



Collectivism, Unionisation and Union Influence: A decline? An investigation into the attitudes and perceptions of South African unionised employees in a single trade union.

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Abstract

Amid the immense changes in the 21st century world of work, has come with it widely held views that significant changes are occurring in employee attitudes to labour relations. Research asserts that the prevalence of individualistic human resource management strategies has initiated argument postulating that employees' collectivist work orientations are in decline (Deery & Walsh, 1999).

Is this notion of 'collectivist decline' reflective of South African employees, particularly trade union members? In perspective, further research has suggested that collective approaches to grievances in the workplace are fading away because workers are perhaps becoming more individualised in their working patterns and in their general dealings with employment relations (Deery & Walsh, 1999). In line with this, are South African unionised employees then becoming less committed to their union membership and the values of collectivism?

In light of the above, an exploration into the mind-set of unionised employees towards collectivism and individualism is therefore useful. This study attempted to explore the attitudes and perceptions of South African unionised employees toward collectivism. In this regard the study endeavoured to investigate the extent to which the 21st centuries human resource and industrial relations practices are capable of reducing unionised employees' collectivist work orientations. It aimed to firstly unpack and understand the perceptions and attitudes of unionised employees toward their trade unions, second to determine the factors that affect an individual's preparedness to involve themselves in and partake in the daily activities of the union's internal organisation and thirdly the underlying reasons of union members' willingness to partake in industrial action.

The findings of the study are based on research generated through the undertakings of interviews with eight blue collar shop stewards. Semi structured interviews were used to obtain the qualitative data, and themes were subsequently generated from a thematic analysis.

Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

With the critical changes in the labour market, the fusion of full time- part time and temporary workers, the decreasing size of business units (Bacon and Storey,1996), together with the new practices in the labour world that have impacted on the organisation of work, which have in turn inevitably attempted to individualise the employment relationship through the greater use of performance based pay, individual appraisal systems and goal setting (Deery & Walsh, 1999), all suggest that the collective mass movement ideals upon which trade unions have been built, are gradually slipping away (Bacon & Storey, 1996).

Indeed, in South Africa, over the past quarter of a century, trade unions have played a major role in working to achieve greater social justice; however this role of trade unions must not be overestimated. Nel (2002) indicates that union membership has indeed been fluctuating dramatically over the last decade. Additionally, research indicates that unions everywhere, including South Africa, have been negatively influenced by capital's chase across the globe, particular emphasis being made on restructuring, suggesting that it has predominately disconnected unions as companies relocate and downsize their workforces (Lambert, 1999). Notably, the global changes in the labour market have created immense enticement into researching the effects of these altered practices and processes on employee attitudes toward collectivism and trade unionism. Speculation has arisen suggesting that the 'new' industrial relations practices can be seen as a direct threat to union loyalty and participation, and to member's willingness to partake in industrial action (Deery & Walsh, 1999). Furthermore, Kelly (1998) states that due to the individualistic premise of human resource strategies, the basis of effective trade unionism may be undermined. Such changes in employee attitudes are perceived as a 'crisis' in 'traditional union practices' (Deery & Walsh, 1999).

Critically, if such a 'crisis' exists, then it will in all probability directly affect the attitudes of employees toward collectivism and their trade unions entirely. Hence, the levels of commitment of members toward their unions internal organisation and their willingness or enthusiasm to partake in industrial action, all must be investigated, a fundamental endeavour of this study.

It is noteworthy to take into account similar research conducted during the year 1999, which explored the collectivist attitudes of white-collar employees in Britain and Australia. In both countries, results of the research showed that collectivism was found to have a significant effect on the preparedness of individuals to fulfil their union obligations and to take part in industrial action; additionally the study concluded that there was no evidence pertaining to the demise of collectivism, at the time, in the two countries (Deery & Walsh, 1999). Significantly this study has however been conducted almost a decade ago, and the drastic changes of the new working world have grown extensively since 1999. Evidently, the new labour markets, restructuring, downsizing, individualised human resource strategies and so forth have indeed intensified since then.

Additionally, this study has focused primarily on white-collar workers, only in Britain and Australia. The fundamental aim of the present research was to investigate blue collar workers and navigate through the unionised employees' position toward collectivism primarily in a South African context.

Chapter 2

2.1 Theoretical framework- Literature Review

2.1.1 Unitarism

Unitarism argues that all employees should be loyal and committed to the employing organisation, whereby loyalty or commitment to trade unions is seen as problematic (Geldenhuys & Naidoo, 2007). From this perspective, employers and employees are seen as striving for the same goals, hence profitability by which all can gain (Bendix, 1999). In this view, conflict is seen as irrational as the owners of both capital and labour are complementary partners to common aims (Swanepoel, 1999). Salamon (2000) adds that management's prerogative to manage is regarded as acceptable and justifiable. Many commentators regard modern human resource strategies as a unitarist based management strategy (Geldenhuys & Naidoo, 2007).

When we enquire about the definition of employment relations, two divisions emerge according to Abott (2006). American literature frequently draws upon the corpus of Human Resource Management [HRM] activities and the direct interaction between employer and employee (a unitarist concept). British literature often applies a broader conceptualisation of the term indicating that employment relations goes beyond just the workplace and includes the state, employer associations and organised labour, hence conceiving not only micro levels between the employer and employee but also macro levels of interaction (a pluralist concept). Notably Abott (2006) states that the British definition of employment relations does manifest into both unitary and pluralist ideologies. In unitarism the employment relationship is seen as an expected interaction between managers and employees in the flexibility, skill and loyalty of employees and an absence of workplace conflict and trade unions. The pluralist concept denotes that trade unions and state interventions are an imperative part of the workplace; hence the employment relationship encapsulates a plurality of group interest and the existence of potential workplace conflict.

Within the paradigm of Human Resource Development [HRD], O'Donnell, McGuire Cross (2006) critically challenge key assumptions in HRD within which they elaborate on the association between HRD and the Unitarist Human Resource Management agenda. The authors emphasise that HRD is subservient to both capital and labour, whilst asserting that HRD is reflective of a pluralist perspective as it more realistically adheres to the tensions inherent in the labour- capital relation, implying that a unitarist discourse is not interconnected to HRD practices.

Abott (2006) further states from a unitarist perspective that divisions that do exist in the organisation are attributed to effects of personality disorders, inappropriate recruitment and promotion practices or poor communication. In this regard to ensure the above does not occur, it is imperative for management to make certain the recruitment and promotion processes are fair and equitable as well as alert employees of where their true interests lie and that individuals who do not adhere to these standards are dismissed or suppressed. Additionally management must ensure that the organisation alone is the source of authority and that alternative sources such as shop stewards and trade unions are eliminated. Abott (2006) further makes reference to three theoretical perspectives which govern unitarism. *Scientific Management Theory*, asserts that employees attitudes toward work are immature, they have self-centred aspirations and tend to avoid work whenever possible. It is in this regard, that efforts to control the activities of employees are essential, hence rigid management control. This theory additionally states that workers should be treated impersonally and collectively and management has the authority and is superior to all decisions and processes of work. *Human Relations Theory*, gives emphasis to the importance of individual's self-fulfilment in the workplace, hence granting autonomy and abilities to think for example are important so that employees do not find other ways of fulfilling these desires. The task of management on this conception is to manipulate workplace relations by employing techniques that satisfy employee needs in order to reduce internal tensions. *Human Resource Management Theory* is based on the premise that organisational tensions can be resolved by cooperation, it is believed that the forces uniting managers and workers are much stronger than the forces dividing them. Therefore the task of management is to facilitate autonomy and collaboration through the development of a unifying culture, open

communication, collective understanding and by introducing performance appraisal, performance based pay and individual contracts of employment.

According to Geare, Edgar & McAndrew (2006), the ideologies of employment relationships are either unitarist or pluralist and High Commitment Management [HCM] is achieved through a unitarist position. In their empirical investigation from a managerial perspective Geare, Edgar & McAndrew (2006), stipulate that managers do consider employment relations to be pluralist in nature, however when it comes to the employment relationships in their own organisations manager's see it as unitarist, with an increased usage of HCM associated with unitary beliefs and values.

2.1.2 Pluralism

Pluralism suggests workers and their employing organisations share some interest, but not all, indicating that although there is some interdependence between them, there is also conflict and competition, an implication is thus made suggesting that both 'individualism and collectivism' can indeed live alongside each other (Geldenhuis & Naidoo, 2007). From this approach, conflict is seen as unavoidable, arising from the very nature of employment relations (Bendix, 1999). However this conflict is limited by the interdependence of the parties involved in the process of economic survival, and it is for this reason that the parties are willing to settle their differences by collective mechanisms such as negotiation (Swanepoel, 1999). Finnemore & Van der Merwe (1992) indicate that within the framework of pluralism, it is imperative that employers recognise unions as crucial to the labour world, and at the same time unions should value the role of employers within the economic system.

Furthermore, it is indicated by Abott (2006) that pluralists differ from unitarists in that pluralists have a set of assumptions and values that conflict is inevitable, indicating that business organisations are complex structures made up of different social groups, namely management and employees. In this regard, conflict is seen as especially healthy for the organisation as it creates room for grievances to be brought to the surface from employees. Additionally, on the other side of the coin, conflict helps managers to become innovative and attempt to handle such

conflicts in a manner that produces the finest results. Importantly, pluralists acknowledge that there exists competing sources of authority alongside management, which are shop stewards and trade unions. This is seen as beneficial as industrial relation issues can be dealt with in a collective manner. Following this, it is therefore argued that management should be provided with the most efficient means to institutionalise employment rules and minimise workplace conflict. Added to this, it is imperative that a fair process and outcome is always achieved by allowing employees the ability to negotiate workplace contracts with management. It is for this reason that pluralists are confident that collective bargaining and trade unions are necessary in order to achieve the above objectives.

