises between members of a team as a result of opposing views and ideas. Intergroup conflict occurs between different teams within an organisation. Thomas (1992) states that, although researchers have not agreed on a general definition of conflict, all definitions seem to mention interactions, perceptions, and interferences between parties. Similarly, tensions are defined as clashes and incompatibilities amongst parties that should be managed (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). Therefore, conflict can be classified as a kind of hidden struggle identified by discomfort rather than by aggression.

Generational conflict in the workplace is associated with differences identified in work values between generations (Hillman, 2014; Cogan, 2012). Other researchers have associated it with an aspect of communication (Milligan, 2016). The generational theory made popular by Strauss and Howe (1991), was developed in the 1990s and it seeks to explain what multi-generational conflict is.

2.2.1 Generational cohort theory

Generational cohort theory seeks to explain how an individual develops their value system and how the era in which they grew up affects how they view the world. According to the theory, an individual's value system is developed within the first decade of their life. It is influenced by their community, friends, families, and the era in which they were born.

It is expected that people in the same age group would have the same value systems regardless of their country of origin or the community in which they grew up. Value systems are what drive people's attitudes and behaviours and can be used to predict how individuals will behave or react to situations (Codrington, 2008).

A generation is defined as a period of 20 years from the date of birth to the date when a specific group (cohort) of people start having their own children. Generational cohorts are referred to as veterans, baby boomers, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z, although there are slight variations and overlap between countries regarding when each generation starts or ends. Veterans and Generation Z are not included in Table 1 below because, at the time of the study, veterans will no longer be part of the workforce and Generation Z will be younger than 20 years of age and not information-rich (Twenge et al. 2010; Jonck, Van der Walt & Sobayeni, 2017).

Generational group	Period born	Age (2020)
Baby boomers	1946 – 1964	56 - 74 years
Generation X (X'ers)	1965 – 1981	39 - 55 years
Generation Y (millennials)	1982 – 2000	20 - 38 years

According to Codrington (2008), an individual develops their value system based on what they experience in a societal context, which is not necessarily the same as that for other cohorts. South African society, owing to the pre-1994 oppression that took place, is uniquely fragmented based on its past. Not all social groups were affected equally by the political and historical events. Therefore, a need exists to conduct a study in an emerging country like South Africa to establish whether citizens have dealt with the effects of apartheid and how it has affected their work values and mindset (Jonck et al., 2017).

Baby boomers

Baby boomers were born into a stable post-war economy. The opportunities for education and the availability of employment have raised their optimism. They were inspired in North America by the Beatles, Martin Luther King, and John F Kennedy. They have lived through periods of unrest and sorrow in the world, such as the Vietnam War, the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the Czechoslovak Revolution (Erickson, 2008).

Because of the time in which they grew up, baby boomers had an enormous influence on society and generated a powerful sense of idealism (Glass, 2007). Baby boomers

have a strong desire to bring change to the world and see jobs as a personal sacrifice and a way to create economic breakthroughs (Glass, 2007; Erickson, 2008)

According to Notter (2007), baby boomers matured in a time of social turmoil. Their core values are personal development, confidence, cooperation, personal satisfaction, health, and well-being. They like to help others, are self-driven, eager to go the extra mile, reluctant to go against their peers, are very open to criticism, and uncomfortable with confrontation.

They have a good work ethic marked by hard work, long hours, and employee loyalty (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Southard & Lewis, 2004). In South Africa, baby boomers are associated with the 1960 Sharpville Massacre, the 1976 Soweto uprising boycotting Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools enforced by the apartheid government, the fight against Bantu Education, and the banning of the African National Congress in 1960 (Jonck et al., 2017).

Generation X (X'ers)

Generation X are descendants of baby boomers, who have been brought up with both parents at work. They saw their working-age parents get laid off at work and get divorced, which made them determined to have a healthy life. They grew up in circumstances of family, financial and social instability, and continuous change. They were dependent on a small group of friends for encouragement, and on television, computers, and video games for entertainment (Erickson, 2008).

Generation X grew up with mobile phones, computers, and other electronic gadgets (Pitta, Eastman & Liu, 2012; Young, Sturts, Ross & Kim, 2013). Generation X is innovative and independent thinkers who value family and friends above their jobs. Generation X handles personal time better and, as staff, they focus more on reality than on feelings (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Cugin, 2012).

In the workplace, Generation X is usually very skeptical, less loyal, and extremely independent (Glass, 2007). Generation X tackle their work with optimism and a rational approach to problem-solving. They are independent, innovative, and have the technical know-how. They can handle change, multi-tasking, and diversity (Smola &

Sutton, 2002; Southard & Lewis, 2004). They are ingenious and tend to pursue a work-life balance (Kupperschmidt, 1998; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

In South Africa, this is the first generation to be influenced by codes regulating the labour market, such as the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997, and the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 (Jonck et al., 2017).

Millennials (Generation Y)

Millennials are also known as Generation Y owing to their inquisitive nature (Van der Walt, 2016). Millennials are expected to be the fastest-growing workforce of 76 million people born between 1980 and 2000 (Ismail & Lu, 2014; Schullery, 2013). Millennials grew up in the most child-centric period. They received a lot of attention from their parents, who also expected a lot from them. As a result, this fostered a great deal of self-confidence. Millennials have high expectations of their employers, and themselves. They are used to being go-getters because of the perceived tight competition in the global job market. (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Ismail and Lu (2014) indicate that Generation Y will be the biggest portion of the American labour force by 2020 at 50%.

According to Eisner (2005), millennials combine job satisfaction with a healthy working climate, versatility, and the potential to evolve more than every other generation. They would give up a decently paying job for a meaningful job where they felt respected. Millennials value mentoring and on the job training, that enhances their skills and attractiveness in the business.

Job satisfaction for millennials is closely related to their sense of mission. They need a job that will allow them to learn new skills, make new friends, and live for a higher purpose (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

In South Africa, 40% of the population is classified as Generation Y (Van der Walt, 2016). Generation Y enjoy challenging jobs, working in-groups, and companies that are technologically oriented (Van der Walt, 2016). This generation has high self-confidence and they are bound to be in leadership positions at a very early age (Van der Walt, 2016).

There is, however, an alternative theory or approach to generational cohort theory called a sociology-based approach, which also seeks to explain the multi-generational conflict.

2.2.2 A social identity theory

A sociology-based perspective sees generations as collective beings that can express new ideas and progress in the world (Gilleard, 2004). In generational theory, Mannheim (1952) played a key role in arguing that individuals born in a similar period and environment, share similar experiences in life (Pilcher, 1994). Thus, the time at which a particular generation is born restricts its participants to a particular variety of interactions and opportunities. In addition, it offers them 'shared memories' (Schuman & Scott, 1989). These shared memories serve as a foundation for future ideas, behaviours, and actions (Joshi, Dencker, & Franz, 2011). Based on this view, a generation is a way in which one makes sense of one's own life and interprets the actions of others within the framework of history (Meyer, Durrheim & Foster, 2016).

Social identity theory is a psychological theory aimed at explaining behaviours such as stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflicts. Social identity theory advocates that individuals categorise themselves based on similarities and differences perceived to exist between themselves and others (Turner, 1999). Certain individuals may classify themselves as being part of a certain generational cohort based on traits shared and associated with that group; then associates other 'out-groups' based on different characteristics (Urlick, Hollensbe & Fairhurst, 2017). This type of self-classification satisfies two elementary human desires, which are a sense of belonging and differentiation (Brewer, 2001).

These intergroup comparisons become noticeable and important at work as the positive and negative group prejudices affect interactions between the different groups. As groups interact, generational identities and differences emerge between employees, and tension can arise (Dencker, Joshi & Martocchio, 2007).

According to Urlick and Crandall (2012), identity-based disputes can be very difficult and widespread in organisations. This is because identity can be affected by

demographics such as age (Dencker et al., 2007), while diversity can lead to increased conflict. Conflict in organisations arises owing to the interactions between different heterogeneous employees with different generational identities (Corwin, 1969). Therefore, the presence of multiple generations at work can enhance interpersonal conflict owing to diversity within the organisation (Woodward et al., 2015)

It is also important to distinguish between surface diversity and deep diversity. Surface-level diversity is based on different demographics and ages while deep-level diversity has to do with differences in principles, attitudes, and thoughts. While surface-level diversity tends to cause tension in the early stages of the relationship, its impact decreases as deep-level diversity becomes more prevalent (Martin, 2014).

2.3 CAUSES OF MULTI-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

Realistic group conflict theory submits that tension between groups emerges when there is a struggle for resources (Insko et al., 1992). However, the theory failed to explain the cause of conflict when there was no competition for resources. The social identity theory was then used to explain the intergroup conflict when there was no competition for resources (Hogg, 2016).

Conflict is triggered by what happens when individuals join groups in their desire to form a positive social identity. To create a positive identity, individuals view the in-groups favourably and the out-groups negatively. In applying social identity theory in multi-generational conflict, employees similar in age would be part of the in-group while others not in the same age group would be classified as the out-group (Dencker et al., 2007; Tajfel et al., 1979). This can lead to prejudice and discrimination (Tajfel, Turner, Austin & Worchel, 1979). This is done firstly, by categorising people as part of the in-group or the out-group. After categorisation, comparison follows making direct comparisons between the in-group and the out-group. This happens because human beings have a desire to boost their self-worth, and belonging to a group can assist them to view out-groups as inferior and own groups as superior in return boosts self-esteem and may lead to discrimination, prejudice and stereotypes between members of different groups (Tajfel et al., 1979).

Deal and Levenson (2016) suggest that conflict in the workplace is not always generational but caused by power and control. They suggest that conflict might appear to be generational, but it is often about who has the power and who should obey. In an age-diverse workforce, conflict usually emerges owing to work-life flexibility, especially between baby boomers and millennials. Baby boomers believe in rules and that work should be done in the office; however, Generation Y believes that technology provides the flexibility to work anytime, anywhere. Because managers are more likely to come from an older generation, which is the baby boomers, and the subordinates more likely to be Generation Y, the conflict might be interpreted as being generational, but the conflict might be about a need for power and control.

What employees want is influenced by their life stage and not by their generational claims (Deal & Levenson, 2016). People's views about work and relationships are shaped by the era in which they grew up, but what they want depends on their circumstances (Deal & Levenson, 2016).

Employees who do not have children are in a different life stage compare to employees with children, whether the person is Generation X or Generation Y. The career stage also determines what an employee expected from his or her work. A larger portion of millennials might be looking for promotion because most of them are at the early stages of their career (Deal & Levenson, 2016). Social identity theory, however, identified that differences between generations result in multi-generational conflict in the workplace. These differences are caused by differences that are identity-based, value-based, and behaviour-based as indicated in Figure 1 (Urick et al., 2017).

Although multi-generational conflict is often presumed to be the consequence of generational differences, Deal and Levenson (2016) have given a theoretical explanation of why such conflict is probable. Also, understanding these differences is vital in managing multi-generational conflict. Conflict can be seen as a product of the perceived differences between the values, behaviours, and identity of different generations even before the interaction between these generations occurs. Through classifying this tension as identity-based conflict, value-based conflict, and behaviour-

based conflict, a schema will be discussed detailing how the different generations are bound to conflict even before they interact.

2.3.1 Identity-based conflict

The theory of social identity suggests that people should categorise themselves based on similarities and differences perceived to exist between themselves and others (Turner, 1999). Certain individuals may classify themselves as being part of a certain generational cohort based on traits shared and associated with that group. They will then associate other 'out-groups' based on dissimilar characteristics (Urlick et al., 2017). That type of self-labeling satisfies two primary human needs, which are a sense of belonging and a sense of differentiation (Brewer, 2001). Conflict classified as identity-based is 'single- vs multiple identities' and 'me vs we' conflict.

2.3.1.1 Single- vs multiple identities

Each person is first an individual, but also part of a group. This can be an ethnic, gender, age, interest, political, sport, or nationally based group. These groups can further belong to religious or professional groups. Different social identities can be acquired through inheritance or accomplishment. Furthermore, these groups can assign certain values or status to an individual, which has a low or high social standard. This can result in a type of identity-based conflict referred to as single- vs multiple identities conflict (Kulich, De Lemus, Kosakowska-Berezecka & Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2017).

It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that people classify themselves based on a certain cohort, age group, or specific expertise owing to the oneness which they perceive to share with that group (Urlick, 2012). Self-categorisation satisfies two primary human needs, which are differentiation and inclusion (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008).

Both the self-categorisation and social identity theories are similar since they both seek to explain one's place in society by making a comparison between themselves and members of in- and out-groups. Social identification arises from four aspects

which include the following: classifying people as members of certain groups, uniqueness and the stature of the in-group, the salience of out-group, and lastly factors relating to the formation of the group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Social identity theory, while emphasising discrepancies that occur between generations, also maintains that social identification results in behaviours consistent with the identity of the group and may contribute to stereotypical perceptions of both the in-group and the out-group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This can help to understand barriers to contact between members of different generations (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Urick, 2012; Ho & Yeung, 2019).

2.3.1.2 Me vs we

Identity-based conflict occurs as a result of how people see themselves and how they perceive that other people are defining them. The identity-based conflict stems from conflicting self-definitions that individuals can control simultaneously (Ashforth, Johnson, Hogg & Terry, 2001; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006; Serpe, 1987; Urick, 2012).

The sense of self that emerges from membership in a social group is a sense of self as 'we' and 'us'; not just 'I' and 'me'. This involves internalising the group as part of the self so that the self is 'us' (Turner, 1999). However, our sense of personal identity also derives from our social identities. It is group life that allows me to be who I am as an individual (Serge, 2016; Postmes & Jetten, 2006). Haslam and Turner (1999) agree that who 'we' depend on who we compare ourselves with. Consequently, it is the basis for group behaviour such as communication, social connection, trust, influence, power, organisation, and solidarity (Turner, 1999).

Me vs we refers to how people perceive that different generations gave priority to personal and collective identity. Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clack (1985) described idiocentric personality traits as prioritising personal views, needs, goals, beliefs, and pleasures, while allocentric traits prioritise shared views and beliefs (Urick, 2012).

2.3.2 Value-based conflict

Value-based conflict arises when each generation portrays different values in the workplace (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Members of Generation X would most likely appreciate extrinsic rewards more than any other generation. Generation Y values freedom more than other generations, while social and intrinsic rewards are regarded as less important by Generation Y than by baby boomers (Twenge et al., 2010; Urick, 2012). Several studies have advised that differences in values between different generations are a function of maturity or length of service in the workplace and although those differences may exist, they are not as stereotypical as reported in the media and other literature (Twenge et al., 2010; Urick, 2012).

Because members of the same generations are perceived to share similar values, it increases the potential of individuals to the sense of oneness and identification with their social group. It can be concluded that identity theories can be used to study different generations at work (Urick, 2012). The type of conflict classified as value-based is traditional vs progressive conflict. See Figure 1 underneath.

