An Exploration of the Experiences of Conflict as Perceived by Industrial   Psychologists in the Workplace: A Qualitative Study

By

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to explore conflict as perceived by Industrial Psychologists in the workplace. The sample of (N=6) consisted of registered Industrial Psychologists. A qualitative research approach was used to explore how Industrial Psychologists in the workplace perceive and experience issues of conflict. A purposive sample was employed. Data was analysed using thematic analysis. The emerging themes were: (1) the Industrial Psychologists' perceptions and reactions to conflict; (2) organisational structure; (3) organisational management style; (4) the nature and condition of job assignment; (5) individual characteristics; (6) mutual understanding and interaction; and (7) the consequences of conflict. The first six themes describe the sources of the conflict as well as strategies to manage them. The findings of this study reveal that issues such as the perception of and reaction to conflict, organisational structure, and organisational management style, the nature and conditions of job assignment, individual characteristics, and mutual understanding and interaction are important factors contributing to the occurrence and management of conflict.

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Chapter 1: Introduction, Background and Outline of the Research Problem

1.1 Introduction:

Conflict is a reality of organisational life. Given the range of activities, stressors and personality types that must come together, it is no surprise that conflict exists. The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of conflict as perceived by Industrial Psychologists in the workplace. The researcher was curious about how Industrial Psychologist view conflicts and wanted their thoughts on how conflict could be dealt with more effectively. Fullagar (1984) is of the opinion that Industrial/Organisational Psychology focuses more on managerial concerns at the expense of the concerns of employees and that this is reflected in both research and practice. To date it seems Industrial Psychologists are concerned with motivating employees to align with organisational objectives so as to ensure the optimal functioning of the profit-driven organisation (Isaacs, Bobat, & Bradbury, 2006). In this exploration we further hope to better understand the role of Industrial Psychologists perceptions of conflict in the organisations and in handling conflict.

Although conflict resolution approaches have been extensively researched throughout the world, no research-based data on the perceptions of conflict and effective resolutions among Industrial Psychologists in the workplace is available.

Conflict and power are central to the field of employment relations, yet the concepts of conflict/power have been largely neglected in Industrial Psychology. Steffy & Grimes (1992) argued that the bulk of research focuses on static issues, not on important dynamic issues such as power, conflict, politics and ideology. As a result, conflict remains vaguely defined and understood in industrial psychology (Fullagar, 1984). The dimensions of South African conflict are many: racial domination, ethnic intolerance, ideological division, class stratification and poverty associated with inequitable wealth distribution, authoritarian rule etc. This suggests that conflict is ubiquitous in our society, and yet industrial psychology research and practice seems to largely ignore it.

This research aims to investigate the perceptions and experiences of Industrial Psychologists with regards to conflict in the workplace. Rose (1990) argued that industrial psychology is itself playing an ideological and political role. He further argued that it does this in two ways: (1) disguising the fact that power is distributed unequally; (2) by influencing the way power is utilized in the organisation. Rose (1990) argued that what is found at the core practice of industrial psychology is the subordination/domination of the individual worker.

1.2 Background and Outline of Research Problem:

Conflict and even conflict resolution practice has largely focused on conflict taking place in public, as if it was set on a theater stage with an audience watching the interactions unfold. In reality, conflict plays out behind the scenes.Conflict is one of many issues found in any organisation where constant human interaction occurs. The potential for conflict to arise in organisational setting is considerably higher due to the complex and frequent interactions among the psychologists and other employees and the dual roles they play. Specialisation and organisational hierarchy often add to the territorial conflicts in organisations. Conflict in the form of competition can contribute to a higher level of performance and a conflict-free work environment is an exception, how conflict is addressed is of paramount importance. The sources of conflict among organisations/employers and industrial psychologists include authority and hierarchy, the ability to work as a team, interpersonal relationship skills, and the expectations of performance in various roles at various levels.

Participants believe that conflict, if not managed properly, can disrupt collaborative efforts; leads to unprofessional behaviours; results in under commitment to the organisation; increases psychological stress and emotional exhaustion; results in mistreatment of staff; elevates anxiety and work resignation; and decreases altruistic behaviours. This is only a short list of negative consequences of poorly managed conflict. Nevertheless, Barling (1983) is of the opinion that conflict, if treated with wisdom and creativity can result in positive performance in the organisation. Finally, conflict influences decision-making as much as collaboration and positive relationships do.

The first step for the effective management of conflict would be the recognition of conflict and its sources from the viewpoints of industrial psychologists and then understanding how to moderate and control them according to those viewpoints. Once conflict and its sources are identified, addressing the conflict would be instrumental in enhancing professional development and reducing the burnout rate among industrial psychologists. However there is no sound statistics about Industrial Psychologists burnout.

The literature review, that follows, points to the paucity (only in Industrial Psychology not in Social and critical theory) of information relevant to this study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Conflict

Anstey (1994) defines conflict as existing in a relationship when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in their values, needs or interests and purposefully employ their power in an effort to defeat; neutralize or eliminate each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction. In other words conflict is due to a real or perceived divergence of interests, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously. This definition suggests that conflict cannot be studied and understood outside of power. Anstey (1994) divides conflict into two stages, namely *latent* conflict and *manifest* conflict. *Latent* conflicts exist when two parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously. In this phase conflict is largely internal and perceived rather than felt. *Manifest* conflict exists when parties purposefully employ their power in an effort to defeat, neutralise or eliminate each other to protect or further their interest in the interaction/relationship. Latent (concealed or dormant) conflict relies on the perspectives or points of view of the parties: it relies on a belief or a perception. Brand, Lotter, Mischke & Steadman (1997) argued that the fact that these beliefs or perceptions may be mistaken is not relevant for the purpose of defining conflict, for as long as there is a divergence of belief or perception, conflict may arise. We cannot talk about conflict at the exclusion of power. In fact, underlying conflict is power struggle. In order to support their belief or perception, a party will resort to some form of power not only to nuetralize the belief or perception of the other party, but to protect or further its own belief or perception. Barling (1983) argued that the degree of industrial conflict present in many societies and organisations should have provided clues of power concerns. Himes (1980) is of the same opinion as he argued that social conflict refers to purposeful struggles between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power resources and other scarce values. In terms of this approach, social conflict is purposeful behaviour involving planning as to how to attain scarce values (i.e. wealth) and overcome resistance. Robbins defines power as the potential or the actual ability to influence the

behaviour of another to a desired direction. Conflict from this perspective is inherent in the labour relationship (Anstey, 1994).

Folger (2009:4) defines conflict as *"the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatibility and the possibility of interference from others as a result of this incompatibility."* This definition suggests that the most important feature of conflict is that it is a type of human interaction. Conflicts are constituted and sustained by the behaviours of parties involved and their reactions to one another. There are many arenas for conflict such as, interpersonal relationship, intergroup setting, and organisation. Conflict in the employment relationship (relationship of exchange) in particular, is regarded as inevitable where both parties have conflicting interests and values. In fact, sociologists, such as Marx, view employee-employer relationship as a relationship of exploitation. Where at the core of such a relationship is power struggle.

2.2 Power

Power is a complex, multidimensional concept (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sulliavan, 1998). "Most traditional organizational behavior textbooks simply do not have chapters on power or, if they do, admit that it has been largely ignored or subsumed within other issues such as leadership" (Thompson & McHugh, 2002:118). At the most simplest level power is defined as the ability of one person to get another to do something they would not otherwise do, despite resistance (Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

French and Raven (1959) identified five bases of social power located in organizational resources that managers could use either singly or jointly depending on the perceptions and responses of the subordinates (French & Bell, 1999; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). The first base of power is reward power (based on the ability of those in power to reward others) where rewards are used to get employees to deliver a target (French & Bell, 1999; Thompson & McHugh, 2002). Secondly, coercive power refers to the capacity to enforce discipline, which could include psychological or material punishment (French & Bell, 1999; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). Thirdly, referent power is similar to charismatic power, where the personal characteristics of a manager are used to influence employees

(French & Bell, 1999; Thompson & McHugh, 2002). Legitimate power is linked to the idea of authority and the acceptance by employees that a manager holds power over them because of his/her position (French & Bell, 1999; Thompson and McHugh, 2002). Lastly, expert power is a form of power that an individual has because of the expertise or skills that he/she possess and can also include the power an individual possess because of the information/facts in his/her possession that others might need (French & Bell, 1999; Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

Thompson and McHugh (2002) argue that, due to the nature of French and Raven's (1959) research, which was conducted through the use of questionnaires, the five bases of power may give more information regarding the cultural expectations, rather than the actual work practices. As the researchers relied on the perceptions of the respondents, they might have been measuring perceived influence or the relationship between influence, tactics and outcomes (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). In addition, French and Raven's five bases of power are regarded as too individualistic to use as a framework of power (Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

Lukes (1974) explored the concept of power further and developed the three-dimensional view of power. In the first dimension power is exercised to influence the outcome of decision-making processes through the use of various resources (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). The one-demensional view of power thus focuses on the observable activities of particular subjects and rests on the behavioural assumption that power can always be observed and measured (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). In the second dimension power is exercised by controlling access to decision-making process (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). The two-dimensional view of power argues that by controlling the agendas and mobilizing bias inherent in access to resources and values, they (those who own resources) keep to safe issues and exclude others that threaten their interests (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). Both the first and second dimensions are based on the assumption that power is only activated or used in the face of conflict or opposition and remains on the terrain of observable power (Hardly & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998; Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

Power is exercised in the third dimension through hegemonic processes in which the use of power is legitimised through cultural and normative assumptions (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). The third dimension recognizes that power can be used not only to defeat conflict, but also to ensure that conflict never arises (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Lukes (1974) points out that "power in the traditional sense of force and domination may be exercised not only by coercion but by inducing people to willingly do something against their self-interest as well…hence individual desires and goals may be manipulated so as to facilitate their acting voluntarily in ways that are not self-defined and quite often contrary to their real interest" (Abel, 2005:504). By accepting that power can prevent conflict, the third dimension recognizes the possibility of maintaining the status quo through societal and class mechanisms (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Power does not necessarily need a subject and is not always observable in the traditional sense (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). "Power might be both the production of effects and the capacity to produce them" (Thompson & McHugh, 2002:123). Although the process cannot always be measured, the outcomes can in the form of the structural inequalities created between groups (Thompson & McHugh, 2002)."Power is ideological, as well as economic and structural. Through the production of everyday beliefs and practices, power is used to produce apparent consensus and acquiescence, replacing visible controls by hidden cultural forms of domination" (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998:456).

Due to the developments in the study of power (notably Michel Foucault) since the work of Lukes (1974) on the three-dimensional view of power, it is now possible to explore the various aspects of power further, beyond the third dimension. From a Foucauldian perspective, power does not come from above or from a central body, rather power is embodied in the micro-practices of everyday life (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). Foucault also maintains that power is not stable but discontinuous, as there is a ceaseless process of shifting tensions and alliances, and that it is not possessed by any individual or group (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). "Power lies outside its possessor, in routines and narratives that confer fluid, temporary capacities to act effectively" (Thompson & McHugh, 2002:458).

This is a post-structuralist idea in which power does not operate through agencies with specific interest, but through discourses (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). "The pre-modern sovereign power was dependant on the personal bonds of obligation between individuals (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). Techniques of disciplinary power were developed and refined in religious institutions, hospitals, asylums and prisons and were concerned with observing, recording and evaluating individuals in a detailed manner" (Thompson & McHugh, 2002:459). In modern institutions power has become increasingly focused on the body as an object (Thompson & McHugh, 2002).

If one looks briefly at Foucault's perspective on the changing forms of work over time, it can be argued that work as a form of control went through a number of permutations, and subtle shifts over time (Townley, 1998). Fordist and bureaucratic forms of control were clear in nature, foremen watched workers, employees clocked in and out, and paperwork was done in triplicate. All of this acted as surveillance, employees were (and are as such organizations do still exist) watched and their performance appraised. For those organizations, this ideally led to employees surveying and disciplining themselves, even if they were not under direct managerial surveillance at the time.

Foucault uses the image of a panopticon, a circular building with an observation tower, to describe the power of surveillance used in the modern organization (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). The central observation tower of the panopticon facilitates a unidirectional disciplinary gaze (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). "In other words the observed can be seen but cannot see, while the observers see everything but cannot be seen. So effective are such practices that individuals begin to discipline themselves to be, in Foucault's words, docile and useful bodies" (Thompson & McHugh, 2002:126). Although modern organizations are not panopticons, electronic and self-surveillance constitutes organizations, and their employees as subjects of power (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). "Organisational processes act to produce corporate obedience…the culture and discourses of the modern corporation have become a crucial means through which human feelings, emotions and thoughts have become increasingly managed and governed" (Thompson & McHugh, 2002). "Employees at these organisations strategize their own subordination; they control their behaviour and feelings, and use self-

surveillance to obtain 'money, security, meaning or identity" (Deetz, 1998:164). According to Foucault, individuals take on the responsibility of transforming themselves in order to achieve a 'happier' or 'better' state of being through technologies of the self (Deetz, 1998).

The knowledge products of Industrial Psychology provide management with capacity to "gaze at, scrutinize, classify and count individual characteristics and behaviours" (Deetz, 1998:85). It is assumed that testing and ranking people hierarchically is an unproblematic and purely technical necessity of business (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Collected data are analysed and stored; ensuring that an individual's legacy, good and bad, is not forgotten (Steffy & Grimes, 1992:192). Industrial Psychology thus facilitates the Foucauldian idea of surveillance within modern organizations. However, today "the effects are greater than the prison exemplar, because the modern corporation goes home with its members and colonizes competing institutions such as the media" (Deetz, 1992:38). Thompson & McHugh (2002:214) argues that "new practical and theoretical knowledge from the repertoire of organizational behavior can function as 'technologies of regulation', used to control and discipline employees". Furthermore, disguises the extent and nature or structure of conflict (Rose, 1990). New production techniques such as Just-In-Time (JIT) and Total Quality Management (TQM) are simply more effective surveillance techniques that serve to enhance managerial control of the labour process (Thompson and McHugh, 2002).

The rise in Information Technology (IT) allows organizations to centralize information and extensive information systems are used to collect data on worker performance and behaviour (Thompson and McHugh, 2002). This is described as the 'electronic panopticon that brings the disciplinary gaze to every aspect of worker activity" (Thompson and McHugh, 2002:128).
The idea of an electronic panopticon has been reinforced by the proliferation of call centres, whose sophisticated surveillance capacities had let to them being labeled "electronic sweatshops" (Fernie & Metcalf, 1997).

Foucault (1980) further expands his concept of power by explaining how power can be used not only to maintain the status quo, but can also be used to change the status quo (Abel, 2005). Knowledge and power do not exist independently of each other, rather "knowledge constantly induces effects of power…it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (Abel, 2005:510). "Knowledge itself opens a field of potential force relationships…those involved in particular force relationships may come to understand how those particular relationships came to be and how they operate by analyzing the processes, concepts, categories and grammars involved in both the construction of a particular knowledge and the discourses about those relationships" (Abel, 2005:510). Foucault (1980) argues that it is possible for science (including Industrial Psychology) to be mobilized to transform and reverse the "prescriptive patterns of power relationships" that it has developed and instilled within organisational life (Abel, 2005:514).