Abott (2006) draws on the *Systems Theory* of employment relations which forms a pluralist framework. The theory holds that work is governed by a range of formal and informal rules and regulations and these very rules are what industrial actors try to determine which is influenced by a wider environmental context and the actors themselves share an interest in maintaining conflict resolution. According to the Systems Theory four elements make up the system:

- 1.) Industrial actors namely; employers and their representatives (employer associations), employees and their representatives (trade unions) and external agencies (example, government departments, labour courts or the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration [CCMA]).
- 2.) Environmental context; technological and economic conditions, and the distribution of power in the wider society.
- 3.) A web of rules that governs the employment relationship, in South Africa for example the Labour Relations Act [LRA].
- 4.) A binding ideology which consists of a common set of understandings which serve to make the system operable.

The Strategic Theory emphasises the recognition of contemporary changes of industrial relations practice, this includes, the decline in union membership and the rise of new industries not covered by unions, the alteration of collective bargaining structures and outcomes involving trade unions, and the new managerial values and human resource strategies that encourages for example information sharing and cooperation. The theory suggests that these changes have impacted on the traditional managerial decision making authority over workplace relations.

A study by Khan & Ackers (2004), denounces the underpinnings of both pluralism and unitarism in the nature of employment with Sub Saharan Africa [SSA], postulating that the employment world of SSA comprises of a broader social and moral community which the pluralistic and unitarist ideologies have ignored. It is proposed by the authors that a neo-pluralist framework, which incorporates a number of ideals that 1970's pluralism has not addressed. For instance, neo pluralism attaches aspects such as civil society and democratic rights and moral communities and social institutions. By applying a neo-pluralist framework to SSA employment management a conceptualisation of an 'African System' based on cultural characteristics which are common in most SSA societies will be most appropriate.

Morrison & Milliken (2000), present a paper in which a discussion of organisational silence unfolds, indicating that there exists a wide array of barriers and powerful forces which impact on employees speaking up and holding back on information. In this regard it is disputed that organisational silence is in fact an immense threat and obstacle to organisational change and development, more particularly, toward a more pluralistic organisation. Morrison & Milliken (2000) therefore argue that such pluralism is restrained and denied in organisations where silence and restriction of views and opinions are practiced. Hence the benefits of diversity are thus not attained, leaving the organisation at a loss as pluralism is not capitalised upon.

2.1.3 Marxism

The Marxist view argues that workers cannot, by the very nature of a capitalist society, be committed to their employing organisations, they can only be committed to their unions (Geldenhuys & Naidoo, 2007). This approach views the worker as oppressed for the sake of capital interests, and it is for this reason that trade unions are viewed as an unavoidable response to capitalism as they enhance the power of the working class (Nel, 2002).

According to Abott (2006) applying a Marxist frame of reference to employment relations allows social conflict to be viewed as a natural outcome of capitalism. This reflects the continued struggle between two social classes, with industrial conflict being viewed as a manifestation of this struggle occurring in the workplace. Additionally Abott (2006) makes reference to a few

theories governing the Marxist framework. *The Labour Process Theory* refers to managements' goal of converting raw materials into products via labour and machinery by instituting some form of structure and power toward employees, whereby profit and capital are accumulated. It is from this basis that the theory asserts that contemporary employment strategies are facilitated by the advancement of technology and has changed the labour process. Additionally, organisations are searching for cheaper ways of employing labour. The crux of the matter is that the exploitative movements of such processes are often resisted by employees making them prone to act in ways that are against the interest of the organisation. It is from this that the Marxist views conflict as the result of the very nature of capitalist development itself. *Postmodernist theories* argue that a particular type of discourse on individuals conditions the way they experience work. This type of thinking and process is manifested in Human Resource techniques, which has been argued to manipulate behaviour and thinking of employees. The theory emphasises that it is imperative that employment relations must concern itself with the subjective dimensions of work and with the domination of workers.

2.1.4 Collectivism and Individualism

The very essence of collectivism itself has been a significant conceptual framework within the industrial relations segment. Collectivism has almost always been compared to individualism in existing literature. Purcell (1987) relates collectivism and individualism to management styles, deeming that a collectivist management style reflected an organisation which took an approach of representing its employees by trade unions, hence these organisations being seen as having an accepting and good relationship with trade unions. Purcell (1987) further views individualism as the extent to which human resource policies focused on the rights and capabilities of individual workers, hence an organisation that displayed high individualism showed that individual contribution of employees is seen as important and are therefore willing to invest in training and development.

Salamon (2000) notes that management and unions both contain elements of individualism and collectivism, and it is this interrelationship between individualism and collectivism that lies at the very epicentre of industrial relations. From this view, we can draw on Storey and Bacon's (1993: 670) perspective that "individualism and collectivism are used interchangeably with

‘unitarism’ and ‘pluralism’ therefore suggesting that collectivism comes to equate with trade unionism and individualism with non-unionism”

It is these conceptual frameworks of collectivism and individualism that will allow for and provide a foundation to the epicentre of this research. Consequently, the central literature on collectivism and individualism will prove to be valuable in identifying the factors that influence a unionised individual’s collectivist work orientation.

According Triandis (1995) the constructs of individualism and collectivism enhance the distinction of those cultures who value the importance of an individual against those who value group harmony. It is in this regard that those who acquire individualised values focus on independence and follow suit of personal attitudes and preferences, whereas those who are accustomed to collectivist values see themselves as interdependent of others and behave according to social norms.

Sivadas, Norman, Bruvold & Nelson (2008: 202), add that in “Individualistic societies personal goals take precedence over in-group goals whereas in collectivist societies, in-group goals take precedence over those of the individual, with personal goals secondary, hence individualistic societies are “me” orientated and collectivist societies are “we” orientated”

Murphy, Ramamoorthy, Flood, & MacCurtain (2006) indicate that prior research of individualism and collectivism orientations of employees in relation to organisational justice perceptions influence the following employee attitudes: affective/normative commitments, pro-social behaviour, team loyalty and tenure intent. The research conducted by Murphy, Ramamoorthy, Flood, & MacCurtain (2006) indicates that individualistic orientations tend to be negatively related to organisational levels of affective commitment and tenure intent. Additionally it was found by the researchers that a higher level of individualism results in lower pro-social behaviour and team loyalty. Furthermore, previous research also asserts that individualism orientation favours equity and collectivism orientation favours equality principles. Research on justice perceptions indicates that distributive justice (referring to the fairness of the decision outcome) perceptions maybe different across individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

Hence, norms based on performance-based pay maybe more compatible with individualism and those adherences based on equality norms maybe compatible with collectivist orientations.

According to Thomas, Au & Ravlin (2003) individualism refers to the tendency to view one's self as independent of others attached to personal goals while collectivism refers to the interdependence of others and the sacrifice of personal interests for group welfare is more prominent.

In the comparative study of America and China conducted by Zhao & Chen (2008), which examined the relationship between individual's cultural values of individualism and collectivism, selected personality traits and the psychological contracts tend to form with ones employer. It was hypothesised that people with individualistic cultural value will tend to form a transactional psychological contract and people with collectivist cultural value will tend to form a relational psychological contract. Morrison & Robinson (1997), defines transactional contracts as short-term, with an economic or materialistic focus, and entails limited involvement by both parties, whereas relational contracts are long-term and broad, as they are not restricted to purely economic exchange but also include terms of loyalty in exchange for growth in an organisation. It was found that the cultural value of individualism seemed to be positively related to transactional contract for the Chinese which supports the hypothesis. However the opposite was found with the American sample, indicating that individualism had a significant impact on the relational contract.

A study conducted by Van Dyk & De Kock (2004) investigated the individualism and collectivism factor for the management of diversity in the South African National Defense Force. The study aimed to determine if white and coloured officers tend to be more individualistic in nature, whereas black officers tend to be more collectivistic. The second aspect of the study tried to understand if cultural behaviour and practices relate to levels of individual or collectivist orientation. Matsumoto (2000), states that the individualism and collectivism culture encourages, fosters and facilitates the needs, wishes, desires and values of the self against the group. It is also indicated that members of individualistic cultures view themselves as separate, autonomous individuals, whereas those of collectivist cultures see themselves as connected to one another. It

is further stated that in an individualistic culture, personal needs take precedence over the needs of others whereas in a collectivist culture individual's needs are sacrificed to meet the needs and desires of the group. Hwang, Francesco & Kessler (2003) stated that for the individualist, social behaviour is determined by attitudes and personal rights, whereas for the collectivist such behaviours are embedded in norms, obligations and duties. Hence, it is noted that individualists view relationships as rational exchanges and collectivists emphasise the communality of the relationship. The study conducted by Van Dyk and De Kock, indicated overall that there was no significant differences that existed in the Individualism- Collectivism factor between the groups studied. These results state that the students of the military no longer adhere to extreme forms of individualism and collectivism, but a shift towards moderation is apparent.

Huff & Kelly (2005) had conducted research on the impact of culture on organisational trust and customer orientation with a strong focus on individualism. With regards to individualism, collectivism and trust, in their review of past research they had found that individualism had implied a social framework within which people take care of themselves and their immediate family only, whereas collectivism implied a tightly bound social framework in which people distinguish between in-groups and out-groups, and ultimately expect their in-group to look after them and in exchange they feel that they owe loyalty to it. Huff & Kelly (2005) further stated much of the past literature implies a strong relationship between trust and collectivism and a negative relationship between trust and individualism. It is further acknowledged by the authors that collectivists who value relationships have higher levels of trust than individualists. It must be noted however that collectivism may also draw on the distinction between in-groups and out-groups, this emphasising that the quality of social-interactions between individuals in a collectivist culture depends on whether or not they belong to the same in-group. In this regard it is stated by Watkins & Liu (1996) that strangers are not received by collectivists' cultures effectively; consequently these strangers who are the out-groups are exploited and manipulated more extensively than those of individualistic cultures. Consequently, Huff & Kelly (2005) had developed their hypothesis, and found that individuals from individualist societies will have higher propensities to trust in a general business setting than those from collectivist societies. In organisations of small size and scope, internal trust will be higher in organisations from collectivist than from individualist societies. The larger the size and scope of the organisation,

the more likely internal trust will be higher in organisations from individualist than from collectivist societies. It is noted that this would not be true for external trust, which typically involves trust for members of out-groups. For external trust, Huff & Kelly, (2005) stated that, organisations from individualist societies will have a higher level of external trust than organisations from collectivist societies. Additionally, organisations from individualist societies will have a stronger customer orientation than those from collectivist societies.

