INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CONFLICT IN THE LABOUR RELATIONSHIP AND THE INCIDENCE OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

By

Sasha Govender

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Supervisor: Dean Isaacs

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DECLARATION

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science (Industrial Psychology) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I declare that this dissertation is my own work. All citations, references and borrowed information have been appropriately acknowledged. This dissertation is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science in Industrial Psychology in the School of Applied Human Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This dissertation has not been submitted previously for any other degree or examination in any other University.

Signed: .... Date: ....

Sasha Govender

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions of the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. A qualitative research approach is used to explore the perceptions of these students in relation to the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action. The sample of participants who were interviewed consisted of ten postgraduate (honours and masters) industrial psychology students at a university in South Africa. This study also explored several university prospectuses which revealed students' exposure to the concept of conflict in their academic curriculum. Purposive sampling was employed in this study. The method of data analysis used was thematic analysis. The emerging themes were: (1) perceptions of industrial action; (2) apartheid versus democracy; (3) capitalism; (4) employee versus employer; (5) unions as mediators; (6) factors contributing to industrial action; (7) perceptions of conflict; (8) factors contributing to conflict; (9) exposure; and (10) solutions.

The findings of this study revealed that honours and masters participants had a broad and contextualized understanding of the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. The study also revealed that these participants were exposed to these concepts in a more contextualized manner based on their academic curriculum. Overall participants expressed well rounded knowledge on the subject matter and aspects associated with industrial action and conflict. Both honours and masters participants expressed the need for more practical exposure in association with theoretical exposure in their academic studies. A comparison of several university prospectuses revealed that only three out of the eight universities included in this study incorporate conflict and labour relations in their academic curriculum. Furthermore, this study revealed that students are exposed to technical and structural solutions rather than political solutions to reduce issues of conflict and industrial action. The majority of participants were not able to provide possible solutions for the reduction of industrial action and conflict. The findings of this study revealed that more research needs to be conducted on conflict and industrial action in the South African context. This adds value to the field of industrial psychology and academia. Perusal of several university prospectuses revealed a limited amount of exposure to the concept of conflict across South African universities.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction, Background and Outline of Research Problem

Industrial action takes various forms including go-slows, lock-outs, work stoppages, work-to-rule, overtime bans and strikes, which are the most frequent (Millington, Holland & Burnett, 2015). The Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995 (p. 235) defines industrial action in terms of strikes as "the cessation of work by a body of employed persons acting in combination" or "a concerted refusal, or a refusal under a common understanding, of any number of employed persons to continue to work for an employer in consequence of a dispute..." Industrial action is becoming an area of concern in South Africa through the increasing manifestation of industrial action through strikes which have been taking place in the mining, education, health and service delivery sectors, to name a few (Rycroft, 2014).

South Africa has been ranked as one of the countries with the highest levels of industrial action (South African Economic Outlook, 2014). There are numerous labour disputes which result in unprotected strikes which often lead to violence and the loss of lives (Rycroft, 2014). An 'unprotected' strike means a strike which does not act in accordance with the provisions of chapter four of the Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995 and is often termed a 'wildcat strike.' One of the major concerns of these strikes is the incidence of violence (Alexander, 2013). Industrial action displayed through strikes in South Africa can be characterised by conflict in the labour relationship. According to Scott (2014), industrial action can be seen as a marker of conflict. In other words, conflict in the labour relationship influences industrial action (Boiteveau, 2014).

Conflict is a reality of the South African labour relationship. Coser (1957) defines conflict as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scare resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals" (p. 232). This perspective views conflict as 'goal-directed' in the sense that parties seek to hurt, weaken or injure one another in an effort to attain their desired goals (Anstey, 1991). Conflict is inevitable in a country inundated by ideology, diversity, class and race. The concept of conflict is not necessarily taught in a nuanced manner at universities in South Africa. In other words, students may leave university with a superficial understanding

of conflict rather than a holistic one. Furthermore, there may even be a lack of focus on the concept of conflict which does not allow the student to understand the practical implementations.

It is important to understand the possible neglect of these concepts and the impact it may have on the discipline and the perceptions of industrial psychology postgraduates. Marrin (2006) defines perception as "a cognition or apprehension obtained through the senses and intellect, as well as ideas or notions arising from such knowledge" (p. 9). It is important for students of industrial psychology to understand or perceive the true nature of conflict in a holistic manner. This will allow students to be aware of the various theoretical aspects, similarities, differences and anticipated outcomes of the concept of conflict and the manifestation of industrial action. It is also of importance as future industrial psychologists may be required to apply their expertise on matters of conflict in organisations.

It is essential to consider the role ideology plays in relation to the concept of conflict as this is an important aspect in the South African context in relation to South Africa's oppressive history based on colonial and apartheid ideology. There are numerous international and local studies conducted on conflict resolution processes and industrial action, however there is no research based data on postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions on the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. It is therefore important to conduct this research study to develop a better understanding and considerable viewpoints to fill this gap.

1.2. Aim/Rationale for Research

The objective of this study is to explore postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions of the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. It is vital to understand conflict in the labour relationship and its manifestation of industrial action in a holistic manner. South Africa is faced with continuous industrial action and will benefit from exposure and understanding of this multifaceted trend of conflict in the labour relationship. There is a lack of exposure to dealing with conflict, specifically at South African universities (Fullagar, 1984). Therefore, it is vital to investigate

whether industrial psychology in South Africa offers a holistic or superficial understanding of the concept of conflict.

Many students in industrial psychology leave university without a broad or a deep understanding of the concept of conflict and its influence on organised labour (Fullagar, 1984). The rationale for this study involves understanding the perceptions of these postgraduate students in terms of their perceptions of conflict in the labour relationship in relation to the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. This research study will also examine postgraduate programmes in industrial psychology at several universities to identify the manner in which conflict is conceptualized and covered in the curricula, which will be done by examining universities' prospectuses.

1.3. Research Objectives

The researcher was curious about how industrial psychology students view the concept of conflict. This research aims to explore the level of exposure students have had to this concept (at honours and masters levels) and how this influences their perceptions of conflict. The main aim behind this research study is the existing lack of research of this nature in South Africa. The current study is therefore aimed at providing a foundation on which future studies can build in order to comprehensively understand the role conflict plays in industrial action and how students understand the concept of conflict, as well as their level of exposure to this concept.

1.4. Research Questions

- Do the perceptions of postgraduate industrial psychology students on industrial action in South Africa, reflect a contextual perspective?

- Do the perceptions of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action reflect a pluralistic/contextualized understanding?

- What are the perceptions of the role industrial psychology plays in conflict in the labour relationship and industrial action?

- In what way is conflict conceptualized and covered in the curriculum at universities in South Africa

1.5. Summary

This chapter has given a brief overview of the topic, the aim and rationale for the study and questions that the study aimed to answer. The literature review that follows will provide literature on various research studies which were conducted to explore postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions of the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in the labour relationship in South Africa. The literature will also explore the gap in research which calls for further studies in this specific area of research and explores the possible neglect of including aspects of conflict and industrial action in the university curriculum in South Africa.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conflict

According to Anstey (1999), "conflict exists in a relationship when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously, or perceive a divergence in their values, needs or interests (latent conflict) and purposefully employ the power in an effort to eliminate, defeat, neutralise, or change each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction (manifest conflict)" (p. 36). Anstey (1999) divides conflict into two stages, namely the latent conflict and manifest conflict as indicated above, however it is important to note that the latent phase of conflict (dormant) relies largely on the perspectives of the parties. It is suggested that despite the chance that these perceptions or beliefs may be misguided, it is not relevant for the purpose of defining conflict, so long as there is a difference of opinion or perception, and conflict may arise.

Fox (1966) defines conflict as the incompatible objectives or goals between members in the employment relationship. Conflict can be seen as a complex concept which involves the struggle for power, decision making, the manner in which people talk to each other, as well as unresolved issues. Conflict focuses on the situation or circumstances that lead to conflict or the behaviour of disputants that produce perceptions of disagreement (Cupach, Canary & Serpe, 2001). Conflict can also be divided into functional or dysfunctional conflict (De Jager, 2008). Functional conflict takes place in the interest of the organisation, whereas dysfunctional conflict may have a negative impact on the organisation. Dysfunctional conflict is the 'confrontation or interaction between groups that harms the organisation or hinders attainment of goals or objectives', while functional conflict is 'considered positive, because it enhances performance and identifies weaknesses' (Belak, 1998; Takas, 2002).

The South African labour relationship frequently faces numerous challenges in which both conflict and industrial action arise. Industrial action is a normal part of industrial relations and the Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995 provides this right to South African employees. Power and conflict are inherent and inevitable in the employment relationship in South Africa mainly due to the inequalities and exploitation which was eminent during apartheid, and has had a trickle-down effect into democracy. South African workers in the mining, education,

health care and service delivery sectors are in a perpetual state of conflict due to competition for limited resources. Employees demand higher wages or salaries which the employer does not always agree to. Over time negotiation procedures and good faith bargaining seems to have been lost and wildcat strikes, which are illegal, have replaced them. This emphasises the conflict between employees and employers. Conflict can result from differing values, objectives or interests (Chidi & Okpala, 2012). Most often it is the employee who has different values and goals to that of management and it is those values and goals which are in conflict with that of management (Chidi & Okpala, 2012). This is often the reason for conflict in the labour relationship and the emergence of industrial action.

2.1.1. The Labour Relationship

Bendix (2007) defined labour relations as a relationship which exists between people who work and those for whom they work. In a nutshell, it is a mutual relationship that exists between an employer and an employee. The aim of the employer is to oversee the overall functioning of the organisation, while the employee is accountable for all the duties given by the employer. While the employment relationship is expected to be bound by mutual respect, divergent interests and goals are more prevalent. While employees may demand higher wages with better conditions, employers may wish to maximise their profits by using cheap labour (Bendix, 2007). The result of this phenomenon is conflict of interests in the form of industrial action.

The labour relationship is closely aligned with industrial relations which can be described as "the study of people in a situation, organisation or system interacting in the doing of work in relation to some form of contract either written or unwritten" (Margerison, 1969, p. 274). Industrial psychology refers to the study of people in organisations (Schultz & Schultz, 1994). Both these fields are interrelated, however the emphasis in the study and practice of industrial relations has become more 'procedural, operational and developmental' (systems and regulations determining work relations) instead of behavioural relationships and dynamics functioning in industry (Blain & Gennard, 1970; Flanders, 1965).

There has been a shift away from industrial relations and a move toward employee relations. Employee relations can be referred to as the 'study of relations between employees as well as

employer and employees in an attempt to find methods of resolving or reducing conflict and to help in improving the efficiency of an organisation by boosting motivation and morale of the workforce' (Kaufman, 2010; Hartley, Geoffery & Stephenson, 1992). The field of psychology and industrial psychology contributes to the understanding of employment relations by focusing on the behaviour of individuals, groups and organisations in employment. According to Bain and Clegg (1974), a traditional approach to industrial relations has been to regard it as the study of the rules governing employment, and the ways in which the rules are changed, interpreted and administered.

According to Bendix (2007), the labour relations system does not operate in a vacuum. This means that it is influenced by the wider societal and contextual factors of the country. Simplistically, it can be said that the labour relations system is an open system, as it both influences and is being influenced by the environment (Bendix, 2007). This is where employee relations become relevant. In South Africa the industrial relations system has always reflected the socio-political system of the time. Nevertheless, since the industrial relations system is structured by societal factors, the dominant ideology of the time will largely determine the governing laws of that society (Bendix, 2007). In South Africa, the apartheid ideology and policies espoused a notion of a separatist society. As a result, legislations that were institutionalised were purely meant to define and enforce segregation, according to race. The labour relationship can be complex and result in conflict between the members.