One of the most influential definitions of power has been that given by the Max Weber. Weber defines power as something that some have at the expense of others. Weber is of the opinion that everyone cannot be powerful, if some group of people has power then this means that some other group does not (Weber, 1946). Power is thus a finite resource. He defines power thus: "the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Weber, 1946: 367). According to Weber power also involves people doing things that they would not otherwise do: getting your way "even against the resistance of others". Thus, it is implicit in his definition that power is only exercised when people are forced to do things that they would not otherwise do, Weber argued.

2.3 History of Organisational Psychology

Industrial/Organisational psychology has its roots in the late 19th century movement to study and measure human capabilities and motives (Lawson & Zheng, 1998). Some early psychologists, noting the practical nature of psychological research, sought to apply the findings to business problems. In response to the urging of some advertising executives, one such early psychologist, Walter Dill Scott, *The Theory of Advertising* (1903),

generally considered to be the first book linking psychology and the business world. It was followed by *The Psychology of Advertising* (1908). Another founder of the field was Hugo Munsterberg (1863-1916), a German-born psychologist teaching at Harvard University who in 1913 published *The Psychology of Industrial Efficiency* (Muchnsky, 1999). Muinsterberg's book was heavily influenced by the fascination with human efficiency so well represented in the work of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth and Frederick W. Taylor (1856-1915).

When the United States entered World War I in 1917, applied psychology truly came into its own. Committees of psychologists investigated soldier morale, motivation, and the prevalence of psychological impairment. Moreover, psychologists developed a group-administered intelligence test called the Army Alpha. While 1,726,000 enlisted men and officers were tested, little use was made of the results at the time since the war ended a mere three months after the testing program was authorized. (Lawthon, 1999). However, research studies did show that the test scores were related to soldier performance.

After the war, in 1919, the first university-based centre for studying the applications of psychology to business was established at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. Called the U.S. Bureau of Salesmanship Research, it was funded largely by the life insurance industry for the purpose of conducting research for the selection and development of clerical and executive personnel as well as sales people.

Neoclassical school

In 1924, a change in direction was heralded by the Hawthorne experiments, named after Western Electric Company's Hawthorne plant in Chicago where the studies were conducted. Originally conceived as a test of some aspects of Taylor's principles, the researchers sought the optimal level of illumination necessary for workers to produce telephone equipment. Instead of finding Taylor's assumed "one-best-way," the researchers found that productivity increased after each change in lighting no matter how bright or dim they made it. (Isaacs, Bobat & Bradbury, 2006). Eventually, they concluded that the workers were responding to the attention they were getting as part of the special

research study and this phenomenon came to be known as the *Hawthorne effect.* Up to this point, thinking about work organizations had been dominated by classical (i.e., bureaucratic or machine) theory. Workers were viewed as extensions of the job and the aim was to arrange human activity to achieve maximum efficiency (Isaacs, Bobat & Bradbury, 2006). Moreover, these classical views of organization assumed a top-down management point of view, emphasizing the authority structure of the organization. The object was to get top management's wishes translated into practice on the shop floor. So the task was to design the job according to scientific precepts and then provide an incentive (usually piecework) to get workers to comply with the will of management.

The Hawthorne researchers came to embrace a very different view of the business enterprise. They concluded that friendship patterns among the workers were the guts of the organization, and also that people would work harder for an organization that they believed was interested in their needs. The Hawthorne researchers eschewed economic incentives as the driving force behind work and painted a rich picture of the informal relationships (i.e., those not specified in the organizational chart or job specifications) among workers themselves, in addition to those among workers and the managers, which was the focus of the classical view. People, in other words, came to work not for money, but for the social rewards and satisfactions inherent in human organization.

Management was no longer the controlling force for the Hawthorne researchers (also called neoclassical theorists). Rather, they argued that management can govern only with consent of the workers and that workers actually influence management decisions by controlling the impression that management had of a proper day's work. For example, workers might slow up the pace when the time-motion man (the one with the stopwatch) came into view. The Hawthorne researchers became convinced that job performance could be influenced in ways that could not be achieved with either money or job design. They proposed motivating workers with a set of techniques called human relations, which involved providing considerate supervision and management as a means of persuading the workers to conform to management's expectations by convincing them that the company was indeed concerned about them (Beder, 2000). In other words, the goal was to change employee attitudes rather than job design or pay. In return, productivity and

reliable job performance would presumably increase. Thus, motivation was seen as a function of the satisfaction of social needs for acceptance, status within one's group, and humane supervision (Beder, 2000). They recognized that workers may not be performing effectively, not because they are immoral, but because they perceive that they are being treated indifferently or even shabbily by management. To motivate workers, therefore, one changes those perceptions.

Contemporary I/0 psychologists no longer feel they have to choose between classical bureaucratic theory or scientific management on the one hand and neoclassical human relations on the other. The common view today is that taken together, they provide a comprehensive picture of organizational functioning. Environmental forces such as management directives, human capabilities, the state of technology, and economic considerations are important forces on worker performance and cannot be denied. Likewise, human motivation, perceptions, and job attitudes are influential as well and are ignored at management's peril.

Growth and professionalization

During World War II, psychologists contributed heavily to the military by developing the Army General Classification Test for the assessment and placement of draftees, as well as, specific skills and ability tests, and leadership potential tests. Psychologists also conducted studies of accidents and plane crashes (which led to the field of engineering psychology), morale, and soldier attitudes.

Following World War II, I/O psychology emerged as a specifically recognized specialty area within the broader discipline of psychology. Subspecialties emerged such as personnel psychology, engineering psychology, and organizational psychology (Lawson, Robert and Zheng Shen, 1998). In the late 1950s and into the 1960s, a renewed thrust toward studying organizations with psychological precepts emerged as social psychologists and I/O psychologists gained the conceptual tools needed to model and understand large, task oriented groups including work organizations. From this line of inquiry came the work of I/O psychologists in assessing the effects of organizational

structure and functioning on employees (Lawson, Robert and Zheng Shen, 1998). Related applications appeared under the rubric of *organization development* (e.g., participative management, socio-technical systems, self-managing work groups, team building, survey feedback, and related approaches).

Modern Approaches

Contemporary I/0 psychologists no longer feel they have to choose between classical bureaucratic theory or scientific management and neoclassical human relations. The common view today is that taken together, they provide a comprehensive picture of organizational functioning. Environmental forces such as management directives, human capabilities, the state of technology, and economic considerations are potent forces on worker performance and cannot be denied. Likewise, human motivation, perceptions, and job attitudes are influential and are ignored at management's peril (Lawson, Robert and Zheng Shen, 1998).

Organizations seek regularity and so attempt to reduce human behavior to predictable patterns. Humans, on the other hand, do not take well to having their behavior reduced to the acts required by a job, preferring to add spontaneity and expression to the equation. This conflict will never be eliminated, only alleviated. It requires constant, on-going effort and vigilance to contain the unnatural arrangement we call social organization (Lawson, Robert and Zheng Shen, 1998).

The most recent major thrust in I/O psychology began in the 1970s following court decisions interpreting the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The courts placed a heavy burden on employers to defend the validity (i.e., job relevance) of their recruiting, selection, and promotional procedures. Many employers concluded that complying with this and subsequent anti-discrimination legislation required the skills of industrial psychologists as their best defense against lawsuits brought by employees who claimed they were victims of illegal employment discrimination. Evidence of the validity of selection criteria as provided by industrial psychologists is often essential in defending against

charges of civil rights violations brought by government or employees against employers (Lawson, Robert and Zheng Shen, 1998).

2.4 Psychology, Knowledge and Power

According to Hook, Mkhize, Kiguwa and Collins (2004:13), an investigation into the relationship between power and psychology will reveal that "psychology itself is powerful….psychology plays a part in maintaining and extending existing relations of power". They further posit that psychology is a political tool and an instrument of power (Hook et al, 2004). When psychology is referred to as a political tool, it is not used in the sense of government politics but rather refers to politics in terms of relationship of power. In other words, these refer to relationship of authority, control and subordination (Hook et al, 2004).

The knowledge that psychologists produce and their subsequent practices also constitute power relationships (Hook et al, 2004). Hook et al (2004:14) argues that "psychology is not a neutral science, not an unbiased, simply objective way of knowing the world…on the contrary, power 'runs in the veins' of psychology; there is no form of psychological knowledge or practice that does not set up or support a certain relationship of power". Furthermore, Psychology has always attempted to play down its political nature and the discipline's avoidance of the questions of power and politics points to the ideological functioning of power (Hook et al, 2004). This is reflected in the Industrial Psychology's ongoing avoidance of an in-depth conversation about conflict with the labour relationship.

According to Foucault (1978, cited in Kinsella, 1999:172), "power and knowledge are intimately related and operate through discourse". Knowledge is produced by scientific work which is based on the production of consensus amongst scientists (Kinsella, 1999). Traditional views of science emphasise the autonomy of scientists and this remains a common ideology even when various institutional constraints intensify on scientists and researchers (Kinsella, 1999). These constraints are ideological themselves and demonstrate the close relationship between scientific knowledge and organizational

power (Kinsella, 1999). Kinsella (1999:174) further argues that science can be viewed as "fundamentally a set of communicative practices. Scientific questions and problems are formulated within particular discourse communities, findings are established through persuasive appeals to the members of these communities, and scientific knowledge is deployed within and beyond these communities to produce what Foucault (1972) would call the discursive formations that we know as science".

Embedded within the social organization is social power and consequently the exercising of discipline (Kinsella, 1999). This discipline is not, however, imposed coercively or overtly, but it is rather a more subtle product of the organizational discourse and culture (Kinsella, 1999). Deetz (1992:40) argues "rarely is explicit power displayed by management". The key to achieving this level of implicit control lies within the ideology of modern humanism (Knights and Willmott, 1989). It misleadingly envisages the individual as separate from society and this individualization increases the individual's dependence on the systems of knowledge and power operating within organizations in order to attain a stable identity (Feldman, 1999). "Furthermore, because the self-society dichotomy is taken for granted, the individual is unaware of the role ideology plays in his or her institutionalized dependency" (Feldman, 1999:231).

From a Foucault inspired view, "power and knowledge are seen as coterminous. One begets the other" (Feldman, 1999). Feldman (1999) adopts Foucault's perspective on knowledge and power and maintains that knowledge is socially produced, in a ritualistic manner, through consensus. This knowledge then becomes an instrument of power (Feldman, 1999). Before something can be controlled it must first be known and then it can be manipulated and changed (Feldman, 1999). Knowledge is therefore not as objective as it claims to be as it is the product of various practices of power (Feldman, 1999). Alvesson and Deetz (1996:205) argue that the power/knowledge "discourses structure the world, they at the same time structure the person's subjectivity, providing him/her with a particular social identity and way of being in the world".

Embedded within postmodern power/knowledge systems is the philosophy of individualism (Feldman, 1999). According to Feldman (1999), this is clearly evident in organization theory where concepts such as leadership, motivation and competition are key focus areas. All of these concepts assume that individuals are ahistorical, acultural and autonomous (Feldman, 1999). By focusing on issues concerned with the autonomous self, organization theory deemphasizes aspects surrounding relationships in organizations such as class, power and conflict and results in the limiting of the self within the workplace (Steffy and Grimes, 1992).

2.5 Organisational Control

The task of harnessing human efforts for the attainment of organizational objectives has always been of paramount importance. In their endeavor to gain control over the behavior of people, most organizations use a combination of mechanisms, including personal supervision, standard operating procedures, position descriptions, performance measurement and reward ststems (Flamholtz & Das, 1985). Taken together, these mechanisms constitute the organizational control system. Jermier (1998) is of the same opinion that control is integral to the manner in which organisations operate. Contemporary society is uncomfortable with the exercise of blatant hierarchical control as it questions basic taken-for-granted values, the processes through which these values are instilled, and makes us aware of the fact that people are not as free as we want to believe (Jermier, 1998). "Consequently, contemporary mechanisms of control are often unobtrusive" (Jermier, 1998: 235). According to Jermier (1998: 235), recent organizational, managerial and technological advances have been lauded for creating a revolutionary paradigm shift, but this is deceiving as "they disguise control in the rhetoric of emancipation and, therefore, seem more humanistic…their substance lies in the unstated promise of providing more thorough control for elites". Rose (1985), cited in Lawthom (1999), points out that power is enacted in subtle and contradictory ways under Psychology's guise of expertise, authority and specialization. Psychology has the power to "explain" away or disguise the effects of control of conflict.

From the late nineteenth century, managerial practices have relied on coercive control and shifted to technological control and, later, more bureaucratic forms of control in the mid-twentieth century (Jermier, 1998). A shift occurred from "authoritarianism, hierarchical control and punishment as discipline, to psychological manipulation, incentives and internal self-discipline" (Abel, 2005:504). These shifts in the use of control were accompanied by shifts in the nature of work and labour relations (Jermier, 1998). Naturally, Industrial Psychologists went along with these changes, supporting the regimes of control through their research and practices and establishing various movements in support, such as the Human Relations Approach in the 1930s and the Human Resources movement in the 1960s. It has also been suggested that "contemporary organizations are making more use of post-bureaucratic systems of control, which rely heavily on advanced technology and on the inculcation of emotions, values, and worldviews congruent with the interests of the more powerful constituents" (Jermier, 1998:246). Jermier (1998) argues that organizations use these modern forms of control but, at the same time, they rely on more conventional forms of control such as coercion. As an example, Jermier (1998) refers to Buroway's (1985, cited in Jermier, 1998) concept of "hegemonic despotism" which refers to new systems of control based on warnings of outsourcing, plant closure and other forms of capital losses. Another new technique of control is that of shared decision-making, "shared forms of decision-making…are calculated to instill self-discipline in the employee as a more subtle, an omnipresent form of control that hierarchical, authoritarian direction and supervision might not accomplish" (Abel, 2005:504). This is a way of disguising power inequalities and different interests.

"While ideologically, organizational psychology presents itself as a neutral domain of technical expertise to be applied to organizations, for the good of all, interventions also bring control" (Lawthom, 1999:68). According to Baritz (1960), social scientists (including Industrial Psychologists) have served (and possibly still do serve) the powerful well by providing them with explicit and detailed techniques to facilitate these forms of managerial control. Baritz (1960) further argues that these techniques satisfied the elite at

the expense of the disadvantaged and the broader society, in other words, the controlled or dominated…..

2.6 Management and Industrial Psychology

Historically, a symbiotic relationship between management and Industrial Psychologists emerged, in which management funded the discipline's research and practitioners, in turn, focused their attention on those aspects of organizational functioning specified by management (Beder, 2000; Fullugar, 1984). Industrial psychologists, as a result of their association with management, avoided employee issues that would show management or managerial goals in a negative light, and even if Industrial Psychologists did address the political and ethical implications that their work had on industrial relations, they would ultimately do so from a managerial perspective (Baritz, 1960). According to Fullagar (1984:95), the research of Industrial Psychologists has "focused mainly on workers rather than being done for or with them". It could therefore be argued that Industrial Psychologists are seen to focus on managerial concerns as opposed to the concerns of employees.