Huff & Kelly (2005) therefore states that the evidence indicates that firms from western-style individualist countries may have an advantage in their ability to develop relationships with external exchange partners. Firms from collectivist cultures may have stronger climates of trust in small organisations, but they appear to have no advantage for larger organisations.

Research conducted by Harrison, McKinnon, Wu & Chow (2000) stated that collectivism is a 'we' orientation to a group and individualism in contrast reflects an 'I' orientation to the self in an individualised society.

Morris, Davis & Allen (1994, p. 67) suggest that collectivism involves "The subordination of personal interests to the goals of the larger work group, an emphasis on sharing, corporation, and group harmony, a concern toward group welfare and hostility to outward group members".

Additionally, Morris, Davis & Allen (1994, p. 68) argue that in collectivist cultures "greater synergies may occur from the combined efforts of people with diverse skills". In this regard Harrison, McKinnon, Wu & Chow (2000) suggests that those of collectivist cultures may have an advantage when it comes to teamwork and effective group functioning. However it is pointed out by the authors that the impact of in-groups and out-groups within the collectivist culture show that while relationships tend to be very supportive and intimate within the in- group, there is little trust and often hostility toward out-group members. It is from this that Harrison, McKinnon, Wu & Chow (2000) had based their comparative study between Taiwanese collectivists and Australian individualists. It was concluded that Taiwanese employees in a collectivist culture have difficulties in adjusting to frequent shifts in workgroup and team membership whereby such shifts are reflective of disruption of pre-existing groups in- groups. This is the opposite for Australian individualised employees who adapt relatively easily to these conditions. The study provides an overall support for the influence of culture on the adaptability of workgroup and teams.

Osermyn, Coon & Kemmelmeir (2002) noted that there exists a relation of self-concept and individualism and collectivism. In this regard individualism was seen as attached to personal self- descriptors and collectivism was manifested in more socially-orientated self descriptors. Additionally collectivism was seen as being associated with the need for affiliation and sensitivity to rejection and individualism placed more importance on personal success for self-esteem than family life whereas collectivism placed great significance on family life. With regards to the association between relationality and individualism versus collectivism, it was stated by Osermyn, Coon & Kemmelmeir (2002) that collectivism was associated with cooperation in social dilemma tasks and individualism was only ready to entertain cooperation when there was a sense of team focus. In terms of conflict resolution styles and communication individualism was related to goal orientated, direct communication and collectivism was connected to indirect and high-context communication. Additionally, collectivist values had a preference for accommodation and negotiation in conflict situations and individualist values preferred confrontation and arbitration as tools.

Triandis & Gelfand (1998) had proposed a model that individualism and collectivism can be characterised as either horizontal or vertical. The horizontal pattern represents equality and places emphasis on everyone being alike in the system. The vertical pattern is representative of everyone being distinct in the system. With this in mind Triandis & Gelfand (1998) explain that horizontal individualism values the uniqueness of each person but not social hierarchy, and vertical individualism values both uniqueness and social status acquired through competition, hence 'the winner takes all'. With regards to collectivism, horizontal collectivism views people as alike, emphasising common goals and interdependence resisting authority. In this model decisions are taken by the group as a whole and leadership is not stressed upon. Vertical collectivism places emphasis on interdependence and the willingness to sacrifice ones own goals for the sake of a common good, however here, people are willing to accept hierarchy and to submit to authority.

2.1.5 Neo-liberalism

The perception that collectivist ideals are gradually declining and individualism is rising, due to the new individual practices of the labour world, has indeed been born from the neo-liberal agenda. Salamon (2000) states that during the nineteenth century a neo-liberalist or *laissez-faire* ideology had dominated the industrial world, with its ultimate premise tied to capitalism and individualism. Hence, economic and social matters were perceived as being determined by individuals who were responsible for their own destiny, whereby seeking to combine with others for success was not adequate. This approach had inevitably constrained the development of trade unions. Furthermore, Salamon (2000) draws on the 1979 Thatcherism stance and its association with *laissez-faire* individual reminiscent of the early nineteenth century that incorporated a free market enterprise, open markets, deregulation, individualisms and privatisation as well as a Monetarist rather than Keynesian macroeconomic management system. Consequently, the neo-liberal ideology was based on an initiative to curtail the perceived power of trade unions, allow management to exert its prerogative and protect individual members against union ‘tyranny’ (Salamon, 2000).

Davies and Peterson (2005) draw on an interesting notion that refers to neo-liberalism as a fabrication of the working arena, whereby individuals are consumed by such immense amounts of work, which they are unable to go beyond this point and engage in a collective pattern. The individualisation of workers combined with the weakening of unions’ means that there exists no powerful voice with which resistance can be articulated.

Schneider (2003), had presented a paper based on neo-liberalism and economic justice in South Africa, and had expressed that neo-liberal economists still continue to set in motion a large unregulated market system which in turn has no value for black South Africans. The principles underlying the neo-liberal agenda prior to the release of Nelson Mandela according to Schneider (2003) are aspects such as the efficiency of the free market, economic factors outweighing racial factors and some of the apartheid measures may have been based upon good intentions. Schneider goes on to state that the role neo-liberal principles have played on frustrating and

opposing change such as the redistribution of land, income and assets in South Africa continues to be present.

Desai (2003) had stated in his paper that the transition into democracy in South Africa is victory into the transition of neo-liberalism, adding that the ANC had begun cementing their alliance with the advanced capitalist world. Habib & Padayachee (2000) stated that white business, black bourgeoisie and black professionals have only benefited from the neo-liberal economic policies. Desai (2003) further states that over the last decade there has indeed been an increase in temporary, casual, contract and part-time work, which has created instability for unions, and unemployment is increasing as a whole emphasising that the neo-liberal transition has negatively effected the poor in South Africa.

According to Narsiah (2002), neo-liberalism is characterised by a free-market capitalist system, deregulation and privatisation. Hence there is a distinct withdrawal from the state and transference to the private sector. Narsiah (2002) goes on to state in his paper that South Africa has not escaped the neo-liberal regime, with The Growth Employment and Redistribution Policy (GEAR) playing a large part of it. The neo-liberal development policy is being driven by economic severity, export orientated production, and the privatisation of public sector services (Narsiah, 2002).

According to Williams & Taylor (2000) the post apartheid government in South Africa had altered the route from being broadly socially democratic to a neo-liberal position it uses today. This transition has created some regret as it is the poor who have suffered the most. GEAR has done very little to decrease the unemployment rate and even less to redistribute the profits of apartheid (Williams & Taylor, 2000). It remains to be seen if the Zuma administration can reverse this trend with an improved agenda for South Africa.

Clarke (2006) had conducted research related to labour market reform, employment trends under the new regime, and trade union formation within the frameworks of democratisation and neo-liberal economic structuring in post apartheid South Africa. The study found that post apartheid labour policies have reinforced neo-liberalism, with evidence of a decline in permanent, full time

and protected employment. Additionally, the study suggested that the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) had remained narrowly focused on full time workers, and in protecting their members. The research concluded by suggesting that although the government had been successful in some areas, the government had been unsuccessful in maintaining the social and economic inequality in the country.

2.1.6 Unionism

On the outset, it is only legitimate to discuss the legislation passed by the South African government. Hence, the Labour Relations Act, The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, The Employment Equity Act, The South African Qualifications Authority Act and the Skills Development Act were all introduced to support the employment and skills situation. It follows that the Labour Relations Act aims to accomplish and govern organisational rights of trade unions, ensuring the facilitation of collective bargaining, promoting and allowing a degree of employee participation in decision making as well as helping reduce and resolve conflict in organisations. The Basic Conditions of Employment Act allows for fair labour practices which regulate working hours, leave, working conditions and environment. The Employment Equity Act ensures fair and non discriminatory practices (<http://www.labour.gov.za/>)

Research by the World Bank discloses that trade unions act as agents for labour, maintaining collective bargaining. Additionally, trade unions assist in monitoring employers' compliance with government regulations, reduce discrimination and increase productivity at the workplace. The World Bank further elaborates that some trade unions have contributed significantly to their countries' political, social and economic development (World Bank, 1995).

A spectrum of literature seems to denote a similar definition of trade unions, indicating that the main purpose of trade unions is to promote the living standards of their members (Allen, 1996). Trade unions are viewed as agents who are expected to try and improve the working lives of their members through negotiations (Kelly, 1998).

It is indicated that within a unionised workplace, mobilisation theory holds that trade union effectiveness can be measured by a common reliance on trade unions to represent worker interests, derived through high levels of internal participation, and a willingness to engage in collective action (Kelly, 1998).

Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu (2007) described The National Union of Metalworkers [The Num], as being successful in organisational achievements, gaining improvements for its workers such as wages and working conditions by negotiating with employers, allowing the opportunity of workers to exercise democratic rights as well as providing literacy to employees and thereby developing some of the most prominent political and business leaders of contemporary South Africa. Additionally, Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu (2007) had identified that The Num provided vast improvements to the employees for example, improving employment status, providing better health and security and ensuring high levels of solidarity for fair employment rights.