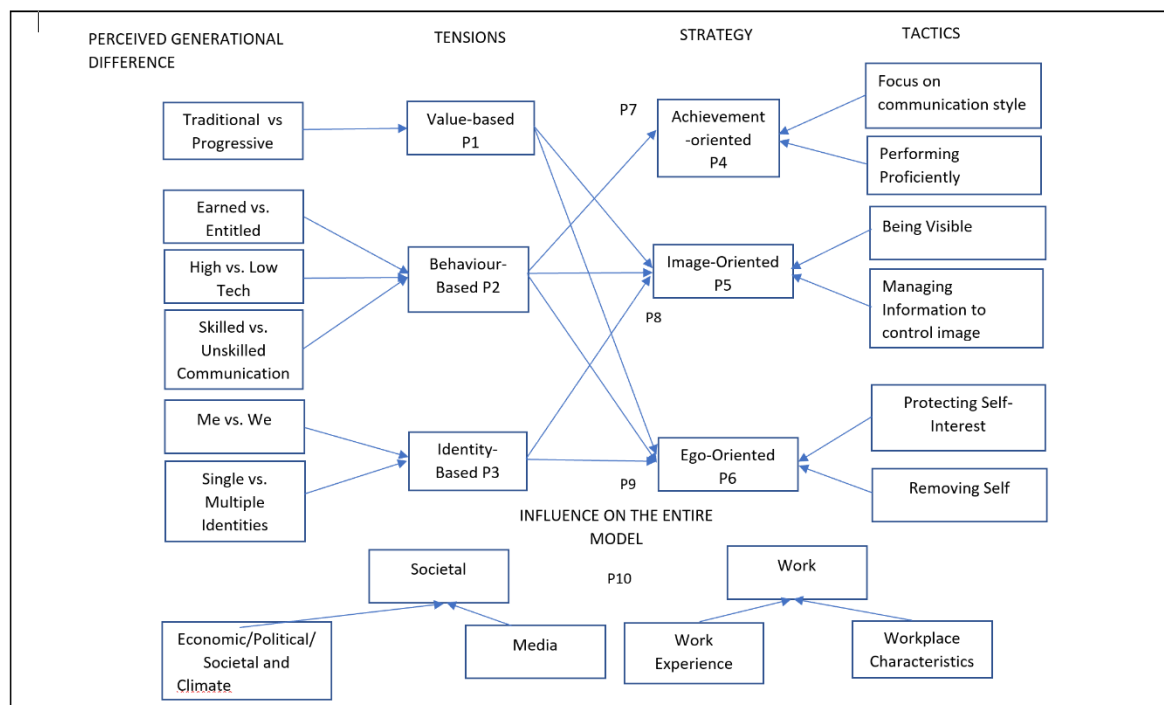


Figure 2:1. Intergenerational tensions and strategies to be managed (Source: Adapted from Urick, Hollensbe, Masterson & Lyons, 2017)

2.3.2.1 Traditional vs progressive

This value-based generational conflict occurs when one generation prefers to maintain the status quo while the other generation embraces innovation and change in the workplace. The younger professionals perceive baby boomers as being complacent and keeping the existing state of affairs while they (the younger generation) value challenging the status quo. This fundamental difference between these generations thus creates conflict (Urick et al., 2017).

2.3.3 Behaviour-based conflict

Behaviour-based tension occurs when an individual attributes the behaviour of another person that is different from their own to the generational group he belongs to. Behaviour-based generational conflicts that can be identified are high-tech vs low-tech, earned vs entitled, and skilled vs unskilled communication. See Figure 1 (Urick et al., 2017).

In South Africa, multi-generational conflicts emanate from differences in communication styles, different values or beliefs of the different generations, and the misalignment of work ethics of each generation as they become prevalent in the workplace (CHRO South Africa, 2020).

2.3.3.1 Earned vs entitled

From a sociological perspective, the entitlement mentality can be linked to the social conditions which took place during the early development of Generation X and millennials. Generation X and millennials are children of baby boomers, who were referred to as a special generation. Baby boomers have instilled the same sense of self, emphasising the status of being unique and special in their children and focusing on building their self-esteem (Twenge et al., 2010). This created a habitus invoking the label 'trophy kids', which captures the tendency of baby boomers to build self-esteem in their children, emphasising the sense of being winners, and subsequently

creating a sense of entitlement (Alsop, 2008; Allen, Allen, Karl, & White, 2015). Baby boomers, in contrast, earned everything in life through working hard, long hours, dedication, and loyalty (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Southard & Lewis, 2004).

2.3.3.2 High-tech vs low-tech

The older generation believes that younger generations undervalue conventional ways of doing work because they are too dependent on technology. Researchers conclude that the greatest tension between Generation Y and other generations in the workplace is their dependency on technology (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010; Urick et al., 2017).

2.3.3.3 Skilled vs unskilled communication

Generation Y is more likely to encounter conflict with any generation who is not willing to embrace technology while communicating (Carver & Candela, 2008). The younger generation prefers to utilise alternative forms of gathering information such as the internet than older generations do (Hillman, 2014).

2.4 HOW MULTI-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT MANIFESTS

2.4.1 Identity-based conflict

2.4.1.1 Single vs multiple identities

The social identity literature contrasts social and personal identities, also known as group identities (Hogg, 2003). Social identities involve the knowledge that each individual is a member of a group and members of a group share the same values, knowledge, and status when compared to other groups. Group identity can overlap with personal identity as individuals play multiple roles within the different groups they belong to (Tajfel et al., 1979; Urick et al., 2017).

Single vs multiple identities conflict manifests when individuals do not define themselves as a member of one group. They can also be regarded as members of a certain department within an organisation or be part of a larger social group like being part of a generation (Urick et al., 2017).

Members of a certain generation may not define themselves as such at all times, and the identity of a generation might overlap with certain social identities that are relevant to the individual. In its design, the social identity theory envisages that, with each interaction, an individual takes on a unique identity. Cohorts such as nationality, gender, religion, race/ethnicity, heritage, first-year university students' groups, have different identities and may differ in longevity and in how they make an individual feel across situations and time (Brewer, 2001; Oyserman, Elmore & Smith, 2012).

2.4.1.2 Me vs we

Identity-based generational conflict, referred to as me vs we manifest in the workplace when members of a generation give priority to personal or group identity. Me vs we identity-based conflict manifests in the workplace as being idiocentric or allocentric. Idiocentrics are concerned about their own personal goals, needs, views, and beliefs instead of those of others. Allocentric prioritise shared beliefs and interests over their own (Triandis et al., 1985).

While sometimes useful, the abbreviated 'me' can unintentionally limit the emphasis of attention to a single way of perceiving the self. While there are limited studies on the subject, people may perceive themselves in different ways. An individualistic viewpoint 'me' emphasises how one is different from others, but people may also consider how similar and connected they are to others via relationships 'we' which is sometimes referred to as a collective view.

The ability to use a separated 'me' as well as a connected 'we' viewpoint of the self, allows individuals to classify themselves from different perspectives. That is, they can consider themselves as performers successful owing to others (Oyserman et al., 2012). Conversely, they can consider themselves from a distant perspective.

Individuals can consider what others perceive about them and start seeing themselves through the eyes of others (Oyserman et al., 2012).

2.4.2 Value-based conflict

2.4.2.1 Traditional vs progressive

Values are the fundamental beliefs that are at the heart of every decision a person makes. Values define who each person is, their value system, and what they consider to be right or wrong (Normala & Kumar, 2013). Each generational cohort stands for different values in the workplace and in their lives generally (Ismail & Lu, 2014; Iden, 2016).

Multi-generational conflicts become complicated with the combination of generational and age differences (Hansen & Leuty, 2012). Leaders and managers are therefore encouraged to utilise the results of new research on work–value differences in the workplace to assist with managing generational cohorts with different backgrounds (Hillman, 2014). Baby boomers value material success, getting ahead, and yearn for individuality. Generation X values working flexible hours, family time, and getting promoted in a short space of time. Millennials like personal freedom and social activities as well as workplace engagement (Iden, 2016).

Krahn and Galambos (2014) suggest that, according to social science, the younger generation is very different from the older generation. Krahn and Galambos (2014) reported that baby boomers do not share the same values as Generation X or millennials. Furthermore, they expect the younger generation to have the same work ethic of working long hours and respecting protocol in the workplace that they have.

Traditional vs progressive conflict manifests in the workplace when an older generation values complying with historically accepted ideas, beliefs, patriotism, diversity, appearance, and formality, encounters younger generations, who are more open-minded, preferring change, and embracing innovation. See Figure 1 (Urlick et al., 2017).

Value-based conflict emerges in the workplace owing to differing expectations from each generation of another. Baby boomers value loyalty, predictability, sacrifice, and everyone following orders. Generation X, on the other hand, is skeptical about authority and values flexible work schedules and less supervision. Millennials value their work the same way they value time-off. As a result, the working environment becomes unsettling (Iden, 2016).

2.4.3 Behaviour-based tension

2.4.3.1 Earned vs entitled

Earned vs entitled generational conflict was experienced by both the younger and older generation. The older generation believes that they deserve everything they accomplish since it is through hard work but perceive the younger generation as always expecting things to be given to them without working hard for them, in that way suggesting that the younger generation is entitled. The younger generations, on the other hand, perceives the older generation as being over-invested in their work while the younger generation is simply seeking a work-life balance and deserve to be rewarded at the same level as the older generation (Urick et al., 2017; (CHRO South Africa, 2020).

According to Twenge (2014), millennials are labeled as the 'me, me, me generation', which is a generation considered to have an entitlement mentality. This generation grew up getting accolades, trophies, and congratulatory treatment from their coaches, teachers, and parents. In some instances, these were rewarded even if they had not accomplished anything special but this was done in the spirit of building up their self-esteem.

In South Africa, millennials prefer a workplace that offers an integrated, team-oriented culture and that provide opportunities for interesting work. This generation does not believe that excessive work demands are worth compromising their personal lives. They value appreciation, support, and feedback especially reinforcement in the workplace (CHRO South Africa, 2020).

Earned vs entitled conflict manifests in the workplace as millennials become a larger part of the workforce. They are challenging the manager's (usually a baby boomer) ability to motivate and lead the team as they have an unrealistic expectation of being promoted, getting a raise, and any form of recognition. This has been exacerbated by millennials struggling to find employment, more so than in previous generations, also experiencing low employment and low wages in the past decade owing to recession. This has created the assertion that millennials have an entitlement mentality (Allen et al., 2015).

The concept of generations ranges from psychological, biological, sociological, and historical academic disciplines. From a biological point of view, there are physiological characteristics and capabilities linked to a generation at a given stage in their life stage. Based on this concept, it is suggested that part of the brain associated with strategic thinking is not fully developed until a person reaches their twenties. A typical member of the millennial generation will, therefore, be impacted by this biological phenomenon (Allen et al., 2015). From a sociological perspective, the entitlement mentality can be linked to the social conditions which took place during the early development of Generation X and Generation Y. Generation X and millennials are children of baby boomers who were referred to as a special generation.

Baby boomers, in contrast, have earned everything in life through hard work, extended hours of work, dedication, and loyalty (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Southard & Lewis, 2004). Baby boomers are also considered to be self-employed, ambitious, positive, and independent team players, seeking personal satisfaction and believing that they can change the world (Tang, Cunningham, Frauman, Ivy, & Perry, 2012; Thompson, 2017). Thompson (2017) agrees that baby boomers have a strong work ethic; they expect their colleagues to do the same; they get the work done. It was also noted that baby boomers are competitive, they work long hours and they define themselves by their professional accomplishments (Zabel, Biermeier-Hanson, Baltes, Early, & Shepard, 2016; Thompson, 2017).

2.4.3.2 High-tech vs low-tech

High-tech vs low-tech is a behaviour-based conflict that manifests in the workplace when one generation perceives the other to be relying on technology in a form of hardware or software to complete their work. In the current workplace, technology is 'the one big gap' between generations. The younger generation displays frustration when the older generation shows reluctance to leverage or embrace technology using texting. The younger generation deems this as limiting communication and impacting efficiency (Urlick et al., 2017).

According to Dries, Pepermans and De Kerpel (2008), organisations are facing complex challenges that are strategic in nature and need reliable resources such as millennials, who are the most savvy of all generations in information communication technology (ICT) in the workforce. Rendell et al. (2011) agree that millennials have high ICT literacy and that they are the first generation that entered the workplace with this skill, which is regarded as the key business tool in the workplace today.

2.4.3.3 Skilled vs unskilled communication

Generational conflict in the workplace was associated with differences in the way various generations communicate (Milligan, 2016; Hubeis et al., 2018). The last generational conflict which results in behaviour-based conflict is centered around the perceptions of both generations that members of the older generation communicate in a skilled way. The older generation believes that their own generation can communicate effectively while implying that the younger generation cannot communicate adequately. This perception is based on the assertion that the younger generation is not willing to listen, cannot interpret and transmit messages effectively, and that they lack sensitivity when interacting with other generations (Urlick et al., 2017).

Based on the perception of the older generation, the 'unskilled' communication results in workplace conflict, a lack of transmission of information, unclear messages, and

inefficiencies. The older generation associates these challenges with how the younger generation learned to communicate (Urlick et al., 2017). The older generation believes that they have stronger communication skills than the younger generation. Several researchers have identified poor communication as a source of conflict in a generationally diverse workforce (Hillman, 2014).

Deyoe and Fox (2012) noted that there were communication breakdowns between workers of different generational cohorts. The older generation is unequivocal of the view that the younger generation has no communication skills owing to the way they communicate on Twitter and other social platforms. They imply that the younger generation talks in abbreviated sentences and abbreviated words, which is difficult for the older generation to understand. So, if they were to have a lengthy conversation with someone in their twenties, they would not understand them (Urlick et al., 2017).

2.5 STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS MULTI-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

According to Rothman (1997), conflict management methods rely on the causes of the conflict. For example, identity-based conflict, which arises from a profound misapprehension of particular groups of individuals, can involve strategies that emphasise the vulnerability of groups to their identities. Complex causes of conflict, such as those resulting from generational problems, can be difficult to address owing to deep and superficial issues that need to be considered. The specific reasons for conflict may not always be clear to everyone concerned (Urlick et al., 2017). One strategy used for conflict resolution is the dual concern model.

2.5.1 Dual concern model

The dual concern model suggests that the 'concern for self' or the 'concern for others' motivates the strategy which an individual will choose to resolve the conflict (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). An individual with high concern for self is dominating and seeks to compel the opponent to surrender to their demands. People highly concerned about others, and having low concern for themselves, give in to the demands of the competitor. Also, when a person ranks high on both concern for self and others, they

tend to be able to reach a mutual agreement. However, when someone has low concern for themselves and others, they avoid the conflict and hope it will resolve itself. What is interesting is that, when concern for self is restrained, and concern for others is high, an individual will compromise.

The dual concern model, however, has limitations in terms of resolving multi-generational conflict as it is more focused on interpersonal conflict rather than on intergroup perceived behaviours, feelings, and dynamics. An appropriate theory to explain multi-generational conflict is social identity theory as it has the conceptualised emotional and value significance attached.

2.5.2 Social identity theory

Social identity theory suggests that individuals group themselves based on similarities and differences perceived to exist between themselves and others (Turner, 1999). Certain individuals may classify themselves as being part of a certain generational cohort based on traits shared and associated with that group; therefore they classify others as 'out-groups' according to dissimilar traits (Urick, Hollensbe & Fairhurst, 2017). This type of self-categorisation satisfies two specific, basic human needs, which are a sense of belonging and differentiation (Martiny-Huenger, Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2014).

Communication between generations not only includes interactions between individuals but also involves relations between the two groups of younger and older people. Next, strategies that can be used to manage the multi-generational conflict are discussed. These strategies are achievement-oriented, image-oriented, and ego-oriented, as indicated in Figure 1.

2.5.3 Achievement-oriented

Two basic, achievement-oriented techniques are discussed below. They are communication styles, and performing proficiently. Each of these strategies seeks to prove an individual's value in the workplace by demonstrating to fellow colleagues that

an individual can be useful to the organisation and is capable of achieving results (Urlick et al., 2017).