2.1.2. Conflict in the Labour Relationship in South Africa

Conflict in the employment relationship can be seen as constructive as this allows for improvement in numerous aspects for both the employer and the employee. However, if conflict remains unaddressed this can result in destructive incidents such as the 'Marikana Massacre' and the 'farm worker's strikes' in the Western Cape (Bendix, 2006). Often the employer uses their position as an advantage to intimidate workers into submission (Vorhies, 1991). The escalation of strikes in this industry has been amplified by conflict and power struggles that occur. During the last few years the perception that violent strike action and aggression is a way for employees to get employers to take them seriously has been established (Rossouw, 2012).

South Africa is a country that has a history which involves inequality, racial and gender discrimination, job reservation for white people and oppression during the apartheid era. These were enforced by a separatist ideology by the dominant party which governed the country. In order to implement such systems of inequality the ruling party implemented numerous acts in an attempt to serve their own interests. The Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995 is a fundamental legislation which is intended to redress the inequalities of the past, advance social justice, ensure that individuals' rights are protected and that all receive fair and equal rights and enhance labour peace in the employment relationship. Conflict is intrinsic in South Africa due to the struggles during apartheid regarding diversity, ideology, discrimination, inequality, class and race. The main purpose of the Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995 is to protect the rights of workers and employers and delineate responsibility, however many individuals continue to be victims of exploitation and inequality.

Many South Africans continue to face these unequal circumstances in their living and working conditions and this further entrenches their destitution. This often results in conflict between the employee and the employer. Conflict is entrenched in the employment relationship in South Africa mainly because it is an economic relationship (Ndlovu, 2013; Cunningham & Slabbert, 1990). The Rand Rebellion of 1922 is an example of how unresolved labour disputes can result in detrimental consequences. Although South Africa is now a democratic country, these labour inequalities regarding wage disputes and working conditions still exist and are reflected through the dominant ideology.

Indicators of conflict in the labour relationship include salaries, fixed-term contracts, working and living conditions, unemployment, retrenchments and numerous other factors which are not uniform locally or internationally (Estanque & Costa, 2011). In the South African context income levels are a major contributor to conflict in the labour relationship, especially regarding wage increases and wage cuts. A considerable number of strikes in South Africa are to 'petition' employers to increase wages and improve the working conditions. According to the Industrial Action Report (2012), 'wages, bonus, and other compensation' still remain the major reasons for work stoppages in South Africa. According to the Department of Labour (2012), a total of 99 strike incidents were recorded in comparison to the 67 in 2011 (Murwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014).

In August 2013, 'technicians' from the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU) working at South African Airways went on strike after the airline refused to add a 0.4% once off payment to its offer of 6.5%. Numerous issues arise between members in the labour relationship and if not effectively dealt with, often lead to industrial action. Despite conflict in the labour relationship in other countries, the incidence of industrial action is far less than that of South Africa. Deacon and Cilliers (2009) suggest that frequent strike action in South Africa implies that the legal system is not adequately dealing with industrial relations. Adequate measures need to be put in place to eradicate this situation.

In contemporary society industrial psychology is often perceived as being aligned with managerial objectives and has been thought to succumb to managerial ideology (Fullagar, 1984). It is important to understand conflict in the labour relationship and the manifestation of industrial action as a result. Often students of industrial psychology are not exposed to conflict in a realistic manner. The concept of conflict is often dealt with in a superficial manner at universities in South Africa. The concept of conflict may be neglected or taught in a theoretical or practical manner, furthermore there may not be much focus placed on the concept of conflict. Many students in industrial psychology leave university without a broad understanding of the concept of conflict and its influence on organised labour (Fullagar, 1984). It is vital to understand industrial action in the context of the labour relationship, and that conflict in the labour relationship influences industrial action (Boiteveau, 2014).

2.2. Industrial Action

Industrial action can take many forms with the most frequent being in the form of strikes. Industrial action is often seen as a result of conflict in the labour relationship. This section will discuss industrial action manifested in the form of strikes. According to the Labour Relations Act No 66 of 1995, "every employee has the right to strike and every employer has recourse to lock out" in accordance to the provisions of the Act (p. 62). Industrial action can be detrimental on the economy as it results in destruction of property, intimidation tactics, loss of production, and of late, the loss of lives (Rycroft, 2014).

It is also important to recognise that most times industrial action is a reaction to conflict and its manifestation in the form of strikes is perceived as the only way in which a labour dispute

can be solved (Godfrey, Maree, Du Toit & Theron, 2010). Industrial action takes place in overt and covert ways, and is often influenced by the stakeholders in the employment relationship (Godfrey et al., 2010). Overt industrial action refers to 'open, obvious industrial action taken by workers or management including strikes, work bans, pickets, lockouts and work-to-rule' (Godfrey et al., 2010). Covert industrial action refers to 'actions by workers or management which are not immediately obvious such as absenteeism, sabotage, turnover or exclusion from business decision-making. Industrial action is experienced throughout the world' (Godfrey et al., 2010).

South Africa is ranked as the country with the highest incidence of industrial action in the world (South African Economic Outlook, 2014). This is concerning considering that other countries such as the United States of America, Australia and Europe, to name a few have rather low incidents of industrial action. The Marikana Massacre in South Africa is just one example of the nature, violence and forms of industrial action which also resulted in the loss of many lives (Alexander, 2013). South Africa's statistics revealed that approximately 200 striking South Africans were killed, 313 injured, and over 3 058 arrested during the period 1999 to 2012 (SAIRR, 2013). In comparison, the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that the level of industrial action in Australia is at near record low (Mail and Guardian, 2015).

According to Visser (2007), even though studies on South African labour relations have recently begun to produce some information of strike occurrences, none provide a comprehensive chronological picture of South African strike incidents. This lack of ample literature on strike incidents in South Africa validates the significance of this paper. It is public knowledge that most common to the demands of workers in South Africa are wage increases and/or good working conditions (Murwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014). It is important to note that other factors play a considerable role in causing labour unrest in South Africa. Such factors include 'union rivalry, poverty, unemployment, and inequality, the use of migrant workers, apartheid legacy, and fear of retrenchment, among others' (Murwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014). The strike actions have far and wider reaching consequences on the economy as a whole, ranging from economic to socio-political effects, and are both instant and gradual.

The common perceived knowledge is that strike actions have extensive negative effects on the economy as a whole. However, due to the complexity of the nature of strikes, rarely can one empirically quantify the effects of strike actions on the economy (Myers & Sarreto, 2009). Nevertheless, it is factual that strike actions have negative consequences for the economy. Strike actions have been associated with immediate effects, such as the loss of production which reduces the actual GDP, and long-term effects, such as the loss of investment which reduces the potential GDP of a country (Economic Research Division, 2010).

Key to the incidents of strikes in South Africa is the extent of development of labour movements in the country (Murwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014). South Africa has the most vibrant, organised, and soundly developed labour movements on the continent. Trade unions in the country have a rich history that stretches back to the apartheid era (Murwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014). They have been instrumental in shaping the political, economic, and social fabric of the country. Voicing on the streets has been considered the language clearly understood by employers. The right and ability to strike in South Africa is a reflection that the country has embraced Kaufman's (2010) core principle that forms the theoretical and policy foundation for the field of industrial relations. It is important to understand industrial action in the context of South Africa.

2.2.1. Industrial Action in South Africa

Industrial action in the form of strikes has been rife in all sectors, with many economic analysts calling South Africa a "striking nation" (Greg, 2013). They have become a blunt weapon frequently wielded in an atmosphere of hostility and intimidation, with negative socio-economic consequences (Muwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014). The causes of strikes are multifaceted and the effects detrimentally catastrophic. Key to the causes is the fact that South Africa faces a number of long-standing economic problems that still reflect, at least in part, the long-lasting and harmful legacy of apartheid (OECD, 2013). As explained by Visser (2007), the history of industrial relations in South Africa, especially pertaining to strikes, is, to a greater extent, a reflection of the country's racially divided past. Industrial action in South Africa has manifested itself in the form of strikes in various sectors such as mining, education, health care and service delivery, to name a few.

The mining sector is one of the country's largest economic sectors (Botiveau, 2014). For instance, the initial reason for the Marikana strikes taking place was a dispute over higher wages however there are underlying factors that have contributed to this situation, such as social and living conditions. Another significantly altering incident of industrial action was among the education sector in the form of strikes in 2007 and 2010 (Rossouw, 2012). Members of all teachers' unions took part in the protest action that lasted nearly several weeks (Rossouw, 2012). The effect of this drawn out industrial action in the education sector may prove to have had severe consequences for the country (Cohen, 2010; Rossouw, 2012). According to the South African Economic Outlook (2014), South Africa has the highest rate of industrial action in the world and among the most violent in the world.

Another significant strike which took place in the agricultural sector was the farm workers' strike which commenced on the 27th of August 2012 in the Western Cape at a farm near De Doorns. It is believed that the Marikana strikes had inspired the farm workers and paved a path which empowered them to embark on these strikes. John Brand (2014) stated that between 2007 and 2011 South Africa has faced an average of 65 strikes per year. During the first half of 2014, a five month strike in the platinum sector took place. The Department of Labour (2012) revealed that a total of 99 strike incidents were recorded in 2012 as compared to 67 in 2011, 74 in 2010, 51 in 2009, and 57 in 2008.

In September 2013 approximately 70 000 petrol attendants and vehicle industry workers affiliated to NUMSA spent three weeks striking. The strike was prolonged and so heated that the Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant, had to intervene to broker an understanding between RMI and NUMSA (Murwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014). These disparities between wage offers and demands make strikes certain in South Africa. In 2010, for example, the South African economy was heavily affected by the Transnet strike. Given that the transport sector is the engine for every economy, the South African economy suffered a great loss in production during the three weeks of the Transnet strike. It is important to understand the role of industrial psychology regarding conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action. The next section will discuss a brief overview of industrial psychology in South Africa.

2.3. Industrial Psychology in South Africa

Industrial psychology is considered an applied discipline which is founded in psychology and is also seen as the study of human behaviour and the manner in which the human mind operates. In order to understand industrial psychology in South Africa, it is important to understand the historical context on which it rests (Rothmann & Cilliers, 2007). The emergence of industrial psychology in South Africa took place during the colonial and apartheid era which was characterised by a political and socio-economic context influenced by a separatist ideology. Ideology can be described as a set of historically and collectively constructed meanings which aim to preserve power relations of dominance (Foster & Louw-Potgieter, 1991).

Industrial psychology in South Africa was rooted in the establishment of the National Institute of Personnel Research (NIPR) in 1946 (Fullagar, 1983). Through the NIPR, South Africa initiated an institute, the sole purpose of which was to carry out research using theoretical findings of industrial psychology to aid government, organisations and personnel management (Fullagar, 1983). Industrial psychology had been implemented in the colonial era which was not conducive to traditional psychological practice and used for the government's own agenda of oppression. Blum and Naylor (1968), as cited in Muchinksky (2006, p. 4), define industrial psychology as "the application or extension of psychological facts and principles to the problems concerning human beings operating within the context of business and industry" (p. 4).

Industrial psychology can be seen as both a science and practice whereby questions are asked in order to guide research, and scientific methods are then used to obtain answers which can be used to explain behaviour (Muchinsky, 2006). One can therefore assert that organisational behaviour plays a vital role in industrial psychology. Industrial psychology assists in problem solving in a real world context in terms of employee selection, reducing absenteeism, efficiency, training and improving job satisfaction and communication, as well as power and control within organisations (Fullagar, 1983). Industrial psychology can therefore be seen as an organisational service rather than an independent and objective science (Fullagar, 1983).