Dale Kinnear: “Unions provide a means for employees to vent frustrations and resolve contentious issues in the workplace. In so doing, concerns can be addressed by management and this can prevent issues from disrupting the workforce and the workplace. In any workplace, a union can help keep an employer on track and above board. When a mutual fear/respect relationship exists, management and employees keep each other centered”, (as cited in Marks & Flemming, 2008:454)

Croucher & Brewster (1998) indicate that trade unions are adopting a variety of positive strategies such as mergers with other unions in order to maintain high membership, consequently trying to achieve a control of power.

A study by Hold & Webster (2005) pointed out that casual employment in the Durban Docks fragmented union power.

It is apparent that in the past the South African trade union movement was characterised by high levels of innovation and effective power. In a democratic South Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) have indeed retained social justice for the poor, unemployed

and communities but have generally failed to deliver innovative strategies and maintain organisational power (Hold & Webster, 2005).

According to Kelly (1997), a possible explanation for the decline in participation of union activity, is that fewer employees experience work-related grievances that are sufficiently serious to encourage participation in union activity.

Kelly (1997) indicates that aspects such as recession, mass unemployment and union weakness all contribute to the reduction in employees unionising or acting collectively.

Moreover, the stability in unionism and collectivism is dependent on convincing employees that they have common interests which are antagonistic to the employer and therefore they require a form of collective engagement (Kelly, 1996).

Buhlungu (2008) states, that simultaneous with the growth and influence trade unions have been experiencing a loss of organisational power due to an array of reasons including new industrial labour practices. Consequently, this will impact on the future of trade unions and their impact on representing the working class.

Finally, past research has pointed out that in South Africa although declines in trade union density appears less prominent than in the United States and Europe the decline is still very significant (Theron, 2003)

Wood & Glaister (2008), state in their research that aspects such as performance related pay remain unpopular among trade union members probably due to the fact that such methods undermines the basis of enterprise and industry wide collective contracts.

Rational choice theorists (Cooke, Clarke, Roberts, Semeonoff, 1975; Deery & Cieri, 1991) propose that rational employees join unions based on the perception that union benefits outweigh the cost of union membership.

With regards to police unions in South Africa, it was indicated that the growth of police unionism meant that police officers are increasingly concerned with their workplace rights and

participation. Police union members seemed to have benefited greatly from their trade unions, whereby aspects such as participation and negotiation into decision making and policy making are being achieved (Marks & Flemming, 2008)

Union participation refers to involvement in collective action (Metochi, 2002) and other union related activities (McShane, 1986) that are closely related to the effective functioning of the union (Sverke & Kuruvilla, 1995).

In correlation to union participation, research has indicated that a possible predictor of union participation is union commitment itself (Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark & Carroll, 2004).

Union commitment is defined by Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson & Spiller, (1980) as the extent to which a member has a strong desire to retain union membership, is willing to put effort in the union and believes in union objectives. Additionally, Gordon et al. (1980) designate a four dimensional model of union commitment which includes:

1. Union loyalty,
2. Responsibility to the union
3. Willingness to work for the union
4. Belief in unionism

A recent study by Wood & Glaister (2008) indicated that union penetration rates are indeed high in South Africa, but the highly competitive environment of the 2000's may have led to the weakening of union participation and strike action.

According to Wood (2000) South African unions have indeed attained gains, with the Labour Relations Act providing stability and optimism. Furthermore, Buhlungu (2008) states that trade unions have gained significantly as well as retained enormous influence over the years which provides a platform for their growth.

Chapter 3

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Introduction

The analytical focus of the investigation is based on the interpretative paradigm, which is thematic analysis (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). An investigation on the attitudes, opinions and ideologies of union employees toward collectivism, individualism and unionisation was explored using interviews. This allowed for the identification of various views, and thus enabled the inference of whether or not collectivism is in decline.

3.1.2 Sampling

Convenience sampling is conducted on the basis of ‘availability’ of cases or people volunteering to participate in the research; appropriate cases are then utilised (Durrheim, Painter & Kelly, 2006). Convenience sampling was deemed most appropriate and useful within the frameworks of the present research, as it allowed for available unionised employees to be recruited, with the specific intention of utilising office bearers who provided for information rich data, which is in line with the aim of the research project. The sample was ten unionised shop stewards in a single unionised organisation.

3.1.3 Procedure

After the participants had been recruited, they were invited to be interviewed in order to collect information rich data, using a semi structured interview schedule. The participants were asked to sign informed consent forms. The interviews took place in convenient venues, mainly the shop stewards office in the organisation. Taking notes as well as using audio recording was utilised to record the interviews, and the transcribed conversations made up the data set. The interviews had lasted approximately an hour for each participant.

3.1.4 Methods of data collection

As mentioned above, the form of data collection was prepared via semi structured interview techniques. Interviews allow for a natural way of interacting with people, and as the interpretive approach sees it as a ‘means to an end’, it thus additionally tries to find out how people really feel or experience particular things (Kelly, 2006). Given that interview techniques are in line with the interpretative paradigm, it thus allows for thematic analysis to be conducted (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006), which is suited to the aims of this study.

3.1.5 Data Analysis

The interviews recorded and note-taken data was transcribed and analysed using the methods of thematic analysis. In this regard the information gathered was sorted into themes. The approach that was utilised in the present research was a hypothetico- deductive approach whereby the themes were identified beforehand from theory and the analysis consisted of identifying statements which relate to them. (Hayes, 2000). The analysis was prepared to account for the attitudes and perceptions of collectivism, individualism and unionisation. Themes were identified revolving around trade union member’s collectivist work orientations, commitment to trade unions and the readiness to partake in industrial action. The utilisation of a theory led thematic analysis allowed for large amounts of data to be dealt with easily. Additionally, this type of analysis allowed for a comparison to be established among the participants’ opinions and views (Hayes, 2000).

Chapter 4

4.1 Research results and analysis

4.1.1 Theme 1: The meaning of collectivism for participants

The general consensus from all the participants interviewed understood collectivism to mean working together collectively as employees.

Statements made by the participants included:

“Collectivism is a more powerful way of doing things together”.

“Collectivism addresses the concerns of people collectively”

“Collectivism means “the getting together of employees in a strike or struggle”

“Collectivism implies working together with all unions”

“It is a form [collectivism] of sharing ideas”.

4.1.2 Theme 2: The meaning of individualism for participants

The general consensus among all the participants interviewed understood individualism as working and addressing all encounters alone as an individual person.

“Individualism involves not consulting with others”

“Individualism can involve someone who is a member of a union by name but does not actually participate in any of the union’s duties and activities. That person essentially works as an individual alone. Secondly, individualism means not belonging or involving oneself in a union at

all. For me, the meaning of an individual is not to involve him/herself with others and is not prepared to listen to others”

“Individualism involves ones own ideas and demands as ones own and does not involve or affect any other individual or organisation”

“Individualism includes having personal interests or views and acting upon those interests and views alone”

4.1.3 Theme 3: The effectiveness of trade unions in organisations: The positive/negative impact of unions in organisations.

The general consensus for the present theme is that trade unions are positively effective in organisations. The participants presented a variety of reasons to substantiate their opinion.

“Goals of many employees have been reached due to the presence of unions and trade unions have additionally played a positive role in training”

“Unions help protect victimised and exploited workers”

“My union had played a very important role in my company with management in decision making, which was very positive and effective”

“Unions are effective particularly in the services they deliver to members as well as teaching members the correct ways of dealing with issues in accordance to the law”.

“Trade unions and Cosatu itself helps the poor and unemployed in particular... They [trade unions] challenge the company in order to get what the employees want”

1 participant had concerns about the effectiveness of trade unions:

“Unions are very effective, however there does exist challenges that have to be faced continuously in the operation of the union. You see, the apartheid era has influenced the manner in which unions have been and still are to be organised...people need to be mobilised into becoming a member of a union, also certain sectors such as domestic workers must be organised accordingly and it is the duty of the union to do this. Secondly, people are sometimes not as enthusiastic as they use to be with regards to full participation of a union...this maybe due to the fact that the benefits which are now given by unions are extensive as compared to the past”.

4.1.4 Theme 4: Levels of confidence in trade unions

The general consensus on the present theme is high confidence levels in trade unions particularly the trade union the participants belonged to. Participants responded with various opinions.

“Objectives as well as improvements have been met by the union and my confidence is very high”

“My trade union provides strong training that adds to my confidence. I joined this union at the time of change in South Africa, and as a shop steward I had the opportunity to partake in the changes through my union... the outcomes have increased my confidence greatly”

“My union is growing very much everyday... and that is why my confidence in the union is great”

“My union is gaining more experience and is proving better service and delivery all the time”

4.1.5 Theme 5: Level of trust in trade unions

The participants in general trust their trade union; however the level of trust is not a 100% by all participants.

“I trust my union about 80%”

“I would say I can trust my union at least 60%... my union does communicate transparently, the message is clear down to top and up to bottom”.

“Disciplinary measures are in place in the union to handle all wrongdoings in the union and I base my trust on this factor”

“I trust my union because the union had won many dismissal cases in favour of the workers”

“The good service of the union extends my trust”

4.1.6 Theme 6: The power of trade unions in enforcing employee rights in an organisation

The general consensus among all participants for the present theme is positive. Participants tend to agree that trade unions do help enforce employee’s rights in an organisation.

“Employers cannot implement decisions without consulting with the unions...Unions help raise suggestions and reach objectives”.

“Unions help employees against exploitation by the company on their rights”.

“Rights such as gender equality are important for my union”

“At present workers have the right to speak, and it is the union officials who negotiate with management on employees rights”.

“Improvements have been made with the presence of the unions”.