2.5.3.1 Focusing on communication style

The first achievement-oriented strategy is focusing on communication style. This demonstrates a mindful choice by members of each generation to portray respectful behaviour when communicating with other colleagues from other generations by using communication channels that are preferred by other generations, such as email, phone or face-to-face. Furthermore, each generation should also focus on the language used when communicating with members of a different generation (Urlick et al., 2017).

The use of organisational jargon helps an outcast to blend into a community (Louis, 1980). Using generational jargon would allow a member of another generation to minimise tension with someone from another generation. For instance, the younger generation made an effort to communicate face-to-face or to call (rather than texting) when communicating with employees belonging to the older generation at work. By adjusting their communication medium, younger generation participants have helped to solve the interpersonal tension that emerges from expectations of communication abilities (Urlick et al., 2017).

2.5.3.2 Performing proficiently

The next achievement-oriented strategy used is performing proficiently. This strategy is achieved when colleagues point out or keep referring to planned or accomplished goals to colleagues belonging to another generational cohort. People noted that highlighting their past accomplishments improved trust between them and their colleagues, thereby leading to conflict resolution (Urlick et al., 2017).

According to Urlick et al., (2017) stated that one participant in their study highlighted her accomplishments by demonstrating excellent work results, allowing her work to speak for itself. The Employee volunteered for years to organise work events and

repeatedly proved herself by ensuring that all events were a success. She demonstrated hard work to her colleagues, thereby decreasing the conflict and the perception relating to earned vs entitled conflict.

When various generations plan to counteract stereotypes of behaviours at work, they appear to participate in some kind of action needed for the task at hand. Performing proficiently can also be used to handle behaviour-based multi-generational disputes (Urlick et al., 2017).

2.5.4 Image-oriented

2.5.4.1 Being visible

The first method of achieving an image-oriented strategy is being visible. This includes ensuring that individuals are available at work during normal working hours and that their work efforts are noticed by others. This can also be achieved through maximising contact with individuals from other generations (Urlick et al., 2017).

2.5.4.2 Managing information to control image

The second method of achieving an image-oriented strategy is managing information to control images. Employees provide certain pieces of information or ideas to manage the image of their own generation for others. Members of different generations can use image-oriented methods to deal with all types of conflict. Identity-based conflicts and value-based conflicts hit at the core of self; that is, what individual values and who they truly are. It also encompasses the view of one generation about the other; that is, an image-based tension.

Behaviour is also an image-based concern in that colleagues make impressions on others on the basis of their actions. It is closely linked to the center of self. Research has shown a difference between the identity of the company (as perceived by its employees) and the picture of the company by outsiders (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). The younger generation was very concerned with controlling

the views of others through image-based strategies, including being visible and controlling information to monitor the image of their generation. Image-oriented methods can also be used to resolve meaning, actions and identity-based multi-generational disputes (Urlick et al., 2017).

2.5.5 Ego-oriented

2.5.5.1 Protecting needs

Individuals focus on this strategy to ensure that their needs in an interaction are met.

2.5.5.2 Removing self

The second ego-oriented strategy that individuals use is to walk away, disregard, or, in extreme cases, even to terminate interactions with others to avoid conflict. This strategy is used more frequently by the older generation, who prefer to walk away from exchanges with younger generations to avoid conflict (Urlick et al., 2017). Individuals also used ego-oriented strategies when dealing with behaviour, values, and identity-based types of conflict. Identity-based conflicts arise owing to perceived generational differences between one generation and another. Individuals managed the conflict by being proactive and taking steps either to protect or to remove themselves from the situation (Urlick et al., 2017).

It was noted that ego-oriented methods were additionally linked to behaviour-based and value-based conflicts. For example, the apparent differences linked to communication skills (behaviour-based) were alleviated by walking away from these unproductive interactions (removing self). Equally, individuals who perceived incompatible differences in values applied an ego-oriented strategy of removing self. It can therefore be concluded that ego-oriented strategies can be used to manage, behaviour-based, value-based, and identity-based multi-generational conflicts (Urlick et al., 2017).

2.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the reader with the literature on multi-generational conflict detailing what multi-generational conflict is, what causes multi-generational conflict, and how it manifests in the workplace. Furthermore, to identify strategies that can be utilised to resolve these conflicts. The multi-generational conflict was defined in terms of generational cohort theory and of social identity theory. According to the literature, multi-generational conflict is caused by identity-based conflict, value-based conflict, and behaviour-based conflict.

In addition, it was discussed that multi-generational conflict manifests in different ways in the workplace, namely: single vs multiple, me vs we, traditional vs progressive, earned vs entitled, high-tech vs low-tech, skilled vs unskilled communication.

Finally, the strategies which can be utilised to resolve multi-generational conflict, according to literature, are achievement-oriented, image-oriented, and ego-oriented strategies. In the next section, the focus of Chapter 3 will be on methodology, outlining how the study will be conducted.

3 CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the methodology chapter is to provide a proper account of the research approach adopted, the research design, sampling strategy, research instruments used during the data collection, ethical considerations, and the trustworthiness of the researcher. In this chapter, the researcher has stated, expanded, and provided an understanding of the application of the methods which have been used and their relevance to the research topic.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher adopted an interpretive paradigm as a philosophy and the study was qualitative in nature. An interpretive paradigm is also known as constructionist or constructivist. From an interpretive point of view, the truth is not tangible 'out there,' which a researcher could palpably describe or translate. Rather, knowledge and reality are created and repeated through interactions, communication, and practices. This means that knowledge was socially built by individuals participating in the research project and the researcher was directed by the participants' points of view (Tracy, 2019, p.40).

A qualitative approach was followed during the study because the researcher was interested in understanding qualitative data, which was meant to provide a rich insight with regard to the multi-generational conflict that might have otherwise be missed during a structured study.

According to Geertz (1973), qualitative research is not an investigative science in search of facts or rules but rather an interpretative study searching for meaning. Qualitative research is about putting oneself at the scene, making note of small cues to examine the subject matter, and trying to understand the data collected and the context to build larger knowledge claims or culture (Tracy, 2019, p.23).

Vishnevsky and Beanlands (2004) agree that qualitative research is not substandard research, but a different way of studying human beings. Qualitative research highlights individual experiences, explains the phenomenon, and formulates a theory (Cope, 2014). Cope (2014) states that qualitative methods are an umbrella concept that covers participant observation in the form of focus groups and private interviews, which can be in person or online. Qualitative research comes in the form of open-ended qualitative investigative methods.

3.3 SAMPLING STRATEGY

A non-probability sampling strategy was used. Non-probability sampling is a sampling technique where the odds of selecting participants are not determined by a calculation; instead, it is subjective and depends on the judgment of the researcher. Bryman et al., (2014, p.300). state that non-probability sampling does not make use of random sampling, and that some participants are more likely to be selected than others.

The non-probability technique was utilised because it allowed the researcher to have a sense of the wide and diverse experiences of the sample group (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011). The non-probability sampling method shows that not all sections of the population will have an opportunity to partake in the study which can, therefore, limit the general ability of the findings (Creswell, 2009). Given that the sampling technique limits the general ability of the findings, this did not mean that the findings of the study were less accurate because the sample group was small.

For the purposes of this research, purposeful sampling was used. Purposive sampling was considered to be the best because the population in question was large, so the researcher had to choose participants deliberately who matched the parameters of the goals of this study and questions and who were information-rich.

According to De Vos et al. (2011), purposive sampling allows the researcher to concentrate on the key components or players in the population that are of interest to the researcher. This sampling procedure often ensures that the researcher chooses the sample group based on the characteristics they embody and on the typical

attributes of the population, which will ensure that they meet the needs of the study (De Vos et al., 2011).

Tshaya (2015) agrees that purposive sampling allows the researcher to utilise their judgment in selecting participants. This enabled the researcher to choose participants based on the selection criteria established.

Furthermore, purposive sampling was appropriate for this study owing to the limited resources and time the researcher had. Finally, purposive sampling was used because it was going to assist the researcher in understanding the experiences of the generations within the workforce and since the study did not intend to generalise to the entire population, it was considered to be appropriate.

3.3.1 Population and sample size

The population consisted of employees working at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality representative of three generational cohorts, namely baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials (Generation Y). The total workforce size is 4300 employees. There were ten Directors (senior managers), 50 General Managers (second layer of managers), and 115 Managers (third layer of managers) in the entire institution. There was not a good representation of all three generations at the level of Directors and General Managers. The sample was therefore selected from the 115 managers across the municipality.

For the purposes of this research, the sample consisted of 15 managers selected throughout the municipality, which was divided as follows:

5: Baby boomers

5: Generation X

5: Millennials (Generation Y)

Participants were chosen using the test sampling approach based on purposeful sampling methods. The criterion sampling process includes the use of a fixed selection criterion (Yıldırım & Simşek, 2008). The managers selected as part of the sample had to meet the following criteria irrespective of their race or educational level:

- An individual is an employee of the Margaung Metropolitan Municipality since January 2018.
- The age of the employee had to range between 20-65 years, and the employee could be male, female, or gender non-conforming.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. According to Tracy (2019), semi-structured interviews are organic in nature. The researcher can probe answers given further to seek clarity or elaboration. Fontana and Frey (2005, p.703), agree that semi-structured interviews are more flexible because neither the interviewer nor the respondents are confined to specific questions or answers.

Semi-structured interviews pursue more information, stimulate discussion, and do not dictate it. Tracy (2019, p.159) suggests that semi-structured interviews are more than just asking good questions. They are about creating an environment that encourages comfortable, honest, and fun dialogue. The interviewer takes the role of a listener and reflector rather than that of a questioner.

3.4.1 Covid-19 risk consideration

According to the World Health Organization (2020), Covid-19 is an infectious pandemic with no cure. When people are in an area where there are or have been cases of Covid-19, they need to take precautionary measures and take the possibility of infection seriously. For the majority of individuals, Covid-19 infection causes mild illness, but it can make some individuals extremely ill, and, for some persons, it can be deadly (WHO, 2020).

According to the World Health Organization (2020), precautions should be taken in this regard. People should regularly and thoroughly rub their hands with an alcohol-based sanitiser or wash their hands with soap and water to kill viruses that may be on their hands. People should also maintain at least a one-meter distance (social

distancing) between themselves and others, especially people who are coughing or sneezing, to avoid contracting the virus by wearing a facial mask.

For the purposes of this study, interviews were held virtually with all participants via Skype, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams, as a precautionary measure. Once the participant has agreed to take part in the study, the researcher arranged a virtual meeting on either Zoom, Skype, or Microsoft Teams for the time agreed with the participant and sent the meeting link to the participant's email address.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data were analysed employing content analysis. Content analysis is a vital research technique in the social sciences, which tries to analyse data within a certain context, to give it meaning. The content analysis goes beyond the instantly visible physical means of communication and relies on symbolic capabilities to trace the experiences, correlates, or consequences of communication, consequently rendering the unnoticed context of data analysable. In other words, content analysis is a research method for making replicable and valid extrapolations from data within its context (Krippendorf, 1989; Krippendorff, 2018).

The data obtained in the qualitative content analysis are analysed to define the usual trends or characteristics for the identification of important relationships between the quality of the contents examined. If the categories and rules are conceptually and logically sound and implemented reliably, the researcher increases the probability that the findings of the analysis will be accurate; that is, that the trends found are significant (Riffe, Lacy, Fico & Watson, 2019).

The basic idea of content analysis is to begin from the methodological basis of coding the text passages of information collected, and then grouping the codes together to form themes that can tell a story, and analysing the frequencies of the categories (Mayring, 2014). On this basis, a seven-step model of the research process was developed.

Step 1: Concrete research question

Mayring (2014) states that research questions have to be specific and expressed as real questions. This specification is important since the findings can be explicitly connected to them and, without this specification, the research process remains subjective. For the purposes of this research, the research questions were specific and expressed as a question to address the research objectives.

Step 2: Linking research question to theory

It is vital to set the research question and research findings within a theory. For the purposes of this research, the research question in the form of the primary objective was linked to literature through previous articles and studies conducted by other researchers relating to the multi-generational conflict.

Step 3: Definition of the research design

According to Mayring (2014), adaptive research design, as the basic logic of the analysis, can be specified when following a particular research question. Qualitatively oriented designs can provide a coherent and explicit chain of reasoning if scientific rules and rigour are applied to them (National Research Council, 2002).

For the purposes of this research, an interpretive paradigm was adopted as a philosophy and a qualitative approach was followed during the study.

Step 4: Definition of sample and the sampling strategy

While qualitatively oriented studies frequently work with small samples, with single-case studies, the reasons for the sample size and sampling strategy must be clarified and supported. (Mayring, 2014). For the purposes of this study, a technique for non-probability sampling was used and purposive sampling was used.

Step 5: Methods of data collection and analysis

Clear analytical techniques for data collection and analysis are central to quantitative and qualitative approaches. A good case for a specific technique is often a contrast to an alternative technique. Qualitative content analysis programmes must also have explanations on why they do not use a text analysis method, e.g. quantitative content analysis or grounded theory coding. (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

For the purposes of this study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews have been chosen because they are more organic in nature. The interviewer probed the answers given by participants further to seek clarity or elaboration.

Step 6: Processing of the study, presentation of results with respect to the research question

At the end of the study, it is important for quantitative and qualitative studies to present results in a broad descriptive context and, more precisely, to answer the research question (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). For the purposes of this research, the results are discussed in Chapter 4.

Step 7: Discussion concerning quality criteria

At the end of the study, it is important for quantitative and qualitative studies to present results in a broad descriptive sense and to answer the research question in a more precise sense (Tracy, 2019). For the purposes of this research and content analysis, certain quality standards, such as inter-coder and intra-coder agreements, were established. This was incorporated in a software programme described in Chapter 4.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are ethical principles that occur at various stages in business and management research and relate directly to the values and the integrity of any research. The four main areas of ethical considerations can be transgressed in

determining whether or not there is harm to participants, whether there is lack of informed consent, whether there is an invasion of privacy and whether deception is involved (Bryman et al., 2014, p.120).

3.6.1 Permission obtained

According to Watson (2006), permission obtained is about getting access to people or data. This means the researcher needs the approval of the gatekeepers or organisation involved before getting permission from the participants themselves.

For the purposes of this research, permission was obtained from Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to conduct this research relating to the multi-generational conflict experienced by its employees. A letter requesting permission to conduct the study was written by the researcher to the City Manager and the Administrator of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality of which permission was granted (see Appendix A: Letter of permission).

3.6.2 Informed consent

According to Kaiser (2009), informed consent allows participants to engage freely with researchers without undue coaching or being threatened. Manson and O'Neill (2007) agree that, as part of obtaining informed consent, the participants should be made aware of their rights including the right to withdraw during the research process. The participants should also understand how issues of anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained.

Consent was sought from all study participants for the purposes of this research. The participants are colleagues of the researcher. They were contacted by the Human Resources Officer by email to request that they participate in the report. Appendix G was also presented to participants as a recruiting technique and an information leaflet. The purpose and essence of the study were explained to the interviewees before interviews were performed. They were asked to sign the form 'Informed consent' form,

which outlined their rights including the right to refuse to participate or to pull out of the study at any time.

3.6.3 Confidentiality

In research, confidentiality entails the management of private information. This is in respect of the participants' independence and right to keep certain matters private and in secrecy, as they deem fit. They also have the right to share secrets as they choose. The researcher should, however, be aware that the promise of confidentiality is binding and should not be taken lightly but must also acknowledge a person's right and desire to share information (Bryman et al., 2014, p.122).