Industrial psychology tends to neglect an organisation's political context and does not always deal with social structures within an organisation effectively.

Frederick Taylor proposed that the efficacy of people had managerial benefits as a result of industrial psychology having an obligation to management to make sure that the workers' efficiency was at its peak in order to gain a profit, productivity and optimal outcomes (Fullagar, 1983). This is one of the reasons industrial psychology is considered a managerial science rather than a social science (Muchinsky, 2006). Workers were not seen as 'thinking' or 'learning' individuals but rather as machines that were meant to do a specific job in a specific way. Industrial psychology then began to study the workers' job profiles and provided fair incentives through systematic processes such as a weekly wage and a bonus (Ashraf et al., 2006). This can also lead to conflict between the workers and the employers (organisation).

Organisational conflict can be resolved once the organisational objectives have been implemented (Bendix, 2006). One of the main reasons for the neglect of labour in South Africa was due to industrial psychology aligning itself with managerial ideology and the implementation of managerial objectives (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004, p. 139). A symbiotic relationship is therefore created between management and industrial psychologists, in which the promotion of organisational efficiency by the worker benefited management and the conducting of research to develop and build theories, benefited the industrial psychologist (Rose, 1990). This resulted in industrial psychologists adopting and reflecting the views of management (managerial bias). Industrial psychology saw conflict as a result of interpersonal and personality differences and it was believed that the situation could be improved if the emotional needs of the worker were satisfied by the organisation (Fullagar, 1984).

Rose (1990) argues that conflict is present between: a) employees, trade unions and industrial action who seek to increase wages and employment, reduce exploitation and improve their working hours and conditions, and b) the employers, managers and industrial psychologists whose goal is to increase profit and productivity, maintain low wages and weaken worker resistance and the workers' collective power. The conflict between each member in the

employment relationship can be alleviated through improving supervision and communication between employees, employers and trade unions.

Brief (2000) suggests that managerial bias in the field of industrial psychology must be less and that some industrial psychologists are now working together with employees to advance their interests. It is important that industrial psychologists that are willing to offer their services and expertise to employees must avoid repeating past mistakes and should remain apolitical despite being in a field characterised by power and class (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2004). It is therefore important to examine industrial psychology as a science in terms of its relation to workers and management. Reflexivity is an important concept which comes into play in both industrial psychology and its practice. This will be discussed below.

2.3.1. Epistemological Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to a researcher's ability to reflect on and acknowledge their own biases and their reactions to the research context and information which they are exposed to (Billig, 2008). Epistemological reflexivity can be described as the ability of a researcher or theorist to acknowledge that their subjective involvement in the research process can influence and shape the research (Willig, 2008). The current context of the South African society should be recognised as playing an integral and crucial part in determining what social phenomena should be researched, studied, and published (Rothman & Cilliers, 2007). Science seeks to objectify subjects to conditions with the hope of producing scientifically universal or generalised knowledge (Rothman & Cilliers, 2007).

Reflexivity insists that researchers must confront and question their taken for granted assumptions which give meaning. This expresses the need for psychologists and researchers to take into consideration their belief systems and values, which require that they view phenomena through a reflexive lens, which calls for a critical review of one's personal biases and subjectivity. Through consideration of these factors, psychologists and researchers become more consciously reflexive by thinking about their own thinking, by noticing and criticising their own epistemological pre-understandings and the effects these have on research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000).

The same can be said with regard to one's understanding of conflict which is shaped by colonial and apartheid ideology. This ideology is passed on through specific contexts and knowledge, therefore epistemological reflexivity is important; in addition, the lack of epistemological reflexivity-shaped research of industrial psychology in South Africa during the apartheid and democratic era (Biesheuvel, 1991). This likely influences and shapes the manner in which industrial psychology is taught at universities. Industrial psychology as a science will always reflect the values, attitudes, ideology and beliefs of those involved in theory formulation or knowledge production (Biesheuvel, 1991). Reflexivity is significant in the relationship between employers and employees in terms of personal biases and reactions to different situations, especially with regards to industrial action and conflict. This also influences the nature of conflict and the manner in which it is understood which is crucial to industrial psychology in South African universities.

2.4. Industrial Psychology in South African Universities

The development of industrial psychology in universities across South Africa has been associated with the department of psychology which moved to the faculty of economics and management sciences during the late 1960s due to its relation with economic sciences (Schreuder, 2001). The department of industrial psychology within the faculty of economics and management sciences was introduced to the University of South Africa (Schreuder, 2001). There has been much confusion regarding the identity of industrial psychology in terms of differentiating between the disciplines of industrial psychology among the public, students as well as academics (Schreuder, 2001). Most individuals perceive industrial psychology and human resource management as synonymous, which posed a negative reflection on the operational relevance of industrial psychology as a scientific practice (Schreuder, 2001).

It is often assumed that this is the role that will be filled by students of industrial psychology. Universities groom their students to pursue such aspects of industrial psychology and align themselves to organisations' ideologies (Schreuder, 2001). Industrial psychology has ignored the issues of conflict and labour relations issues in South Africa during apartheid and contemporary South Africa (Fullagar & Paizis, 1986). According to Fullagar (1984), students in industrial psychology often leave university without a comprehensive understanding of the

true nature of conflict, labour relations and unions in relation to organisational behaviour (as cited in Barling, 1988). This is significant as postgraduate industrial psychology students should have a holistic understanding of these concepts which is not necessarily reflected in universities in South Africa. If industrial psychology takes on a human resource approach in its curriculum this threatens the relevance and purpose of industrial psychology as a whole.

2.4.1. Industrial Psychology and the concept of Conflict in South African Universities

Industrial psychology's relationship with labour and the 'blue-collar' worker can be characterised by apathy and neglect especially with regard to the concept of conflict in most postgraduate courses (Kornhauser, 1947; Shostak, 1964; Walker, 1979). After the establishment of industrial psychology with the NIPR its growth in academic institutions can be seen, as well as the various professional bodies which apply industrial psychology to industrial issues and the number of registered industrial psychologists in South Africa (Fullagar, 1984). The problem that arises involves the academic texts used in the courses of industrial psychology at universities across the country. This facilitates a de-contextualized understanding of conflict for postgraduate students in industrial psychology.

A study conducted on the types of prescribed books for organisational behaviour and industrial psychology across several universities in South Africa revealed that only 0.6 percent of the contents addressed issues of organised labour and trade unions (Fullagar, 1984). Another concern involved the lack of publications in South African Journals of Psychology regarding industrial relations or conflict (Godsell, 1982). This is a cause for concern as this poses questions to the relevance of the field as a whole. South Africa is faced with numerous conflict issues in the labour relationship which often result in industrial action. Without a holistic education of such a concept it becomes difficult for students of industrial psychology to understand and assist in improving these situations. Studies suggest that there has been a decline in the number of qualifying industrial psychologists as well as a lack of academic research and articles in some areas of the field (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010).

According to Orpen (1977), the contemporary tendency in industrial psychology neglects the sphere of conflict and labour relations. It is therefore possible for a student of this discipline

to review literature on industrial psychology and still lack the knowledge concerning the reality and effect of labour and conflict in organisations (Fullagar, 1984). This can create numerous issues in the field of industrial psychology, such as the relevance of the field in terms of its contribution and neglect of industrial action and conflict (Fullagar, 1984). Another concern involves the reason and duration of this neglect. Through a perusal of the courses offered at several universities across South Africa it will reveal whether there is a neglect of the topic of conflict in the industrial psychology curriculum at present.

Given the disparities in what the literature states regarding the concept of conflict and industrial action in South Africa, it is important to examine how the theories have previously been used to link the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. For purposes of this research study, critical theory will be used to provide a theoretical underpinning of postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions in terms of the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action. Furthermore, critical theory provides a theoretical understanding in relation to the possible neglect of these concepts in the academic curriculum at various universities for industrial psychology students. The section below will discuss the theoretical framework of the current research.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

2.5.1. Critical Theory

Geuss (1981) defines critical theory as a complex conceptual object which is addressed to a specific group of agents in a certain society and purposes to develop their self-consciousness in a process of effective emancipation. In other words, it is the liberation of individuals from systems which are dominating. According to Jermier (1998), this requires an "examination of the structures of control in society and of the political implications of academic work" (p. 236). Critical theory "is relevant for the field of conflict resolution because it offers practitioners and scholars with a framework that can guide them in assisting parties to overcome societal and interpersonal oppression and injustice" (Hansen, 2008, p. 406). One of the ideas of critical theory is emancipation of human beings, with particular reference to industrial action and conflict. However critical theory is much broader than this.

Emancipation is the process by which workers and groups become freed from oppressive social and ideological circumstances which are responsible for socially unnecessary limitations upon the advance and articulation of human consciousness (Alvesson & Willmot, 1992). This quest for emancipation may cause conflict.

Individuals require democratisation; however, top down management limits the human being to a passive being who cannot make sense of their own lives (Alvesson & Willmot, 1992). The labour relationship in South Africa is one which is applicable to this context as the worker is marginalised in the workplace. This is relevant to the research as one of the core reasons for conflict taking place in the labour relationship is that employees are becoming more aware of their rights and they emancipate themselves through industrial action. This also calls into question how students understand the concept of conflict and industrial action in the field of industrial psychology. Critical theory seeks to address how the worker is associated or only understood within the work context, however failing to recognise external factors, that before we recognise the individual as a worker we have to understand them as a human being that exists in society outside the workplace (Kazi & Indermun, 2014).

The Marikana Massacre provides an example of the direct result of profit over people who can be associated with the neoliberal ideologies that have been adopted by the South African government and the policies that govern business (Twala, 2012). Many organisations make huge profits, while the employee is responsible for the labour yet receives a minimal wage. In other words, organisations benefit at the expense of the worker. This is an exploitative relationship between capital and work which dehumanises the employee. This research study is concerned with conflict in the labour relationship and the emergence of industrial action which can be described through critical theory.

Industrial psychology should be concerned with the human side of the organisation and should benefit the employee. Industrial psychology needs to emancipate itself from managerial ideology. This emancipation is also critical in universities across South Africa in terms of practical applications and a more holistic curriculum incorporating the concept of conflict and industrial action in the labour relationship. In order to truly understand critical theory, it is important to understand how and when it developed.

2.5.2. Development of Critical Theory

2.5.2.1. Habermas' Discursive Approach

Habermas views individuals as active agents that construct their environment and institution through the process of communication and emancipate themselves (Habermas, 1996). For example, job satisfaction reflects how individuals interpret their working environment. In the case of South Africa many employees are dissatisfied with their working conditions, and this creates conflict between management and employees. These opposing views result in unrest which is reflected by the high rate of industrial action in the country (Habermas, 1996). A cyclical relationship is prevalent in that job satisfaction provides feedback to the organisation and for an organisation to be successful it must continuously ensure the satisfaction of employees (Bonham, 2005).

This is difficult in a situation where organisations want a high profit and are not willing to pay their workers above minimum wage (Bonham, 2005). Central to Habermas' argument is his notion of rationality which he sees as a process of communication inclusive of both subjective and objective spheres (Habermas, 1996). This is reflected in what Habermas terms "public sphere" where individuals openly discuss ideas without threat and with mutual respect, thus the basis of a democratic society (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). A lack in communication or willingness to compromise may create more conflict.

2.5.2.2. The Frankfurt School

Being largely multidisciplinary, the Frankfurt School understood society in terms of Hegel (Bohman, 2005). That is, society is more or less self-reflexive in the sense that the beliefs and attitudes held by individuals about themselves and society is an integral part of said society (Kazi, 2010). Thus, a society is seen as being a totality of beliefs and attitudes that can shape any part in that society. This is reflected in South African society based on apartheid ideology which is still rife in organisations today.