“Unions help enforce employees rights based primarily on the law, and anything beyond the law cannot be help”.

4.1.7 Theme 7: The degree to which trade unions help resolve disputes with employers

The general consensus from the participants with regards to the present theme is trade unions do in-fact help resolve disputes with employers. Majority of participants agree that their union is able to legally solve disputes in the correct procedure. Participants tend to also agree that unions help employees win many of the disputes with employers.

“My union provides lawyers to its members”.

“My union has a legal structure that is named the Local Dispute Committee to help with disputes”.

4.1.8 Theme 8: Trade unions’ impact on South Africa as a whole

The general consensus among participants is that trade unions are playing a major role and doing a good job for the country.

“Cosatu itself has played a positive role and it has a positive impact on the country as well as the workers on the floor”.

“The South African Communist Party links directly to Cosatu, who influences the government’s decisions for the betterment of South African citizens and the country as a whole”.

“Trade unions fight against poverty in the country as well as dismissals in the organisation”.

“Trade unions have the ability to influence training and the uplifting of skills and therefore promotion exists”

“Less victimisation exists due to the presence of trade unions and unions help employees understand their correct rights and the correct procedure of fighting for their rights”

“Trade unions help the economy tremendously, especially due to the fact that they help in reducing unnecessary work stoppages”

4.1.9 Theme 9: Power of trade unions in the organisation

With regards to the present theme, the feelings of participants vary. 70% of the participants agree that their trade union has a high degree of power in the organisation.

“The high membership figure in my union reflects the high domination that the union has”.

“The power the union has is high due to the fact that when the workers unite, it is difficult for management to victimise them”.

“The union’s power is high as the majority needs that were fought for were achieved by the union”

“The majority membership of my union gave the union power...however one of the greatest concerns is the inexperience of shop-stewards; and this is due to the changes that are constantly taking place...the union has a medium amount of power in this regard”

Other participants added:

“The union has a medium amount of power”

“The union has too little power”

4.10 Theme 10: The perception of management with regards to trade unions in the organisation

The feedback from participants in the present theme varied and a number of substantiations emerged.

The Labour Relations Act (LRA) seems to be the driving force that allows management to understand and accept the presence and right of a trade union.

“Management opposes our union, however at the same time, management accepts our union due to the fact that it is law abiding”.

“Some members of management accepts our union whereas others do not”

“It is the younger managers who tend to understand unions better”

“In my company, older management opposes my union as they still have the mindset of the past and this also overruns the opinion of the younger managers... management only supports my union because they must”

“Management sees’ my union as a stumbling block as the amount of power managers has decreases...management does not always agree or disagree with the union, and I think management has a mixed perception on unions”.

“Since the early 1980’s, positive changes have taken place with regards to management’s perception on trade unions...an example I can give is the shop stewards office we are sitting in right now, this was not allowed in the past...Friction still exists among different issues, particularly economic ones but at least the issues are being addressed in a dignified manner... on the other hand, I feel that management does find it difficult to accept trade unions...I believe that it is due to the changes of new managers coming into the company all the time who do not understand the culture of the organisations, presence of unions, and they therefore come into the organisation with their own attitude...within my plant a huge problem still exists as particularly the white managers still carry out racist ideologies and classify workers in racial colours”

“Management perceives our union in a good light”.

“Management views unions as a form of help in resolving micro issues”

“Management in my organisation consults my union on changes and decisions to be made”

4.11 Theme 11: Attitudes on new individual labour practices

The general consensus amongst participants is that new industrial labour practices are seen in a negative light. According to participants, it is not reasonable on employees to not be treated unfairly; and hence not compensated or paid on an equal basis.

“The new industrial labour practices create a huge challenge in order to keep unions together and allow them to grow”.

“The new labour practises does not promote job creation as the same employees are provided with incentives to produce more work”

“It creates a lot of divisions to working; however it is not present in the country yet”

4.12 Theme 12: Expectations of trade union/s

There were a variety of reasons which members provided with regards to their expectation of their union.

“It is very important that my union protects me against any exploitation”.

“Everyone must become union members in the future, and more importantly my union expects me to form a workshop in order to educate all members”

“I want my union to grow to be the largest in the country and to change the lives of the working class”

“My union must protect and save jobs”

“The union has to provide good service to its member at all times”

“I would like to see my union as part of parliament in the future”

“I expect my union to reach greater achievements and improve on its systems and strategies”

4.13 Theme 13: Fundamental reasons for joining the union

The participants had a spectrum of reasons for joining their union.

“Joining my union meant being united in reaching goals”.

“The reason for joining my union is to ensure job security”.

“My reason for joining my union is to understand the fundamentals of a company and have an influence on its decisions... through meetings the union can provide this”.

“Joining a union means being thought how to defend and behaviour oneself in an appropriate manner”.

“I joined my union in order to ensure that my rights are not violated”.

“I joined my union simply because it was a strong union that was democratic”

“My union achieved great goals and this was the fundamental reason for joining them”.

4.14 Theme 14: Level of commitment toward trade union

The general consensus in the current theme was that participants were committed to their union.

“I have a 50% commitment to my union”.

“Being a shop steward alone and sacrificing money as well as time shows a high commitment to our union”.

“My union is important to me, and therefore I am highly committed”

“I am very much committed to my union”

4.15 Theme 15: The extent of fulfilling the daily duties of a trade union

The participants’ responses reflect that they are fairly committed to their union’s daily duties.

“I am 80% committed as I cannot always fulfil all duties because I have other responsibilities”.

“...commitment to the union is very high and fulfilling the unions daily duties are important... you see, we are always making ourselves available to solve problems and attend meetings at all times”.

“I am committed to fulfilling my duties to such an extent that I am prepared to teach and groom other members of the company to join”.

4.16 Theme 16: The future of trade unions in SA

Participants generally felt that there is a future for trade unions in SA.

“The laws of South Africa will protect trade unions greatly I think...”

...“you know, South Africa is a stable country and that means a lot of investment opportunities and job creations and the future looks bright for trade unions”

“The future of trade unions is a promising one as we are moving from the apartheid regime of having no rights to many rights for the working class”

1 participant had a few concerns:

“I am very concerned about this individual new industrial labour practices...if individualism takes full control in South Africa, than the future of trade unions will be greatly threatened, as unionism is a collectivist ideal”

4.17 Theme 17: Extent of participation in strikes

The general consensus is that participants are fully active in partaking in a strike.

“Strikes show togetherness of employees”

“Legal striking is vital...”

“Striking reflects the strength of employees...”

1 participant felt otherwise:

“Striking is not the ideal solution to a problem, it has a bad effect on both the employer and employee with slow production and no pay... I participate in strikes only because I am forced to do so...”

4.18 Theme 18: The future of collectivism in SA.

70% of participants interviewed agreed that collectivism has a bright future in SA:

“South Africa is at a stage whereby all unions are united for their rights to be achieved and this creates a stronger future for collectivism”.

“Collectivism is going to make this country a successful one”

“...collectivism has a future in South Africa due to the presence of the current parties and how parliament operates as compared to the past”.

30% of participants had a concern for the future of collectivism in the country:

“I think the unions will end in time as unions seem to be getting weaker even in striking and fighting for their rights”

“If the capitalists are going to fully embed the new industrial system in South Africa, than the future of collectivism will fade”

“I am concerned about the increasing utilisation of outsourcing labour by the employers... I feel if it continues than collectivism will indeed loose its strength in the future”

Chapter 5

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 The meaning of collectivism and individualism for participants

The participants in the study share a similar understanding of the term collectivism and agree that collectivism means working together collectively as employees. Further analysis into the participants' responses reflected an assortment of descriptions attached to the meaning of collectivism. Affixing the terms "power", "sharing of ideas" as well as relating the elements of addressing strikes, struggles and concerns of employees as a group, to collectivism, demonstrate the participants' sense of adherence toward collectivism. Literature suggests similar connotations toward collectivism. Morris, Davis and Allen (1994, p. 67) suggest that collectivism involves "The subordination of personal interests to the goals of the larger work group, an emphasis on sharing, corporation, and group harmony, a concern toward group welfare and hostility to outward group members".

In comparison, the definitions of individualism which the participants provided in the study reflected an unaided management of oneself and an independent working environment with personal interests and views. Literature correspondingly suggests that individualised values tend to focus on independence, personal attitudes and preferences, whereas those who are accustomed to collectivist values see themselves as interdependent of others (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

Further past literature encompasses patterns of individualism and collectivism in a classification that is comparable to the analysed data of the present research. According to Thomas, Au & Ravlin (2003) individualism refers to the tendency to view one's self as independent of others attached to personal goals while collectivism refers to the interdependence of others and the sacrifice of personal interests for group welfare is more prominent. It is also indicated that members of individualistic cultures view themselves as separate, autonomous individuals, whereas those of collectivist cultures see themselves as connected to one another. This is again represented in the present research finding which elaborates on individualism as independent

thinking, interests and views and carrying out work independently. Additionally, collectivism is denoted as mutually dependent and concern for all members involved. Complementary literature states that individualistic cultures denote personal needs which take precedence over the needs of others whereas in a collectivist culture individual's needs are sacrificed to meet the needs and desires of the group (Matsumoto, 2000). Moreover, Sivadas, Norman, Bruvold & Nelson (2008) suggest that individualistic societies are a more "me" orientated and collectivist societies are "we" orientated. Hence, this is a direct personification of the present analysed data.

Further analysis of the present study provided interesting aspects. The responses from participants also indicated that individualism echo's independent practices whereby there is no consultation with others and no participation in the union's activities, whether one is a union member or not. This directly implies that individualism can be found in both union and non-union members, which contrasts with Storey and Bacon's (1993) perspective that collectivism equates with trade unionism and individualism equates non-unionism.