For the purposes of this research, the information provided by research participants was treated as strictly confidential at all times. Furthermore, information obtained during the research that could reveal the identity of the interviewees was kept confidential. To ensure that access to confidential information was restricted, information was encrypted and stored in a password-protected laptop.

3.6.4 Voluntary participation

According to Tracy (2019), researchers should inform the participants of what they will encounter during the research process and should try to persuade them to participate. Studies show that if participants get accurate and complete information, they are likely to participate. If participation is imposed, it can lead to morally unacceptable choices.

Bryman et al., (2014, p.129). agree that both intimidation and oppression violates the principle of volunteering, which could lead to participants not expressing how they truly feel. Voluntary participation enhances research validity and reliability. For the purposes of this research, all participants were told that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to pull out of the study at any point.

3.6.5 No harm

Researchers need to consider the principle of 'no harm' with regard to the study subjects to ensure that no harm is potentially inflicted on the participants. Conflict may occur between the right to know, which will be beneficial to the broader society, and the right to privacy promoted to protect the right of the individuals concerned (Orb et al., 2001; Tracy, 2019, p.234)

For the purposes of this research, all participants were promised that the information shared during the study will not harm them financially or threaten their jobs in any way. Furthermore, the researcher ensured participants that the interview questions asked of participants, were structured in a way that they did not cause reputational harm to the municipality, the participants, or the individuals to whom the participants referred during the interview. The same was ensured when reporting the outcomes of the study.

3.6.6 Power differential

Power differentials are common in organisations, including academic ones since they are structured hierarchically with some positions being senior and having more authority over others, resulting in seniors and subordinates (Gibson et al., 2014). Powerful individuals have the ability to influence the well-being of their subordinates, placing them in vulnerable positions. Ideally, seniors should guide, support, and develop their subordinates in terms of their training needs. Research studies suggest that these relationships are important, especially regarding ethical decision-making (Bhattacharya, 2016). The power differential has the ability to bring about certain complications regarding ethical decision-making (Råheim et al., 2016).

For the purposes of this research, the power differential threat was mitigated by specifically excluding the two managers reporting directly to the researcher from the 115 managers when the sample of 15 was selected. The rest of the 113 managers were from other departments, and they do not work directly with the researcher; therefore, they should not experience the power differential threat. Furthermore,

Human Resources personnel were appointed as a third party to send written invitations (see Appendix G: Information leaflet and consent form), which include interview questions, via direct email to all 115 managers, with an instruction to contact the researcher if they wanted to be part of the study.

3.6.7 Loss of work time / study time

If interviews or questionnaires are held or completed during office hours, the permission of the employer should be obtained. Additionally, the informed consent form should clearly indicate the length of the interview or how long the completion of the questionnaire will take (UFS, 2020).

For the purposes of this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted during office hours. The interview took 30–60 minutes. Permission was obtained from the Administrator of Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to conduct the interviews during working hours (see Appendix A: Letter of permission).

3.6.8 Conflict of interest

Conflict of interest refers to a case in which a professional decision can be affected by secondary interest, such as financial gain. Although the literature has mainly focused on financial considerations, there are many other interests such as gifts and personal relationships that may affect behaviour (MacKenzie & Cronstein, 2006).

For the purposes of this research, Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality was the employer of the researcher; however, this relationship did not undermine the integrity of the research in any way as the employer did not have a vested interest in the outcome of the research. Furthermore, the employer-funded the university fees of the researcher through a bursary scheme, which was available to all employees. However, there were no conditions linked to the bursary which could influence the independence of the researcher or the outcome of the research.

3.6.9 Trustworthiness and rigour of the research

Historically, a qualitative study was regarded as 'soft' science and was disapproved of owing to lack of scientific precision compared to quantitative study using modern, unbiased methods (Mays & Pope, 1995). It is widely understood that qualitative research is subjective and lacks generalisation (Koch & Harrington, 1998; Cope, 2014; Amankwaa, 2016).

The expectations of qualitative research are those of trustworthiness and credibility. In order to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research instruments, Lincoln and Guba (1985) initially provided four criteria: dependability, confirmability, reliability and transferability. In 1994, Guba and Lincoln introduced the fifth criterion of authenticity (Cope, 2014; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.6.9.1 Credibility

Qualitative research is assumed to be reliable if the experiences mentioned are instantly recognised by people who have the same experience (Sandelowski, 1986). In order to demonstrate integrity in disclosing the results of qualitative analysis, the researcher should present the interaction and audit trails (Cope, 2014).

For the purposes of this report, the researcher ensured that the analysis was accurate by making audio recordings and process notes that were later transcribed.

3.6.9.2 Transferability

When readers automatically believe that research outcomes resemble something important in their own world, then resonance has been achieved through transferability. Qualitative research meets the requirements if the findings obtained resonate with people who did not participate in the analysis and the readers can link the findings to their own experiences (Tracy, 2019, p. 239). This aspect allowed the researcher to understand whether the findings could be generalised, and to address the specific issues of how the researcher could go about making specific claims.

For the purposes of the research, transferability was achieved by using purposive sampling. It was also achieved by providing detailed descriptions of findings that were interrelated with specific literature.

3.6.9.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the accuracy of knowledge or outcomes under similar conditions (Tobin & Begley, 2004). This can be done if another researcher agrees with the results at each point of the testing phase. The analysis can be considered accurate if the results were repeated when similar participants were examined under similar conditions (Koch, 2006; Cope, 2014; Connelly, 2016).

For the purposes of this study, complete records were securely locked away in a cabinet in the office of the researcher at the municipality. This included information obtained in all phases of the research process; that is, a selection of research participants, interview audio recordings, interview transcripts, fieldwork notes, and information data analysis decisions, etc. Furthermore, recordings of the participants' interviews were encrypted and placed in a password-protected laptop, should an audit be required (Bryman et al., 2014, p.45).

3.6.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the ability of the investigator to show that the data obtained represent the reactions of the participants and not the preconceptions or points of view of the researcher (Tobin & Begley, 2004; Cope, 2014). Confirmability encompasses the integrity factor. The researcher needs to protect the data's inter-subjectivity. The interpretation should not be based on the researcher's personal preferences and points of view but should be based on the data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

For the purposes of this study, confirmability was achieved when the researcher ensured that the results were not altered for the satisfaction of the researcher and showed that the truthfulness of the study lies in the data which were collected and analysed accordingly. It was achieved through the submission of transcripts and the description of the methodology used.

3.6.9.5 Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the degree to which the researcher diligently records and expresses the emotions and feelings of the participants' experiences (Cope, 2014). Tracy (2019, p.162) indicates that it is important to recognise the non-verbal communication of the researcher during the data collection process. Mostly, facial expressions and body language can convey warmth and neutrality. The participant might be talking about something that the researcher finds repugnant, disturbing, or devastating. Although not giving rise to inauthenticity, the interview is primarily intended as a forum for participants' thoughts and emotions, not for the opinion of the researcher. Displaying judgment or shock will most likely reduce the confidence and level of transparency of the interviewee.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher made the interviewees aware that the recorder was to be used, as well as note-taking, from the beginning of the interview. The researcher was careful about how the notes were taken during the interview. According to Patton (2002), if the researcher unexpectedly begins taking more notes than usual during the interview, the participant may think the researcher is surprised or delighted with the answer. It is sensible to introduce note-taking at the start of the interview, as part of the process.

At the end of the interview, the researcher expressed gratitude for the interviewees' time and knowledge. The researcher also offered participants a transcript of their interview, which was to be used as a kind of follow-up. Finally, before the interviewee left, the researcher turned off the audio recorder and, depending on the situation, the researcher questioned whether there were any other concerns that the participants wanted to address after the recorder had been shut off.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The methodology applied for the analysis was outlined in this chapter. These approaches ensured that the study was carried out and completed by providing an

understanding of the research methodology, research design, sampling technique, data collection techniques, data analysis, ethical considerations, and the reliability of the study. This chapter has shown that appropriate methodological aspects are essential to ensure that the goals of the study are achieved.

4 CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research design and methodology used in this study were discussed in detail. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and interpret the information which was gathered during the data collection process. The chapter will analyse and interpret what multi-generational conflict is, what causes the conflict between the different generations, how multi-generational conflict manifests, and strategies used by employees at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality to resolve the conflicts based on the data collected.

4.2 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

4.2.1 Definition of sample

A sample of 15 managers working at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality was invited to participate in the study. A total of eight participants, which represents 53%, responded positively to the invitation, and were interviewed. The eight participants consisted of three participants representing baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964; three participants representing Generation X, born between 1965 and 1981; and two participants from Generation Y, born between 1982 and 2000. All participants occupied a managerial position at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. One participant had matric, one participant had a National Diploma, four participants held a degree, and one participant held a Master's degree and the other participant held a Ph.D. degree. The participants came from different directorates and had vast expertise in the municipality. The working experience of the younger generation ranged from between 5 and 15 years, and the older generation's working experience at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality ranged from 20 years to 40 years.

The eight participants represented three ethnic groups being four whites, three Africans and one coloured. Five were males and three females. The participants provided a broad view of multi-generational conflict as they represent the three

generations in the modern workplace. The sample was purposively selected based on the employees' experience and not only on their age. The approach was not to compare the different generations (millennials vs Generation X) but to compare the experiences and perspectives of the younger generation, which has recently joined the municipality, with the experiences of the older generation which have been leaders and managers in the municipality for years.

4.2.2 Interview approach

A total of eight participants were interviewed digitally via Zoom for about one hour each. Interview questions were presented in such a way to consider the perspectives of various generations in the municipality (see Appendix G for sample questions). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing the interviewer to ask follow-up questions on interesting topics posed in order to better understand the perspectives of the participants. All interviews were recorded then transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was approximately 15 pages long single-spaced, but 22 pages if 1,5 spaced in Arial 12.

Data were analysed using electronic coding software namely NVIVO. This was to reduce the data without losing its meaning. Audio data collected were transcribed and imported into NVIVO software because the data to be analysed was deemed large. Statements from each transcription were given labels or coded depending on what the participant was trying to address in the data collected. A total of 22 codes were created.

Since an interpretive method was used, only the first coding cycle was used to assign labels to the collected data via NVIVO coding. Once completed, the codes created were categorised into groups based on their relationships, code frequencies, and underlying meaning across codes based on literature and research objectives, as can be seen in Figure 2. The 22 codes were categorised into five groups. Once the information was grouped, the data were synthesised to tell a story and develop a theme. Data was also interpreted to obtain the meaning behind the statements given by the participants.

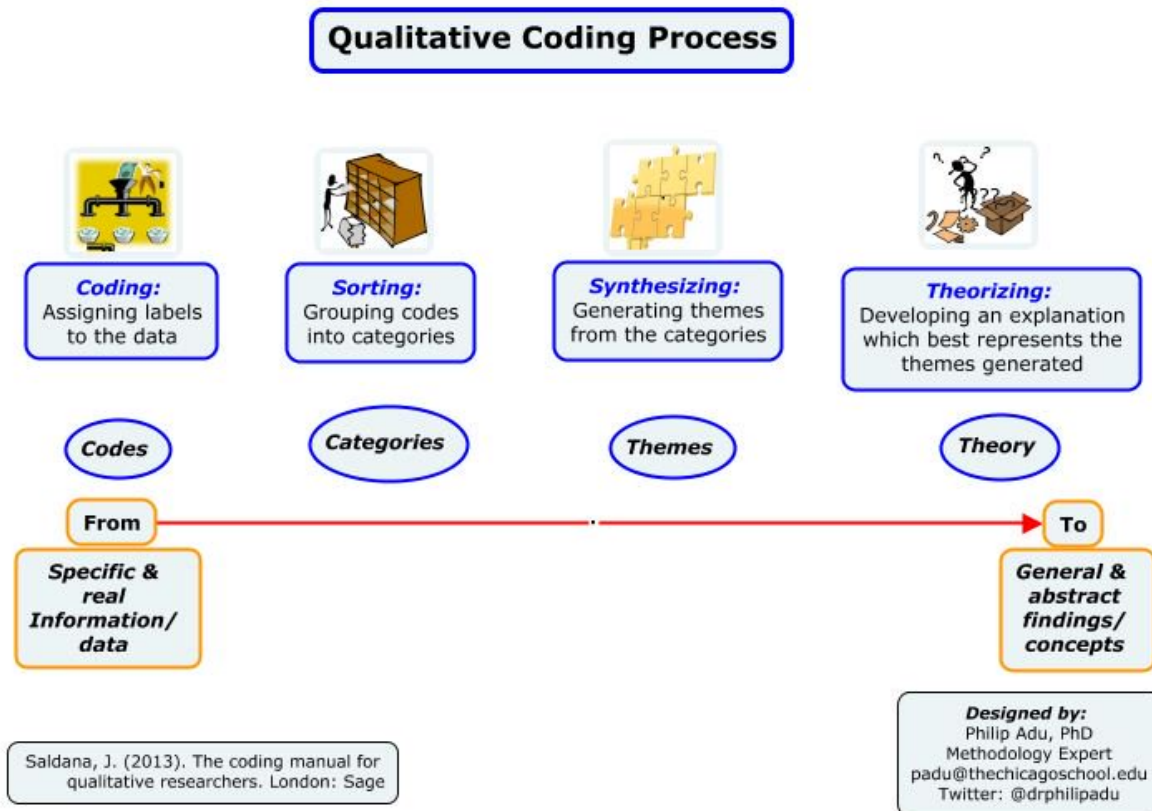


Figure 4:1. Qualitative coding process Source: Saldana, (2013)

4.3 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA ON MULTI-GENERATIONAL CONFLICT

4.3.1 Definition of multi-generational conflict?

The interview started by examining the perceptions that each generation has about each other and about the type of conflict those perceptions create. Conflict, as defined by Thomas (1992), is adopted in the terminology which states that although all researchers have not agreed on one definition, all definitions for conflict seem to involve interaction between individuals, the perceptions between parties that need managing, possible interference by another party, tensions, and perceptions of mismatch between parties. Likewise, tension is defined as clashes between parties that cause discomfort that needs to be managed (Stohl & Cheney, 2001). As a result, tension is seen as a type of conflict categorised by uneasiness instead of utter

aggression. It should be noted that no differentiation is made between tension and conflict; therefore, the words will be used interchangeably.

4.3.2 Causes of multi-generational conflict?

4.3.2.1 Identity-based conflict

Identity-based conflict arises as a result of how individuals see themselves and how they perceive that other people are defining them. The interview started with asking the members of both the younger and the older generation to describe themselves and other generations based on their perceptions. While conducting the study, generational tensions were identified in the manner that each generation defined its identity as opposed to how other generations perceived them. These conflicts are referred to as 'me vs we' and 'single- vs multiple identities.'

Me vs we identity-based conflict seeks to explain whether members of the different generations prioritise their individual needs or those of the collective. Idiocentric individuals prioritise personal goals, needs, views, beliefs, and pleasures over those of others while allocentric individuals pay attention to shared views and to others. In the sample interviewed, an example of an idiocentric view is illustrated below by a member of the older generation, Participant D:

'The only time when they become results-oriented is when it has a direct impact on themselves. Then the consumer attitude is Why is my overtime not paid? Why am I not allowed to do acting? Why didn't I receive my increase? Why am I not being considered for the next position? Then results are important to them. But when you talk about results like you have to finish this project, then they will tell you that they are busy with that. But they're not finalising it. So, that's my experience.'