Fullagar (1984:97), states "from its beginning, Industrial Psychology was under some form of obligation to management to promote the industrial efficiency of the individual worker….because of Industrial Psychology's need for managerial sponsorship to carry out the research necessary to build its theories". The picture presented by Industrial Psychologists was, therefore, not an objective or even accurate one, but rather a representation of the organization from a managerial perspective. Rose (1990:58) argues that "by concentrating upon theories and techniques that would sell it to managers, the psychological expertise of production has inevitably adopted a managerial perspective". In doing so, Fullagar (1984) claims that Industrial Psychologists moved away from a social science perspective and placed the discipline within the realm of management science. Essentially, the inclusion of Industrial Psychologists in the work environment by management was not done in an attempt to better industrial relations for the good of all organisational members, it was a mechanism by which managers hoped to achieve the maximum output from employees. "From the outset, industrial psychology was under an

obligation to management to promote the industrial efficiency of the individual worker" (Fullagar, 1983:4). Baritz (1960) notes that the primary interest of management is to increase productivity and profit and, to achieve this goal, they hire Industrial Psychologists. Industrial psychology, therefore, from its inception, colluded with management in finding subtle ways to manipulate workers (Isaacs et al, 2006).

2.7 Critical View of Industrial Psychology and Its Epistemology

IP commonly deals with topics such as psychometrics, job analysis, selection, training, and utility analysis. With these topics has come a focus on the very precise measurement and prediction of individual-level behavior, personality, and affects (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). In order to allow for the very precise measurement of these constructs, scholars within IP have made a number of methodological gains. With these gains, IP has often paid little attention to the assumptions underlying these developments (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Islam & Zyphur (2006) outlined two aspects of the field of IP that may have led to this state of affairs.

(1) Application ….. *but for whom?*

The major sources for publication in IP are journals with a highly applied focus, such as the Journal of Applied Psychology or Personnel Psychology. In these publications, it is often made clear that it is not just the application of IP which is of paramount importance; it is also the application of IP toward increased organizational performance and greater profit for organisations. Islam and Zyphur (2006) are of the opinion that this is not always the case. For example, some literature, such as that on safety training, has worked to benefit many individuals in and around various organizations. Often inherent in the discourse of these journals is the perspective of management and those who hold positions of power in organizations.

With such a strong focus on profit and management, it is likely the case that Industrial Psychologists have simply overlooked the question of whether or not this focus is (ethically and otherwise) the best idea (what may have further added to this is the fact that much of IP's history has links to the military during WWII, which was, almost

unquestionably, a worthy impetus for IP scholarship). Instead, IP scholars have worked diligently to develop better testing procedures, more accurate estimates of the utility of these procedures, and worked toward organizational profit and performance maximization. We propose that, at least in part, this "management myopia" (Brief & Bazerman, 2003:187) occurs as a function of the unquestioned epistemology associated with IP.

Islam & Zyphur (2006) argues that this myopia is not due to a willing denial of IP scholars to ignore or downplay the importance of workers or wokers rights in organisational settings. On the contrary, many central ideas in IP were based on pro-worker movements that attempted to revive the "humanistic" side of management (e.g. Porter, 1961). For example, the extensive literature on job satisfaction (e.g. judge et al., 2001), intrinsic motivation (e.g. Deci, 1999), and various facets of interpersonal relationships within organisations offers a great deal of potential to improve the lives of people in the workplace. Islam & Zyphur (2006) argues that the managerial biases inherent in IP studies arise not so much from the topics they study, but from the subject positions (Davies & Harre, 1990) they take in studying these topics. That is, whenever a topic studied, an important question to ask is "for whom is this concern important" and "who is being positioned as an actor and observer, and who is being observed as an outsider" (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). The "management myopia" described by Brief and Bazerman (2003) points out the fact that much organizational research assumes the position of management, informing decisions of management and worrying about management concerns.

In order to exemplify this, the study of job satisfaction provides an excellent example. While literally thousands of studies have examined job satisfaction, the main theme of the majority of studies has been to establish a link between satisfaction and job performance. The idea that job satisfaction should be promoted for its own merits, independent of its effect on performance, while not altogether absent, is a rare idea in the IP literature. According to Fullagar (1984) these studies serve as subtle ways to manipulate workers.

(2) Objectivity study ... *how objective is objective?*

Many of the topics associated with IP are inherently vague (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). For example, IP is often concerned with ability, personality, performance, and productivity (Fullagar, 1984). In response to the difficulty associated with measuring these concepts, IP has developed quite a strong methodological focus. In their methodological focus, IP researchers are very concerned with the "objective" measurement of their constructs, leading to related statistical and theoretical developments concerning the nature of their study. (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). However, and interestingly, instead of the degree of uncertainty associated with many of the constructs measured within IP being a motivator of a critical perspective, it appears to have been a motivator for a stronger focus on the need for better methods, causing the field to become somewhat entrenched in a strictly realist epistemology.

 In essence, this epistemology is based on classic positivist, behaviouristic notions that there is an external, objective reality that may be accurately measured if a researcher uses the correct measuring instrument (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). For the measurement of their variables, IP researchers often invoke the notion of "talent" variables in order to describe the content of their study. These variables are assumed to be real, but not directly measured and, because of this somewhat difficult epistemological standpoint, Industrial Psychologists have opted for a strong methodological focus.

Associated with this methodological focus, IP researchers often quantify their variables of interest. Through this quantification, researchers are often put in the position of performing statistical analyses and have come to rely (almost totally) on quantification to support their hypotheses. Through this quantification, researchers may be tempted to equate numbers with objectivity, forgetting that the quantities with which they are dealing rely on an epistemological foundation which often goes unmentioned. In order to bring this epistemological position more into the limelight we need to explore Critical Industrial Psychology (CIP) (Islam & Zyphur, 2006).

We argue that this epistemology choice reflects political dynamics that are often left unquestioned in the IP literature (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Drawing on Foucault's (1977) **Discipline and punish** may give us a tool with which we can better understand the particular ways in which positivism allows the perpetuation of managerial power relations through human resource practices (Islam & Zyphur, 2006) .

In Discipline and punish, Foucault argues that measurement and evaluation provide powerful mechanisms of control over populations because they reduce the potentially infinite complexity of social behavior into discrete units that can be administered. By treating these units as fixed ontological entities, rather than moral agents with self-transformative potential, administrators may reduce normative prohibitions against the treatment of human beings as means to an end, and thereby transform dynamic and complex human relations into discrete and measurable human "resources" (Deetz, 1992)

This process of objectification of workers is usually framed within the IP field as arising from the necessity to validate conceptual scheme through empirical indicators (e.g. Binning and Barrett, 1989). However, from a Foucaultian standpoint, we can see objectification in light of modern control techniques.

Some writers such as Nzimande (1985), and Fullagar (1984) may question the perspectives of industrial psychology practitioners in South Africa in particular. Nzimande (1985) argued that issues of conflict have been largely ignored by industrial psychology practitioners. This could be due to their scientific orientation. There is also evidence in industrial psychology texts used at universities in South Africa. There is little reference made on issues of conflict in such texts. Fullagar (1984) argued that even when research is done about labour, research is done on, not with employees. This epistemology results in neglecting issues of concern for labour, such as conflict and power. Rose (1990) argued that the very word: work entails the exercise of power upon the body of the worker: coercion, exploitation, discipline, control. For this reason Rose concluded that "at the heart of work under capitalism the fundamental conflict remains" (1990:93). At one pole stand the labourers and those allied with them in the trade union

and labour movement, with nothing to sell but their labour power. At the opposite pole stand the bosses and their functionaries and apologists in management, personnel, and occupational psychology. Their interests are tied to increasing profit through raising productivity, keeping work rates high and wages low, weakening the collective power of workers through unions, and reducing their capacity to disrupt work, while at the same time casting a cloak of legitimacy over the fundamentally exploitative nature of the employment relation.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Unitarist Perspective

The unitarist perspective assumes the organisation is, or should be, an integrated group of people with a single authority/loyalty structure and a set of common values, interests and objectives shared by all members of organisation (this is a view often endorsed by industrial psychology). In other words, employers and employees are united by common objectives and values, (management and employees attitudes and interests overlap). Management's prerogative (i.e. its right to manage and make decisions) is regarded as legitimate, rational and accepted and any opposition to it (whether formal or informal, internal or external) is seen as irrational. Therefore, relationship is characterised by obedience, loyalty, and trust that are expected from the employees with little or no challenge to management's authority. Conflict is regarded as irrational and unnecessary (Salamon, 1998). Salamon (2000) argued that according to the unitarist perspective the organisational system is in basic harmony.However, Fox (1976) argued that this perspective represents a management ideology. Industrial psychology practitioners who operate from this view are more likely to place little emphases on conflict and regard conflict as unnecessary in the labour-management relationship. They are also less likely to invest time on studying issues of power and conflict as they are perceived as unnecessary.

3.2 Pluralist Perspective

This perspective argues that the organisation is multi-structured and competitive in terms of groupings, leadership, authority and loyalty, and this, Fox (1976) argues, gives rise to 'a complex of tensions and competing claims which have to be "managed" in the interest of maintaining a viable collaborative structure. The organisation is, therefore, in a permanent state of dynamic tension resulting from the inherent conflict of interests between the various sectional groups and requires to be managed through a variety of roles, institutions and processes. Conflict, is 'the total range of behaviour and attitudes that express opposition and divergent orientation', and is perceived as both rational and inevitable (Anstey, 1994). Industrial psychology practitioners who perceive conflict from

this standpoint are most likely to see themselves as a playing a role of mediators (helping disputing parties, i.e. labour and management, to resolve their disputes). Such practitioners, unlike followers of the unitarist perspective, do not totally ignore issues of conflict but are more likely to look at issues that give rise to conflict and suggest ways to manage them. However, very often industrial psychology practitioners who operate from this perspective are most likely to study conflict from the point of its resolution rather than its generation

3.3 Equity Theory

Scholars such as Homans (1985), Blau (1964), and Walster, and Berscheid (1978) cited in Isenhart and Spangle (2000) view conflict from the perspective of distributive justice. Employment, in its fundamental capitalist form, implies a purely contractual relationship between two isolated economic actors. The worker enters into an agreement to alienate a certain quantum of labour power in exchange for a wage; the capitalist agrees to part with a certain quantum of money in exchange for the right to deploy a crucial factor of production within the labour process. Employees seek to maintain equity between the inputs that they bring to a job and the outcomes that they receive from it against the perceived inputs and outcomes of others. In other words, perceived inequity is the source of conflict. It would be very interesting to measure equity and how Industrial Psychologists try to achieve an equitable relationship; and how they react if they are not happy in a relationship, as this theory argues that people are happiest in relationships where the give and take is about equal. Equity is attained if the ratio of one's rewards to one's costs is equal (Adams, 1965).

3.4 Transformational Theory

From the transformational perspective, conflict is the tension between what is and what people believe ought to be. The gap or discrepancy between what is and what people believe ought to be might be real or perceived (both, real and perceived results in conflict).

The perspective of this theory, however, is that, conflict forces parties to deal with deeper issues and thus serves as a constructive social process. For example, tension between labour unions and management frequently facilitate higher wages or better working conditions for workers. In addition, political debate between Republicans and Democrats may generate new policies or values that influence policy choice. This perspective views conflict as a vital social function where tensions are released and new communal norms are established or refined. Weber (1946) is also of the same opinion that class (group) conflict is the source of societal change-without such conflict the society would stagnate. It would be interesting to find out about industrial psychology practitioners experiences of what conflict is likely to result in, in their workplace. From this perspective (transformational theory) conflict is likely to result in change. Without conflict society would stagnate. Industrial psychology practitioners may have different perspectives and experiences about conflict in the workplace, as some may argue that conflict in general does little good than harm.

This research aims to go beyond exploring industrial psychology practitioners' perspectives on conflict (which might be influenced and informed by our former leaders) to explore their experiences as well. It would be fascinating if their experiences are in line with one or more of the perspectives mentioned above (Rose 1990).

Research suggests that prior managers and industrial psychology practitioners were more in line with the unitary perspective on conflict. The unitary perspective assumes the organisation is, or should be, an integrated group of people with a single authority/loyalty structure and a set of common values, interests and objectives shared by all members of organisation.

3.5 Marxist or Radical Perspective

The Marxist conflict theory begins with the notion that there are two classes of people within society – the wealthy and the poor (Weber,1946).

Additionally, Marxist conflict theory looks at what happens when one group attempts to rebel against the other group and the various roles a group of people have (or one person has) over another group of people (Weber, 1946).

For Marx, conflict theory was a way to study the social control that the rich have over the masses. Further, he believed that one society or organisation only functions in order to try and better their social situation, which usually results in some type of social upheaval (Salamon, 1998).

Social change that occurs as a result of a revolt effectively alters society as a whole.

The radical approach to the labour relationship is based on the Marxist view of society (Fox, 1974). From this perspective, conflict is not only caused by the employment relationship but is also an expression of the economic and social disparity between the owners of capital and the suppliers of labour within a capitalist society. Labour conflict is therefore synonymous with political and social conflict (Salamon, 1998). Because of the imbalance in social power in a capitalist society, there can be no parity of power between employer and employee. Collective bargaining provides only a limited and temporary accommodation of the inherent and fundamental divisions within capitalistic organisations. The process and institutions of joint regulation are therefore seen as supporting and promoting the position of management instead of challenging it (Zickar, 2004). The legal contractual relationship between employer and employee is accordingly also perceived as asymmetrical. The law is seen to support the interests of management instead of being an independent referee between the opposing parties. Consequently, it is argued that labour relations (as studied by industrial psychologists) is concerned only with marginal issues such as the relative distribution of pay, rather than with more fundamental issues such as the distribution of wealth and control within society as a whole (Salamon, 1998).

In light of the Marxist perspective, labour relations are regarded as political activities for the achievement of fundamental changes in the nature of the economic and social systems, and the function of trade unions is not merely to enhance their collective

industrial power, but also to express and protect the interest of the working classes (Salamon, 1998). They are thus part of a class struggle whose ultimate aim is the abolition of the power base of the bourgeoisie and victory for the working classes. The legacy of apartheid, together with the huge disparity in the power between capital and labour, provided fertile ground for Marxist analysis and the promotion of a socialist alternative in South Africa (Anstey, 1994).

According to this approach, the relationship in the workplace becomes a capitalistic practice when the capacity to work becomes a commodity. This implies that the labour relationship becomes one of exploitation to accumulate capital from the surplus value of work activities. This requires the development of the production process and the cheapening of production costs. In order to develop the production process, structures of control have to be established that include systematic attempts to obtain co-operation and consent (Salamon, 1998). Often industrial psychology is involved in this. This approach therefore emphasizes that policies, processes, and procedures used in the management of people are instruments of management control.

Some critics argue that the 'post-capitalist' notion of society which underlies the pluralistic perspective is wrong. The Marxist perspective concentrates on the nature of the capitalist society surrounding the organisation where, Hyman, 1994 (as cited in Salamon, 2000) argues, "the production system is privately owned; profit is the key influence on company policy; and control over production is enforced downwards by the owners' managerial agents" (P 33)

The Marxist general theory of society argues the following as cited in Anstey (1994):
- Class (group) conflict is the source of societal change-without such conflict the society would stagnate.
- Class conflict arises primarily from the disparity in the distribution of, and access to, economic power within the society-the principal disparity being between those who own capital and those who supply their labour.