5.1.2 The effectiveness of trade unions in organisations: The positive and or negative impact of unions in organisations according to the participants.

It is indicated that within a unionised workplace, mobilisation theory holds that trade union effectiveness can be measured by a common reliance on trade unions to represent worker interests, derived through high levels of internal participation, and a willingness to engage in collective action (Kelly, 1998).

According to the results obtained it is transparent that the participants view trade unions as valuable, effective resources in organisations. Further analysis of the data illustrate that the value given to trade unions by the participants stems from benefits which are directly related to the needs of employees. This effectiveness is apparent in the words the participants had used to describe a positive position toward trade unionism. Accordingly, aspects such as the achievement of goals, higher education and training, protection against victimisation and exploitation, participation in managerial decision making as well as assisting the poor and unemployed were the highlighted captions of the participants. In a similar recognition, Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu (2007) described The National Union of Metalworkers [The Num], as being successful in

organisational achievements, gaining improvements for its workers such as wages and working conditions by negotiating with employers, allowing the opportunity of workers to exercise democratic rights as well as providing literacy to employees and thereby developing some of the most prominent political and business leaders of contemporary South Africa.

Added to this, it is imperative to note what pluralism denotes about the effectiveness of trade unionism. Consequently pluralists believe that a fair process and outcome is always achieved by allowing employees the ability to negotiate workplace contracts with management. It is for this reason that they give confidence to collective bargaining and trade unions in order to achieve the above objectives (Abott, 2006). This is clearly explicit in the present research which elaborated on the opportunity the union has to negotiate and partake in decision making and changes with management which is extremely positive and effective.

However, further analysis of the data obtained suggests that trade unions are not without challenges. An aspect that has been highlighted in the study which deserves some consideration is that trade union members are not always enthusiastic in the participation of union activities as compared to the past. This directly adds a hindrance to the effectiveness of trade unions in the workplace. According to Kelly (1997), a possible explanation for the decline in participation of union activity, is that fewer employees experience work-related grievances that are sufficiently serious to encourage participation in union activity. In a similar light it was revealed in the present study that the lack of full participation maybe due to the fact that union members are receiving benefits which are extensive and they are thus satisfied with many outcomes as compared to the past.

5.1.3 The participants' levels of confidence and trust in trade unions

The analysed data revealed that the participants feel a sense of confidence and trust toward their union. Drawing on the research conducted on The Num, a clear link can be made to the findings of the present study. Bezuidenhout & Buhlungu (2007) had identified that The Num provided vast improvements to the employees for example, improving employment status, providing better health and security and ensuring high levels of solidarity for fair employment rights. Responses from the participants in the present study painted a comparable picture, indicating that

improvements in working conditions, good service as well as the growth and experience of the union creates a sense of confidence and trust in the trade union. Additionally, the positive transition into democracy by the unions was highlighted in the previous research conducted with The Num as well as the present research.

With regards to trust and unionisation, Huff & Kelly (2005) had illustrated in their theory, that those who belong to a collectivist ideal, and are internal group members will develop high levels of trust and a strong relationship. This is duplicated in the present research as the unionised employees seem to belong to a collectivist culture and are internal group members. The participants have certainly shown that they have trust and confidence in their union and amongst each other.

5.1.4 The power of trade unions in enforcing employees' rights within the organisation

The analysed data discloses that there exists a strong consensus among participants whereby trade unions have an influence on employees' rights within the organisation. It is clear that the trade union provides the opportunity for members to express their opinions, negotiate with management, as well as attain protection against exploitation or victimisation.

Interestingly, an account of ideologies such as unitarism and organisational silence must be mentioned which reflect a direct contrast to the findings obtained in the study.

Morrison & Milliken (2000) presented a paper in which a discussion of organisational silence unfolds, indicating that there exists a wide array of barriers and powerful forces which impact on employees speaking up and holding back on information. In this regard it is disputed that organisational silence is in fact an immense threat and obstacle to organisational change and development, more particularly, toward a more pluralistic organisation. Morrison & Milliken (2000) therefore argue that such pluralism is restrained and denied in organisations where silence and restriction of views and opinions are practiced. Hence the benefits of diversity are thus not attained, leaving the organisation at a loss as pluralism is not capitalised. It is thus clearly manifested in the present research findings that pluralism is practiced and unitarism or organisational silence is minimal when trade unionism is present. The data obtained indicate that trade unionism creates an opportunity for opinions, views as well as the exercising of rights by

employees to be practiced. Participants in the study revealed that they are able to express themselves as well and retain fairness due to the presence of their union.

Supplementing unitarism and organisational silence ideologies, Scientific Management Theory which governs the unitarism ideology asserts that employees attitudes toward work are immature, they have self –centered aspirations and tend to avoid work whenever possible. It is in this regard, that efforts to control the activities of employees are essential, hence rigid management control. This theory additionally states that workers should be treated impersonally and collectively and management has the authority and is superior to all decisions and processes of work (Abott, 2006). Again, a theory which is in conflict to pluralism, and is in opposition to the results obtained in the present study. The present research findings illustrate that trade unionism allows for employees to attain power and therefore partake in all decision making and negotiation, not allowing management to exert complete authority. In this regard victimisation and exploitation of workers rights are controlled and theories such as the above are not exercised.

5.1.5 The degree to which trade unions help to resolve disputes with employers according to the participants.

Dale Kinnear: “Unions provide a means for employees to vent frustrations and resolve contentious issues in the workplace. In so doing, concerns can be addressed by management and this can prevent issues from disrupting the workforce and the workplace. In any workplace, a union can help keep an employer on track and above board. When a mutual fear/respect relationship exists, management and employees keep each other centred”, (as cited in Marks & Flemming, 2008:454)

The participants in the study had provided a parallel response to the above account by Dale Kinnear regarding the resolution of disputes and trade unions. The data obtained clearly demonstrated that trade unions play a significant role in resolving disputes and ironing out issues in the workplace, particularly with employers. It is additionally identified that the presence of a trade union benefits the employees by succeeding in several of the disputes with employers. In this regard it is mentioned by Kinnear that unions provide a platform for employees to obtain

stability and voice their dissatisfaction successfully. Analysis of the present study furthermore signified that legal assistance is importantly provided by the trade unions which allows for the members to correctly and legally attend to issues. This in turn demonstrates a dignified and controlled procedure which results in the benefit of both the company and its employees. In a similar manner Dale Kinnear emphasises that the resolution of issues by trade unions allows for minimal disruption and a balance in the workforce and workplace. Hence the results of the study illustrates specifically that legal and correct procedures provides equilibrium to the employee, employer and workplace itself.

5.1.6 The participants' perception on the impact of trade unions upon South Africa

On the outset, it is only legitimate to discuss the legislation passed by the South African government. Hence, the Labour Relations Act, The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, The Employment Equity Act, The South African Qualifications Authority Act and the Skills Development Act were all introduced to support the employment and skills situation. When analysed, the South African labour law is directly linked to the results obtained in the present research. Accordingly, it is reasonable to mention that trade unions aim to carry out or at least reflect in accordance to the above laws. The analysed data confirms that trade unions have an impact on the country, in a positive way. It is apparent that trade unionism places immense emphasis on training and development within the workforce. In addition participants in the research elaborated on the positive position trade unions have toward unfair labour practices. Hence it is evident that trade unions protect employees on their rights and minimise victimisation extensively. In relation, the core of The Basic Conditions of Employment Act emphasises on fair labour practices, whereas The Employment Equity Act ensures that fair and non discriminatory practices are adhered to at the workplace (<http://www.labour.gov.za>).

Additionally, further analysis revealed that trade unions educate employees in addressing difficulties or issues with employers in accordance to the law. It is in this regard that an association can be made to The Labour Relations Act which aims at governing organisational rights of trade unions, ensuring the facilitation of collective bargaining, promoting and allowing a degree of employee participation in decision making as well as helping reduce and resolve conflict in organisations. (<http://www.labour.gov.za>).

A further analysis of the present research data disclosed that trade unions addressed the economic situation of the country in various ways particularly by helping to reduce work disruptions. Moreover the issue of poverty is a significant aspect on the trade union agenda; hence it was outlined by the participants that dismissals are reduced by the help of the unions thereby creating a reduced amount of unemployment. Correspondingly, research conducted by the World Bank (1995) links directly to the present research findings elaborating that trade unions act as agents for labour, maintaining collective bargaining. Additionally, trade unions assist in monitoring employers' compliance with government regulations, reduce discrimination and increase productivity at the workplace. This is clearly manifested in the present data whereby trade unions are seen as a means to reduce rigid management control, ensuring that employees are treated fairly and victimisation as well as exploitation is diminished. The World Bank further elaborates that some trade unions have contributed significantly to their countries' political, social and economic development (World Bank, 1995). The present research findings is in agreement with the World Bank contentions, hence directly revealing that trade unions indeed have an immense impact on the economic, social and political development of South Africa. The participants in the study believe that trade unions empower employees; wrestle against poverty and victimisation; help influence the political state of affairs in South Africa as well as assist in the economic situation of the country.

5.1.7 The participants' attitude on the power of trade unions in organisations.

Upon analysis of the present study, it is perceptible that trade unions have an unbalanced amount of power within the organisation.

To begin with it is apparent that due to the high membership figure of trade unions, union power seems to be elevated in the opinion of the participants.

When analysed against past research, a relation to Croucher & Brewster's (1998) premise emerges which indicates that trade unions are adopting a variety of positive strategies such as mergers with other unions in order to maintain high membership, consequently trying to achieve a control of power. The unity of employees together with the positive achievements which trade unions attain is depicted in the analysed data. This directly represents high union power

according to the research findings. In relation to the Marxist view, the worker is oppressed for the sake of capital interests and it is for this reason that trade unions are viewed as an unavoidable response to capitalism as they enhance the power of the working class (Nel, 2002). Clearly theories such as the above correlate with the present research, whereby both demonstrate that trade unions do in fact acquire a fair amount of power maintaining high membership figures as well as protecting employees against capitalism and individualism.