What is important to understand about objectivity and reflexivity, is that an objectifying attitude towards a belief is meant to be seen in isolation to the system. However, individuals

within capitalist societies are manipulated in a manner which results in their reflexive nature supporting a false objective reality in a way that reinforces the domination, resulting in an acceptance of the system (Marx & Engels, 1985). Marx and Engels (1985) suggest that in order to overcome the power of this system, "the oppressed must awaken their awareness of the repressive dimensions of this oppressive societal ideology and rise up in revolution to wrest ideological, economic, and political power from the hands of the oppressors" (p. 407).

2.5.3. Industrial Psychology and Critical Theory

Industrial psychology's main role is to improve organisational effectiveness, and performance and turnover are of utmost importance. Informing management decisions and concern regarding issues of management is crucial. Entrenched in industrial psychological discourse is what is known as "management myopia" (Brief & Bazerman, 2003, as cited in Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Research and understanding assumes that the position of management is one of dominance and power in any organisation. This is reflected in the sense that industrial psychology leans toward managerial ideology. Individuality and performance are complex concepts to measure which has resulted in the difficulties in industrial psychology. This has resulted in industrial and organisational psychology becoming "entrenched in a strictly realist epistemology" (Islam & Zyphur, 2006, p. 23).

It is suggested that there is an objective reality and using the suitable instruments results in precise measurements. According to Foucault, measurement and evaluation are innate in industrial psychology which provides means for control over employees (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Workers are considered to be machine like, which results in alienation and mechanisation of the individuals. Employees are considered a means to an end for an organisation. This is an important aspect in the field of industrial psychology. Critical theory in industrial psychology aims to redress these inequalities and to enforce the human side of the organisation (Kazi & Indermun, 2014).

Critical theory seeks to address how the worker is associated or only understood within the work context, however failing to recognise external factors, that before we recognise the individual as a worker we have to understand them as a human being that exists in society outside the workplace, not as a product of goods but as a mother, a father, a sister, brother

and community member (Kazi & Indermun, 2014). This can also be implemented in the academic curriculum at universities in South Africa which incorporate a more social science application of the field with a focus of conflict, industrial relations and industrial action. This will better equip students to have a holistic understanding and aid in a positive contribution to the research and the field itself.

Personnel psychology is an incorporation of human resource management and industrial psychology (Steffy & Grimes, 1992). Human resource management involves a general role in staff related issues and various policies. The aim is to improve productivity by conducting performance appraisals, recruitment, selection and even retrenchment (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Industrial psychology on the other hand involves the construction and validation of theories which are used to explain and predict behaviour. Aspects such as group dynamics, stress and so forth are highlighted here. Personnel psychology is anchored in logical positivism and can be regarded as neo-positivist, which places emphasis on hypothesis testing using objective measures (Steffy & Grimes, 1992). This is significant as the role of human resources and industrial psychology is perceived as synonymous. Critical theory aims to create fair and equal treatment of personnel.

Critical theory may assist in the emancipation of industrial psychology from human resources and from being perceived and implemented as a managerial science. It seeks to rearrange the thwarted focus of industrial psychology as a method of controlling workers in the interest of the organisation. Critical theory aims to change the focus of industrial psychology onto the workforce to their benefit. Habermas suggests that communicative action is the condition for emancipation and democracy. It facilitates the building of agreement through social exchanges (Steffy & Grimes, 1992). Critical theory "encourages a public critique of ideology" (Steffy & Grimes, 1992, p. 196). Habermas upholds the belief that empirical verification should not be the decisive arbitrate of truth; rather that social consensus should be allowed in order for truth to be realised and manipulation to fade out.

2.5.4. A Critique of Critical Theory

According to Alvesson and Willmott (1992), there are two dominant attitudes to the notion of emancipation within mainstream management and organisation studies: firstly to ensure the

survival of organisation or to satisfy shareholders; and to some extent the worker (Alvesson & Willmot, 1992). Secondly, the contemporary management theory, which is interested in the emancipation of employees from alienating forms of work within the organisation; the central idea is to advance job satisfaction and raise productivity (Alvesson & Willmot, 1992). Critical theory fails to recognise this as emancipation, the mere fact that the worker is understood or the worker's well-being is attached to job satisfaction and productivity is problematic in itself (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). The human being is still instrumental and is seen as an instrument to achieve productivity.

The end goal or objective of critical theory is to end the dominant ideologies that exploit workers; it is a utopian approach to the problem of social imbalance and inequality (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). It is when the workers are seen or have equal rights and say in organisations that emancipation of the workers will be obtained. Critical theory adopts an extreme approach in dealing with conflict and industrial action, to ensure emancipation of all members of the workforce is equal, that is pertaining to how the organisation is run, and the wealth is to be equally distributed (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Critical theory is applicable to both conflict and industrial action as well as how these concepts are taught in the curriculum at universities across South Africa. This theory illustrates that there are alternate ways to managing organisations and dealing with conflict resolution. Co-operative business whereby all workers have a share in the business and an equal say on how it is run may be a possible solution to ensure a fair and equal society.

Although critical theory exposes ideology it may prove hard to make the transition from the capitalist societies that are characterised by exploitation of workers and are subject to domination from capitalists and others in power like the government, in this case the police as well, to one characterised by equality and fair distribution of wealth and resources. The present study aims to explore whether participants have a contextual understanding of the above and whether they are able to think of possible methods of reducing conflict and industrial action. Furthermore, the present study aims to explore whether industrial psychology students have a contextual understanding of conflict and industrial action based on the exposure they receive in their academic curriculum. The concept of power by critical theory has been criticised for being too constricted, concentrating on collective rather than the individual justice and entirely considering supremacy by elites when helpless groups can use

both violence and social power to advance their own ends as well (Hansen, 2008). Considering the incidence of industrial action in South Africa, the power of workers cannot be underestimated.

2.6. Summary

This chapter defined conflict and industrial action and the theoretical framework used. It also highlighted previous research findings and the relationship between conflict and the incidence of industrial action. The following chapter will discuss the methodology and research design used in the current research.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

A research design is an essential aspect of executing any research study. The research design can therefore be considered a framework for how the researcher intends to carry out the research study. It serves as a link between the research question and the execution of the research. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) suggest that there should be cohesiveness between the purpose of the research study as well as the paradigm of the research study, the methodology and the context in which the study takes place.

The purpose of the present research study is to explore postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions of the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. Furthermore, this study will explore several South African university prospectuses in an attempt to explore postgraduate industrial psychology students' exposure to the concept of conflict in their curriculum. This type of research interest therefore required that this study follow 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; Neuman, 2011).

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), acts as a paradigm acts as perspectives which provide a rationale for the research and requires the researcher to make use of particular methods of data collection, observation and interpretation. In addition, paradigms represent the epistemological, ontological and methodological premises of the researcher (Neuman, 2011). Ontology refers to the question, 'what is the nature of reality?' A fundamental assumption of the interpretive paradigm is that subjective experience constitutes reality (Neuman, 2011). The present research study explored the subjective perceptions of postgraduate industrial psychology students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal: Howard College Campus. 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 (Neuman, 2011). 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); this

therefore warrants a reflection of the role of the researcher within this specific research process. Knowledge can therefore be considered multiple, subjective constructions of meaning. In interpretive research there is the assumption that the researcher is the primary instrument for the collection and analysis of data (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994; Maree, 2007; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). In the present study the researcher was concerned with the different ways in which postgraduate industrial psychology students perceived the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in the labour relationship, as well as their exposure to the concept of conflict in their honours and masters curriculum. The researcher was therefore involved in an interactive meaning-making process with participants simultaneously influencing one another.

Methodology stipulates how the researcher goes about practically constructing and co-constructing both knowledge and insight (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). A researcher working from the interpretive paradigm has a preference to make use of personal and interactive methods of obtaining data (Mertens, 1998). The present qualitative research study makes use of semi-structured interviews in order to capture the many meanings of the participants.

The interpretive research paradigm presupposes that people's subjective experiences are real, and that one can understand others' experience through interaction with them (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). A qualitative research approach is therefore most suitable for this. The present research study is therefore assumed to be an interpretive paradigm because the reality to be studied consisted of participants' subjective perceptions of the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. As a result, the researcher was involved in the process of active meaning-making with the participants and made use of semi-structured interviews comprised in the qualitative method of data collection.

3.2. Research Methodology

The methods used by qualitative researchers represent a common belief that they can provide a deeper understanding of the social phenomenon that is being explored (Silverman, 2000). A qualitative research methodology was chosen for this research study to allow the researcher to interact directly with participants. Through the use of interviews in this study the

researcher was able to explore the world of postgraduate industrial psychology students in order to understand their perceptions of the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. The researcher was therefore able to achieve an 'insider' perspective of the meanings and experiences of the participants.

The distinctive 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). Through qualitative research, as stated above, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994; Maree, 2007; Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). In addition, 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 usually in the form of themes and categories; it focuses on process, meaning, and understanding; and the product of qualitative research can be considered as richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998).

On the whole, qualitative research provides the researcher with rich, descriptive data in relation to the research topic. According to Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit (2005), an interpretive researcher constructs meanings from the data by seeing the bigger picture and translating 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.

3.2.1. Selection of Participants

Qualitative researchers usually work with small groups of participants. The individuals who are included in the group of participants should provide in-depth knowledge of and insight into the phenomenon being studied. Purposive sampling was used in the present research study. According to Merriam (1998), 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. Participants in this study should therefore be knowledgeable, willing to participate, and readily available (Greyling,

2008). In addition, purposive sampling takes place when the group of participants is homogenous, sharing similar experience of a particular situation (Willing, 2001).

The present study made use of participants from a homogenous group in terms of the field and level of studies. This study made use of ten postgraduate industrial psychology students at a university in KwaZulu-Natal. Five students were from the master's class and five were from the honours class. These students were individuals who had distinctive experiences and perspectives regarding the topic of research. The biographical information for the participants can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Level of Study
Participant1	23	Male	African	Masters
Participant 2	23	Female	Indian	Masters
Participant 3	25	Male	Coloured	Masters
Participant 4	22	Female	African	Honours
Participant 5	23	Female	Indian	Masters
Participant 6	22	Female	Indian	Honours
Participant 7	22	Female	African	Honours
Participant 8	23	Female	African	Masters
Participant 9	23	Male	African	Honours
Participant 10	24	Male	Indian	Honours

Both the honours and masters classes were informed about this research study. Students were asked to volunteer and email the researcher if they were interested in participating. Appointments were set up in order to conduct semi-structured interviews with these students at a time suitable to them on campus.

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

In the context of the present research study it was important to provide a framework within which participants could express their perspectives, understanding and experiences. In order for such expression to take place, semi-structured interviews were used. This allows the researcher to be able to hear participants express their views and opinions (Kvale, 1996). The purpose of qualitative research interviews can be depicted as the description and interpretation of themes in the subjects' lived world (Kvale, 1996). This offers a holistic understanding of the research participants' perceptions and thoughts in relation to the topic.

Kvale (1983) found that qualitative research interviews sought to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the life-world of the respondent; and the research aims to obtain as many nuanced descriptions from the different qualitative aspects of the respondents' life-world as possible. Furthermore, the respondent describes what he or she experiences, feels or acts on (Kvale, 1983). The present research study utilised semi-structured interviews and this took place through the use of an interview schedule which was developed before conducting interviews. The semi-structured interview schedule provided a framework to ensure all relevant topics pertaining to the research study's focus were covered during the interview sessions (Patton, 2002). This also allowed for flexibility in exploring certain topic areas and probing for more in-depth perspectives as they arose.