Participant D went further to say the following about the younger generation:

'One of the other things that they struggle with is to be less self-focused. Less me and my consumer problems and listen to what the bigger picture is. And sometimes you have to compromise certain things for the institution to achieve

its goals.'

On the other hand, the younger generation Participant C had this to say:

'One of the biggest challenges is that our generation is educated. One would say based on my qualification, I shouldn't be this; I should be that, whereas it's not only qualifications that accompany what you are.'

Participant C further said:

'With construction, it's a bit tricky as much as you want to do the bare minimum, what they normally do, the young generation understands their functions. What they do is that if I'm appointed for these functions, anything outside those functions is not mine.'

In the examples given, the older generation is making a point that young people are egocentric at work. Three levels of identity orientation from literature can be identified from the two quotes above; that is, personal, interpersonal, and a collective definition. Each individual has a bias towards a specific identity orientation. That orientation has social motivations linked to it. In these examples, the younger generation defines 'self' as unique individuals, not in terms of interpersonal relationships nor as a member of a social group, while the older generation may do the exact opposite, and as a result, may create conflict.

This can best be explained through an example. In the 1950s, if you entered a middle-class home, there would be a display of family, school, wedding, or military photos, whereas today you find millennials with 85 or more pictures of themselves and their pets on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms. The millennials live in the era of the quantified self, where they record their daily steps, and their whereabouts, every day, every hour.

4.3.2.2 Value-based conflict

Value-based conflict arises when members of different generations value different things in the workplace. Traditional vs progressive, value-based conflict refers to perceiving one generation that maintains the status quo while the other values innovation and change. Based on the data collected during the interview, the value-based conflict called traditional vs progressive was identified.

4.3.2.2.1 Traditional vs progressive

This value-based conflict refers to apparent generational differences where one generation seeks to maintain the status quo instead of embracing innovation and change. For instance, during the interview the younger generation believed that the older generation is rigid about change, they prefer doing things the old way and they are not open to new approaches, while the younger generation 'pushes the envelope'. One member of the younger generation, Participant E, made this remark:

'Baby boomers are not open and acceptable to change. Those are the people who will tell you if it works, "Why do you want to change it?"'

Participant E elaborated further in saying:

'The older generation, they do things by the book; they want to maintain the status quo. I mean, if they've learned this is how to make a cup of coffee, to them it will forever be that way. There won't be any other way of doing it. So, hence that rigidity'

On the other hand, the members of the older generation of baby boomers perceive the younger generation as always trying to push boundaries, and not wanting to adhere to policies and procedures. This can be demonstrated in the following quotation from Participant H:

'The younger generation question policies and rules. And that is causing a conflict because then you realise that they have thought about the things and have the intention of challenging systems.'

And the other older interviewee, Participant D, agreed, saying:

'The younger generation struggles to adhere to policies; they struggle to accept what is set in the rules, which they have to stick with.'

It was, therefore, noted that the younger professionals perceived the older professionals as trying to maintain the status quo, and perceived themselves as people who like to challenge that status quo. The young professionals perceive their elders as rejecting this behaviour, thereby causing conflict. What was interesting was that the older generation also perceives the younger generation as people who simply cannot accept things as they are. They see younger people as unwilling to listen and failing to learn from others. All generations have different perspectives regarding the change, yet each generation reflected positively on their own generation.

4.3.2.3 Behaviour-based conflict

Behaviour-based conflict arises when one generation deems the behaviour of another generational cohort in a way that conflicts with their own. That creates tension. During the interviews it was confirmed that there are three behaviour-based conflicts that the different generations experience at work; namely, earned vs entitled, high-tech vs low-tech, and skilled vs unskilled communication.

4.3.2.3.1 Earned vs entitled

This is the first type of behaviour-based conflict. This type of conflict was experienced and reported frequently in the sample interviewed. The older generation reported that the younger generation portrays behaviour that suggests that they don't want to work hard. They almost expect things to be handed to them, while the older generation perceives their fellow older generation colleagues as hard workers who have earned

everything they have. In contrast, during the interview, the younger generation sees the older generation as being too invested in their work compared to their own generation which is striving to have a work-life balance. To the younger generation, work is only part of their lives and they expect to get the same rewards as the older generation. As a result, this causes conflict.

One of the older professionals, Participant E, had this to say:

'Well, the younger generation is like they lack work ethic; they are job hoppers. To them, security is not really an issue; they can easily go from one employer to the other. So, hence, I say it is a lack of work ethic, commitment, and responsibility towards the job environment. To them a job is not a personal brand, identity, or a representation of who they are; it is just something they have to do to earn money. That's where the lack of commitment arises from.'

One of the older professionals, Participant D, made a further comparison in saying:

'For us, a career path was something which was 20 to 30 years. But, for the younger generations, if they don't achieve in two or three years, then they become career hoppers.'

Furthermore, the older generation is of the opinion that the younger generation has an entitlement mentality. They expect to occupy management positions in a short space of time while they have not worked hard or long enough to earn the position. This is what one of the older professionals, Participant D, had to say:

'I am not necessarily saying it should take them 19 years, but at least in terms of the job content and what is expected of such an incumbent is there. You need to have experience. I mean, how do you expect a manager to manage someone with 30 years' experience and you are just here. They need to have experience. I would say for a manager at least 7- 10 years exposure to a certain discipline. And for a Head of Department, definitely not less than 10 years of relevant experience.'

However, the younger generation has a different view. They are of the opinion that just because it took the older generation almost all their careers to get to management positions, it does not mean they should travel a similar path or take the same period before occupying such a position. This is illustrated by the following quote from a young professional, Participant C:

'The approach that older generation feels that appointments should not only be based on qualification but also on years that you've worked in that particular institution, which therefore then takes away the career because now you're there for many years, but it does not mean if you have been working for 20 years, you've got 20 years' worth of working experience.'

These conflicting perceptions and strong opposing views cause conflict amongst the different generations. It is understandable that the older generation feels it is unfair for the younger generation to occupy senior positions quicker when they had to work very hard for them and had to invest years of experience to get there. On the other hand, it will also be unfair to expect the younger generation to take the similar route as the older generation as things has evolved. Most young professionals enter the workplace highly qualified. This does not however take away the fact that the younger generation still need to give themselves time to understand the environment, gain the necessary experience and display a level of competence and commitment before eyeing senior positions. It is therefore clear that for the younger generation will have to demonstrate high level of knowledge, expertise and competence if in the management position they occupy for the older generation to trust them as accept them as their superiors.

4.3.2.3.2 High-tech vs low-tech

High-tech vs low-tech is the second type of behaviour-based conflict. This type of conflict is perceived to arise when one generation is leveraging the use of technological software and hardware to perform their work. This type of conflict becomes evident when teams have to work together. Individuals from different generations might feel frustrated when they feel restricted in terms of using their own preferred way to get the work done through technology. The older generation

expressed their frustration with the unlimited use of technological gadgets by younger people in meetings, which shows a lack of respect to everyone in the meeting, according to them. This is what one of the older interviewees, Participant D, had to say:

'The only thing that frustrates me is what the younger generation tends to do, is sitting and playing on their gadgets in a meeting so they are not focusing on the meeting. When they give input, you can hear that they didn't follow the meeting. And it is because they are side-tracked with these gadgets which they are playing with.'

Participant D also said:

'Yes, and even a laptop. You know, we were discussing things and I will sit next to a person and I can see he is not focused on the meeting. He's on his laptop, reading his emails or doing totally something else, which is not part and parcel of the meeting'

These sentiments were shared by another older interviewee, Participant E, who said:

'A lot of young people have become so addicted to the cell phone that if they have to be an hour without the cell phone, you will find them showing this withdrawal behaviour because they are so addicted to their cell phones.'

And one of the younger generation, Participant C, had this to say about their view:

'My understanding is that the older generation prefers eye contact. When they talk you look them in the eye, you hear what they are saying. But in reality, if you are in a meeting and then you've got other functions that at the same time need responses within the very same time. So, therefore, different approaches apply. You would rather inform the person that I'm expecting a call, so, therefore, do not be alarmed when I receive a call. It also goes hand in hand with courtesy how you communicate with the person so that they do not see this as disrespect. For example, you get emails on the phone. So, therefore, you see this email that requires you to submit this information now or they need

a decision now. Then you respond, then it's WhatsApp; it just peeps in meetings, which might be disturbing.'

The different perceptions regarding the use of technology in the workplace between the older and the younger generation cause conflict between these generations. The older generation understands the importance of technology and how it can simplify one's work however, the use of gadgets such as phones and laptops in meetings, is perceived by the older generation as a lack of respect for everyone in the meeting. However, the younger generation perceives it as multi-tasking and being able to attend to other pressing work-related matters and deadlines while in meetings. Therefore, strong boundaries and rules need to be set and be well communicated with employees regarding the use of gadgets in meetings to manage this conflict.

4.3.2.3.3 Skilled vs unskilled communication

Skilled vs unskilled communication is the third type of behaviour-based conflict. This type of conflict is about how one generation perceives the communication skills of another generation compared to that of their own. The older generation perceives the younger generation as having unskilled communication. This can be attributed to their perception of failure to communicate or interpret messages clearly, and lack of sensitivity by the younger generation when communicating.

During the study, the definition was adopted that generational conflicts are associated with differences in the way the different generations communicate, as defined by Milligan, (2016), who was in agreement with Hubeis et al. (2018). At Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, the younger generation interpreted unskilled communication as the older generation's inability to keep up and adapt to modern ways of communicating. One member of the younger generation, Participant B, had this to say:

'Our unit uses WhatsApp. If I think of my one colleague, which is more likely to be on the verge of a baby boomer, he struggles. WhatsApp is not his preferred method; he would rather call and talk to me, and others would rather not talk to

me. They would rather just send a message. So, the millennials prefer the distance; it's not as personal. And the older generation would rather have a little bit of human interaction, so there is a little bit of difference between the two but we as a group we do communicate in WhatsApp.'

The potential communication barriers between the different generations are fuelled by the older generation preferring more traditional methods of communication while the younger generation prefers using technology to communicate. This can be illustrated from the following quote by Participant B:

'The older generation prefer face-to-face because it shows a little bit of respect for them, and that you make time for them, but you need to follow up with a written request. But with younger generation, they have this thing of don't waste my time; if you put it on an email, I will attend to it and I can. But if you talk to me you are actually using twice my time, so be as brief as possible.'

This sentiment was shared by another older interviewee, Participant E, who said:

'Generation Y does not even want to see you, as long as they can hear you, not even daily. So, communication with them through other mediums except face-to-face is what they appreciate.'

Although the younger generation prefers technology to communicate, one of the younger interviewees, Participant C, also made it clear that he still prefers formal instructions from his boss to be done via email instead of WhatsApp. This is what he had to say:

'Let's say with technology we are referring to [is] WhatsApp. It is expected that the younger generation uses WhatsApp more than normal. Whereas for me, I don't use WhatsApp. I do have WhatsApp but I don't use it more. So, therefore, if an older person sends me a WhatsApp, they expect me to have seen it, and maybe I did not see it. So, therefore, it can cause conflict on the basis of you to use it on a daily basis. So, if I send you something there, why didn't you respond by now? Then you are breaking away from that formal communication to this

informal communication of WhatsApp. Therefore, it does create a bit of conflict or misunderstandings because there's an expectation that you will see it. But if I don't have data? I did not see it. Whereas with emails, if I open my laptop in the morning, I will see it. I might not go to WhatsApp for three days. So, the instruction [for] should be on email not on WhatsApp.”

When it comes to communication, the older generation prefers communications channels with physical human interaction such as face to face. This type of communication is also perceived by the older generation as showing respect and making time to see them. That is why in some cases if they send an email to someone, they will follow it up with a face-to-face or telephonic explanation to ensure that the person is aware of their email and they understand it. However, the younger generations prefer as little physical human interaction as possible. Any technology-based communication is preferred. Due to these differences between generations, the older generation perceives the younger generation as having poor communication skills.

4.3.3 How multi-generational conflict manifests

Multi-generational conflict at Marga Mangrove Metropolitan Municipality manifests in different ways, according to the interviewees. Although they agree with the literature, they tend to have an additional element, or the influence of politics and cultural backgrounds, which makes their experiences unique. The actual experiences of the employees will be outlined in detail in the next section.

4.3.3.1 Identity-based conflict

This type of conflict happens as a result of how people describe themselves and how they perceive that other people perceive them.

4.3.3.1.1 Single vs multiple identities

This type of conflict emerges when the younger generation perceives that the older generation are defined by their work and the younger generation define themselves as playing multiple roles in their lives, but work is only one of them. One member of the older generation, Participant E, made this remark about the younger generation:

'They lack work ethic, commitment, and responsibility towards the job environment. To them a job is not a personal brand, identity, or a representation of who they are; it is just something they have to do to earn money.'

The other older professional, Participant A, shared the same sentiments, saying:

'With younger people, there are those who want to work and then you also find people that don't want to work and they find every excuse not to work. You can see if a person doesn't want to work with the quality of the work that comes through and the accuracy of that and the queries that you receive. You know, but again they just disappear; you don't know where they are, they misuse sick leave, or they are on the internet the whole day. And these lead to conflict because when I confront them, they think I am unfair, I don't treat them right.'

The younger generation, on the other hand, has a different view in this regard. This is what Participant C had to say:

'The way I would describe my generation, I would say it is mostly self-driven people who are independent and diverse.'

Participant C went on to say:

'The young generation understand their functions. What they do is that if I'm appointed for these functions, anything outside those functions is not mine. With the older generation, they would normally cut across these functions because they want things done at the end of the day. Whereas with the younger generation, we will normally compare functions with income. So, once your

functions are limited, and whatever that is additional and it's not stipulated in the conditions of employment, it's not your work, so it is different approaches. We do minimal work depending on what we want to achieve. And we do go an extra mile, depending on what we want to achieve.'

4.3.3.2 Value-based conflict

During the interviews, it became clear that the younger generation and the older generation do experience traditional versus progressive value-based conflict.

4.3.3.2.1 Traditional vs progressive

The younger generation, whether Generation Y or X, strongly believe that the older generation of baby boomers are stuck in their own ways and that it is sometimes difficult to introduce new approaches at work. This is what one of the members of the younger generation, Participant C, had to say:

'I've had quite a lot of disagreements, not just personal but in terms of ethics and work, and not necessarily having bad ethics but the difference in point of view, experience and the change in the environment where you find that methods that are used by the older generations are no longer viable. That's where we start to differ because the older generation is using old methods, not to say they don't work. But it is old methods versus new methods. So, then you get frustrated in between because your method that you are bringing to the table is not tested and you can see the gaps in that old method.'

The same sentiments were shared by the other young interviewee, Participant G, who commented:

'They don't want to accept that we have to change, that there is that evolution that is taking place in so many things that we do. And in terms of young people, they are innovative, they want to change because they have seen gaps in the systems that we have. So, they inspire evolution and that change we are talking

of. We all know that young minds are innovative; they are eager to do things differently, you know, so they forever influence what happens in the future.'

It was also interesting to see that Generation X also doesn't like change but that they are open to it if it is necessary. This is what Participant E had to say for them:

'As Generation X, I also question change although I am open to change if it is beneficial. But at the end of the day, one doesn't just change for the sake of changing. It should bring progress, or it should be to the benefit of participants to this change process.'