On the contrary further insight into the research gave an indication that the power trade unions have within the organisation is average to little in nature.

A vast amount of literature correlate with these findings, specifying that the power and collectivist nature of trade unionism particularly in European countries are in the decline, due to a plethora of factors encompassing the neo-liberal ideal, hence, one of the key questioning components of this research. Consequently, the neo-liberal ideology was based on an initiative to curtail the perceived power of trade unions, allow management to exert its prerogative and protect individual members against union 'tyranny' (Salamon, 2000). The present research demonstrates that a concern around new changes in the workplace such as temporary employment and the constant reinstating of shop stewards affects numerous areas within the trade union which reduces union power as a whole.

Furthermore a study by Hold & Webster (2005) pointed out that casual employment which is a feature of neo-liberal practices in the Durban Docks fragmented union power to a great extent. Again, this creates a direct link to the present research which reveals that constant changes in the workplace such as casual shop stewards reduces the amount of union power in the workplace. In essence, research makes it apparent that in the past the South African trade union movement was characterised by high levels of innovation and effective power. In a democratic South Africa, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) have indeed retained social justice for the poor, unemployed and communities but have generally failed to deliver innovative strategies to maintain organisational power (Hold & Webster, 2005). The findings of the present research is in agreement with the above argument, pointing out that justice and fairness for employees are achieved to a certain extent by trade unions, however further insight into the data revealed that trade union power in the organisation is medium to little as constant alteration in

the workplace creates difficulty in maintaining power. There is no stability among shop stewards and therefore firm strategies and implementation of influence are not maintained.

5.1.8 Managements' perception of trade unions according to the participants

The findings of the study show that management is seen as having a mixed perception toward trade unions. Clearly, there exists an imbalance in managements' attitudes.

In relation to the acceptance and positive attitude of management toward unions', it is apparent that the South African law plays a strong role in steering management toward a healthier recognition of unions. This amalgamates with the pluralist ideal, which denotes that it is imperative for employers to recognise unions as crucial to the labour world, and at the same time unions should value the role of employers within the economic system (Finnermore & Van Der Merwe, 1992). Analysing the data revealed that positive changes have taken place with regards to the attitude a portion of management has on trade unions as compared to the apartheid era.

Accordingly a fair postulation can be made that the post apartheid South African working environment habituates itself within the dimensions of pluralistic ideology.

Furthermore the data revealed that management consults with unions in decision making and negotiates with changes to be made within the workplace. Evidently, yet again a direct relationship is established toward the pluralistic framework which stresses that a fair process and outcome is always achieved by allowing employees the ability to negotiate workplace contracts with management and it is for this reason that pluralists give confidence to collective bargaining and trade unions (Abott, 2006). Perceptions of the participants also revealed that management utilises trade unions as a means to resolving conflict, binding to the pluralist ideal which views conflict as inevitable and healthy for organisations. Hence, conflict creates room for grievances to be brought to the surface from employees and it additionally helps managers to become innovative and attempt to handle such conflicts in a manner that produces the finest results, Abott (2006).

The second facet that the data disclosed encompassed managements' negative attitude toward trade unions. It was pointed out by the participants that a fraction of management were still

accustomed to the apartheid embedded approach to work and employees, in particular the older managers. In this regard it is reasonable to believe that the apartheid era encompassed a way of work that was embedded in the unitarist perspective. This can be attributed to the perspective that unitarism argues that all employees should be loyal and committed to the employing organisation, whereby loyalty or commitment to trade unions is seen as problematic (Geldenhuys & Naidoo, 2007). The data in the present study revealed that management still had the tendency to resist union presence and conflict placing emphasis on management control and power. This follows a similar trend to the unitarist perspective which views conflict and unions as irrational as the owners of both capital and labour are complementary partners to common aims (Swanepoel, 1999). Additionally, Salamon (2000) adds that management's prerogative to manage is regarded as acceptable and justifiable within the unitarist framework which is reflected in the analysed data of the present research.

Moreover, the data emphasised that management has the tendency to view trade unions as a disruption to the working environment, creating unnecessary conflict and not abiding to management power. This creates a link to the unitarist *Scientific Management Theory* which asserts that employees' attitudes toward work are immature; they have self centred aspirations and tend to avoid work whenever possible. It is in this regard, that efforts to control the activities of employees are essential, hence rigid management control. This theory additionally states that workers should be treated impersonally and management has the authority and is superior to all decisions and processes of work (Abott, 2006).

In essence, the present research indicates that management practices both pluralism and unitarism ideologies. With some data revealing that management has come to understand the presence of unions other data showed that management still carries out the ideology of a prerogative nature dismissing union power and existence.

5.1.9 The participants' attitude on the new individual labour practices

Upon analysis of the data it is clear that the new individual labour practices are scrutinised as a negative element by participants whereby it creates divisions, uncertainty and unfairness within the workplace. When an attribution is made to the *Human Relations Theory* (Abott, 2006) which places immense importance on self-fulfilment and reducing internal tensions amongst employees it is evident that the new labour practices are not providing these principles to the employees of the present research.

Furthermore, it is identified from the data that an enormous amount of pressure is placed on the growth and stability of unions due to the influx of the new individual labour practices. This inevitably reflects on the decline of collectivism and rise of individualism. In this regard it is of importance to recognise the neo-liberalist or *laissez-faire* ideology which is the foundation of the decline in collectivist ideals and rise in individualism. The neo-liberal ideology had dominated the industrial world during the nineteenth century, with its ultimate premise tied to capitalism and individualism (Salamon, 2000). The vital principle was that uniting with others for success was not adequate and therefore determining ones own destiny was significant. Hence the containment of trade unionism was at large. The basis of the neo-liberalist ideology which is the new individual labour practices is one of the key issues in the present research. The new individual labour practices are viewed by the participants as rising in the workplace and is of an immense concern. The participants agree that these new working practices decreases a union's collectivist ideal and increases individualism. It is evident in the present research that aspects such as individual appraisal systems and individual ways of work are rejected. Consequently uniting collectively as one is the ideal; therefore the *laissez-faire* ideology of the past is declined.

The working conditions within the structure of individualistic practices are pessimistic and unfair according to the results obtained. Aspects highlighted were the individual appraisal systems and performance based pay and is viewed as unreasonable and incorrect. Supporting past research by Wood & Glaister (2008), state that aspects such as performance related pay remain unpopular among trade union members probably due to the fact that such methods undermines the basis of

enterprise and industry wide collective contracts. Additionally, it has been suggested by Desai (2003) that over the last decade there has indeed been an increase in temporary, casual, contract and part-time work, which has created instability for unions, and unemployment, which is increasing as a whole emphasising that the neo-liberal transition has negatively affected the poor in South Africa. A direct reflection of Desai's (2003) suggestion is apparent in the present research. Hence aspects such as a lack of growth in job creation, a decreased influx of opportunities as well as the instability of employment itself has all led to the negative impact toward the unity and survival of unions. The findings of the present research indicate that the introduction of individualised working practices such as temporary and part-time work are the direct cause of the pessimism facing unions.

The power of unionisation is a major factor that is of great concern due to individualism. Evidently the analysed data revealed that the new labour practices are undesirable and create interruption and disorder to the working world, especially toward unionised employees. The participants clearly do not acknowledge this way of work, and feel antagonism toward it. Interestingly, and in a comparable notion Davies and Peterson (2005) refer to neo-liberalism as a fabrication of the working arena, whereby individuals are consumed by such immense amounts of work, which they are unable to go beyond this point and engage in a collective pattern. Hence, the individualisation of workers combined with the weakening of unions' means that there exists no powerful voice with which resistance can be articulated.

It is apparent that the new individualised labour practices are a great concern for unionised employees presently. The impact of this regime makes participants in the study feel vulnerable and anxious as they indicate their concerns of their unions losing complete control, power and unity. The data in the present research revealed that individual ways of working, together with aspects such as being compensated and paid on an individual basis as well as divisional type of working are problematic and are among the greatest distresses of the participants. Indeed, an aspect that is not ignored by some of the participants who clearly feel that individualisation has entered the labour world and will continue to grow. This is subsequently supported by Desai (2003) who stated in his paper that the transition into democracy in South Africa is victory into the transition of neo-liberalism, adding that the African National Congress [ANC] had begun

cementing their alliance with the advanced capitalist world, hence a form of individualism which has not escaped South Africa. Habib & Padyachee (2000) stated that white business, black bourgeoisie and black professionals have only benefited from the neo-liberal economic policies. In contrast, the data had also provided an indication that individualised working practices are a huge concern, but has not impacted significantly on South Africa yet. This is in distinction to various past research. An example can be provided by Narsiah (2002) who states in his paper that South Africa has not escaped the neo-liberal regime, with The Growth Employment and Redistribution Policy (GEAR) playing a large part of it. Additionally, Williams & Taylor (2000) believe that the post apartheid government in South Africa had altered the route from being broadly socially dramatic to a neo-liberal position it uses today. This transition has created some regret as it is the poor who have suffered the most. GEAR has done very little to decrease the unemployment rate and even less to redistribute the profits of apartheid (Williams & Taylor, 2000).