The topics were based on the concept of conflict, the level of exposure the student has had to this concept of conflict in their academic curriculum, industrial action in the labour relationship in South Africa and the relationship between conflict and industrial action. The interview schedule approach was used to cover particular topics, issues were specified in advance, and the sequence and wording of questions were decided upon during the course of the interviews. According to Patton (2002), the outline of the interview increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes the data systematic for each participant. Furthermore, logical gaps can also be anticipated and covered. Patton (2002) also points out some limitations of the interview schedule which include the fact that important and significant topics may be overlooked, as well as the flexibility of the interviewer in the sequencing of questions, which can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives. This can reduce the comparability of responses.

All ten semi-structured interviews were approximately twenty minutes in length, 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. A transcribed semi-structured interview is attached to demonstrate the process of data transformation (see Appendix 1).

3.3. Method of Data Analysis

According to Merriam (1998), data analysis refers to the systematic search for meaning; it is the process which involves making sense of data. Data analysis involves the process of transforming data to answer the 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.

3.3.1. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a comprehensive process where researchers are able to identify numerous cross-references between the data and the researcher's evolving themes (Hayes, 1997). It provides flexibility for approaching research patterns in two ways, i.e. inductive and deductive (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Hayes, 1997; Niece, 2011; Halldorson, 2009). This makes the process of thematic analysis more appropriate for analysing the data when the researcher's aim is to extract information to determine the relationship between variables and to compare different sets of evidence that pertain to different situations in the same study. This study will make use of a combination of inductive and deductive thematic analysis whereby the theoretical framework of this study will define the themes as well as emerging themes from the data collected which will be explored in the data analysis of this study.

Thematic analysis has six phases which are rather flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is important to remember that data analysis is a recursive process rather than a linear one (Patton, 1990). The first phase of thematic analysis is familiarising oneself with the data

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is important that the researcher immerse themselves in the data in order to become familiar with the 'depth and breadth of the content' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This can take place during data collection and transcribing of verbal data in which the researcher begins to identify patterns. It is important to read these transcripts more than once and to make notes or mark ideas for coding. Reissman (1993) suggests that transcribing is an excellent way of familiarisation with the data however it is time consuming. If the researcher outsources a transcribing service, it is important that the researcher spend extra time reading the transcripts.

The second phase of thematic analysis is generating initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This takes place once the researcher has read and familiarised themselves with the information and generated ideas about what interests them about the data. This phase involves the initial coding process, whereby the researcher identifies features in the data (i.e. semantic or latent). This refers to the most basic element of the raw data that can be addressed in a meaningful manner regarding the research phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). This specific research study makes use of deductive thematic analysis and is theory-driven. The researcher may code data by writing notes on texts that are being analysed, using highlighters or coloured pens to indicate potential patterns or by making use of post-it's to identify segments of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The third phase of thematic analysis is searching for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This phase takes place once the researcher has coded and collated the data, and lists of codes have been identified. The researcher can then refocus the analysis at a broader level of themes, in other words, the researcher sorts the different codes into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It may be helpful to use visual representation such as an Excel spreadsheet to sort different codes into themes. The fourth phase of thematic analysis is reviewing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This takes place once a broad set of themes have been identified. During this phase it will be evident whether some themes may be relevant or not. During this phase some themes may collapse into each other or be separated. The themes are reviewed and refined during this stage and the researcher will have a fairly good idea of what the different themes are and how they fit together (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The fifth phase of thematic analysis is defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase the researcher defines and further refines themes which involves identifying the 'essence' of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of data each theme captures (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Names need to be concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about. The sixth and last phase of thematic analysis is producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the researcher has finalised the set of themes the final analysis and report can be written. This involves providing evidence of the research being valid and proof of why it holds merit (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The write up as well as data extracts must provide "a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the story the data tells - within and across themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23). The write up must provide sufficient evidence of the themes including data extracts which support this.

3.4. Standards of Quality and Verification

Qualitative researchers endeavour for understanding; a deep structure of knowledge which emerges from interacting with participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to find detailed meaning (Creswell, 1998). During or after a study, qualitative researchers may ask if they 'got it right'. According to Creswell (1998), the verification of a study is seen as a process which takes place throughout data collection, analysis and report writing phases of the study. This verification follows standards and criteria which are imposed by the researcher and others both during and after the research study is completed. There are various perspectives which exist relaying the importance of verification in qualitative research such as the definition of it and the procedures for establishing it. For example, researchers search for and find qualitative equivalents that parallel traditional quantitative approaches to validity. Another example involves the use of alternative terms that are argued to adhere more to naturalistic axioms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Creswell, 1998).

To establish the trustworthiness of a study, Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Creswell, 1998) use the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability 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. The naturalistic researcher also 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, 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).

3.5. Ethical Considerations

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 (see Appendix 2)].

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

The following chapter will present the research results and a discussion based on the results of the study. This chapter will present the various themes which emerged from the data collected. These themes will then be discussed while simultaneously drawing information from the literature review and theoretical framework which aids in understanding the perceptions of postgraduate industrial psychology students regarding the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in the labour relationship. Furthermore, perusal of several university prospectuses will be tabulated and then discussed in relation to the above.

3.6. Summary

This chapter explains the research design and ethical clearance. The research instrument used was a semi-structured interview. It also highlighted the characteristics of the participants, procedure and statistical method used

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Research Results

This section will provide a discussion based on the raw data collected. The data was obtained from ten semi-structured interviews which were transcribed and coded. Thematic analysis was used to identify nine master themes which provide a descriptive analysis of the data. This allows for a holistic understanding of the research phenomenon. In this chapter the researcher will discuss the themes in relation to the information provided by participants during interviews with them. This focuses on their perceptions of the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in the South African labour relationship. However, this research is also aimed at exploring the way in which conflict is conceptualized and covered in the curriculum at universities across South Africa. This information was obtained through the perusal of several South African university prospectuses.

The entire research process was motivating and broadened the researcher's understanding of the subject matter. This also allowed the researcher to be aware of how these concepts are perceived at different levels at university. Participants were eager to offer their time to participate in interviews and provided their perceptions freely. Each of the ten participants in this research study will be referred to as participant 1 to 10 throughout the presentation of results. Any quotes used are written in italics to indicate that these are not the words of the researcher but rather that of the participants. Their responses have been quoted verbatim. This chapter will provide a presentation of the research results, an illustration of the data obtained from the university prospectuses and lastly a discussion of the results. An illustration of the themes is provided below:

Table 2

Themes	Sub-Themes
1. Perceptions of industrial action	- Strikes - Discontent - Violence - Resistance
2. Apartheid versus democracy	- Segregation (racial division) - Resistance - Unequal distribution of wealth and

	resources
	• Exploitation
	• Power
3. Capitalism	• Exploitation in the workplace
	• Profit over people
4. Employee versus employer	• Communication breakdowns
	• Contradictory goals
	• Cheap labour
5. Unions as mediators	• Union politics
6. Factors contributing to industrial action	• Employers
	• Unions
	• Discontent employees
	• Working conditions
	• Bottom line
7. Perceptions of conflict	• Dissatisfaction among employees
	• Relationship between industrial action and conflict
	• Curriculum
8. Factors contributing to conflict	• Economic, political and social factors
9. Exposure	• Contextual understanding
	• Theoretical versus practical exposure
	• Conduct more research
10. Solutions	• Practical exposure
	• Awareness
	• Human side of the organisation

Theme One: Perceptions of Industrial Action

Participants had relatively similar perceptions of the concept of industrial action. The majority of participants perceived industrial action as strikes. Most participants expressed negative perceptions of industrial action, especially in the South African context. For instance, most participants expressed that strikes frequently occur in South Africa and this negatively influences the economy and labour relationship. Some participants associated industrial action with violence. These responses revealed participants' perceptions of current industrial action, which take place in the form of strikes. The majority of participants expressed a relatively good understanding of industrial action. They were able to relate their perceptions to practical examples in the South African context. Participants' responses also reflect their exposure to the concept of industrial action in their academic curriculum. It was evident, based on responses from participants, that the masters' participants had a more

holistic and contextualized perception of industrial action. The majority of participants associated industrial action with strikes and violence.

For instance, participant 2 illustrated the following:

"*My understanding of industrial action is strikes...violent activity between parties.*"

The abovementioned response from participant 2 also illustrates participants' perceptions of industrial action associated with violence. The following participants also perceived industrial action as strikes:

Participant 7: *"All the major transformations that occurred in our organisations in the labour force...through strikes."*

Participant 9: *"Industrial action is striking."*

In comparison to the abovementioned responses from honours participants, the master's participants had a more contextualized perception of industrial action. This is a possible reflection of their different academic levels. These participants perceived industrial action to be more that just strikes. This is illustrated by the following responses from participants:

Participant 5: *"It's a collective group of people that come together and they take action in terms of achieving a common goal."*

Participant 10: *"Collective movement from your workforce in resistance to conditions already in existence, implemented or about to be implemented by the company."*

The majority of participants also expressed that more strikes are occurring because of dissatisfaction in the employment relationship. Participants expressed that many workers are not satisfied with their working conditions or salaries.

This can be illustrated by a response from participant 1:

"It's all the, the strikes, workers from the municipality, from private organisations not being satisfied with the working conditions or pay or payment that they receiving, yea, poor working conditions, so it's basically the unhappiness of, workers or employees within their respective organisations."

One participant in particular was unable to provide a description of what she perceived as industrial action. As an honours student she had a limited understanding and provided a vague response. To illustrate this point relating to the participants' limited understanding of the subject matter, the following was said by participant 6:

"I think it includes that employee and the employer while I think that maybe, well conflict does happen where you have to include the trade unions and all that... maybe if there is a problem, how am I going to phrase this, I have this in my head. I just can't put into words, okay."

Participants also expressed that employees show their discontent through striking. In this way striking acts as a tool which allows employees' voices to be heard.

This can be illustrated by the following participants:

Participant 2: *"When people compare themselves to other companies and they look at how much they are earning. They want a better salary and living conditions; people's dissatisfaction with working conditions; also with salary. The living conditions (i.e. Marikana) were bad and the wage they were getting was not sufficient."*

Participant 5: *"Okay, so it's a collective group of people that come together and they take action in terms of, in terms of achieving something that they all want."*

Participant 8: *"It's when people show their discontent through striking, boycotting."*

Participants also expressed that industrial action is associated with resistance. In other words, industrial action is seen as employees challenging their current situations and the organisation itself. For instance, the following participants stated:

Participant 1: *"It's about workers fighting against being exploited."*

Participant 7: *"I think when the demands or needs of the workers are not met they feel that to emphasise what... and to emphasise their things they display it through strikes or further actions."*

Overall, the majority of participants from honours and masters level had a similar perception of industrial action. Based on their responses industrial action was associated with strikes and discontent among workers. The majority of participants expressed negativity in relation to industrial action especially with regard to current events which have taken place in the South African context. For example, participants perceived industrial action to be associated with strikes, resistance and violence. The responses from participants also revealed that perceptions of industrial action were perceived in a more contextualized manner among the master's participants.

Theme Two: Apartheid versus Democracy

The majority of participants included apartheid and democracy in their responses. This was a common theme which emerged throughout the interview process. The honours and masters participants expressed similar perceptions, which included the history of apartheid and the trickledown effect into democracy. Issues of segregation, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, as well as resistance emerged as sub-themes of apartheid versus democracy. The majority of participants perceived segregation to be associated with both industrial action and conflict. This includes aspects of race and history which are present in contemporary South Africa. Participants perceived segregation to be present in the employment relationship, in which racial division and apartheid ideology are reflected.