- The nature of the society's social and political institutions is derived from this economic disparity and reinforces the position of the dominant establishment group, for example through differential access to education, the media, employment in government and other establishment bodies, etc.
- Social and political conflict in whatever form is merely an expression of the underlying economic conflict within the society.

Conflict is seen as a reflection of not just organisational demands and tensions but also, and perhaps more importantly, the economic and social divisions within society between those who own or manage the means of production and those who have only their labour to sell. Therefore, it is continuous, unavoidable and synonymous with political and social conflict. The pluralistic perspective is criticised for maintaining an illusion of a balance of power between labour and management which hides the reality of imbalance in social power resulting from two factors:

- Employers do not need to exercise their full industrial power by closing plants and withdrawing their capital; the implicit threat that they have such power is sufficient to balance any direct collective power exercised by employees and trade unions.
- The social and political institutions within the society support the intrinsic position of management; employees, through the influence of education and mass media, become socialised into accepting the existing system and role of management.

Salamon (2000) argued that the Marxist perspective sees the processes and institutions of joint regulations as an enhancement rather than reduction in management's position; at best, they provide only a limited and temporary accommodation of the inherent and fundamental divisions within capitalist-based work and social structures. Thus, trade unions and collective bargaining become an established, accepted and supportive part of the capitalist system rather than a real challenge to it.

Marxist conflict theory is quite a complex topic once you begin to dissect it. In fact, Marx's conflict theory is a sort of ongoing conversation amidst various theorists. As you can see, Marxian conflict theory can be applied to a number of social disputes as it relates to how one group controls the rest, the struggle within the oppressed group, and the way that the controlling group maintains power (Salamon, 2000).

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Research Questions

(1) To what extent do Industrial Psychologists experience conflict in the workplace?

(2) What the major causes of conflict in the workplace as perceived and experienced by Industrial Psychologists in the workplace?

(3) To what extent do Industrial Psychologists confront and address issues of conflict in the workplace when they experience them?

(4) To what extent does Industrial Psychologist's role in the workplace reflect a focus on managerial concerns as opposed to employee's concerns?

4.2 Broader Issues to be investigated

The research study will also aim to investigate the broader theoretical (power, knowledge and political) factors that play a role in shaping and informing the Industrial Psychologist's perception and experience of conflict in organisations.

4.3 Research Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate the extent to which Industrial Psychologists experience conflict in the workplace. A further aim of the study is to explore to what extent do Industrial Psychologists confront and address issues of conflict in the workplace.

Previous research suggests that the area of conflict in the workplace has been neglected. Fullagar (1984) argued that traditionally, industrial psychology has tended to neglect the area of organised labour and trade unions. This is especially so in South Africa where little reference is made to the issues of labour in industrial psychological texts used at universities and where very often industrial psychologists in the workplace solve management defined problems. Their scope of practice is defined by management. Hence a need to conduct studies on this area remains. Even when industrial psychology students pursue research they rarely focus on labour issues.

4.4 Research Method and Data Analysis

(a) Research Design

A research design is necessary to execute any research study. The research design is, the framework of how the researcher intends to carry out the research study. It serves as the connection between the research question and the implementation of the research. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), the purpose of the research study as well as the paradigm of the research study, the methodology, and the context in which the study took place should be cohesive.

The purpose of the present research study was to explore and describe the perceptions and experiences of Industrial Psychologist in the workplace. The type of research question, therefore, required that this study followed an interpretive paradigm within a qualitative research methodology framework, since the reality to be studied consisted of participants' subjective experiences of the external world (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), paradigms act as perspectives that provide a rationale for the research, and commit the researcher to particular methods of data collection, observation, and interpretation. Moreover, paradigms represent the epistemological, the ontological, and the methodological premises of the researcher (Neuman, 2000).

Ontology refers to the question, 'what is the nature of reality?' A fundamental assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that subjective experience constitutes reality. The present research study explored the subjective experiences and perceptions of Industrial Psychologist with regards to conflict in the workplace. The aim was to discover the many perspectives of the participants from the point of view of their unique experiences.

Epistemology specifies the nature of knowledge. Epistemology within an interpretive paradigm refers to a concern in exploring and understanding the social world using both the participants' and the researcher's understandings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003); it warrants a consideration of the role of the researcher within the research process. Knowledge is thus multiple, subjective constructions of meaning. In interpretive research, the assumption is that it is the researcher who is the primary instrument for the collection and analysis of data (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Maree, 2007; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006).

Methodology specifies how the researcher may go about practically constructing and co-constructing knowledge and insight (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The researcher that works from the interpretive paradigm prefers to use personal and interactive means and methods to gather data (Mertens, 1998). In the present research study the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews was used to capture the many meanings of participants.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) report that the interpretive research paradigm assumes that people's subjective experiences are real, that we can understand others' experiences by interacting with them, and that qualitative techniques are best suited for this goal. The present research study, therefore, assumed an interpretive paradigm since the reality to be studied consisted of participant's subjective experiences and perceptions of conflict in the workplace. As such, the researcher was involved in an active meaning-making process with the participants and used the qualitative method of data collection known as the semi-structured interview.

(b) Research Methodology

The methods used by qualitative researchers represent a common belief that they can provide a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon under investigation (Silverman, 2000). A qualitative research methodology was chosen for the current research study so as to allow the researcher to interact directly with participants. Through the use of interviews the researcher in this study was able to enter the world of Industrial

Psychologist in order to understand their perceptions and experiences of the conflict in the workplace. As such, the researcher was able to attain an insider perspective of the meanings and experiences of the participants.

The unique qualities of qualitative research, which were appropriately applied in the current research study, include: a concern with meaning that people construct from their world and their experiences (Merriam, 2002). During qualitative research, as noted above, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Maree, 2007; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). Additionally, qualitative research involves fieldwork, which means that the researcher must go to the setting or institution to observe behaviour, experiences, and perspectives in their natural settings. Qualitative research findings are typically in the form of themes and categories; it focuses on process, meaning, and understanding; and the product of qualitative research, according to Merriam (1998), is richly descriptive. Overall, qualitative research provides the researcher with rich, descriptive data regarding the topic at hand. Furthermore, Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2005), explain that the interpretive researcher constructs meaning from the data by seeing the bigger picture and by translating the raw empirical data into what is known as thick description. The purpose of the present research study was descriptive and interpretive in nature. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and analysed in order to generate themes and categories rich in meaning.

(c) Semi-structured Interviews

In the context of the current research study it was important to provide a framework within which respondents could express their own understandings, perspectives, and experiences in their own terms. Interviews allow for such expression to occur as they provide the researcher with the opportunity to hear participants express their views and opinions in their own words (Kvale, 1996). According to Kvale (1996) the purpose of the qualitative research interview has been depicted as the description and interpretation of themes in the subjects' lived world. The subject of the qualitative research interview, thus, is the life-world of the interviewee and his or her relation to it (Kvale, 1983).

Overall, Kvale (1983) reports that the qualitative research interview seeks to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the life-world of the interviewee; aims to obtain as many nuanced descriptions from the different qualitative aspects of the interviewee's life-world as possible. Furthermore, the interviewee describes as precisely as possible what he or she experiences and feels, and how he or she acts (Kvale, 1983). The semi-structured interview was chosen for the current research study and was conducted by making use of an interview guide that was developed before the scheduled interviews. The semi-structured interview guide provided a framework to make sure all relevant topics regarding the research study's focus were covered during the interview session (Patton, 2002), but also allowed for greater flexibility in exploring certain topic areas in more depth as they arose. The topics were based on Industrial Psychology as a discipline as well as on the dynamics of the world of work. The interview guide approach was used to cover particular topics and issues that were specified in advance, and the sequence and wording of questions were decided upon during the course of the interviews. The outline of the interview guide, according to Patton (2002), increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes the data systematic for each participant. Moreover, logical gaps can be anticipated and can then be covered. However, Patton (2002) does point out that some weaknesses of the interview guide approach include the fact that important and significant topics may be missed, as well as the flexibility of the interviewer in the sequencing of questions can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of responses.

All six semi-structured interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants, and were later transcribed verbatim in order to capture the verbal data for use during later data analysis.

(d) Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the systematic search for meaning; it is the process that involves making sense of data (Merriam, 1998). Data analysis involves the process of transforming data to answer the initial research question (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Within a qualitative framework, data analysis begins by bringing together and organising all the

information about the case at hand, for example the interview transcripts (Patton, 2002). The qualitative researcher's focus thereafter will be on interpreting and understanding the social world of the participants. Furthermore, the aim of analysis is to understand the various elements of the data and to identify patterns or themes (Mouton, 2001). The method of data analysis chosen for the present research study was that of thematic analysis. However, also thematic phenomenology was employed to explore the participant's experience. Interpretive Phenomenology was employed as it forms part of thematic analysis.

Even though interpretive phenomenological analysis aims to explore the research participant's experience from his or her perspective, it recognises that such an exploration must necessarily implicate the researcher's own view of the world as well as the nature of the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Willing, 2001). As such, the phenomenological analysis produced by the researcher is always an interpretation of the participant's experience.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis works with the transcripts of semi-structured interviews; the texts generated by participants. These are analysed one by one. According to Willing (2001) interpretive phenomenological analysis takes an idiographic approach whereby insights produced as a result of intensive and detailed engagements with individual cases (e.g. transcripts, texts) are integrated only in the later stages of the research.

Willing (2001) proposes a four stage process of analysis. The first stage involves the reading and re-reading of the texts. At this stage the researcher produces wide-ranging and unfocused notes that reflect the initial thoughts and observations he or she may wish to record (Willing, 2001). During the data analysis process of the present research study the researcher worked case-by case, line-by-line with individual transcripts and documented issues, notes, and comments in the margin.

The second stage of analysis, according to Willing (2001), requires the researcher to identify and label themes that characterise each section of the texts. At this stage the researcher reviewed the notes and comments in the margins of each transcript and jotted down emerging theme titles. Theme titles are conceptual and they should capture something about the essential quality of what is represented by the texts (Willing, 2001). The third stage of data analysis involves an attempt to introduce structure into the analysis process. Here the researcher listed the themes identified in stage two and thought about them in relation to one another. Some of the themes formed natural clusters of concepts that share meaning, while others were characterised by hierarchical relationships with one another. Clusters of themes were then given labels that captured their essence.

The fourth stage of data analysis involves the production of a summary table of the structured themes, together with quotations that illustrate each theme. According to Willing (2001) the summary table should only include those themes that capture something about the quality of the participant's experiences of the phenomenon under investigation. This means that some of the themes generated during stage two will have to be excluded. At this stage the researcher produced a table of themes for each case (participant), ordered these coherently (repetitions and irrelevant elements were cut out), and noted which themes followed questions on the interview schedule and which were new. These summary tables included the cluster labels, brief quotations and references to where relevant extracts may be found in the interview transcripts (i.e. page and line numbers).

Ultimately, according to Wilbraham (2008), each case should be written up separately in its own right, and then the researcher should move on to produce a composite thematic picture of all cases. The researcher should look for master-themes across cases, linked to empirical evidence of patterning (e.g. how many times did X appear?) or use literature to interpret trends.

At this stage in the analysis process the researcher in the current research study used the summary table for the first participant in the analysis of subsequent cases. Here, the original list of themes was used to code the other interviews, adding to or elaborating themes in the process. A cyclical movement was required so that themes which emerged in later transcripts could be checked against earlier transcripts (Willing, 2001).

An example depicting the identification of themes (stage two) can be found in Appendix E. An example of the clustering of themes (stage three) can be found in Appendix F. An example of the production of a summary table (stage four) can be found in Appendix G. This is to show how themes were identified and clustered to produce a summary table. Appendix F shows an example of a master theme and its constituent themes (drawn from multiple participants' responses).

Trustworthiness and data credibility were established via face-to-face discussions with individual participants and fellow researchers. The researcher made every effort to clarify participants' perceptions and the emergent themes to determine whether the codes and themes identified were appropriate to their experiences. The participants were contacted for verification of analysed data from the full interview transcript and the summary. Maintaining long-term communication with the participants helped the researcher to establish trust and reach a better understanding of the participants in the field.

4.5 Sample

Qualitative researchers usually work with small groups of participants. The individuals who are included in the group of participants should provide in-depth knowledge and insight of the phenomenon being studied. Purposive sampling was used in the present research study. Merriam (1998) states that purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to understand a phenomenon and must, therefore, purposefully select participants who are rich in information regarding the phenomenon. Therefore, participants included should be knowledgeable, willing to participate, and readily available (Greyling, 2008). Furthermore, purposive sampling takes place when the group

of participants is homogenous, sharing the experience of a particular situation (Willing, 2001).

With reference to the present research study, although the participants formed a homogenous group in terms of the context and label of Industrial Psychologist in the workplace, they were individuals with unique experiences and perspectives; voices. In the present research study, Industrial Psychologists were viewed as a heterogeneous group and included participants with more experience: 10 years and more, those who work in a very unionized environment. Furthermore, participants comprised both males and females, from different world of work and from different ranks within the organisation. As such, Psychologists selected from these categories of criteria represented the broader population of Industrial Psychologists in the workplace.

Through referrals I got the database of approximately 10 Industrial Psychologist in KZN. Of these, six agreed and were willing to participate in the present research study. Appointments to conduct the semi-structured interviews were then set up with these psychologists and a convenient venue in their workplace was booked to conduct the interviews.

Among the 6 industrial psychologists who participated in the study, there were 3 psychologists from the FMCG industry, 2 from government (SAPS), and 1 from a higher institution of learning. All participants from the FMCG and were based in an HR department. The industrial psychologists' experience ranged from 3 years to 22 years. The participants' age ranged from 27 to 52 years. 5 participants were female and 1 was male. They all had a Master's degree in Industrial Psychology and were registered with the HPCSA.

4.6 Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability
Qualitative researchers strive for understanding; a deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to find detailed meaning (Creswell, 1998). During or after a study,

qualitative researchers ask if they got it right. For Creswell (1998), verification of a study is viewed as a process that occurs throughout the data collection, analysis, and report writing phases of a study; this verification follows from standards and criteria which are imposed by the researcher and others during and after a study is completed.

Multiple perspectives exist regarding the importance of verification in qualitative research, the definition of it, and procedures for establishing it. For example, writers search for and find qualitative equivalents that parallel traditional quantitative approaches to validity. For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Creswell, 1998) use alternative terms that they contend adhere more to naturalistic axioms. To establish the trustworthiness of a study, Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Creswell, 1998) use the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as naturalist equivalents for internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity. In order to operationalise these new terms, they propose techniques such as prolonged engagement in the field and triangulation of data of sources, methods, and investigators to establish credibility. To make sure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied, thick description is necessary. Rather than reliability, one seeks dependability that the results will not be subject to change and instability. And, the naturalistic researcher looks to confirmability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of the data. Both dependability and confirmability are established through an auditing of the research process.