From research findings it is evident that the individualised labour system composes a range of categories that is reflective of the 1979 Thatchersim stance and its association with *laissez-faire* individual reminiscent of the early nineteenth century. Hence, this regime incorporated a free market enterprise, open markets, deregulation, individualisms and privatisation as well as a Monetarist rather than Keynesian management system. This indeed being a mirror image of the current day individualised working practices which has impacted pessimistically to the unionised environment. The data in the present research evidently reveals that individualised working practices are not a myth, but instead a growing labour practice which in turn has a negative impact on the unionised working world. Aspects such as a decrease in collective working methods, individualised appraisal systems, performance based pay, the rise in contract, part-time and temporary employment as well as a limited opportunity in growth and development in one's job are all apart of the individualised working method. The present findings indicate that this type of working practices affect the functioning of trade unionism as a whole and thereby creates room for a decline in trade unionisation. Hence, the 1979 Thatcherism ideology mirrors the current individual practices together with its negative impact on trade unions found in the present research.

5.1.10 The expectations of trade unions as well as the fundamental reasons for joining a union upon participants.

Upon analysis of the data it is reasonable to state that the participants' expectations of their trade union were ultimately the reasons why they joined their unions.

Protection against any exploitation and discrimination; job security; immense achievements, strategies and service as well as education was on the agenda of the participants in terms of their expectations of their union.

In a similar trend, the participants joined their union to ensure achievements of all goals, protection and implementation of strategies against all unfair practices, job security, as well as having an influence in all decision making.

In light of the above, it is applicable to mention the very definition of trade unions itself. A spectrum of literature seems to denote a definition of trade unions that is reflective of the data analysed in the present study hence the expectations of the trade union from participants.

According to Allen (1996), the main purpose of trade unions is to promote the living standards of their members. Additionally, trade unions are viewed as agents who are expected to try and improve the working lives of their members through negotiations (Kelly, 1998).

Rational choice theorists Cooke, Clarke, Roberts, Semeonoff, 1975; Deery & Cieri, 1991 argue that rational employees join unions based on the perception that union benefits outweigh the cost of union membership. Evidently, a direct link can be asserted toward the data revealed in the present research which provides detailed benefits of joining a trade union. Accordingly, it is articulated that benefits such as goal accomplishments, job security, and protection against violation of rights as well as proper education and assistance in resolving disputes with employers are the fundamental reasoning behind joining a trade union.

In a comparable study of police unions in South Africa, it was indicated that the growth of police unionism meant that police officers are increasingly concerned with their workplace rights and participation. Police union members seemed to have benefited greatly from their trade unions, whereby aspects such as participation and negotiation into decision making and policy making are being achieved (Marks & Flemming, 2008). The present research draws on a similar trend in

the reasoning of being associated with a trade union. Undoubtedly, the analysed data revealed that trade union membership creates healthy prospects, growth, and stability and is a key ingredient for opportunities in decision making and negotiation. This automatically improves on self- fulfilment in ones occupation.

5.1.11 Level of commitment and participation in striking as well as partaking in the unions' daily duties.

Union participation refers to the involvement in collective action (Metochi, 2002) and other union related activities (McShane, 1986) that are closely related to the effective functioning of the union (Sverke & Kuruvilla, 1995).

In correlation to union participation, research has indicated that a possible predictor of union participation is union commitment itself (Fullagar, Gallagher, Clark & Carroll, 2004).

Union commitment is defined by Gordon, Philpot, Burt, Thompson & Spiller, (1980) as the extent to which a member has a strong desire to retain union membership, is willing to put effort in the union and believes in union objectives. Additionally, Gordon et al. (1980) designate a four dimensional model of union commitment which includes:

1. Union loyalty,
2. Responsibility to the union
3. Willingness to work for the union
4. Belief in unionism

The participants' responses demonstrate that they are fairly committed to their union itself as well as the daily duties it demands. Aspects that are highlighted above by Gordon et al. (1980) are replicated in the analysed data of the present research. Hence, a strong sense of loyalty, responsibility and dedication is depicted whereby the participants indicate their personal time and money they invest in maintaining the core functioning of the union. Additionally, aspects such as educating and coordinating workshops in order to promote unionisation are features that are not neglected by the participants. It should also be acknowledged that in some instances other responsibilities hinder the level of commitment and participation of trade union members according to the data.

With regards to partaking in strikes, participants are reasonably dedicated to legal striking as it displays strength and unity. Further analysis of the data additionally revealed that striking can indeed have of negative consequences effecting both the employer and employee and it therefore should be the last resort of any dispute. Comparably, a recent study by Wood & Glaister (2008) indicated that union penetration rates are certainly high in South Africa; however the highly competitive environment of the 2000's may have led to the weakening of union participation and strike action as a whole.

5.1.12 The future of trade unionism and collectivism in South Africa upon participants

The results of the study show that participants attain a sense of balance with both positive and negative attitudes toward the future of trade unionism and collectivism in South Africa.

In relation to a more optimistic stance, the data disclosed that the South African labour law and the combined endeavour of all unions provide a platform for the constructive future of trade unions and collectivism in South Africa. Indeed, the very essence of collectivism reflects the interdependence and uniting of all involved. According to Wood (2000) South African unions have certainly attained gains, with the Labour Relations Act providing stability and optimism. Furthermore, Buhlungu (2008) states that trade unions have gained significantly as well as retained enormous influence over the years which provides a platform for their growth. This is reflected in the present research findings as some of the participants portray that trade unions' have exceptional strength and are at a stage whereby substantial protection is available on the part of the union.

On the other side of the coin, it is apparent that aspects such as the new industrial labour practices, individualism, capitalism as well as the weakening of the unions' power will be the detriment of the decline in trade unionism and collectivism in South Africa.

In relation to the above, Salamon (2000) identifies that during the nineteenth century a neo-liberalist or *laissez-faire* ideology had dominated the industrial world, with its ultimate premise tied to capitalism and individualism. Hence, economic and social matters were perceived as being determined by individuals who were responsible for their own destiny, whereby seeking to

combine with others for success was not adequate. This approach had inevitably constrained the development of trade unions. Likewise, the influx of individualised practices are a great concern according to the data in the present research whereby a threat to the life of collectivism and unionisation seems prominent due to the weakening of the unions' strength in striking protection of rights. Additionally, areas of immense concern are of the growth of capitalism and increased utilisation of working practices such as outsourcing and decentralising of labour. Furthermore Kelly (1997) indicates that aspects such as recession, mass unemployment and union weakness all contribute to the reduction in employees unionising or acting collectively which is echoed in the findings of the present research.

Moreover, the stability in unionism and collectivism is dependent on convincing employees that they have common interests which are antagonistic to the employer and therefore requires a form of collective activity (Kelly, 1996). This is additionally reflected in the present research as aspects indicate that the weakening of unionisation and a collectivist quality will be the detriment of the existence of unions' altogether. It is therefore imperative that unions' and their members rise together and combine their strengths in order to grow and stabilise individualism. It has been viewed that certain aspects of the analysed data revealed that collectivism and unionisation are at a peak in South Africa and will continue to grow steadily.

Although some aspects of the analysed data show that collectivism and unionisation are strong, in essence the decline for the future of trade unionisation and collectivism are noticeable due to the new labour practices. This is concurrent with Buhlungu's (2008) argument which specifies that simultaneous with the growth and influence, trade unions have been experiencing a loss of organisational power due to an array of reasons including new industrial labour practices. Consequently, this will impact on the future of trade unions and their impact on representing the working class. Finally, past research has pointed out that in South Africa declines in trade union density, though less striking than in the United States and Europe are still significant (Theron, 2003)

Chapter 6

6.1 Limitations of the study

Due to time and economic constraints, the non-probability method of convenience sampling was used. The major limitation of utilising this approach includes the fact that the results obtained cannot be generalised to the larger population. Thus the results of the study may not be a representation of all the members of the trade union, or members of all trade unions in general. Additionally, Marshall (1996) states that convenient sampling may result in data that has quality drawbacks and complete intellectual credibility.

This study had investigated a sample of blue collar employees. In this regard a limitation of not examining employees across a white collar sample was created. In addition, due to time and economic constraints the study did not aim to explore the attitudes and perceptions of non-unionised employees, hence not allowing for a spectrum of divisions across the employment sector to be researched.

6.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study create opportunity for an extended research project with regards to the present status of trade unionisation in South Africa. It has been shown that trade unionisation is being fairly nurtured within the confinements of the South African labour environment.

Consequently the study revealed that although the notion of a decline in collectivism together with the impact of the 21st century human resource and industrial relations practice is a credible concern for the future, it is reasonable to affirm that collectivism is strong within the boundaries of the current unionised workforce.

In supplement, individualistic working patterns is in fact perceptible to an extent in the South African working environment but has not dramatically changed the operation of the unionised employee. It is apparent that individualist working patterns are negatively acknowledged by union members.

The unionised employees' perception and attitude toward aspects such as confidence levels, power, and the effectiveness of trade unionism is convincingly high. Areas such as trust and commitment fluctuate between high and low levels. Similarly, trade union members view management as both tolerable and intolerable of unions. Additionally, it is evident that trade unions help settle disputes with employers. It is also clear that union members had joined their unions for significant aspirations and have high expectations of their trade union.

Furthermore, unionised employees are fairly committed to their unions' daily duties and are fully active in partaking in strikes.

To end with, union employees seem to agree that trade unionism has a convincing future in South Africa. With regards to collectivism, a fair portion of the employees believe that collectivism has a bright future in the country whilst others were concerned that collectivism may in fact decline in the future due to aspects such as individualism and new industrial working practices.

Recommendations:

- The validity, reliability, and generalisability of the research findings can be strengthened by using larger samples and longitudinal research designs in future studies (Sinclair & Tetrick, 1995).
- Further research needs to be undertaken utilising employees from higher management all the way through to lower level employees. Hence, the attitudes and opinions of blue collar and white collar workers, unionised and non-unionised employees should be explored. This will allow for an extensive range of additional research.
- With regards to the benefit of the trade union investigated, a large survey can be undertaken in order to explore the attitudes and perceptions of all unionised employees. Shop stewards and union officials will be able to benefit from the results obtained for the future survival of their union.

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