Another member of Generation X, Participant B, agreed and had this to say:

'I think we are a little resistant to change, and I hate it because I can't predict how things would change. So, we would rather not be exposed to any change. I need to be able to see a little bit into the future. I need to make sure that things are more or less in control. I like to have control over my environment. I love more stability.'

Both baby boomers and Generation X value stability; hence, they can stay with one employer for many years, in most cases until retirement. In contrast, Generation Y does not value stability at all. They want to achieve more in a short space of time. This then explains why the older generation perceives them as being impatient and resorting to job-hopping.

Valuing money

Furthermore, the younger generation is perceived as valuing money in the workplace. This is illustrated by the following quote by Participant E:

'I think, for the younger generation it is all about the money. For instance, when I started in this department, I introduced certain incentives, but it seems it is not appreciated. The younger generation wants money while the older generation would say if you give me two days off, then it can work for me. Because at the

end of the day if you convert a benefit it is also money, but the younger generation wants hot cash. That is the difference between these generations. The younger generation is only after bling, they want to drive in this Mercedes Benz, which I am driving after 35 years of service.'

And in the workplace, their love for money is also seen in the following quote by one of the older professionals, Participant D:

'The younger generation, especially with social media, haven't got that long concentration span; they get easily bored and they constantly want change. They are in a very high consumer mindset. They want things now and they want things that trend. The newest phone, the newest car, the newest clothes, all that puts them under enormous pressure. Well, all these clothes, cars and all these gadgets are not important to us because we grew up without them.'

The sentiment was shared by another older interviewee, Participant F, who had this to say:

'The younger generation value money and rewards like acting allowances, promotion, the salary increase, overtime, etc. They are just interested in money. The older generation value growth, stability, security, and good leadership. When a leader knows what he is doing and is fair to all the colleagues.'

This is what the younger generation, Participant C, had to say:

'It is true the younger generation wants to get on top of the food chain very fast, and at the time we get there and find that we don't have the expertise and then it creates problems.'

These strong perceptions about the different generations are real and evident in the daily experiences of the employees. Since the younger generation is at the early stage of their careers, they would like to achieve more, earn more to support their young families, buy a house, car and their basic necessities. This at work is perceived by the older generation as the younger generation loving money. For the older generation,

money is not an issue as their children are all grown up, and their houses and cars are already paid up.

4.3.3.3 Behaviour-based conflict

Behaviour-based conflict also encompasses an entitlement mentality, which the older generation perceives in the younger generation. The younger generation is perceived as displaying certain behaviour that makes them conflict with the older generation in the workplace, such as being entitled, interested in promotions, would enjoy working flexible hours, and have the challenge of late-coming. There is also conflict between the older and younger generation caused by technology and by how these generations communicate. In the next section, how behaviour-based conflict manifests in the workplace will be discussed in terms of the various ways mentioned above.

4.3.3.3.1 Earned vs entitled

Baby boomers were raised to be disciplined, patient, and to work hard for everything that they have. It is against this background that they perceive the younger generation to be impatient and that they want to achieve everything quickly. In the workplace, it manifests as being entitled and wanting to be promoted quicker. This is what one of the older interviewees, Participant F, said in this regard:

'The younger generation is impatient and wants success now; they want promotion now; they are very entitled. They don't want to be advised. When you try to advise them, they feel like you are mishandling them.'

The other older interviewee, Participant B, agreed saying:

'I think it is definitely a generation thing to say if you want a promotion, then you actually need to show that you are bigger than your job and that you actually understand what everything entails. I think it is unfair that someone can just demand to be promoted and they get it and there's no effort, no blood, and sweat that went into that process. I definitely think I have the perception that

you need to show just a little bit of gut and that you went through some of the challenges that we went through when we progressed.'

This is what the younger generation Participant C had to say about the entitlement issue:

'I would not dispute the entitlement one, although it is misplaced. The younger generations, because of outside factors such as the economy and everything, they want to grow as fast as they can, which then creates entitlement because I've been working here for this long. I want to grow. So that perception does exist and I'm not going to dispute it.'

The other younger professional Participant G did not dispute the perception either and made these remarks:

'Yes, there are a lot of people who feel entitled. A clear example that one could make is if you had a group of colleagues at a certain level and we know that there is a senior position that is perhaps becoming vacant. Remember under normal circumstances people who have proven to be competent, who are dedicated to their work, who are very productive should be considered first in such instances. But then there are people who feel entitled because of their political affiliation. Maybe when our boss is away, they would tend to feel that immediately, I should be the person acting in his position while he's away. And that element of entitlement you tend to see it every day because of the leadership and affiliations that we have. So, there is that element of entitlement at work.'

Working flexible hours and late-coming

When it comes to working flexible hours at the municipality, this is a contentious issue between the older and the younger generation. The older generation is of the view that there are strict policies which govern working hours, and the younger generation likes to disappear during office hours which they feel they are justified to do if their tasks are complete. This is the view of one of the younger interviewees, Participant C:

'Yes, the younger generation is production based, not time-based. I truly support that on the basis that you can spend eight hours at the office and still perform nothing. Whereas you can perform a function within two hours or an hour. So, to a certain extent, it should be production-based rather than you sit in one place there doing nothing. Our performance must not be measured by the hours we sit in the office, but what you produce within that particular time. There is no use in sitting and doing a task for three hours which could have taken me 15 minutes to do. For me, it's production versus time, that's my view.'

The other member of the younger generation, Participant G, also shares these sentiments. This was his experience, which resulted in a conflict:

'In that incident what happened is that fortunately technology allows us to work faster these days and I'm a kind of a person who's very knowledgeable in terms of lots of software, Excel and the likes. So, I realised that at the workplace older generation even younger generations in some instances, people have no computer skills. They don't know how to use Excel and Excel is such a very powerful software. So, what may take a person two days to do, you know, obviously if you are proficient with Excel, can take you maybe two hours. So, what I would normally do when I get a task at the beginning of the financially year, I will program my spreadsheets so that it generates some information for me obviously allow me to work faster. So, I realised that some colleagues that average task which takes about two days, it will take them about a week. So, in this instance my boss, you know, old people are not productivity-driven. They feel that if you spend time in the office, you are productive irrespective of whether you are doing the work or not. As long as they see you in front of your desk, to them you are working. So, a colleague would take about a week to perform a task that I would take about a day, to be honest, and for me having done that I feel more productive and it also gives me leverage in terms of time to do other things.'

However, the older generation does not want to hear it. They believe during working hours everyone should be at the office, at their desk doing work. This can be illustrated in the following quote from Participant B:

'To be quite honest, I don't think it was even something that was considered because it is not part of the municipal environment. There are standard working hours. I think that's why late-coming is an issue. Because the moment you change hours, your own policies needs to accommodate such. We cannot even monitor a productive eight-hour workday with standard working hours, so how will we manage productive hours within flexible hours?'

The sentiments were reiterated by another member of an older generation, Participant H:

'There is specific policy which governs what time to start, what time of the day is the lunch hour and what time to knock off. So, the policy must just be adhered to, so you need to accept that and abide to it. In the public institution like the municipality it is difficult to work flexible hours as we work with the public. During office hours the public expects someone to always be there when they call, or come to the office to make inquiries, so in the private sector it might be nice to have such flexible hours but in the public sector is impractical.'

4.3.3.3.2 High-tech vs low-tech

The different views of the different generations towards technology became evident again when they were asked whether technology provides the flexibility to employees to work anytime and anywhere. One of the younger interviewees, Participant G, responded by saying:

'Hundred percent. I think with this pandemic that we find ourselves in, that has been a clear demonstration that technology is really doing wonders in difficult times.'

The sentiments were shared by the other member of the younger generation, Participant C, who had this to say:

'I would prefer technology on the basis of more work in construction is outside than inside the office. For example, the same function that I do at the office, I can perform them on-site like responding to an email, typing a report that does not necessarily mean I must be at the office. I can be on-site doing that. I could be elsewhere doing the very same thing'

Generation X had a balanced view. Although they still prefer the office set-up of supervising and monitoring their subordinates, they are open to using technology to provide the flexibility to work anytime and anywhere, although they strongly believe that it cannot be applicable in all instances. Here is what Participant F had to say:

'It is a solution, although not in all disciplines; in some instances, we still have to come to the office to attend to other things. I have two officers which are officials of the municipality who are working from home. But I maintain some sort of supervisory function by calling and sending emails and checking how they respond to it as a form of supervision. I am also more working from home than at the office. If this new concept of working is adopted, I am open to it I mean, why no?. It's one of the things I meant earlier to say, if the change is to the benefit of the employer to work from home, then why not?'

However, the older generation is not convinced. They believe the use of technology is limited. This is the view of one of the members of the older generation, Participant H:

'Yes, technology does make it possible to work anytime anywhere, but in the case of a municipality, because we deal with the public, it will be challenging to implement that. For instance, with the Covid-19 situation, some colleagues are requested to work from home and have been capacitated to do so. However, the only connectivity they can have is with other colleagues not with the public. When the public comes to make inquiries, that remains a challenge. If you look at our typical clients, which is the public of Mangaung, it will be interesting to

know how many of those community members have access to a computer and internet. Furthermore, have the ability to manage and operate such software.'

4.3.3.3.3 Skilled vs unskilled communication

Although the older generation primarily prefers face-to-face communication, while the younger generation prefers technology-based mediums, some other communication styles also emerged that the different generations use in the workplace, which clearly distinguishes them from one another. One of the younger interviewees, Participant E, made the following observation:

'Again in the context of Mangaung, here what I have noted is that there is set-up where one can contribute in a form of a meeting, but there are those aspects which necessitate one-on-one engagement because many people these days, technology also comes with high-stress levels and there are a lot of frustrated and stressed colleagues. So, the manner in which you approach them as individuals, cannot be a generic approach because people are individuals. So, what I have learned is that it's always best even after meetings, some ideas it's better to present them one-on-one. But what is of key importance is to document do formal reports. I mention written reports because I've experienced a number of situations where I have given my professional advice, later on, individuals would deny that. So, document your engagements, advise in writing, and also have one on one sessions.'

During the interview, it was noted that most of the older generation were comfortable communicating via email, WhatsApp, and Zoom, although they still preferred the old ways of using their computers to perform such functions, unlike the younger generation which primarily use other gadgets such as cell phones to do the same. This can be demonstrated by the following quote from one member of the older generation, Participant H:

'I think in that regard, the younger generation is more up to date with the technology, unlike the older generation. I am trying to update myself on

technology such as emails and Zoom communication. But that also depends on whether your employer has also provided you with the means of communication. All employees should be provided with a laptop and internet connection. I am currently using a desktop and that is one of the reasons I still have to come once a day to the office to check my emails.'

The older generation also uses technology as a tool to achieve their goal. For instance, the other older interviewee, Participant H, also made the following remark:

'No, I actually prefer any communication which can provide me with a paper trail; that is the reason why I prefer emails.'

For the younger generation, although they are comfortable with using any communication channel, they also prefer email for formal communication. This can be seen from this quote by Participant C:

'For me, communication in the workplace has to be formal in a form of an email. Informal communication at the end of the day tends to give confusing responses. They are not fully understood whether it's an instruction or not. So, therefore, I prefer formal communication at work regardless of the older or younger generation, but the context has to be respectful to both the older and younger generation. Respect goes across so formal communication should be formal.'

4.3.4 Strategies to resolve multi-generational conflict

4.3.4.1 Achievement-oriented

Achievement-oriented strategies were used by employees to manage behaviour-based multi-generational conflict.

4.3.4.1.1 Focusing on communication style

This strategy was used at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality by different generations. They adjusted their communication styles to the one preferred by the other generation whenever applicable in order to overcome behaviour-based conflict arising from the perceptions of the older generation that the younger generation has poor communication skills. Most of the older generation in the institution are comfortable communicating via email with everyone in the institution. However, to manage conflict, the younger generation makes an effort to have face-to-face or telephonic communication with the older generation owing to this being their preference. This is what one of the younger interviewees, Participant B, said when sharing her experiences:

'With the older generation, preferably you do it verbally upfront and then you follow it up with an email. Then they are not caught off guard when they receive the request or the communication. With the younger generation, you actually tell them or you communicate with them via email and then you follow up in person to see whether they understood the email. Because sometimes it seems that they don't understand the email and if they don't, they don't come and ask, so one just needs to make sure. So, with the older generation is to ensure that you don't offend them, and with the younger generation is to ensure that they understand.'

One of the younger professionals, Participant G, also agrees that face-to-face communication does smooth relations between the different generations. This is what was said:

'What I have learned is that it's always best even after meetings, some ideas it's better to present them on one- on- one. But what is of key importance is to document do formal reports. I mention written reports because I've experienced a number of situations where I have given my professional advice; later on individuals would deny that.'

However, some members of the younger generation indicated some cultural issues affecting communication when the older generation seeks to resolve a problem involving a member of the younger generation. This is what Participant G said:

'When I completed my studies, I worked for consultants before I came to the municipal environment. I gained a lot of knowledge and experience in terms of design work that we do in the private sector. But when I got to the municipality, it was at a young age, and I always had this belief that I'm a professional in my own right within the municipalities to provide technical advice and ensure that whatever that I've learned at school and I'm able to apply and improve the lives of the people. But now, the fact that I was there at a very young age, and I occupied a strategic and senior position very early as well. I had encounters with my boss which was the Municipal Manager at the time. When the community members came to complain, I remember he called me to his office and then he shouted at me and tried to reprimand me in front of the community, without even hearing my side of my story and also the inputs that I had to make. So, that on its own really made me feel that one's value is not really recognised at work.'

This view was further elaborated on by Participant G, who said:

'You know there is this issue of ethnicity, which I also like to explain when I came to that municipality people found it difficult to listen to a young person. Remember, at that time I was very young. I think I was in my early twenties. Unfortunately, due to our cultural background, even when you deal with older people at the workplace, they tend to mistake it for a situation at home whereby they talk to you like their own child. Forgetting that you yourselves are also a professional individually, employed like them. So, it will forever remain a challenge, particularly with us black people. So, in my 15 years of experience, even when I had to reprimand older people, it became difficult because one thing for sure, you will find that I'm reprimanding someone whose last born is the same age as me. So, they really don't value what I'm bringing to the table. They don't believe that this young person is fit to be where he is, that's the

unfortunate part. But it is to me that there is a clear conflict of friction between different generations when you look at it in that context.'

4.3.4.1.2 Performing proficiently

Some members of the older generation reported that there are dedicated members of the younger generation whom they know and have worked with. Those members of the younger generation are using this strategy to prove their worth by demonstrating to other colleagues, especially from different generations, that they are capable of achieving results and can be assets to the municipality. One of the older generation, Participant D, had this to say:

'I have met hardworking, very focused, very productive young people. Which I foresee for them a beautiful career. I'm working with a couple of young ladies and I can tell some of them are just unbelievable.'

The other member of the older generation, Participant B, shared the sentiment and shared the experience of one of the younger persons who pleasantly surprised her. This is what was said:

'It is someone from another department; when he started, he had no one to turn to. He came and he discussed issues about his new department that he didn't understand and we tried together to see how best one should be responding and approach it, and he was like a sponge. He listened and he grew. It's actually so wonderful to see how he has evolved and because he was interested in actually growing in his environment where we were placed out of context. He was not in his area of expertise, but he embraced the change and he actually put an effort to become more familiar with the environment. He spoke to people about it, so I found that amazingly positive. He was really eager to learn and the fact that he actually approached someone from a different culture, different age group, and different gender. You know, he pushed all these boundaries because he felt he could learn something and I think I admire that tremendously.'