To illustrate the aspect of segregation that was discussed, participants stated the following:

Participant 1: *"I think it all stems from segregation, segregated history, in terms of apartheid and maybe even long before apartheid where we're seeing a lot of different racial groups as a whole...It mostly stems from that segregation of seeing what the other side is like, and not being able to be part of that other side; so it's that whole perception I think of, we're still unequal although we're in democracy, we're still very much unequal."*

Participant 5: "*I think first and foremost it's our contextual factors so race, I think we have a lot of issues regarding race. We have racism in South Africa particularly stemming from the apartheid era and it's still prevalent today. So in terms of black people that feel inferior, they feel cheated, they still feel unequal and they are taking action."*

Participants expressed the perception that racial division and segregation stem from the apartheid era. Furthermore, participants perceived that these inequalities are still present in democracy. The majority of participants linked these aspects to the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action. To illustrate this point, participants expressed the following:

Participant 5: *"So I think that there's definitely a racial issue, a class issue, a cultural issue and also once again it definitely stems from our apartheid era, from the inequalities of the past that are still prevalent today and I think that action is caused because of that and also once again we have our action that takes place within organisations."*

Participant 10: *"Conflict always exists in South Africa...due to our apartheid history it continues as it seems to be misplaced and projected in the workplace."*

Many participants revealed that segregation is linked with resistance. Participants perceived that during apartheid employees grew resistant to their circumstances and revolted in the form of strikes, boycotts and so forth. Furthermore, participants revealed that resistance in the form of strikes results in organisations acting quickly and taking their employees seriously.

This is illustrated by responses from the following participants:

Participant 1: *"It's about workers fighting against being exploited."*

Participant 7: *"I think when the demands or needs of the workers are not met they feel that to emphasise what... and to emphasise their things they display it through strikes or further actions."*

Participant 9: *"I remember there was a period where during the apartheid era where you could say the ANC had a choice whether to set up arms or resort to other means such as striking or doing go-slows etcetera, to try and fight for their political freedom. But they chose striking and since then, they used that form of resistance...which eventually, consistently, persistently led to them succeeding at achieving some of their goals. I think that led to the new South Africa, the democratic South Africa, also resorting to striking to try and resolve any conflicting issues that are currently happening. I think one of the reasons is I believe they don't believe in things such as go-slows and, you know, negotiations etcetera, I think those methods are more bureaucratic, they're less effective, whereas you take industrial action you're exposing the organisation to the public, to shareholders, to the whole world which puts them possibly at a very, you could say, fearful position."*

The majority of participants expressed a relationship between apartheid, and an unequal distribution of wealth and resources. This was also associated with the exploitation of employees. Participants revealed that in apartheid there was an unequal division of resources and wealth according to race. Furthermore, it was revealed that despite South Africa being a democratic country, an unequal distribution of wealth, resources and jobs are still present.

To illustrate this point relating to the unequal distribution of wealth and resources, and exploitation, the following was said by participant 1:

"We're seeing a lot of different racial groups and a whole, with that aligned with it, is, a really unequal distribution of wealth and resources, so I'd link it to that and it's still present in current society, where we're in a democracy but essentially not anything is equal. We're still seeing the trend of the poorest people being African, Black, Indian, Coloured people; and White people are in a sense much wealthier and comfortable on average than black people and that sort of spreads into the work environment, where a lot of people are unhappy about why are my White counterparts so comfortable and why are my kids struggling to get a good education, decent housing, being in a neighbourhood I feel my children will be safe."

Participants revealed that this aspect plays an important role in the employment relationship. This includes the relationship between employers and employees where the employer (management) receives higher wages and more benefits, whereas the employee receives minimum wage and benefits. The majority of participants perceived that management includes white males and the work force includes mainly "black" individuals. Furthermore, participants expressed that despite being in a democratic country, positions in management are still filled by the white minority and the black minority. It was also revealed that participants perceived that management holds a great deal of power. This is illustrated by the responses from the following participants:

Participant 1: *"It's that whole perception I think of we're still unequal although we're in democracy, we're still very much unequal. So you'll find that your managers in the work settings are your white males, and your lowest paid workers are your labourers if I can put it that way, are still your black, your Indian, your coloured workers; not so much your white males."*

Participant 5: *"The inequalities of the past that are still prevalent today and I think   that action is caused because of that and also once again we have our action that takes place within organisations and I think that employers... the main reason industrial action takes place is because of pay and there's employees who believe they should be paid, earning X amount and employers aren't paying that amount and in terms of benefits as well so there's a lot of issues and I think it goes down to adhering to our South African legislation."*

Participant 8: *"I would say first of all they don't have equal power, so the capital is always you know, always have power because of the resources that they have, whereas labour on the other hand they don't have enough. They are disadvantaged in that relationship, with regards to their relationship especially the employment relationship, where you find that the management is always at the receiving end. Employees don't get enough, they don't get enough pay, and the conditions are bad, all of that."*

Participant 1 expressed that there is a link between segregation and an unequal distribution of wealth and resources in a democratic South Africa. Participants further expressed that inequalities move far beyond race, but also extend to class and culture. This point is illustrated by the following response by participant 5:

"I think there's class... inequalities amongst classes in the South African context amongst South African people, like let's take action in terms of yes ok, the foreign, the foreigners and the black people of South Africa and they felt cheated. They felt that the foreigners took their jobs."

Theme Three: Capitalism

The majority of participants expressed that capitalism plays a crucial role in the labour relationship. Participants articulated that South Africa is a capitalistic society and that employers are concerned about maximising profits at the expense of workers. Participants emphasized exploitation in the workplace and profit over people. These points are illustrated by the following participants:

Participant 1: *"So it starts off as, maybe for example, we're complaining to management or we feel that we're getting paid too little. The employer is like no, I can't pay you this much because I still has to make a profit; which leads to industrial action."*

Participant 3: *"Capitals out to keep making profit and labourers seen as expense, so they cut down on their profits, capitalists will always try and chide the labour."*

Participant 6: *"Well I can say that South Africa is a very like capitalistic society... most of the time employers are mainly concerned about getting the profits."*

Participant 9: *"I look at it in a way of, it's a very capitalistic idea, as much as South Africa claims it's a socialist country, but I feel like people are exploited as much as when you see the structures that are in place such as having trade unions, having liaison committees and using the industrial action so much, exercising that agency...I don't know, they're giving us a, they're painting a picture of what we what we want, but it's not what they are actually going to give us. I think it is very capitalistic, it's a capitalistic relationship and people are being exploited... looking at the health, the facilities that people are working in, looking at the fact that so much striking is happening, means that there are problems, there are social problems. There are problems of wages; people are getting richer in terms of the owners of the capital, so I think it is a very exploitative, very much capitalistic structure so far."*

Participants stated that this is present in many organisations in South Africa and that employees are exploited on a daily basis. The majority of participants expressed that there is a perception that South Africa is a socialist country however, in reality South Africa is a capitalistic society in which management exploits the labour force. Furthermore, participants revealed that employees' social and working conditions are neglected. Participants stated that employees have poor working conditions and are paid low wages which create an unequal relationship between employers and workers. The major sub-theme which emerged in this theme is that of exploitation in the workforce. This further creates a gap in the employment relationship.

The above is illustrated by the following participants:

Participant 4: *"I think, workers are actually being exploited a lot, and in most cases they are being underpaid, which could lead to conflict in the organisation."*

Participant 6: *"The main thing is to make a profit at the end of the day. So basically what I can say is that the employee's wellbeing and their sense of self is put aside, it is basically trying to get, it's trying to squeeze as much of production and exploiting them, trying to get as much of work done for a minimum wage but then most probably us as people, as normal people, we wouldn't really like be able to see that because we are just so entrenched in the system...you just sort of follow the system, you wouldn't really notice that you are being exploited and things like that."*

Participant 1: *"Workers are complaining about not being paid; and you start understanding it's about more than that. It's about workers trying to be equal. It's about workers fighting against being exploited. It's about workers, well workers not being happy about being treated as machines whose lives don't matter but working in conditions that aren't really conducive or safe for them."*

Theme Four: Employee versus Employer

The employee and employer are the main members of the employment relationship. Participants revealed that conflict often exists between these two parties. This is due to an unequal relationship which is created as a result of numerous factors (i.e. apartheid, political

or economic influence, etc.). One particular factor includes communication, or the lack thereof. Participants expressed that communication plays a significant role in the employment relationship, especially between the employee and employer. Participants stated that communication breakdowns between members of the employment relationship (i.e. employees and employer) result in increased conflict and the incidence of industrial action. This takes place frequently as employees are often excluded from the decision making process. Participants further associated communication breakdowns with contradictory goals between employers and employees. Participants expressed that communication breakdowns need to be bridged in order to create mutual understanding and a productive work environment.

For instance, participant one stated the following:

"Labour and capital; I think it's just, again it's, there's this huge gap where it's I think communication is firstly not transparent and it's not fair or equal; so the communication I think is pretty much management, is I'll tell labourers or my workers what to do and that's ok, it's either you do it or you're outta here, and labourers is I can't really say much to the boss. The only way I can communicate to the boss is by striking or by rebelling, so it's not a really pleasant relationship."

Participants expressed that communication breakdowns also result in contradictory goals or opposing parties (i.e. employees versus employer). Participants expressed that this often results in tension and conflict, where employees feel they do not have any other option but to strike. Participants expressed that the relationship between employees and the employer is often a negative one. This is illustrated by the following participants:

Participant 6: *"South Africa is a very like capitalistic society...most of the time employers are mainly concerned about getting the profits...the employee's wellbeing and their sense of self is put aside."*

Participant 8: *"...employees don't have equal power...they are disadvantaged in that relationship."*

Participant 1: "*Where there's no mutual understanding, it's basically people on two opposite sides of the world and they feel the only way to communicate is by exerting power over each other whereas the manager forcing workers to work for cheap labour and...not good working conditions...or it's the worker who feels that before I can even try to get an understanding of the employer's perception or try to bargain verbally through mediation, there's, ok this person is not gonna understand where I'm coming from so I rather just need to strike in order to get my way or to get my voice heard, so I don't think in a pleasant relationship at all, in most situations it's not a good one.*"

Participant 1: "*You find your leaders or the people that are supposed to be leading don't have the same goals as the people.*"

Participant 4: "*Lack of communication, and not working together...and I think another one is that management...it's like they put a barrier between them and workers. They don't really want to help them. They want to stay as managers and not contribute to what the workers are doing... it's all about communication between the employers and the workers...they do have a contribution to industrial action.*"

Participants expressed that employees are used as cheap labour in organisations. This further emphasizes the unequal relationship between employers and employees, as well as capitalism which is rife in organisations. This is illustrated by the following participants:

Participant 9: "*Inflation rate will always be there, prices have always been rising, if prices are rising and my wage stays the same, then obviously there's going to be conflict.*"

Participant 9: "*You forget about the structures in the organisation such as if you had in mind you forget about your employees socially, you just give them their wages and that's it, so for me I think that has to be one of the gaps between the worker, the employee and employer in terms of the economic income, the social factor of where you live, the services you have available to you. So I think those factors or that gap between the employer and employee socially, politically and economically.*"

Participant 7: "*I think it's when the people are unhappy about something majorly and when they feel that they deserve more, especially if you go back to the mining they are actually working underground for long. They are exposed to so much of diseases, so much of dangers,*

like if the cave just collapses and yet they get paid like a minimum wage salary so anybody will be unhappy about that."