Moreover, these alternative terms, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, form umbrella terms of trustworthiness and authenticity for Creswell's (1998) verification techniques. These verification techniques include: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher perspectives, member checks and respondent validation, thick description, and external audits. Creswell (1998) recommends using at least two of these techniques in the verifications of descriptive findings.

In terms of the current research study's transferability (i.e. the ability of findings to be generalised), the context, design, and selection of participants have been made clear to

the reader. As such, the reader is able to make informed decisions regarding the transferability of the data to his or her specific context. Moreover, the selection of diverse participants as well as the rich in-depth descriptions (thick description) of the research findings contributes to the transferability of the present research study. Mertens (1998) states that in order to enhance the dependability (i.e. the stability and consistency of data) of a qualitative study the researcher must use clearly defined guidelines for data collection and data analysis. This allows for a clearly defined trace of evidence during data collection and data analysis to enable any individual to evaluate the quality of the study. In the current research study both the data collection and data analysis methods were described in detail in order to show the process of data transformation and to leave a trail of evidence per se. Confirmability refers to the value of the research (i.e. is enough evidence provided?), and in the current research study's instance, is linked to thick description (as noted above).

A qualitative research approach was used to explore how Industrial Psychologists in the workplace perceive and resolve conflict at work. A purposive sample of 6 experienced psychologists was selected to obtain data by means of in-depth semi structured interviews. Data was analysed by Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.

A qualitative research method was used to explore sources of conflict in the workplace for industrial psychologists and how they handle it in daily practice. Six Industrial Psychologists were selected purposively and interviewed by the researcher with aim of capturing their experiences in the area of conflict on the job. The inclusion criterion for staff members was a minimum of three years work experience. After giving their informed consent, the industrial psychologists were given an appointment according to their schedule and preferred date and time. The time and place were planned according to the participants' preference in a private place in their working place. Each interview began with a broad question, such as: "Could you explain your experiences with conflict?", or, "Tell me about how you have resolved a conflict in the past". The interviews lasted between 40 and 75 minutes, but on the average it took one hour if the

participant was interested in elaborating on his or her experience. Interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

4.7 Ethical consideration

The research proposal was approved by the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Research Committee. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured of confidentiality and anonymity (see appendix A). Participants signed an informed consent form indicating that their participation in this study was voluntary and without any obligation to continue (see appendix A).

In qualitative research ensuring that standards of quality and verification are met involves conducting the research in an ethical manner. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) emphasise the need to consider the following ethical considerations: informed consent, voluntary participation, accurate information, and confidentiality.

In the present research study individuals who agreed to participate in the study were fully informed about the nature of the research study as well as the research procedure. They were also made aware of what their participation in the study would entail. Additionally, these individuals were informed that their participation in the study would be voluntary [i.e. they were free to choose whether they wanted to participate or to withdraw, and that choosing to withdraw would not result in any adverse impact.

Moreover, prior to the research interviews, participants were alerted to the fact that any information gleaned during the research process would remain completely confidential. Also, any and all personal information would be kept anonymous; their identities would not be divulged in any discussion or presentation of the present research study.

In terms of accuracy of information, the researcher shall not falsify or fabricate any results in any publication of research findings.

4.8 Limitations

The main disadvantage of the qualitative approach is that the findings cannot be replicated for a larger population with the same degree of certainty that quantitative

analyses provide. However, the results can be judged based on the criteria of transferability or applicability. This study provides a comprehensive understanding about factors that influence occurrence and management of organisational conflict. However, there are various limitations that would have to be kept in mind when analysing and making inferences from the sample. The findings will only be applicable to the South African context, in particular KZN and to only Industrial Psychologists. This in turn creates a gap for future research to extend upon this study to compare and contrast the experiences of Industrial Psychologists and in different countries and regions. Therefore a larger and broader study, which is not bound by financial and time constraints, would be the ideal.

Chapter 5: Research Results and Discussion

5.1 Research Results

Using Interpretive Phenomenological analysis, the emerging themes were: (1) the Industrial Psychologists' perceptions and reactions to conflict; (2) organisational structure; (3) Organisational management style; (4) the nature and condition of job assignment; (5) individual characteristics; (6) mutual understanding and interaction; and (7) the consequences of conflict. The first six themes describe the sources of the conflict as well as strategies to manage them.

Seven themes were identified during the data analysis process: (1) the Industrial Psychologists' perceptions and reactions to conflict; (2) organisational structure; (3) organisational management style; (4) the nature and condition of job assignment; (5) individual characteristics; (6) mutual understanding and interaction; and (7) the consequences of conflict.

The Industrial Psychologist's perceptions and reactions to conflict:

Participants interpreted conflict as disagreement, opposition of interest, clash of personalities, two or more people not seeing eye-to-eye, some sort of problem or issue that needs to be clarified which prevents two parties from moving forward…

"Conflict means two individuals have opposing points of view" (R1). The participant (R1) further said, "These two individuals can't respect each other's point of view. Therefore conflict is likely to occur as they don't see eye-to-eye and yet they don't respect each other's point of view."

"Conflict to me means a verbal disagreement between people over a point of view or a policy or an opinion (R4). Essentially it is when two or more people differ in what the way forward can be and that obviously result in both people needing to find some sort of resolution to go forward with the problem" (R1).

Most participants are of the opinion that conflict as harmful and unpleasant as it may be, is not all negative. The participants raised two kinds of conflict, the positive one and the negative one.

"The positive conflict is where disagreement can lead into new thinking, new understanding or way forward" (R6).

"The negative one is where people are just being stubborn for the sake of being stubborn, for instance in the workplace you will find that two people, they both have the different way of doing the same thing, and the one always has to win and the other has to lose" (R6).

"But my theory is, people should be focusing on harnessing the potential differences in finding the new way going forward" (R6).

"Conflict can be with regards to what deemed acceptable and not acceptable in the workplace" (R5).

They view power as embedded in conflict, the ability to influence and direct ones behaviour into a desired direction.

Some participants perceived conflict as the disparity between expectations and realities.

Different views were expressed regarding the existence and control of conflict among industrial psychologists. Some participants believed that there should not be any conflict in the psychology field as a humanistic profession and with so many ethics governing our practice. Others contended that conflict cannot be eliminated and is a normal occurrence in every work environment. Several participants shared that conflict emanates mainly from an individual's behaviour and personality, while the majority of participants believed in multiple sources of conflict. For example, one of the participants said:

"For me conflict can be caused by anything, no one factor that can be said is the only factor that causes conflict" (R2).

"The first thing that comes to my mind about conflict is clash of interest" (R3).

"Conflict to me is two contrary things or people" (R5).

"Conflict emerge due to people pulling towards different or opposing directions" (R6).

"Conflict is power struggle" (R1).

"I worry that most of conflict resolution techniques deal with the superficial most of the time if you think about it" (R2).

The types of reaction to conflict also varied according to the participants' perception of conflict. Reaction such as anger and aggression, shouting at team members and colleagues, a tearful feeling of resignation and sorrow were enumerated by the participants.

About ways of reacting, participants said:

"If I experience conflict with my colleagues I would try to ignore it, if possible" (R2).
"Often its absenteeism, this is a very big problem in our organisation" (R3).

"It does result into a lot of conflict in terms of our situation; a big problem is absenteeism. If people are absent then this results in work overload as we work in shift. In shift if one is absent work still need to continue as if the full team is there" (R3).

"People will be off, not only for days and weeks but for months and even years, and eventually people end up applying for temporary capacity leave" (R2).

"I have my own personal experience where I had an issue or issues with management and its quit funny because of my background as of industrial psychology, I know proper procedures to follow and I know what's my rights are" (R4).

"Often conflict is swept under the carpet" (R1).

'So it was clear-cut communication that needed to be addressed. It was addressed" (R5).

Participants' definition and perception of conflict differed but the following common trends emerged: conflict as **a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns**. Within this simple definition there are several important understandings that emerge:

Disagreement - Generally, we are aware that there is some level of difference in the positions of the two (or more) parties involved in the conflict. But the true disagreement versus the perceived disagreement may be quite different from one another. In fact, conflict tends to be accompanied by significant levels of misunderstanding that exaggerate the perceived disagreement considerably. If we can understand the true areas of disagreement, this will help us solve the right problems and manage the true needs of the parties.

Parties involved - There are often disparities in our sense of who is involved in the conflict. Sometimes, people are surprised to learn they are a party to the conflict, while other times they are shocked to learn they are not included in the disagreement. On many occasions, people who are seen as part of the social system (e.g., work team, family, and company) are influenced to participate in the dispute, whether they would personally define the situation in that way or not. In the above example, people very readily "take sides" based upon current perceptions of the issues, past issues and relationships, roles within the organisation, and other factors. The parties involved can become an elusive concept to define.

Perceived threat - People respond to the perceived threat, rather than the true threat, facing them. Thus, while perception doesn't become reality per se, people's behaviors, feelings and ongoing responses become modified by that evolving sense of the threat they confront. If we can work to understand the true threat (issues) and develop strategies (solutions) that manage it (agreement), we are acting constructively to manage the conflict.

Needs, interests or concerns - There is a tendency to narrowly define "the problem" as one of substance, task, and near-term viability. However, workplace conflicts tend to be far more complex than that, for they involve ongoing relationships with complex, emotional components. Simply stated, there are always procedural needs and psychological needs to be addressed within the conflict, in addition to the substantive needs that are generally presented. And the durability of the interests and concerns of the parties transcends the immediate presenting situation. Any efforts to resolve conflicts effectively must take these points into account.

Organisational structure

Participants pointed out some of their experiences with conflict in the workplace. One of the recurring criticisms related to the companies was to being highly KPI (Key Performance Indicator) driven, and being bottom-line driven and performance focused. It's about getting the job done.

"The culture of the organisation plays a huge role when comes to issues of conflict. (R2)" The participant further said, "In my organisation (participant mentioned his organisation, which I will not mention for ethical reasons) we essentially live and breathe our values, such as values of integrity.

"We believe that to be a good employer or employee you need to live and practice these values" (R6).

"We are very, very concerned about our service delivery, service delivery basically means if you are my client of my business unit – I need to do whatever it takes to meet your needs, whether I want to or not." The participant further said, "So in this process it basically means, if you come to me with a need or a want or a business requirement, I need to make sure that your requirement are met to the best of my ability" (R6).

"We have Service Level Agreement (SLA) in my business, so with SLA, there is no time to sit and quarrel about what needs to be done and who is accountable for it" (R6).

"In my company, in particular in my department, we plan well in advance, in doing this we actually limit the potential conflict that could happen" (R5).

"Who want to come to work and avoid people every day? It is not the kind of culture that we have because we believe in our people and if we want to be an employer of choice we need inculcate a work environment that will attract people towards our organisation and such environment is the one that tackle conflict head-on and in a positive way" (R6).

"But the culture in which we work here in (the participant mentioned the company name), especially in this department, people are very laid back, people are very professional and we follow our values quit seriously, values of professionalism, integrity etc" (R2).

"We are not in a very high pressure environment here, we are flexible in terms of how we serve our business partners. For example, we have prescheduled solid predetermined assessment sessions everyday at 9:00, 11:00 and 14:00, however if there is an interview at 15:30 afternoon and the candidate must be assessed after that, we are often flexible to accommodate that candidate and assess at 16:00" (R3).

"The last thing we want here is end up fighting" (R6).

"We sit chat and talk and find the way forward in this organisation" (R6).

'In my department we are less likely to have uncontrollable conflict because we are family here, we always have tea together" (R6).

Organisational management style

Participants believed that flaws in management styles at different levels contributed to conflict and its ineffective resolution. Authorisation bearing, abuse of power, illogical actions and failure to support employees were some of the weak points that participants recounted from their experiences. One participant provided this example:

"We told our problems to the supervisor and asked him to see to them. For example, I asked the superior to intervene but to my surprise he never addressed the issue, it was swept under the carpet" (R1).

"In the environment that I work under, we experience this a lot, taking into account that it is a very hierarchical organisation" (R3). The participant further said, "We have a rank structure and obviously you have to listen to someone who is in a high rank irrespective. This does results into a lot of conflict. Largely in our environment this will manifest in a form of absenteeism. If people are absent then this result in work overload as we work in shift. In shift if one is absent work still need to continue as if the full team is there. In other words people end up caring twice as much as they should. So if that person comes back obviously things will be ugly. Its affects everyone in every way, we can start from communication, productivity, its affects every aspect. Myself I am involved in employee-health balance, so we deal with this on the daily basis" (R3).

"The dynamics of any organisation, including that of individuals have been largely ignored" (R1).

"In my organisation because conflict is experienced so much, people ignore conflict until the problem gets bigger and bigger" (R3).

"In this organisation, people approach conflict differently. Some people prefer a confrontational style while some try by all means to ignore it at all cost. But nonetheless it is a very big problem in this organisation" (R5).

"Well in this organisation, they have what they call face-to-face meeting, where if there are issues between two employees as such they would have a facilitator sort of setting to facilitate discussion between the two people to sort of come to the essence or the core of conflict (what the conflict is about) to try and address what the parties needs are" (R4).

"So I feel at time companies feel or think they are doing the right thing by having these sorts of meetings where they discuss things, but you know if you not getting to the actual problem, conflict will not be resolved, for example, there might be a real deep settled problem that needs to be identified" (R4).

"The dynamics of any organisation even individual dynamics have been ignored, it plays a big role" (R1).

"People might all be in management but does not make them better managers as they might be in that management position for different reasons and be there not through merit" (R2).

"Conflict is a very big problem in this organisation" (R3).
"Sometimes because conflict is experienced so much, people ignore conflict until the problem gets bigger and bigger" (R3).

"Within this particular organisation, we have a very strong affirmative action drive, and it's amazing how, much conflict that causes, within employees. You find instances where people argue that you cannot pick people in positions based on colour" (R1).

"But I feel there is another conflict, of the day to day basis, from the political stance as well maybe within positions, you have people that who sort of feel some people do not belong there (in those positions) as such and that causes conflict" (R2).

Participants contended that planning, clarifying objectives, supporting the employees, fairness, tending to employees rights and understanding employees needs, along with appropriate leadership measures, can have a significant role in managing conflict and preventing resignations and low morale or loss of motivation. Participants believed that some managers' behaviour influenced an increase in conflict occurrence. Some managers were seen to have mistreated staff, shown unreasonable behaviour, discriminated, suddenly changed style, failed to understand and support the employees, violated staff rights, aggravated conflict intensity, discouraged teamwork and ignored industrial psychologists challenges. Moreover, participants expressed some of their experiences for reduction of conflict through taking their concerns to upper management levels. One participant indicated contemplating taking the matter to CCMA. The participant said:

"I got very frustrated because I felt complains are out there and it was not handled properly, but instead they tried as much as they can to swept it under the carpet" (R1).

"Ignoring conflict apply to lots of companies, because they don't want you to take them to CCMA at the end of the day because its damages the image of the company" (R1).

"Depending on the person, some managers can see these dynamics, some can see but ignore, some are in denial of these issues. People might all be in management but does not make them better managers as they might be in that management position for different reasons not through merit" (R2).

The nature and conditions of job assignment
Another theme or category that emerged from data analysis was the nature and conditions of the job. Participants contended that this theme had double effects on the occurrence

and management of conflict. Industrial psychologists have a dual role to play, to ensure organisational effectiveness and employee wellbeing. Very often these things clash.