However, one of the younger interviewees, Participant G, indicated that performing and being vibrant in one's position is not always taken positively by the seniors. Some may feel intimidated by their subordinates. This is illustrated in the following quote:

'We had an internal meeting with colleagues and our boss and then he was proposing a way forward in terms of the challenges that we brought to the table. I explicitly gave my opinion and I believe it was in a respectful manner and I understood that I have to be seen to be understanding his view, his point of departure but I felt that it was not what the meeting needed at the point in time. So, I then raised my hand and shared my view in terms of how this problem should be approached. I think he felt attacked or intimidated rather and then I think it didn't go well because immediately his tone changed in the meeting and following the meeting he called me to his office and told me that it's like I am undermining him.'

Participant G went on to say:

'The sad part is that I had to come out and say, "Look, I don't undermine you, in fact, I respect you as an individual. You are older than me; I respect you and I am here to learn from you. But at the same time, I can't sit in a meeting where I feel that we are not getting into a direction that will yield fruitful results and sit back. I think it's my responsibility to show that I also give valuable inputs and remember, mine was just a suggestion." As the head, he can take a final decision, take that particular decision. I was trying to make him understand, but unfortunately, you know people will be people. From that day, things didn't go well between me and him. And that showed me that people are not open to new ideas. They more often take it negatively than positively.'

4.3.4.2 Image-oriented

Image-oriented strategies were used to manage identity-, behaviour- and value-based multi-generational conflict.

4.3.4.2.1 Being visible

Being visible is an image-oriented strategy where individuals ensure that their work efforts are noticed by others, especially those from a different generation.

One of the older professionals, Participant D, shared this during the interview:

'I always appreciate the younger generation's knowledge, especially on computer and social science. They are absolutely great. The way they manage all the different programs and things on the computer. It is highly appreciated. They are willing to learn and they are eager to get new knowledge. So, from that point, I admire those skills from them.'

One member of the younger generation also appreciated the skill and knowledge of one member of the older generation whom he worked with. This is what Participant C had to say:

'I interacted with someone that has worked for almost my entire age. They've been in the industry not necessarily in government, but they ended up being in government. So their approaches and guidance in terms of I see what you want to achieve but do it this way, look at this, look at that, pay attention to detail, don't do this, do that. So that was positive. I think one of them was on an instance of a project where I was being difficult, and using what the contract stipulates versus hearing both sides. He would advise me to look at this approach, look at that approach, look at different approaches, and then it helped me to grow. So, I took a different perspective rather than what I had in mind, that's the positive one.'

In the next quote, one member of the younger generation performed these duties so well that even the boss wanted him to perform other duties that were outside his scope of work. This is what Participant G had to say:

'I am a kind of a person who is always willing to assist, but I always feel that there's a thin line between delegating a task to someone and exploiting that person. So, there was a time when my boss knew very well that day I use a computer very well. I know this software and people always ask me whether I was a secretary before because my typing skills are on point. At school I did typing, there were no computers at that time. So, he would want me to do certain reports for him or even attach Excel and these did not fall with my scope of work. Whereas the person who was employed for that task is currently at work. So, I felt no this one unfortunately I will not do.'

Participant G also said:

'There is a person who is appointed her; I would gladly assist them and show them how to do it. Previously, I offered myself to these colleagues to say colleagues challenge yourself, Excel is so easy, do one, two, three. Even if you start to go to YouTube and you check all these things you understand, but if someone does not have any interest you cannot do anything about that. So, I felt that you know, I have tried my best in terms of encouraging and motivating colleagues to learn. And unfortunately, I will not sit and allow myself to be used by other people. We are all employed, we have our own job descriptions'

4.3.4.2.2 Managing information

One of the younger professionals shared how they had managed information when dealing with the older generation in managing conflicts. This is what Participant E had to say:

'Communication is key; you have to establish a line of communication to start with. Try to relate to the other person by understanding their background and what they value. Not necessarily trying to change them but more of an adaptation that needs to take place.

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One of the older generation, Participant A, also shared how she manages information when dealing with her younger colleagues in order to send the message but also to ensure that it is delivered correctly, minimising unnecessary conflict.

'The situation if it is for information purposes or so, the email can suffice but if a person is not doing their work, I will call him in as a manager and ask them what is your problem, why are you not performing? So, it depends on the work situation; then I will decide what method I will use. If I am giving instruction for work that needs to be done, then I will email it but if a person comes late for work, I would rather hold a meeting with the employee concerned and talk to them and ask him. What is your problem? What happened? What was is the reason?'

One of the interviewed younger professionals shared his way of managing information when dealing with the older generation. This is what Participant C had to say:

'If you work with someone from the older generation but within the same field. So as much as you've got the different understanding from older to younger generation, but there's also something can you can learn from the older generation, hear them out, give them attention, at the same time also advise.'

Participant C went on to say:

'Then if you work with someone from an older generation but from different fields, then it requires patience because that person does not understand what you are saying. It is frustrating when you are talking to someone that does not understand what you are saying. And then the more you want it to happen faster than it creates confusion. So, therefore, it requires patience.'

4.3.4.3 Ego-oriented

Multi-generational conflict can also be managed by means of ego-oriented strategies that are protecting one's individual interests and removing one from undesirable interactions.

4.3.4.3.1 Protecting needs

Individuals focus on this strategy to guarantee that their desires are met in an interaction. One of the interviewees, Participant G, had this to say:

'What is of key importance is to document do formal reports. I mention written reports because I've experienced a number of situations where I have given my professional advice, later on, individuals would deny that. When pawpaw hits the fan, people would say you never advised. So, for me, I would say written communication is also important, but I would advocate that before any other thing one on one are really great, it's intimate situations. It also affords the next individual a better understanding of you as an individual.'

One member of the younger generation, Participant G, felt strongly about protecting his needs. This is what he said:

'It depends from individual to individual. I, for instance, won't allow any individual to oppress me, whether a person is a political head or administrative head. I think it is important for them as well to have happy employees, who feel valued at work. The moment you allow yourself to be oppressed at work, you are perpetuating the situation and it will never end. So, for me, whether someone is politically affiliated or not, I will always voice my opinions. How you take it, unfortunately, I don't have control over that even though to some extent it may impact me. I guess, as long as I say it, it helps me.'

Participant G went on to say:

'In the past, I didn't know how to say no. My boss would say, I need one, two, three tomorrow. Even when we had other colleagues a lot of work would be piled up on me and I will keep on doing it. And as such, I would not have time with my family. I would forever be fatigued and all of that. I realised that not knowing how to say no is the biggest problem; hence, I'm saying in answering

your question even now if you feel you are oppressed, it is always best to voice it out.'

However, one member of the older generation, Participant F, had this to say:

'Take time to study both the older and the younger generation. Try different approaches to doing things. Look beyond the things which annoy you. If you feel provoked ask the person what do they mean, repeat it to ensure that you have understood correctly, and ask is what you mean? Secondly, before reacting to any situation, ask yourself if you were in the same situation, what would you do differently? Because maybe that is the mistake we have been making, defending our positions. So definitely engage first and understand where the person comes from. Because some people tend to want their word to be final.'

4.3.4.3.2 Removing self

This strategy is used when individuals walk away, disregard, or, in extreme cases, terminate interaction with others to avoid conflict. This strategy was mostly preferred by the older generation. This is what one of the older interviewees, Participant D, said:

'Because I am a white male, I am very sensitive about things to be getting in any racial debate. So what my generation is doing, when people make remarks concerning race, they just keep quiet. Sometimes is very frustrating and sometimes you become angry because people tend not to be insensitive. So, I become frustrated with white people making sometimes remarks and then also with black people making remarks. You will find that people will say, white people, are very privileged. And I will think to myself my parents was divorced, I stayed with my mother. She worked as an official at the government. There was no privilege concerning me with regards to what I was thinking of studying, I studied with a loan, I paid back the loan. So, when a person makes that remark, I think always to myself to say that is a sweeping statement and not you generalising, you're not taking each person's situation into consideration in

a place. But my especially white males were very, very, very sensitive. Whenever there is a race, you make a hundred percent that you are politically correct on how you present yourself.'

Another member of the older generation, Participant A, also shared his strategy:

'My approach is when there is a conflict, I will keep quiet and wait for some time to pass, maybe an hour or two or a day, and then I will go back to that person. My recommendation is to go back to the meeting. Well, the next day and facilitate the problem. Just go to the person and say I hear you saying this thing. Tell me what frustrates you and then you talk to the person and then you can also give your point of view without the emotional baggage of conflict. So that is my approach.'

However, the younger generation does not always appreciate the way the older generation remove themselves from a conflict situation. One of the younger professionals, Participant F, said this during the interview:

'The older generation thinks we are still young, we can't lead them. If you are a young manager, you can't tell them much. He always questioned my authority, when I tell him to do something, he would always go to someone senior to me. And he will make it clear that he does not see me as his leader.'

A member of the younger generation, Participant B, shared her version of removing herself from a conflict situation:

'I think because we sometimes have a specific perception, I need to be careful that my perception does not color my view and in that sense, one should be a little bit introspective. You need to understand why is this getting on your nerves so, maybe just take a step back and not react, you need to have the introspection to say why is this issue bothering me? Maybe you can just see it is because of your perception because unfortunately, I think my perception sometimes colour my expectations. So, you need to step back a bit and just see if your expectation is unrealistic. Is it because of where you come from or

is it a general and acceptable expectation that you have? Then you can progress but you need to evaluate where we are. I am of the opinion that if you treat people with respect, it would come back to you. So, where you lead by example. If you show someone respect, then they should show you respect.'

4.4 DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to assess the multi-generational conflict experienced by employees at the Mungaung Metropolitan Municipality. The older generation of baby boomers was raised in the era of discipline, whether at school or at home. They were also taught to work hard for whatever they wanted to achieve. For white males, military training was compulsory to ensure that they learned discipline. The younger generation, on the other hand, is children of baby boomers and was raised in a child-centric era. According to Twenge (2014), this generation grew up getting accolades, trophies, and congratulatory treatment from their coaches, teachers, and parents. In some instances, these were awarded even if they had not accomplished anything special but it was done in the spirit of building their self-esteem. This, in the workplace, has created conflict, according to the experiences of the interviewees.

The findings of the study suggest that the experiences of the interviewees are also in line with the generational cohort theory, which seeks to explain how individuals develop their value systems and beliefs, and how their background and the era they grew up in influenced them. The theory further explains that people in the same age group would have the same value systems regardless of their country of origin or the community they grew up in. Furthermore, individuals' value systems are what drive their attitudes and behaviours and can be used to predict how they will behave or react to situations (Twenge et al., 2010; Jonck et al., 2017).

The conflict experienced by the participants in the study also agrees with the social identity theory, which indicates that people tend to classify themselves as in-group and out-group based on their similarities and differences with other teams. This was identified as identity-based conflict, according to social identity theory (Tajfel et al.,

1979). In the sample interviewed, the younger generation was found to be idiocentric, while the older generation was found to be allocentric.

Furthermore, the younger generation interviewed indicated that they believe in using technology to help them do their work faster to ensure that they have plenty of time for other things, while the older generation is rigid and prefer their old ways of doing things in the municipality. This is in agreement with Carver and Candela (2008), who said Generation Y are likely to encounter conflict with any generation which is not willing to embrace communication through technology. This is classified as a value-based conflict.

Also, since the younger generation (Generation Y) interviewed are at the early stage of their careers, they expect a promotion in a short space of time because they want to achieve more, while the older generation believes this is unfair and that the younger generation should invest in their current positions for a few years before being eligible to occupy senior positions. This is in agreement with the claim by Deal and Levenson (2016), that employees who do not have children are in a different life stage than employees with children, whether that person is Generation X or Generation Y. The career stage also determines what an employee wants from work. A larger portion of millennials might be looking for promotion because most of them are at the early stages of their career (Deal & Levenson, 2016).

According to Twenge (2014), millennials are labeled as the 'me, me, me generation', which is a generation considered to have an entitlement mentality. This was one of the conflicts between the older and the younger generation. The older generation, whether baby boomers or Generation X, are loyal, love stability, and most of them have been with the municipality for most of their careers. Working alongside them are millennials (Generation Y). Stability is not important to them and they are willing to job hop if the current employer cannot offer them a better position. This has resulted in the younger generation being perceived as entitled and not willing to sacrifice, and only interested in their own selfish needs, which include wanting to be paid overtime, acting allowances for acting in other vacant positions, being considered for promotions in a short period of time. This has caused conflict called behaviour-based conflict between the younger and the older generation in the municipality.

Eisner (2005) claims that millennials equate job satisfaction to flexibility, a positive work environment, and the opportunity to grow, more than any other generation. It was evident from the interviewees that the younger generation preferred working flexible hours while the older generation was adamant that strict working hours should be adhered to. They expect strict compliance with internal policies and procedures. As a result, this resulted in a behaviour conflict between the two generations. These conflicts manifest daily as different generations interact in the workplace.

In terms of strategies, there are three main strategies that the interviewees used to manage or resolve multi-generational conflicts in the municipality as and when they occur. Those include achievement-oriented strategies, performing proficiently, and ego-oriented strategies, as suggested by Urick et al., (2017).

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the data collected during the study were analysed and interpreted. The data collected were used to explain what multi-generation conflict is; to explain what causes the three multi-generational conflicts; namely, identity-based, behaviour-based, and value-based conflict in the workplace. Furthermore, it was demonstrated how all these conflicts manifested at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality through the experiences of the employees. Finally, the strategies that the employees used to manage multi-generational conflict in the workplace were outlined.

5 CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the analysis and interpretation of the data collected were discussed in detail. In this chapter, the following aspects will be discussed: conclusions reached, the recommendations to be implemented, and limitations to the study.

5.2 CONCLUSION TO THE STUDY

It can be concluded that multi-generational conflict does exist and that it is experienced by employees at Margaung Metropolitan Municipality.

5.2.1 What is multi-generational conflict?

The multi-generational conflict was defined as tensions or conflicts which cause uneasiness as different generations interact in the workplace.

5.2.2 What are the causes of multi-generational conflict?

Multi-generational conflict at Margaung Municipality is caused by identity-based, value-based, and behaviour-based conflict. Identity-based conflict consists of 'me vs we', and 'single- vs multiple identities'. This type of conflict takes place as a result of how people describe themselves and how they perceive that others are defining them. Value-based conflict arose when the older generation was perceived as preserving the status quo instead of being open to innovation and change like the younger generation. Behaviour-based multi-generational conflict arose when the younger generation deems the behaviour of the older generation to conflict with their own.

5.2.3 How does multi-generational conflict manifest?

Identity-based conflict manifests at Margaung Local Municipality as the younger generation is perceived to be egocentric, meaning caring about their own selfish

interest, needs, views, and goals, whereas the older generation is perceived generally as caring about the needs and views of others. Value-based multi-generation conflict manifested as the older generation was perceived as trying to maintain the status quo by sticking to old ways of doing things, adhering to policies and procedures, and not being open to change and innovation as the younger generation were, who were perceived as always trying to push the boundaries. Behaviour-based multi-generational conflict manifested when the younger generation was perceived as having an entitlement mentality, not having a good work ethic, not going the extra mile at work, having the problem of late-coming; however, expecting a promotion, getting paid overtime, acting in a higher position when a vacancy becomes available, while the older generation is perceived to be disciplined, hardworking and dedicated to their work; thereby causing a conflict in the workplace classified as earned vs entitled.