Theme Five: Unions as Mediators

Participants expressed that unions act as mediators between employees and employers. Furthermore, unions represent the rights of employees, and act as a voice to workers. Some participants' responses involved unions providing some form of balance in the employment relationship. This is illustrated by responses from the following participants:

Participant 4: *"I think that unions are there to actually protect workers for example, like, not being paid for six months."*

Participant 1: *"The idea of unions is a good idea because I think workers do need a voice, and it's hard for one being employed to say I'm literally gonna voice my opinions to the boss or the capitalist within an organisation so what unions do, is allow them to be at the forefront without fear of them actually losing their jobs or feeling like they'll be oppressed in any way in the organisations."*

A sub-theme which emerged from this theme includes controversial aspects of unions. The majority of participants expressed that unions do not always act in the best interest of employees. Furthermore, participants revealed that unions have their own agenda. In the abovementioned quote, participant 1 revealed that unions act as a voice to employees. However, participant one also expressed that unions no longer serve the needs of employees. This point is illustrated in the following contrasting response from participant 1:

"We have seen trends in recent history, where unions are no longer actually serving the needs of the people, they just, the leaders are after their own agendas so they're looking to get rich."

This controversial viewpoint of unions having their own agendas is shared by the majority of participants. For instance, the following participants stated:

Participant 1: *"Leaders in the unions are serving their own agendas."*

Participant 2: *"Sometimes unions don't act in the best interest of the employees. They side with management and then, their role is not effective."*

Participant 8: *"...in reality sometimes it doesn't even happen because the unions may have their own agenda...trying to gain more power even in the organisation with all the industrial action that they are doing, they may also try to initiate industrial action, not just to benefit the employees or whatever, but for their own gain in the organisation."*

Theme Six: Factors Contributing to Industrial Action

Participants expressed that there are several factors that contribute to the incidence of industrial action. Three sub-themes emerged as major contributing factors to industrial action, namely employers, unions and employees who are discontent. The majority of participants believed that employers play a significant contribution to industrial action. In other words, employers are concerned about the bottom line (profits). For instance, the following participants stated:

Participant 1: *"I think they're the major contributors in industrial action...employers... come with the conception of bottom line...on average I think most employers just care about bottom line and they're not worried about the lives, workers' well-being...so yea I do think they contribute a lot."*

Participant 2: *"Sometimes they are not willing to have discussions with the employees...they set out demands and expect these to be met...they don't want to incorporate employees in the decisions they make."*

Participant 10: *"Employers contribute to industrial action...to enlarge your profit margin labour is usually cut first...employers hardly put forward fair amounts."*

The majority of participants revealed that they believed unions do in fact contribute to increased industrial action. Participants revealed that unions serve their own agenda and do not always represent the interests of workers. This in turn contributes to industrial action, as the workers' voice cannot be heard. Participants expressed workers may feel that striking is

the only way in which they will be taken seriously or their voices will be heard. This is supported by the following responses below:

Participant 1: *"Leaders in the unions are serving their own agendas...workers feel that before I can even try to get an understanding of the employer's perception or try to bargain verbally through mediation, there's, ok this person is not gonna understand where I'm coming from so I rather just need to strike in order to get my way or to get my voice heard."*

Participant 8: *"...in reality sometimes it doesn't even happen because the unions may have their own agenda...trying to gain more power even in the organisation with all the industrial action that they are doing, they may also try to initiate industrial action, not just to benefit the employees or whatever, but for their own gain in the organisation."*

Participant 10: *"Unions are usually the instigators of it...they bring a great deal of bargaining power to the side of the worker. Unions do make a greater amount of industrial action."*

The majority of participants expressed that employees who are discontent or dissatisfied contribute to the incidence of industrial action. Discontent among employees includes aspects of segregation and race, social/status comparisons, wages, working conditions and lack of communication, among other factors that contribute to industrial action. This point can be illustrated by the following responses:

Participant 1: *"I think it all stems from segregation, segregated history, in terms of apartheid and maybe even long before apartheid where we're seeing a lot of different racial groups and a whole, with that aligned with it is a really unequal distribution of wealth and resources... equality."*

Participant 8: *"I think apartheid played a very big role and also right now I think the BEE is actually contributing to quite a few new changes in how the labour force is supposed to work because of the quota system...when the demands or needs of the workers are not met...they display it through strikes or further actions."*

Another participant attributed comparisons between groups of people as a contributing factor to industrial action in South Africa; this can be seen in the response by participant 2 below:

"...when people compare themselves to other companies and they look at how much they're earning. They want a better salary and living conditions...people's dissatisfaction..."

The remainder of the participants attributed wages, working conditions and lack of communication, among other factors that contribute to industrial action. The responses from participants can be seen below:

Participant 3: *"Wages, payments, grievances, people's lifestyles - they want to uplift themselves and companies aren't giving them enough to do that...better working conditions, better living conditions for employees."*

Participant 5: *"Normal employee issues in terms of maybe employee pay, sick leave, benefits, etc...Differing ideas, differing goals, and differing viewpoints and that's just the basis of it."*

Participant 8: *"It's more like the power differentials, when you find that the two parties don't have the same power and the other one feels like they are disadvantaged in that relationship."*

Theme Seven: Perceptions of Conflict

Participants had relatively similar perceptions of the concept of conflict. Participants described conflict as a 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. Participant's revealed conflict often takes place among employees who are dissatisfied, and can be considered an opposition of parties. This is reflected in responses from both honours and masters participants. The majority of participants were able to provide examples in relation to the South African context. Honours participants seemed to express a limited understanding of the concept compared to that of masters participants. Their understanding of the concept is also influenced by the exposure they have had to the concept in their academic curriculum. Masters participants expressed a pluralistic understanding of the concept of conflict. As reported by participant 1:

"...it's when two parties are not seeing eye to eye and as a result they cannot move forward in achieving one common goal...it results in conflict or misunderstandings."

This participant was able to provide an example which revealed how he understood the concept of conflict. This is reported by participant 1 below:

"...students are complaining about being taught in Afrikaans and that's led to a couple of violent altercations and its worrying that it's actually coming from universities where you'd expect the individuals there to be more understanding in finding better ways to express their dissatisfaction and things, and in a common trend."

This holistic and contextualised understanding could be seen by other participants. This is illustrated by responses from the following participants:

Participant 5: *"Conflict is two parties that are in a disagreement of an opinion, they have a differing goal, differing goals, different viewpoints, different perceptions... people of different race groups...the foreigners...the black people feel that the foreigners are taking their jobs away...there's a disagreement and that's resulted in conflict."*

Participant 7: *"Conflict is I think when there is a disruption between as I said the needs… it's basically a disruption in the relationship between like two sets or groups of individuals."*

Participant 10: *"Conflict would imply not agreeing on something, thereby hostility between both parties, usually with reactions from one or the other."*

However some participants, which included mainly honours industrial psychology students, had a rather vague understanding of the concept and understood it on a superficial level (i.e. conflict is seen as a fight between two people). These few participants exhibited a rather unitarist perspective on the concept of conflict and saw it as a negative phenomenon. This is reported by the following participants:

Participant 2: *"Conflict happens when you don't take the other person's perspective into account...conflict in SA always results in violence."*

Participant 6: *"Well I think it has to do with maybe, in this context the employee not getting along with the employer or the supervisor or a team leader or something like that."*

Participant 8: *"There is conflict...we see it every day, arising through strikes, arising through boycotts...okay conflict arises when there are different interests, different values, and different needs."*

Overall, participants had a broad and contextual understanding of the concept of conflict (i.e. something that occurs between two parties and requires conflict resolution procedures to resolve the matter; differing needs of parties). These specific participants were able to provide South African examples to illustrate their knowledge and understanding of the concept. Participants expressed that they believed there is a relationship between industrial action and conflict. They also revealed that these concepts are interrelated. The responses to support this can be seen below:

Participant 2: *"Industrial action arises from conflict. When conflict is not resolved properly it gives rise to industrial action."*

Participant 4: *"When there is conflict, it could lead to strikes, workers, probably not even coming to work, and so it is a negative relationship between the two, because conflict is a bad thing and the organisation, obviously, won't improve."*

Participant 10: *"Conflict increases industrial action."*

Theme Eight: Factors Contributing to Conflict

Participants expressed that there are several factors that contribute to conflict in the labour relationship. The majority of participants expressed economic factors (i.e. wages, increases, etc.) act as a significant contributor to conflict in the labour relationship. This is illustrated by responses from the following participants:

Participant 9: *"...the poor communities that some of the workers are living in, it has to be economic factors obviously their wages...that gap between the employer and employee socially, politically and economically, those are the factors that I think contribute."*

Participant 3: *"Wages, payments, grievances, people's lifestyles - they want to uplift themselves and companies aren't giving them enough to do that. Money, better working conditions, better living conditions for employees."*

Participant 4: *"... could be wages and salaries. Maybe some workers might feel that they are being underpaid or another example of this, is one of my lecturers, she wasn't paid for six months, so it's things like that that could make people go on strikes and have conflict in the workplace, with management and their bosses."*

The majority of participants attributed economic, social and living conditions as contributors to conflict in the labour relationship. Participants suggested that these factors are interrelated and together contribute to disagreements which often lead to conflict. Furthermore, participant's emphasised dissatisfaction within employment plays a significant role in the above-mentioned.

Participant 7: *"I think it's when the people are unhappy about something majorly and when they feel that they deserve more...they're getting paid like a minimum wage salary so anybody will be unhappy about that. It is also in South African terms it is the wages and even unemployment."*

Participant 1: *"I think it's not so similar fashion organisations are also like that where employers, managers, compromise very little. Ok they're happy to get their big cheques. Their R50 000 a month and that essentially mean they don't mind that they're getting paid R50 000 and the labourer or lower paid workers are only getting paid R1000, R1200 and they can barely survive for food or their kids, or send their kids to school or provide clothing or shelter for their kids; as long as they getting their R50 000 it's fine."*

Participant 9: *"The poor social, the poor communities that some of the workers are living in, it has to be economic factors obviously their wages, it has to be the, how do I call it? How can I call it, the difference, the gap between the worker, the employee and employer in terms of the economic income, the social factor of where you live, the services you have available to you. So I think those factors or that gap between the employer and employee socially, politically and economically, those are the factors that I think contribute."*

Theme Nine: Exposure

The majority of participants expressed that they would prefer more practical exposure included in their academic curriculum. This would complement the theoretical exposure they receive and allow them to have a more holistic and critical understanding of concepts and its application.