"Working for the company that care less about employees is a difficult challenge for industrial psychologist" (R1).

"Every test book will talk about who is the client, but in practice it is not as black and white as one might think" (R4).

"Even although we work for the company but we have an ethical obligation to ensure employee well-being and their needs" (R1).

It can be said that suboptimal working conditions can lead to exhaustion, mental pressure, tension and nervous breakdown, which in turn can result in leaves of absence and ultimately resignation, energy and motivation loss, and psychological problems for the psychologists.

Individual characteristics

The individual characteristics of participants involved specific situations at work where the potential source of conflict was more obvious and its resolution required management skills. These characteristics included an individual's personality, work commitment and moral characteristics. Any of these could play a role in creating or controlling conflict. Some of the participants recalled their experiences about the occurrence or control of conflict.

"People approach conflict differently in this organisation" (R5).

"I think in general, I am a very accommodating individual, I am always the one who wants to preserve the relationship so I would always say, let's sit, let's talk, let's see where the issue is as opposed to screaming and shouting" (R6).

"Since I am a very easy-going person I rarely face conflict; I don't argue a lot" (R4).

"To be honest with you, I often ignore conflict; I don't like disagreement unless it it's really warrants it" (R2).

"Some people prefer a confrontational style while some try by all means to ignore it at all cost" (R3).

"It depends who I am in conflict with" (R3).

"Our reaction is important when comes to conflict" (R1).

"As soon as people encounter conflict, they then say things that shouldn't be said, and then it's becomes a big deal or cause another problem." So you better be worry of that when dealing with conflict. But as a psychologist, you pick up the skills so you better equipped than others" (R6).

"In most of the time, almost 90%, the manner in which we react plays a bigger role in conflict. And there is a 10% where you can't really do anything about it. So our reaction is important," the participant said" (R6).

"Ideally there should be no conflict in the workplace" The participant further said, everything that needs to be done, all the operational requirements of one's job is in the paper. So there shouldn't be any disagreements on how the job should be done" (R6).

"Very often it's the personal issue; it's the personality characteristics that people bring into the workplace, for example, I want to go ahead in my career and maybe you are in a way, or maybe because I do not like the way you look or talk to customers or your attitude, then things must be done my way. So what I am saying to you is that even although, there should in essence be no conflict per se about work, but people's own perceptions, biases, prejudice and that sort of thing come into play and as a result, its

disables them from actually solving the conflict in a positive and embracing manner"
(R5).

Mutual understanding and interaction

Shared understanding and interaction was one of the most important categories. The majority of the participants regarded misunderstanding in interpersonal interactions as one important source of conflict. This inadequate mutual understanding occurs between the industrial psychologist and line managers and other individuals and employees, such as managers and non-managers, employees at different position levels.

"I expect my manager to understand me, no matter if he does nothing for me, I just expect to hear a 'thank you', or yes, you're right on this, I understand you... it's a tough task, I know" (R1).

"It was really due to misunderstanding" (R3).

"He did not want to compromise" (R1).

Other factors that emerged from the data collected may increase or decrease this misunderstanding. Furthermore, the nature and conditions of the job and the structure of the organisation, management style and individual characteristics may have a double effect on this issue, thus improving or worsening the situation. Participants confirmed psychological stress arising from misunderstanding and emphasized the importance of mutual understanding between the industrial psychologist and the managers and other staff.

Nevertheless, experiences of the participants indicated that they felt that their role in the organisation was not well understood by top management as well as employees. Their role was reduced to that of HR. The employer and employees are not utilising their skills and capability to the optimum level. Most of them hold HR positions (i.e. Human Resources Specialist, Human Resources Manager) in organisations. They are perceived as only HR. Some employees and managers do not even know that they are industrial

psychologists by profession. This was the dilemma common across almost all of the participants. Also, participants emphasized the role of colleagues in the occurrence and intensity of conflict. These conflicts arose from sources such as line managers' influence on decision making. For instance, in how line managers decide on rejecting a candidate based on a psychometric assessment since line managers have a limited understanding of psychometrics and they are driven by willingness to hire the employee of high calibre, but very often that is done at the expense of ethics that govern industrial psychology as a profession. Moreover, displacement of responsibilities onto industrial psychologists (as HR) and other line managers who neglected their duties contributed to the occurrence of conflict.

"Recruitment is not only HR/Industrial psychologist's duty but both the line manager and HR are accountable, but very often line manger neglect this to HR" (R4).

"Managers have some expectation from us, but they don't understand that it isn't HR/industrial psychologist's duties. It's not an HR duty to upload a one-on-one, but its managers duty" (R4).

Participants conceded that the existence of a cooperative environment could well prevent conflict, resolve the existing conflicts and prevent displacement of conflict onto hierarchical superiors. In all cases, participants agreed that mutual understanding and interaction can affect or be affected by other themes.

"One of our values in this company is that, 'we work and win in teams', this is only in theory, in this environment people are very competitive and defensive, it's a win-lose situation" (R4).

"We and our colleagues understand each other more, and we know that we have to work alongside each other peacefully, because if any tension is added, we may not be able to manage and control the working environment properly" (R6).

Expectations, viewpoints and cultures of the individuals were important from the participants' viewpoint. Expectations can definitely affect interpersonal interactions. Other highlighted issues were differences in cultures and beliefs that influenced conflict in the workplace.

The consequences/outcomes resulting from conflict

An important category found in this study was the consequences/outcomes of the experience of conflict. Participants expressed several outcomes for conflict. Conflict can cause many psychological problems; agitation, loss of peace of mind, unhappiness, nervousness, sleep disorders and depression were identified by the participants. What is more, conflict can lead to psychological problems and occasionally the hospitalisation of the affected individuals.

In addition to these psychological and physical problems, the affected individual may lose motivation and become discontented, leading to indifferent and irresponsible behaviours at work and even a decision to resign.

"The main cause of our absenteeism is conflict" (R3).

"People do not leave the company, but they leave the boss- most people who resign in this company, they love the company but resign because of the boss" (R4).

"When I experience a lot of stress I feel like changing my job" (R1).

Work-related outcomes are another aspect of this category. These consequences lie on a continuum with no outcomes on work at one end to resignation from work at the other. Some participants said that in their experience, despite existing conflicts, work that needed to be done was not affected and those internal conflicts did not affect meeting the business objectives and customer needs. Work-related outcomes of conflict are not limited to the individual; they also affect colleagues, managers and customers and their companions.

Some participants cited poor performance and neglect of employees needs as instances of unresolved conflicts. Other outcomes involve indifference or intolerance towards colleagues. Other experiences include disrupted performance, decrease in service quality, absenteeism and job satisfaction.

"Those conflict affect you… you get the feeling of discontent…you don't work heartily…with reluctance…you do all with reluctance and unwillingness" (R1).

Conflict can also affect the individual's family life. Participants' viewpoints ranged from a lack of influence to adverse effects on family life. Displacement and inappropriate behaviour with family members and the disruption of the regular flow of life were some of the problems participants mentioned as having affected their family lives. They also suggested that industrial psychologists, during their education and training, be oriented about how to avoid transfer of work-related problems into the family.

"Surely it affects our lives… when you leave for home with a troubled mind you will make trouble for the family members… and this affects children and your whole life…" (R3).

5.2 Discussion

This study found that almost all Industrial psychologists (and HR Practitioners) (99%) deal with conflict. The most common causes of conflict are the perception of and reaction to conflict, organisational structure, organisational management style, the nature and conditions of job assignment, individual characteristics, and mutual understanding and interaction are important factors contributing to the occurrence and management of conflict.

These conflicts frequently result in negative outcomes. Four out of six (67%) have seen conflict result in personal insults and attacks, and 43% have witnessed someone being

fired. Five out of six (83%) of those surveyed have seen conflict lead to someone leaving the organisation and have seen it resulting in sickness or absence.

Yet workplace conflict can also have benefits. Industrial Psychologists (or HR Practitioners) have seen conflict lead to better solutions to problems and challenges, major innovation, increased motivation, a better understanding of others, and higher work team performance. Clearly, conflict is not always harmful, but can add to the success of an organisation.

The challenge is managing conflict in a way that leads to positive conclusions. Given the number and frequency of negative outcomes of conflict, and the impact of the positive ones, it is not surprisingly that all participants rate the ability to handle conflict as either a very important or critical leadership skill.

However, there is a serious gap between the importance of conflict management skills and the effectiveness of current leaders. Five out of six of those interviewed indicated that current management and leadership is not at all effective at dealing with conflict, and only one participant said that they are only somewhat effective. This finding shows that there is a lot of room for improvement in the management/leadership ranks when it comes to dealing with conflict.

Those interviewed said that managers can do more to deal with conflict effectively. Recommendations include: manage toxic individuals more firmly, provide more clarity about their expectations, and model appropriate behaviour. These recommendations seem to be self-evident, suggesting that when it comes to dealing with conflict, some managers are avoiding an important part of their job.

Therefore, managers need to take these variables into account to increase efficiency and job satisfaction.

The discussion that follows summarises the current research study's significant findings as revealed in the previous chapter, and contextualises them against existing bodies of literature.

Themes

(1) the Industrial Psychologists' perceptions and reactions to conflict

Participants interpreted conflict as disagreement, opposition of interest, clash of personalities, two or more people not seeing eye-to-eye, some sort of problem or issue that needs to be clarified which prevents two parties from moving forward. People are often in a conflict situation because they often believe in a win-lose situation. Anstey (1994) defines conflict as existing in a relationship when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in their values, needs or interests and purposefully employ their power in an effort to defeat; nuetralize or eliminate each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction. Participants perceived conflict as the disparity between expectations and realities. In other words conflict is due to a real or perceived divergence of interests, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously. Factors affecting conflict situation is that people respond to the perceived threat, rather than the true threat, facing them. Thus, while perception doesn't become reality per se, people's behaviors, feelings and ongoing responses become modified by that evolving sense of the threat they confront. If we can work to understand the true threat (issues) and develop strategies (solutions) that manage it (agreement), we are acting constructively to manage the conflict.

There is a tendency to narrowly define "the problem" as one of substance, task, and near-term viability. However, workplace conflicts tend to be far more complex than that, for they involve ongoing relationships with complex, emotional components. Simply stated, there are always procedural needs and psychological needs to be addressed within the conflict, in addition to the substantive needs that are generally presented. And the

durability of the interests and concerns of the parties transcends the immediate presenting situation. Any efforts to resolve conflicts effectively must take these points into account.

Participants' definition and perception of conflict differed but the following common trends emerged:

conflict as **a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns**. Generally, we are aware that there is some level of difference in the positions of the two (or more) parties involved in the conflict. But the true disagreement versus the perceived disagreement may be quite different from one another. In fact, conflict tends to be accompanied by significant levels of misunderstanding that exaggerate the perceived disagreement considerably. If we can understand the true areas of disagreement, this will help us solve the right problems and manage the true needs of the parties. Mutual understanding was one of the dominant themes (to be discussed below).

Most participants are of the opinion that conflict as harmful and unpleasant as it may be, is not all negative. The participants raised two kinds of conflict, the positive one and the negative one. The positive conflict is where disagreement can lead into new thinking, new understanding or way forward. The negative one is where people are just being stubborn for the sake of being stubborn, for instance in the workplace you will find that two people, they both have the different way of doing the same thing, and the one always has to win and the other has to lose. Participants concur that people should be focusing on harnessing the potential deference in finding the new way going forward. Transformational theory is also based on the premise that conflict forces parties to deal with deeper issues and thus serves as a constructive social process. For example, tension between labour unions and management frequently facilitate higher wages or better working conditions for workers. In addition, political debate between Republicans and Democrats may generate new policies or values that influence policy choice. This perspective views conflict as a vital social function where tensions are released and new communal norms are established or refined. Marx, is also of the same opinion that class

(group) conflict is the source of societal change-without such conflict the society would stagnate. From this perspective (transformational theory) conflict is likely to result in change. Without conflict society would stagnate. Participants were also of the opinion that conflict if managed well can be constructive and result to better quality decision as people challenge each other.

Participants also view power as embedded in conflict, the ability to influence and direct ones behaviour into a desired direction. Barling (1983) is of the opinion that we cannot talk about conflict at the exclusion of power. In fact, underlying conflict is power struggle. In order to support their belief or perception, a party will resort to some form of power not only to nuetralize the belief or perception of the other party, but to protect or further its own belief or perception. Barling (1983) argued that the degree of industrial conflict present in many societies and organisations should have provided clues of power concerns. Himes (1980) is of the same opinion as he argued that social conflict refers to purposeful struggles between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power resources and other scarce values.

Different views were expressed regarding the existence and control of conflict among industrial psychologists. Some participants believed that there should not be any conflict in the psychology field as a humanistic profession and with so many ethics governing our practice. They perceive their role as that of a mediator – someone who brings harmony. Industrial Psychologist plays major role in improving human relations and also in solving industrial dispute. Psychology also helps in explaining differences in individuals relating to their interests, aptitudes, specialties, intelligence etc. and its results helps in explaining a better person personality and requirements that are required in an individual to perform a particular job. It is for this reason that some participants felt this profession should be a conflict free field. Others contended that conflict cannot be eliminated and is a normal occurrence in every work environment. Several participants shared that conflict emanates mainly from an individual's behaviour and personality, while the majority of participants believed in multiple sources of conflict, such as the nature of the job, the management style etc.

The types of reaction to conflict also varied according to the participants' perception of conflict. Reaction such as anger and aggression, shouting at team members and colleagues, a tearful feeling of resignation and sorrow were enumerated by the participants. However this reaction was believed to be influenced by ones personality make up and personal experience.

(2) organisational structure

Participants pointed out some of their experiences with conflict in the workplace. One of the recurring criticisms related to the companies was to being highly KPI (Key Performance Indicator) driven, and being bottom-line driven and performance focused. It's about getting the job done. According to participants this is largely self-driven. Employees are surveying and disciplining themselves, even if they are not under direct managerial surveillance at the time. This reduction of direct control provides employees with a sense of self-determination; as well as the need for self-control, self-discipline and self-surveillance. It also means that workers are less likely to rebel through unionisation and strikes as their decisions about their work are seen as choices (Deetz, 1998). Employees at these organisations strategize their own subordination; they control their behaviour and feelings, and use self-surveillance to obtain 'money, meaning or identity' (Deetz, 1998: 164). All of which should come from work without self-subordination being necessary. From this perspective, the organisation is integrated into the self and life outside of work becomes a constraint on one's ability to do more. Work stops being a means of supporting one's life and social relations, rather one's life and social relations are valued insomuch as they support work. The employees do this far more effectively than management directly could. Because employees do this themselves, they generally remain happy in their working conditions despite being aware that they are making sacrifices and that power is being excised (Deetz: 1998). Deetz (1998:169) raised the interesting question of "is this the best or worst workplace?' Employees generally gain wealth, status, identity and satisfaction, but lose security, leisure time, social relations and identity outside of the workplace.