The second type of behaviour-based multi-generational conflict arose between the two generations owing to the younger generation leveraging the use of technology to do their work, while the older generation is not as adaptable to technology as the younger generation. The older generation values stability and therefore struggles to adapt to change.

The third behaviour-based multi-generational conflict is called skilled vs unskilled communication. This conflict arose when the younger generation perceived the older generation as not being technologically savvy. They prefer not to use advanced methods of communicating. The older generation is perceived as preferring face-to-face communication. This then leads to conflict in the workplace.

5.2.4 Strategies to resolve multi-generational conflict

The strategies used by the employees to manage the multi-generational conflict are achievement-oriented, image-oriented, and ego-oriented. Achievement-oriented strategies include focusing on communication style and performing proficiently. Focusing on communication style was used as a strategy to manage conflict, which emerged from a preference in communication styles that caused conflict. The younger generation switched from their own preferred type of communication to the one preferred by the older generation, such as face-to-face when interacting with them in

order to minimise conflict, while performing proficiently included members of the younger generation working hard to demonstrate to the older generation that they can be assets to the organisation.

Image-oriented strategies include being visible and managing information. Younger employees ensured that members of the older generation noticed their efforts at work to change their perceptions about them. This strategy is called being visible. Managing information involved giving the members of the older generation limited information to manage their image of the younger generation.

Ego-oriented strategies involve employees ensuring that their needs are met in interactions and removing themselves from heated interactions that could yield unpleasant results. With regards to protecting one's needs, the younger generation would prefer to document their advice or write a report to their superior in order to protect themselves in case something goes wrong. They would also voice their opinions about any matter they are unhappy with and have also mastered to only do what is required of them at work based on their job description to avoid exploitation and ill health. On the other hand, the older generation protects their needs at work by adhering strictly to policies and ensuring compliance at all times. Pertaining to removing oneself, the older generation tends to remove themselves from heated debates by keeping quiet, leave the heated interactions and only address the issue once calm. On the otherhand, the younger generation tends to prefer one on one sessions to iron out any misunderstandings with the person concerned.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need to recognise that multi-generational conflicts are bound to happen in any working environment since these three generations are inherently different. They were raised in different eras, and were influenced by different events in their lives; therefore, this will always influence the lenses through which they see the world. Things such as ethnicity, age, gender, religion, beliefs, and culture will always affect our approaches, views, beliefs, and needs in the workplace. The older generation is more stable because they have reached their career peak and are mostly working

towards retirement. Their children are grown up and their situation is more stable than that of the younger generation who are still trying to climb the corporate ladder, start families, and strive to lead a balanced life. Some recommendations can include the following:

1. While some of the perceptions might be true in both ways, there is a need to realise that each generation is special and is capable of making valuable contributions to the workplace. It is, therefore, imperative that proper strategies are developed and implemented that can encourage deep understanding as well as the appreciation of the strengths of the other generations.
2. The use of technology in meetings must have limits and boundaries, and this should clearly be communicated to all employees. Furthermore, the municipality should consider having a policy limiting the use of technology for non-work-related purposes by installing software that will limit employees' access to social media sites during working hours.
3. Involve the older generation in strategic teams to leverage their institutional knowledge. Most of the challenges discussed in institutions today by the younger generation have already been discussed a hundred times before by the older generation, and they know exactly what the issues are and how they can be resolved. For example, the issue of overtime that the institution is battling with, although there is labour legislation that the municipality can utilise to place a cap on overtime to avoid exploitation of it by staff, the issue at Mangaung is much more complex and political than operational. They understand the root cause and know exactly how to resolve it. The reason it has not yet been resolved is that there is no political will to do so.
4. For the current employees, the municipality should put a great deal of effort into periodically bringing in speakers or having workshops on multi-generational conflict. In the past, owing to the changes which took place in South Africa post-1994, organisations have geared themselves up to deal with diversity issues that might emerge owing to having expected diversity issues in the workplace.

As a result, there was a concerted effort to help employees understand the dynamics of working with different races. This proved to be most beneficial as employees learned to understand their colleagues from different racial and cultural backgrounds better.

Similarly, the same effort should be put into addressing multi-generational conflicts. There is currently no effort whatsoever on the part of the municipality to make employees aware of the conflicts and help them to manage these perceptions better before they lead to conflicts in the workplace. The municipality should also consider providing awareness training to newly appointed employees as part of induction for multi-generational conflicts.

5. Millennials could be a great force for positive change. They are constantly looking for innovative and better ways of implementing things. Not only are they innovative and technologically savvy, but they are also optimistic thinkers and idealists. They fear missing out and they constantly seek new experiences, which mean more to them than material possessions. If the municipality could harness that energy with a bit of guidance from baby boomers and Generation X a formidable team could be created consisting of both the older and the younger generations.

5.4 LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The sample interviewed was not big enough to be generalisable. The experiences of the interviewees were reported with the acknowledgment that they might not necessarily be a representation of all employees' experiences. However, qualitative research is not meant to be generalised but to tell the story of the participants in the study. As such, the findings reported were noted and experienced by the interviewees. It is, however, possible that other causes might exist for other employees. Furthermore, the study was conducted with professionals at the managerial level. It would be interesting to see if the same results would be obtained from the perspective of general workers.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The study examined what multi-generational conflict is, the causes of these conflicts, how they manifest in the workplace and strategies that can manage multi-generational conflicts. The study enhances academic knowledge and adds value by highlighting the challenges and opportunities which could occur when the different generations co-exist at work.

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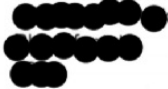
7 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter of permission



DIRECTORATE
CORPORATE SERVICES

Me. Mathapelo Masisi



Date: 22/04/2020

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY AND TO USE MMM CORPORATE SERVICES AS A THIRD PARTY TO CONTACT PARTICIPANTS FOR ACADEMIC AND/OR POSSIBLE PUBLICATION PURPOSES ONLY

I hereby grant you the permission to conduct the research on **Multi-generational conflict experienced by employees at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality** through semi-structured interviews with selected employees for academic and/or possible publication purposes only.

Furthermore, I have the pleasure to inform you that you have been granted the permission to use the Human Resource personnel as a third party to request the participants meeting your criteria, to participate in the study and/or assist in conducting the semi-structured interviews should the need arise. Interviews can be conducted during office hours were possible at earliest convenience of the participants.


During this research project, you will be provided with confidential information from respondents participating in your project and in this regard, I would like to stress the importance of safeguarding the confidentiality of the information received from respondents.

As you may be aware, and depending how the information is handled, this position of confidentiality may be violated leading to irreversible damage to the image of the Municipality and may also result in legal action instituted by these respondents against the employer for not guaranteeing their confidential responses.

I trust you realise the great responsibility placed on you and the significance of safeguarding the confidentiality of the information the respondents will provide. Furthermore, we can rely on your positive contribution in this regard.

The municipality wishes you well in your important undertaking.

Yours sincerely


ADV. M MOFOKENG
ADMINISTRATOR

ADV. MZWAKHE MOFOKENG
ADMINISTRATOR

23 -04- 2020

MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN
MUNICIPALITY

PO Box 3704, Bloemfontein 9300 Room 640, 6th floor, Bram Fischer Building, Cnr Nelson Mandela & Markgraaff Street
Tel: +27 51 405 8623 E-Mail: david.nkaiseng@mangaung.co.za Website: www.mangaung.co.za

AT THE HEART OF IT ALL

Appendix B: Interview schedule



APPENDIX: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Definitions

Generations

Generational group	Period born	Age (2020)
Baby Boomers	1946 – 1964	56 - 74 years
Generation X (X'ers)	1965 – 1981	39 - 55 years
Generation Y (Millennials)	1982 – 2000	20 - 38 years

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers were born post-war economy which was healthy. The education opportunities and availability of jobs raised their optimism. In North America, they were influenced by Martin Luther King, the Beatles, and John F Kennedy. They experienced an era of unrest and sadness throughout the world such as the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the Vietnam War and the Czechoslovakian revolution (Erickson, 2008).

Because of the era, they grew up in, Baby Boomers impacted heavily on society and created a strong sense of idealism (Glass, 2007). They have a deep desire to make a difference in the world (Erickson, 2008) and they see work as a personal sacrifice and as a way to achieve financial success (Glass, 2007).

According to Notter (2007), Baby Boomers grew in an era of social unrest. Their core values include personal growth, teamwork, optimism, personal gratification as well as health and wellness. They are service orientated, willing to go the extra mile, driven, reluctant to go against peers, overly sensitive to feedback and uncomfortable with conflict.



Baby Boomers have a strong work ethic characterized by long hours, hard work and loyalty to employees (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Southard & Lewis, 2004).

In South Africa, Baby Boomers are associated with 1960 Sharpsville Massacre, the 1976 Soweto uprising boycotting Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools enforced by Apartheid government, the fight against Bantu Education and the banning of African National Congress in 1960 (Jonck, Van der Walt & Sobayeni, 2017).

Generation X (X'ers)

Generation X are kids of the Baby Boomers who grew up with both parents working. They witnessed their workaholic parents get laid off at work and getting divorced which made them determined to have a balanced life. They grew up in conditions where there was financial, family and social uncertainty and constant change. They depended on a small group of friends for help and television, computers and videogames for entertainment (Erickson, 2008).

Generation X is the first generation to grow up with computers, cell phones, and other entry-level electronic devices (Eastman & Liu, 2012; Young, Sturts, Ross & Kim, 2013). Generation X are resourceful and independent thinkers placing a high value on family and friends over career. Generation X manages personal time better, and as adult workers, have a strong desire for outcomes drawn from facts rather than emotions (Hendricks & Cope, 2013; Cugin, 2012).

In the workplace, Generation X is often more skeptical, less loyal and fiercely independent (Glass, 2007). X'ers approach their work with positive, pragmatic approaches to problem-solving, creativity, independence, innovation and technical ability. They are comfortable with change, diversity, and multi-tasking (Smola & Sutton, 2002; Southard & Lewis, 2004). They are resourceful and independent and tend to seek out a "work-life balance" (Kupperschmidt, 1998; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002).

In South Africa, Generation X is the first generation to be influenced by labour market regulatory codes, such as and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Act 75 of 1997 and the Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998, (Codrington & Grant-Marshall, 2006; Jonck, Van der Walt & Sobayeni, 2017)



Millennials (Generation Y)

Millennials are also known as Generation Y due to their inquisitive nature (van der Walt, 2016). Millennials represent the fastest-growing workforce estimated at 76 million people born between 1982 and 2000 (Ismail & Lu, 2014; Schullery, 2013). They were born during the most child-centric time. They received high attention from their parents who also expected a lot from them which fostered a great deal of self-confidence. Millennials have high expectations of themselves and the employer. They are used to be high achievers due to the perceived tight competition in the global market for jobs (Meister and Willyerd, 2010). Ismail and Lu (2014) indicate that millennials will be a significant portion of the all-American workforce by 2020 at 50%.

According to Eisner (2005), Millennials equate job satisfaction to flexibility, a positive work environment and opportunity to grow more than any other generation. They would trade a high paying job for a job that is meaningful and where they feel appreciated. Millennials appreciate the training and mentoring in the workplace which enhances their skills development and job attractiveness in the market.

For Millennials job satisfaction is closely linked to their sense of purpose. They seek a job that will allow them to make new friends, learn new skills and live for a higher purpose (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

In South Africa, 40% of the population is classified as Generation Y (van der Walt, 2016). Generation Y enjoys challenging jobs, working in groups and companies which are technologically orientated (van der Walt, 2016). This generation has high self-confidence and they are bound to be in leadership positions at a very early age (van der Walt, 2016).



Demographic questions

Please answer the following questions by placing a cross in the appropriate box or by providing an answer in the space provided.

1. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THE MUNICIPALITY?

2. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR AGE:

20 – 38 Years	
39 - 55 Years	
56 - 65 Years	

3. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR GENDER:

Male	
Female	
Gender nonconforming	

4. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

5. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LANGUAGE

Afrikaans	
English	





Sepedi	
SeSotho	
SeTswana	
TshiVenda	
IsiZulu	
IsiXhosa	
Other	

6. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT

Senior manager (salary level 01)	
General manager (salary level 02)	
Manager (salary level 03)	
Other	

7. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR CULTURE

Asian	
African	
White	
Coloured	
Indian	
Other	



The study is interested in understanding more about your perspective of your generation. Could you please share your experiences of working with employees from different generational groups.

Research Question 1: What is multi-generational conflict?

1. How would you describe the generation that you belong to? How do you think someone in an older [younger] generation would describe your generation? How much of either generation description is true?
2. What events or factors do you feel have shaped your generation?
 - Is there a term or label that you know of, that applies to your age group or generation?
 - Are there times when you would rather not be known by that label?
3. How would you describe your perceptions about members of an older [younger] generation which resulted in conflict, tension or clashes in the workplace?
4. Can you tell me about a positive/negative interaction with someone from another generation at work? [Probe for a specific example, if applicable.]
 - What was their generation?
 - What were the circumstances?
 - How did they treat you?
 - Did this influence in any way your feelings about your job or your organization?
5. There is notion that some people are lazy, entitled, rigid or simply difficult to work with? Would you agree or disagree with such an assessment? Please explain your answer.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of multi-generational conflict?

6. Have you experienced any conflict at work with another member of the older [younger] generation as a result of differences in age, race, religion or beliefs? Please describe what caused the conflict?
7. Can you recall an instance where you had a conflict at work with a member of a older [younger] generation due to late coming, working flexible hours or requesting a promotion? Could you please explain the circumstances?
8. Based on your experience, would you say the older and younger generation value different things in the workplace? Please explain your answer.

Research Question 3: How does multi-generational conflict manifest in the workplace?

9. Some participants in our research have noted friction or conflicts that exist between generations. Have you experienced any friction? Please describe what caused this friction.
10. Do you think the use of technology in the workplace provides the flexibility to work anytime, anywhere? Please motivate your answer.
11. How do you prefer to communicate with members of the older [younger] generation? Please explain why you prefer such a method?
12. Has the use of technology or lack thereof ever caused a conflict between you your colleagues from older [younger] generation?

Research Question 4: What strategies do organizational members use to manage multi-generational conflict?

13. If you had to advise a colleague about working with people from other generations, what would you recommend?

- Are these the strategies that have been effective for you personally?

14. Are there any other issues that you've thought of during our interview that you think might be important to know about generations, generational differences, or intergenerational interactions?

Appendix C: Ethical clearance letter



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

16-Jul-2020

Dear Ms Mathapelo Masisi

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Multi-generational conflict experienced by employees at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2020/0592/1407

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Adri du Plessis

2020.07.16

14:05:29

+02'00'

205 Nelson Mandela
Drive
Park West
Bloemfontein 9301
South Africa

P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein 9300
Tel: +27 (0)51 401
9337
duplessisA@ufs.ac.za
www.ufs.ac.za



Appendix D: Language editing certificate

Editing Certificate

Mr Lyle Markham

University of the Free State

Editing of Master's Dissertation

I, Marietjie Alfreda Woods, hereby certify that I have completed the editing and correction of the dissertation, **Multi-Generational Conflict Experienced by Employees at Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality** by **Mathapelo Masisi**, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree **Master's in Business Administration** at the University the Free State.

I believe that the dissertation meets with the grammatical and linguistic requirements for a document of this nature.

Name of Editor: Marietjie Alfreda Woods

Qualifications: BA (Hons) (Wits), Practical Copy-editing and Proofreading(UCT)



Signature:

Contact Number: 083 312 6310

Email address: rickywoods604@gmail.com

Date Issued: 9 October 2020