(3) organisational management style

Participants believed that flaws in management styles at different levels contributed to conflict and its ineffective resolution. Authorisation bearing, abuse of power, illogical actions and failure to support employees were some of the weak points that participants recounted from their experiences. Participants highlighted challenge with regards to this as very often the adopt approaches to help employees adjust and adapt to the structure of the organisation and the practices of the organisation instead of challenging the structure or the practices.

Participants contended that planning, clarifying objectives, supporting the employees, fairness, tending to employees rights and understanding employees needs, along with appropriate leadership measures, can have a significant role in managing conflict and preventing resignations and low morale or loss of motivation. Participants believed that some managers' behaviour influenced an increase in conflict occurrence. Some managers were seen to have mistreated staff, shown unreasonable behaviour, discriminated, suddenly changed style, failed to understand and support the employees, violated staff rights, aggravated conflict intensity, discouraged teamwork and ignored industrial psychologists challenges. Moreover, participants expressed some of their experiences for reduction of conflict through taking their concerns to upper management levels

(4) the nature and condition of job assignment

Another theme or category that emerged from data analysis was the nature and conditions of the job. Participants contended that this theme had double effects on the occurrence and management of conflict. Industrial psychologists have a dual role to play, to ensure organisational effectiveness and employee wellbeing. Industrial psychologists work for businesses, helping to improve the working conditions and productivity of employees. They help companies hire, train, and manage employees. They also advise companies on ways of getting consumers interested in products and services. Very often these things clash.

(5) individual characteristics

The individual characteristics of participants involved specific situations at work where the potential source of conflict was more obvious and its resolution required management skills. These characteristics included an individual's personality, work commitment and moral characteristics. Any of these could play a role in creating or controlling conflict. Some of the participants recalled their experiences about the occurrence or control of conflict.

"Ideally there should be no conflict in the workplace", participants argued. The participant further said, "Everything that needs to be done, all the operational requirements of one's job is in the paper. So there shouldn't be any disagreements on how the job should be done. However very often it's the personal issue; it's the personality characteristics that people bring into the workplace, for example, I want to go ahead in my career and maybe you are in a way, or maybe because I do not like the way you look or talk to customers or your attitude, then things must be done my way. Some people are competitive than others. Participants however acknowledged that although, there should in essence be no conflict per se about work, but people's own perceptions, biases, prejudice and that sort of thing come into play and as a result, its disables them from actually solving the conflict in a positive and embracing manner. One can therefore reasonably conclude that it's not conflict per se that problematic issues but people in c conflict situation, they perpetuate the issue.

(6) mutual understanding and interaction

Shared understanding and interaction was one of the most important categories. The majority of the participants regarded misunderstanding in interpersonal interactions as one important source of conflict. This inadequate mutual understanding occurs between the industrial psychologist and line managers and other individuals and employees, such as managers and non-managers, employees at different position levels.

Other factors that emerged from the data collected may increase or decrease this misunderstanding. Furthermore, the nature and conditions of the job and the structure of

the organisation, management style and individual characteristics may have a double effect on this issue, thus improving or worsening the situation. Participants confirmed psychological stress arising from misunderstanding and emphasized the importance of mutual understanding between the industrial psychologist and the managers and other staff. Nevertheless, experiences of the participants indicated that they felt that their role in the organisation was not well understood by top management as well as employees. Their role was reduced to that of HR. The employer and employees are not utilising their skills and capability to the optimum level. Most of them hold HR positions (i.e. Human Resources Specialist, Human Resources Manager) in organisations. They are perceived as only HR. Some employees and managers do not even know that they are industrial psychologists by profession. This was the dilemma common across almost all of the participants, except two participants. Also, participants emphasized the role of colleagues in the occurrence and intensity of conflict. These conflicts arose from sources such as line managers' influence on decision making. For instance, in how line managers decide on rejecting a candidate based on a psychometric assessment since line managers have limited understanding of psychometrics and they are driven by willingness to hire the employee of high calibre, but very often that is done at the expense of ethics that govern industrial psychology as a profession. Moreover, displacement of responsibilities onto industrial psychologists (as HR) and other line managers who neglected their duties contributed to the occurrence of conflict.

Participants conceded that the existence of a cooperative environment could well prevent conflict, resolve the existing conflicts and prevent displacement of conflict onto hierarchical superiors. In all cases, participants agreed that mutual understanding and interaction can affect or be affected by other themes.

Expectations, viewpoints and cultures of the individuals were important from the participants' viewpoint. Expectations can definitely affect interpersonal interactions. Other highlighted issues were differences in cultures and beliefs that influenced conflict in the workplace.

(7) the consequences of conflict

An important category found in this study was the consequences/outcomes of the experience of conflict. Participants expressed several outcomes for conflict. Conflict can cause many psychological problems; agitation, loss of peace of mind, unhappiness, nervousness, sleep disorders and depression were identified by the participants. Conflict can lead to psychological problems and occasionally the hospitalisation of the affected individuals. Moreover conflict were highlighted by participants (in particular those who hold HR related positions) as a major contributing factor to labour-turnover. Which this in turn result to more work to Industrial psychologist as they have to recruit endlessly (for those who hold HR positions) or do more psychometrics (those who are assessing in the workplace). Furthermore, this result to staff shortage will in turn result to work overload and low moral to those who are left. "Those conflict affect you… you get the feeling of discontent…you don't work healthy…with reluctance…you do all with reluctance and unwillingness", participant argued.

In addition to these psychological and physical problems, the affected individual may lose motivation and become discontented, leading to indifferent and irresponsible behaviours at work and even a decision to resign.

Work-related outcomes are another aspect of this category. These consequences lie on a continuum with no outcomes on work at one end to resignation from work at the other. Some participants said that in their experience, despite existing conflicts, work that needed to be done was not affected and those internal conflicts did not affect meeting the business objectives and customer needs. Work-related outcomes of conflict are not limited to the individual; they also affect colleagues, managers and customers and their companions.

Some participants cited poor performance and neglect of employees needs as instances of unresolved conflicts. Other outcomes involve indifference or intolerance towards colleagues. Other experiences include disrupted performance, decrease in service quality, absenteeism and job satisfaction.

Conflict can also affect the individual's family life. Participants' viewpoints ranged from a lack of influence to adverse effects on family life. Displacement and inappropriate behaviour with family members and the disruption of the regular flow of life were some of the problems participants mentioned as having affected their family lives. They also suggested that industrial psychologists, during their education and training, be oriented about how to avoid transfer of work-related problems into the family.

In line with the findings of the current study, other research findings confirm the variability of the perception of and reaction to conflict as being affected by different variables. Jahoda and Wanless (2002) found that when facing conflict, employees would react with verbal or physical aggression such as yelling and hitting. Participant's experiences highlight that relationship-destructive reaction such as criticism, faulting, humiliation, defensiveness and job resignation in conflict situations. Participants interpreted conflict as disagreement, opposition of interest, clash of personalities, two or more people not seeing eye-to-eye, some sort of problem or issue that needs to be clarified which prevents two parties from moving forward

The participant's experiences challenges the unitarist perspective which assumes the organisation is, or should be, an integrated group of people with a single authority/loyalty structure and a set of common values, interests and objectives shared by all members of organisation. In other words, employers and employees are expected to be united by common objectives and values, (management and employees attitudes and interests overlap). Fox (1976) argued that this perspective represents a management ideology. Industrial psychology practitioners who operate from this view are more likely to place little emphases on conflict and regard conflict as unnecessary in the labour-management relationship. They are also less likely to invest time on studying issues of power and conflict as they are perceived as unnecessary. From participants account one can reasonably conclude that organisations are not necessarily made up of a truly integrated group of people with single authority structure and a set of common values, interest and objectives. Marxist conflict theory is also based on the same premise that there are two classes of people within society – the wealthy and the poor. Therefore conflict is

inevitable. However, participants expressed different views regarding the existence and control of conflict among industrial psychologists. Some participants believed that there should not be any conflict in the psychology field as a humanistic profession. Others contended that conflict cannot be eliminated and is a normal occurrence in every work environment

Organisational structure- such as the hierarchy in organisations was another issue expressed in various ways by the participants. Participants indicated that competition for limited organisational resources can be a potential source of conflict. When institutional priorities must be juggled against individual and departmental priorities in the face of limited time and other resources, conflict can result. Conflict increases with the number of levels in the organisational hierarchy. When employees work in very crowded settings, their interactions with managers, colleagues and other employees increase and potentially lead to stress, exhaustion, conflict and high turnover.

This is in line with pluralist perspective which argues that the organisation is multi-structured and competitive in terms of groupings, leadership, authority and loyalty, and this, Fox (1976) argues, gives rise to 'a complex of tensions and competing claims which have to be "managed" in the interest of maintaining a viable collaborative structure. The organisation is, therefore, in a permanent state of dynamic tension resulting from the inherent conflict of interests between the various sectional groups and requires to be managed through a variety of roles, institutions and processes. Conflict, is 'the total range of behaviour and attitudes that express opposition and divergent orientation', and is perceived as both rational and inevitable (Anstey, 1994). Industrial psychology practitioners who perceive conflict from this standpoint are most likely to see themselves as a playing a role of mediators (helping disputing parties, i.e. labour and management, to resolve their disputes). Research participants perceived their role as a mediator in the conflict situation. Most participants seemed to adopt this approach; they do not totally ignore issues of conflict but are more likely to look at issues that give rise to conflict. Findings of this study highlight issues such as the perception of and reaction to conflict, organisational structure, organisational management style, the nature and conditions of job assignment, individual characteristics, and mutual understanding and interaction are

important factors contributing to the occurrence and management of conflict. However, critiques of this approach argue that very often industrial psychology practitioners who operate from this perspective are most likely to study conflict from the point of its resolution rather than its generation

Participants also revealed the role of organisational management style adopted by managers in conflict management. Nelson and Cox (2000) found management approaches to be one of the conflict enhancers, contending that since autocratic managers try to prevent challenges and suppress conflict by force and coercion, they aggravate dysfunctional conflict.

The nature and conditions of job assignment, which was one of the major themes expressed by participants, has been investigated in various ways by different researchers. Cox and Kubsch (1999) concluded that task structures, task-based environments controlled by top management, group combination and size, and limited resources available to HR/industrial psychology practitioners can all function as conflict sources. Overloading can lead to conflicts for most individuals. One important strategy in reduction of conflict is a balanced industrial psychology practitioner – employee ratio and clear task descriptions. Working conditions may bring about conflicts that induce industrial psychology practitioners to resort to routine task performance, thus possibly negatively affecting the HR/industrial psychology practitioner and management relationship, as is evident among industrial psychologists in an organisational setting.

Regarding individual characteristics, we found that they are involved in the specific work situations as potential sources of conflict and its efficient resolution. Similarly, prior researches contend that personal characteristics, attitudes and situational behaviours play significant roles in conflict issues.

Mutual understanding and interaction was found to be the most frequent and important category in the research, comprising different aspects such as mutual understanding between colleagues, managers, employees and all other stakeholders. Prior studies have

shown that conflict can occur and be controlled through interactions and communication. Conflict arises because of misinformation or misunderstanding. Inadequate communication between managers and industrial psychology practitioners can lead to conflicts. In his ultimate research model, Cox (2000) proposed that good personal interrelationships and a higher understanding of the spirit of others are negatively correlated with within-group conflict and can function as buffers.

Some participants believed that as psychology is a humanistic profession, conflict could not therefore affects industrial psychology practitioners' performance. Cox did not find any direct relationship between conflict and performance and turnover, although some researchers argued that a *"good psychologist should leave her/his personal life matters behind the organisation doors"*. However, by now it has been revealed that personal and life experiences can influence professional life and vice versa. Further research has also revealed the outcomes of conflict on different individual aspects, the health of family life, poor performance and relationships, increase in absenteeism and eventually an increase in turnover. Generally it can be argued that not all the outcomes of conflict are negative; conflict can be constructive if it enhances decision-making quality.

Another finding in this study was that conflict can also affect the individual's family life. On the other hand, family life and multiple roles of the individual can also give rise to conflicts. Chandola et al (2001) contend that both directions of conflict-work conflicts are disrupting one's personal life and life conflicts disrupting work-affect health. These conflicts can arise from the individual's inability to adopt multiple roles, which can lead to stress and illness. On the other hand, conflict has arisen between industrial psychologists' perceived professional roles and the roles that the organisation has imposed on industrial psychologists (i.e. the role of HR).

Organisational culture, task-oriented industrial psychology practitioners' experiences, unbalanced industrial psychology practitioner-employee ratios were found to be the main theme as per participant's experiences. The role of an industrial psychologist is unclear and largely unknown, even by the employers. It is clear that under these circumstances,

the conditions that cause conflict are increased. Thus, industrial psychology practitioners and managers should be alert in order to prevent and manage conflict effectively. 4 participants were not clear about their role in the organisation and were not sure how their role differs from that of Human Resource practitioner. There seem to be a huge difference between the roles of Industrial Psychologist as prescribed by the HPCSA and as it practiced in the workplace. Scope of practice for Industrial Psychologist (as per the practice framework for psychologist as stipulated by HPCSA) is to plan, develop and apply paradigms, theories, models, constructs and principles of psychology to issues related to the world of work in order to understand, modify, enhance individual, group and organisational behaviour effectiveness. They should facilitate individual and group processes for effective organisational function. Participants felt that most of the time the organisation is not aware of these roles as a result their potential and abilities is not fully utilised. This often results to clash of expectations – that of the Industrial Psychologist and of the company.

This study demonstrates that conflict has negative causes and negative outcomes. It is apparent that conflict is not easy to handle. Yet when properly managed, conflict can lead to improved personal relationships and better organisational performance. If organisations invest in conflict management training, leaders can harness conflict's creativity energy.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

6.1 Conclusion

How Industrial Psychologists perceive conflict influences how they react to it. Sources of conflict are embedded in the characteristics of Industrial Psychologists and the structure of the organisation, but at the same time these characteristics can be seen as strategies to solve conflict. We found mutual understanding and interaction to be the main factor able to prevent and resolve conflict effectively. It is therefore recommended that industrial psychologists and employers encourage any virtues and activities that increase such understanding and interaction.

"Mutual understanding and interaction" were found to be the main factor able to prevent and resolve conflict effectively. It is therefore recommend that industrial psychology practitioners and managers encourage any virtues and activity that enhances such understanding and interaction. This approach will benefit the quality of work life. Finally, as conflict can destroy individual practitioners and the system as a whole, it is advisable that we take action to manage it effectively.

All participants viewed conflict from the perspective of individual (i.e., individual character/personality, misunderstanding between two or more individuals etc) as opposed to the fundamental conflict that is at the heart of the labour relations. They did not view conflict as inherent in labour relationship. They disguise conflict, do not view conflict and power as central to the field of employment relations, hence the concept of conflict have been largely neglected in Industrial Psychology. Fullagar (1984) argued that Industrial Psychologist ignores (or minimizes) issues of conflict in the workplace, as a result, conflict remains vaguely defined and understood in industrial psychology. Hook, Mkhize, Kiguwa and Collins (2004:13), are of the opinion that an investigation into the relationship between power and psychology will reveal that "psychology itself is powerful….psychology plays a part in maintaining and extending existing relations of power". They further posit that psychology is a political tool and an instrument of power

(Hook et al, 2004). The knowledge that psychologists produce and their subsequent practices also constitute power relationships (Hook et al, 2004). Hook et al (2004:14) argues that "psychology is not a neutral science, not an unbiased, simply objective way of knowing the world…on the contrary, power 'runs in the veins' of psychology; there is no form of psychological knowledge or practice that does not set up or support a certain relationship of power". Furthermore, Psychology has always attempted to play down its political nature and the discipline's avoidance of the questions of conflict, power and politics points to the ideological functioning of power (Hook et al, 2004). This is reflected in the Industrial Psychology's ongoing avoidance of an in-depth conversation about conflict with the labour relationship. All participants did not provide an in-depth insight about conflict that is deemed to be at the core of labour relations.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The results can be judged based on the criteria of transferability or applicability. This study provides a comprehensive understanding about factors that influence occurrence and management of organisational conflict. However, there are various limitations that would have to be kept in mind when analysing and making inferences from the sample. The study and the findings are limited to the South African context, in particular KZN and to only Industrial Psychologists. This in turn creates a gap for future research to extend upon this study to compare and contrast the experiences of Industrial Psychologists and in different countries and regions. Therefore a larger and broader study, which is not bound by financial and time constraints, would be the ideal.

It is recommended that future research following a similar methodology and agenda should focus on the quantitative/qualitative divide and explore whether experiences and perceptions of conflict for Industrial Psychologist are shaped and informed by who pay the bills.

A further research gap that has been identified during the course of this research is the focus on all type of industries (i.e. FMCG, mining, energy etc) to see if the experiences will differ.

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Appendix A: *Consent form*

Research Participants Information and Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in research project. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researcher(s) any questions you may have.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

You are being asked to participate in a research study of the perceptions and experiences of industrial psychology practitioners with regard to issues of conflict in the workplace. The major purpose of this project is to begin to investigate how individuals within industrial psychology perceive issues of conflict in labour-management relationship, and what are their experiences in the workplace with regard to conflict.

- In the entire study, 5 people from different workplace settings are being asked to participate.
- You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are perceived to have knowledge or experience of the area being investigated. You are a registered industrial psychologist who has had some exposure to the workplace.
- Your participation in this study will take about 45-60 minutes.
- If you are not registered industrial psychologists and have not more than two years of serves you cannot be in this study.

WHAT YOU WILL DO

In this project we will ask you to respond to research guideline questions in a form of an interview. These questions are about your background and experiences and your perceptions about conflict in the workplace.

- Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate in this project or any part of the project. You may refuse to answer some of the questions and you may discontinue your participation at any time.
- If you would like to receive the results of this study via e-mail, please provide your e-mail address in the space provided at the end of this form.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to the understanding of the industrial psychology practitioner's perceptions and experiences with regard to issues of conflict in the workplace.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no grave risks anticipated. However, there is a room for discomfort in particular, to those questions about your perceptions or your role. Nevertheless, the anticipation is that, the discomfort will not be out of proportion.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowed by law. Only the researcher, supervisor and reviewers, if necessary, will have access to survey responses.

- You will be assigned a unique identification number and the data file containing survey responses will not identify your name. The key linking names and

identification number will be stored separately under lock and key. All electronic data will be stored securely on a password-protected computer. Data will be stored for five years.

- The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will remain anonymous. All results of this study will be reported anonymously so that no one will be able to identify a particular person.
- One year after the completion of this study you will be informed about the findings of the study via e-mails.

YOU RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact the researcher,
Ms Nontuthuko Mgabhi
Masters: Industrial Psychology student
University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College)
E-mail: 205524815@ukzn.ac.za
Mobile: 0839487216

If you have any questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the research supervisor: Dean Isaacs at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College), e-mail: Isaacsd1@ukzn.ac.za.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

<table>
<tr><td>_____ Signature</td><td>_____ Date</td></tr>
</table>

Would you like to receive a summary of study results via e-mail?

☐ Yes   No ☐

If yes, please provide your e-mail address:

_____ E-mail address

May we contact you via e-mail in the future to invite you to take part in follow-up studies, if need may be?

☐ Yes   No ☐

If yes, please provide your e-mail address:

_____ E-mail address

Appendix B: Letter to participants

Dear Potential Participant

Re: An Exploration of the Experiences of Conflict as Perceived by Industrial Psychologists in the Workplace: A Qualitative Study

I am a Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Howard College). For the purpose of completing my degree, I am conducting research on the experiences and of conflict as perceived by Industrial Psychologists in the workplace. I am being supervised by Mr Dean Isaacs.

The research will be conducted during the months of October and November 2009, before the peak period. You are kindly asked to volunteer your participation in this research study. In the event that you agree to participate, I would appreciate it if you could sign the attached consent form. Your participation in the study consists of taking part in an interview which will be conducted in your workplace at the time and venue that is most suited to you. The interview will be approximately 45- 60 minutes in duration. Information provided by you will remain confidential and used only for the purposes of this research study. Additionally, your name will not be mentioned in any report of this research study. All participation in the study is voluntary and no adverse effects will result from discontinuing your participation.

Yours faithfully,   Research Supervisor:

                                                                         Mr. Dean Isaacs

_____   The School of Psychology

Researcher: University of KwaZulu-Natal

Ms. Nontuthuko Mgabhi   Isaacsd1@ukzn.ac.za

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205524815@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix C: *Interview guide*

Potential questions to be raised; areas of focus in the semi-structured interviews with participants (in no particular order):

- What Does Conflict mean to you? Or how do you define conflict?

- What are the most common courses of conflict

- Do you have any experiences of conflict? What are some of these experiences?\

- Where does most conflict emerge from?

- What are the symptoms of conflict?

- How have you resolved conflict before? Or how do you handle conflict?

- What are some of the factors that aggravate conflict?

- How do you perceive your role in your workplace?

Appendix D: Example of a transcribed semi- structured interview

Interviewer:
How do you define conflict?

Participant:
Conflicts to me mean a verbal disagreement between people over a point of view or a policy or an opinion. But essentially it is when two or more people differ in which the way forward can be and that obviously result in both people needing to find some sort of solution to go forward with the problem.

Interviewer:
If people view things from different perspective- why it has to result into conflict? Maybe they can manage it better?

Participant:
Because there are two kinds of conflict: (1) the positive one- where disagreement can lead into new thinking, new understanding or new way forward (2) Negative one- where people are just being stubborn, for instance in the workplace you will find that two people, they both have the different way of doing the same something, and the one always has to win and the other has to loos. And that often result into culture clash, issues and argument or whatever. But my theory is, people should be focusing on harnessing the potential deference in finding the new way going forward.

For example in the workplace, everything that needs to be done, all the operational requirements of ones job is in the paper. So there shouldn't any disagreements on how the job should be done. But very often it's the personal issue; it's the personality characteristics that people bring into the workplace, for example, I want to go ahead in my career and maybe you are in way, or maybe because do not like the way you look or talk to customers or your attitude, then must be done my way. So what I am saying to you

is that even although, there should in essence be no conflict per se about work, but people's own perceptions, biases, prejudices and that sort of thing come into play and as a result, its disables them from actually solving the conflict in a positive and embracing manner.

Interviewer:
What are some of your experiences of conflict?

Participant:
You see in my role, purely as an assessment practitioner- I honestly don't have any conflict here, the only possible conflict that I would have for example, is whether to schedule a candidate assessment now or at 13:00 (laughter). So in terms of identifying and diagnosing and then solving business related conflict in the business (Edcon) that is done in our ER (Employees Relations) department which handles or disciplines conflict i.e. sexual harassment etc. But as far as conflict is concerned in my department there is no much conflict. I think in general, I am a very accommodating individual, I am always the one who wants to preserve the relationship so I would always say: let's sit, let's talk, lets see where the issue is as oppose to creaming or shouting. But the culture in which we work here in Edcon, especially in this department, people are very lied back, people are very professional and we follow our values quit seriously, values of professionalism, integrity etc. So when comes to a possible conflict, the last thing that we want to do here is end up fighting. We sit chat and talk and find the way forward. And because the department we are close together, we always have tea together- we are one department.

The culture of the organisation plays a huge role when comes to issues of conflict. In Edcon we essentially turn to leave and breath our vales of professionalism, integrity etc. We believe that to be a good employer or employee you need to live and practice these values. And the second thing is, we are very, very, concerned about our service delivery, service delivery basically means if you are my client of my business unit- I need to do whatever it takes to meet your needs, whether I want to or not. So in that process it basically means , if you come to me with a need or a want or a business requirement, I

need to make sure that I fulfil that requirement to the best of my ability and with that SLA- SLA comes first, so there is no time sit and quarrel or whatever. And also another thing because we plan well in advance (especially our department or Recruitment and Assessment) because we plan well in advance, we actually limit the potential conflict that could happen. So planning is important, being proactive. And the thing is, who want to come to work everyday and avoid people or what ever. It is not the kind of culture that we have because we believe in our people and if we want to be an employer of choice we need inculcate a work environment that will attract people towards Edcon environment and such an environment is the one that tackle conflict had-on and in positive way.

Interviewer:
What are the symptoms of conflict?

Participant:
If you having conflict with someone in the workplace, probably you would avoid talking to that person, avoid eye contact
-But when we looking at more personal point of view- having conflict within your self it would be:

- stress,
- alienate themselves from people
- Headaches

People handle stress and conflict in different ways, so they would manifest different symptoms of that conflict.

Interviewer:
What is your role in Edcon?

Participant:

Our biggest business partner is Recruitment Department- this department sit with us recruit for all our position in Edgars, Jet, LEGIT, CNA- all our Edgars and Edcon stores in KZN. Our Assessment Department we conduct psychometric testing that is in line with the position, we look at person-job fit, cognitive potential, problem solving- we look at basically at alignment between the candidate and the position they applying for. We also do a bit of Talent management, Succession Planning, we give feedback on the assessment result- I would think that we provide valuable service not a\only to the business but to recruitment.

I also don't think that we are in a very high pressure situation here- we are able to plan, and the most important thing that our department does- we are very flexibly, in terms of how we serve our business partners, for example, we have prescheduled solid-predetermined assessment sessions every day (9:00, 11:00 and 14:00) however if there is an interview at 15:30 afternoon and the candidate must be assessed after that it is not like we will say, no we will do it tomorrow. We are very flexible, as a result when pressure is lot and we are very busy, because the rapport is established and the levels of professionalism we benchmark them all the time- our business partners we reciprocate that understanding. So there isn't that much room for conflict.

Practice does not make perfect but practice makes permanence. If you keep doing the same thing over and expect different results, then you are shooting yourself in the foot. You need to do something different, and the only way of doing something different is to get different points of view and harness and embrace those points of view- otherwise you wasting your time. So I think conflict for me present an opportunity of something new, something innovative, something creative, something you didn't think about before. So I think anybody that pushes away conflict is doing himself more harm than good, doing himself injustice.

Interviewer
How do you handle conflict?

Participant:

What I would probably do is- I would ascertain what behaviours of mine or theirs that has led into them having these conclusions. And if it gets to the point that it's damaging or hampering my everyday functioning- I would first speak to the person, and say you know what this is the issue, and try to find a compromise, failing which- If I really feel I have a case, I would speak to my line manager for some assistance with that regards, if that fails, I would probably approach the ER department for some assistance. Because, I personally would not want to come to work with that in my shoulders' – its unproductive, its waste your day, its stressful.
Most of the conflict is based on the perceived than the actual fact.

Interviewer:

What you mean when you say: based on the perceived not the actual?

Participant:

Often people treat perceptions as fact. They also rely on the rumour. They do not even confrontationally address the rumour, they suppress these ideas until there is no more room for it. I think if we could be more open and honest we would reduce the perception that often results to conflict or tension.

Interviewer:

What are the positives of handling conflict well?

Participant:

- you become family- harmonious working environment
- we celebrate birthdays here, we like a family here
- we live our values
- for me I am more interested in the value of work in our lives, I am not talking about the monitory contribution that work gives us. I think work takes us away from family, friends, helps us deal with the stresses of our lives because we have to perform at work and you feel fulfilled. It's a very big family here, which inculcates the positives.

Interviewer:

What are some of the factors that aggravate conflict?

Participant:

- misconceptions
- prejudice
- stereotypes
- the unknown variables
- perceptions- this is the most important thing, as opposed to being honest and practicing the value of integrity and coming up to the person and say: there seems to be an issue here, what's actually going on here. Instead of going behind that person's back and talk. And if we were to take out all those misconception I think the world would be a better place
- misunderstanding
- Inability to look at things from the other person's point of view- not being open-minded

Interviewer:
Thank you very much for your time. Do you have any concerns or question for me?

Participant:
No, thanks

Interviewer:
Thank you very much

Appendix E: Example of identification of themes

Themes:

1. The Industrial Psychologists' perceptions and reactions to conflict

2. Organisational management style

3. Organisational structure

4. The nature and condition of job assignment

5. Individual characteristics

6. Mutual understanding and interaction

7. The consequences of conflict

Appendix F: *Example of clustering of themes into master themes*

Cluster 1: Conflict as emerging from different sources – intrapersonal and systemic (themes 1, 2, and 3).

Cluster 2: The aspects of the nature of the job (theme 4).

Cluster 3: Conflict as intrapersonal and interpersonal (theme 5 and 6).

Cluster 4: The results of conflict (theme 7)

Appendix G: *Example of a summary table*

Cluster 1: The factors resulting to conflict as perceived by Industrial Psychologists

Constituent Themes	Keywords
• Organisational management style	"People might all be in management but does not make them better managers as they might be in that management position for different reasons and be there not through merit." "We told our problems to the supervisor and asked him to see to them. For example, I asked the superior to intervene but to my surprise he never addressed the issue, it was swept under the carpet."
• Organisational structure	"Well in this organisation, they have what they call face-to-face meeting, where if there are issues between two employees as such they would have a facilitator sort of setting to facilitate discussion between the two people to sort of come to the essence or the core of conflict (what the conflict is about) to try and address what the parties needs are."
• The nature and condition of job assignment	"Every test book will talk about who is the client, but in practice it is not as black and white as one might think." "Even although we work for the company but we have an ethical obligation to ensure employee well-being and their needs."

	"Working for the company that care less about employees is a difficult challenge for industrial psychologist."
• Individual characteristics	"I think in general, I am a very accommodating individual, I am always the one who wants to preserve the relationship so I would always say, let's sit, let's talk, let's see where the issue is as opposed to screaming and shouting." "Since I am a very easy-going person I rarely face conflict; I don't argue a lot." "To be honest with you, I often ignore conflict; I don't like disagreement unless it it's really warrants it." "Some people prefer a confrontational style while some try by all means to ignore it at all cost."
• Mutual understanding and interaction	"I expect my manager to understand me, no matter if he does nothing for me, I just expect to hear a 'thank you', or yes, you're right on this, I understand you... it's a tough task, I know." "It was really due to misunderstanding" "He did not want to compromise"
• The consequences of conflict	"The main cause of our absenteeism is conflict."

	"People do not leave the company, but they leave the boss- most people who resign in this company, they love the company but resign because of the boss." "When I experience a lot of stress I feel like changing my job." "Those conflict affect you… you get the feeling of discontent…you don't work heartily…with reluctance…you do all with reluctance and unwillingness."