For instance, the participants stated the following:

Participant 1: *"Maybe whatever they teach us should, should try and focus a little bit less on theory and more on practical applications. So we can actually link these theories to what's happening in recent events or current affairs. I remember the articles that we used in third year were outdated so it felt very foreign to what was currently happening. Whereas in masters we're dealing with the same, well not the same theories; maybe more advanced level, but the examples are more recent examples which are currently happening or just have happened. So it makes it easier to understand. I think that's the biggest part in whatever we are learning."*

Participant 4: *"Well I think we should have, like practical's, in order for us to understand more and to get a picture of what exactly, how we would be getting in to... in the workplace."*

Participant 6: *"Maybe we can integrate that in most modules that we are doing now and maybe have some practical exposure. Maybe if we can go to places like the CCMA, maybe where things are done in a more, there where they really deal with conflicts at a broader level."*

Participants revealed that they would prefer more exposure than they have had. Participants also revealed that their level of exposure to the concept of conflict or industrial action is associated with their exposure in their curriculum. Some honours participants expressed a limited understanding of these concepts. Honours participants had limited critical understanding and were not able to contextualize the concepts as well as masters participants. This point is illustrated by responses from the following honours participants:

Participant 4: *"Well, this year I'm doing a module; Industrial Psychology in Context...well, it's influence...it's a positive influence because now I understand more of what exactly industrial psychology is about; improving an organisation, so it's a positive influence for me."*

Participant 7: *"We had exposure to modules on labour relationships in South Africa...right now we are even looking at organisational context with Dean. It is actually giving us a little focus of what is happening in current things. It made us critical in a little way where we started to think of the other picture because I think even in communities..."*

Participant 9: *"I have been exposed with regards to modules that I did in third year...we have been exposed to that idea conflict and I think my explanations are even influenced by her teachings of labour relations...conflict in terms of trying to mediate it, trying to be the arbitrator...it has also influenced my research...it has also influenced me in terms of being more critical, being more open to everybody's perceptions, you know...if you could say with regards to my studies and in such as an example that people you could say as an industrial psychologist it begs the question for also for where do we fit in? Are we supporting the employer or are we supporting the employee?"*

Responses from participants revealed that master's students had a more contextual understanding of these concepts. However, most honours participants expressed a broad and contextual understanding as well. The majority of master's participants expressed that they have had more practical exposure to the concept of conflict and industrial action in their master's coursework. In comparison to some of the honours participants, master's participants have a more contextual understanding of these concepts and are able to think more critically. This is illustrated by the following master's participants:

Participant 1: *"Industrial psychology... to be honest, uh, in undergrad not much. We had one module which was labour relations...I only really started engaging with conflict I think at master's level. So only now do I fully understand what conflict and industrial action is and the applications of conflict and industrial action...I was exposed to the concepts at a more practical level which I could see in daily life; and engage properly."*

Participant 3: *"I've learnt about it now in my masters courses. If I compare my undergraduate studies to my postgraduate studies, I mean we did IR in maybe second year and the time from second year to now masters has been what? I think I've got a better understanding, especially going into more depth with the master's course in comparison with the second year course."*

Participant 8: *"...it sort of made me think critically about the employment relationship per se and also to see the dynamics of the employment relationship."*

Participant 9 expressed that there should be more research conducted regarding this aspect of industrial psychology. The response can be seen below.

"I think it puts more pressure on industrial psychologists to conduct more research with regards to conflict in South Africa, because I mean as a new South Africa you could say, democratic country that is so diverse, different backgrounds, ethnicities. Industrial psychology is under that pressure where you need to research, like how the conflict occurs in South Africa...Maybe some people might be more dogmatic in South Africa or I don't know their background will obviously influence their perceptions which cause the conflict. So for me I think that's how it puts pressure on industrial psychologists that you have to understand, you have to try and understand the conflict that may come about in South Africa and try to prevent that beforehand."

Theme Ten: Solutions

Some participants expressed the need to have more practical exposure to concepts of conflict and industrial action. They expressed that more practical exposure will result in a more contextual understanding of concepts such as conflict and industrial action. They reported that having more contextual awareness would aid them in their studies and critical understanding of these concepts. This awareness would allow them, as future industrial psychologists to have a more holistic understanding and therefore would be able to put their knowledge into practice. When asked about possible solutions to conflict and the level of exposure in their academic curriculum, participants responded as follows:

Participant 1: *"Try and focus a little bit less on theory and more on practical applications...we can actually link these theories to what's happening in recent events or current affairs...it makes it easier to understand. I think that's the biggest part where in whatever they're learning, especially because it's a social sciences degree people wanna link what they're learning to what's actually happening...so a more, well maybe not say practical, but let's say link to whatever theory is being taught to a South African context and to the most current events so that it actually makes sense to the students."*

Participant 2: *"There needs to be awareness of conflict and to help students understand what conflict is, how it develops and how it can be resolved effectively."*

Furthermore, participant 5 expressed a more contextual understanding of the question. This response is illustrated below:

"We're not as critical in our thinking at that point so I understand that's your time where you introduce your theories and there's no level of application needed, and I understand that it and I'm fine with that. Where I had my issue was in my honours year. I feel that conflict, as being such a huge part of our masters industrial psychology degree, was barely touched on in honours and definitely there needs to be a bigger focus especially in the honours year. We weren't introduced to conflict in terms of applying it anywhere. We weren't even introduced to it in terms of industrial action. It was such a very individual personalised view in terms of looking at conflict, in terms of what occurs in organisations. And that's kind of the easiest way to think of conflict but conflict is not just within an organisation, it's in South Africa in general as a whole. It's between big parties, it's between, you know for example, our trade unions and miners, and it's not just a, you can't just use a specific organisation and explain the concept of conflict. I think in terms of application that could have definitely been broadened. We need to understand not just what the theories are but how the theories can be applied and where they can be applied. Not just in like a simplistic view, but taking into account a whole range of contextual factors in South Africa. So I think ya, honours definitely needs to be an improvement. With regards to the masters ya, I was very happy with the way the module, our conflict module, was taught. I felt that it was actually a complete experience because it changed my perception, my idea of conflict and you know... what it is, where it's from, how it kind of persists and who starts it, who elevates it, who ya, who tries to resolve it

and I think that this was the year where I understood conflict as a whole in terms of all the contextual factors and how they factor into the concept of conflict and it was a broad, thorough understanding of conflict in my masters year."

Participant 9 expressed a contextual understanding of the question and incorporated the human side of the organisation in his response. This is illustrated by the response below:

"Okay, I think I've read an article once that speaks about industrial psychology on a critical side, that I mean with regards to human beings everything can be, you know quantitative as such in the way we do things, but I think we need to also not ignore the qualitative side. Yes qualitative side may be a bit, I don't know, mechanistic in its ways, but it's at least more inclusive of the subjective side of the human being. And how else am I going to capture the real essence or the real subjective part of conflict between the employee than speaking to the employee and the employer? I'd believe that psychology needs to, in order for it to really develop and make a contribution to society and for it to have less problems, in whatever problems it has, 'cause every discipline has its issues, we need to be more flexible, we need to be more open, because after all, excuse me, psychology, like I said, it's dealing with people and people are so complex, we can never actually ever pin point them and know who they really are. So if you don't know everything, you need to be open to anything, so I believe that psychology, we do need to look at the qualitative side of human beings for us to even be able to understand conflict and therefore find ways to prevent it."

Overall, participants advocated for more practical exposure in their academic curriculum. However, the majority of participants did not provide possible solutions to the reduction of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa.

4.2. University Prospectuses

The researcher perused the course prospectuses from ten South African universities. This allowed the researcher to attain information about how much exposure, to the concept of conflict and industrial action, postgraduate industrial psychology students receive in their academic curriculum. The findings of the information explored are presented in Table 3

below. The information provided below includes modules from the honours and masters coursework that are offered by the specified universities.

Table 3

University	Level	Subjects
University of KwaZulu-Natal	Honours	• Work and Identities • Psychological Assessment • Industrial Psychology in Context • Organisational Studies • Research Fundamentals
	Masters	• Conflict Resolution • Psychological Assessment • Workplace Wellbeing • Organisational Development • Research Methods • Individual Counselling Intervention
University of South Africa	Honours	• Research Methodology • Industrial Psychological Assessment • Managerial and Organisational Psychology • Personnel and Career Psychology
	Masters	• Organisational Psychology • Personnel Psychology • Psychological Assessment • Career Psychology and Professional Development
Rhodes University	Honours	• Research Methodology • Assessment and Evaluation • Organisational Development Theory • Organisational Development Practice • Advanced Organisational Behaviour • Consumer Psychology • Career Development and Performance • Sport and Performance Psychology • Recruitment and Selection • Organisational Diagnosis • Organisational Assessment • Career Development and Coaching
	Masters	• Research degree only offered at masters level
University of	Honours	• Research Methods in Psychology

Witwatersrand		• Individual Wellbeing and Effectiveness at Work • Group Processes in Organisations • Theoretical Foundations of Organisational Psychology
	Masters	• Multivariate Research Design and Analysis • Advanced Organisational Theory • Engineering Psychology • Workplace Counselling
University of Johannesburg	Honours	• Contemporary Issues in Organisational and Career Psychology • Industrial Psychological Testing and Assessment • Organisational Wellness • Research Design and Analysis: Quantitative Research • Contemporary Issues in Personnel Psychology • Psychometric Theory • Research Design and Analysis: Qualitative Research • Industrial Psychological Practice
	Masters	• Advanced Industrial Psychology Theory • Advanced Industrial Psychology Practice • Advanced Industrial Psychology Research
University of Pretoria	Honours	• Career Management • Employee Health and Safety • Organisational Development • Management of Diversity • Industrial Counselling and Group Dynamics • Psychometrics • Labour Relations • Research Methodology
	Masters	• Research degree only offered at masters level (BCom honours degree equivalent with requirements from HPCSA)
University of Cape Town	Honours	• Organisational Change • Research Methods • Psychometrics • Change Consulting • Change and Organisational Culture • Measuring Change and Learning (models and designs)
	Masters	• Theories and Approaches to Work • Research Design • Statistics • Psychological Assessment • Professional Practice and Career • Evaluating Organisational Psychology Interventions

		• Occupational Health Psychology
University of Stellenbosch	Honours	• Applied Psychological and Performance Assessment and Professional Ethics
		• Employment Relations and Labour Legislation
		• Occupational and Career Psychology
		• Organisational Psychology: Contemporary Challenges
		• Psychometrics: Measurement Theory, Test Construction and Decision-making
		• Research Methodology
		• Strategic Human Resource Management I
		• Strategic Human Resource Management II
	Masters	• Counselling Skills for the Workplace
		• Intermediate Statistics and Computer Usage
		• Occupational Health and Wellbeing
		• Organisational Development and Change
		• Performance Dysfunction in the Workplace
		• Personality in the Workplace
		• Professional Consultation and Ethics
		• Strategic and Ethical Leadership

4.3. Summary

This chapter includes the findings of the study and the thematic analysis of the data using quotes from participants. This chapter also provided a table which is based on the perusal of several South African university prospectuses.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions of the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. This section will be structured according to the research questions provided in the introductory chapter. A discussion of the research findings will be presented; this is based on the themes which emerged in the previous chapter. The research findings will then be contextualized with current bodies of literature. This provides evidence of the research, as it allows for a coherent account of what information has emerged from the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Research Questions

- Do the perceptions of postgraduate industrial psychology students on industrial action in South Africa, reflect a contextual perspective?

- Do the perceptions of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action reflect a pluralistic/contextualized understanding?

- What are the perceptions of the role industrial psychology plays in conflict in the labour relationship?

- In what way is conflict conceptualized and covered in the curriculum at universities in South Africa?

5.2. Discussion of Results

Do the perceptions of postgraduate industrial psychology students on industrial action in South Africa, reflect a contextual perspective?

Participants indicated that they believed industrial action was a collective movement of individuals who shared a common goal. According to the Labour Relations Act No 66 (1995), industrial action refers to the "cessation of work by a body of employed persons..."

(p. 235). The majority of participants associated industrial action with strikes, and used these two terms interchangeably. According to Millington et al. (2015), industrial action takes numerous forms, such as strikes, go-slows, lock-outs, overtime bans, and so forth. It is also possible that industrial action is a manifestation of conflict. It is often perceived that industrial action is about workers wanting more money; however it is also influenced by the legacy of apartheid, inequality, and oppression. The association between industrial action and strikes could be a result of the increasing manifestation of industrial action through strikes which have been taking place in the mining, education, health and service delivery sectors in South Africa (Rycroft, 2014).

Participants further associated industrial action with violence. According to participants, industrial action is associated with violent activity. It is significant that most participants associated industrial action with striking and violence. These views may be influenced by the numerous labour disputes which result in unprotected strikes; this is often associated with violence (Rycroft, 2014). This relates to a study conducted by Alexander (2013) where a major concern regarding the increasing number of strikes includes the increasing levels of violence associated with it. The participants' exposure to industrial action in their academic curriculum may also influence their perceptions. South Africa has the highest industrial action rate on a global scale (South African Economic Outlook, 2014).

Critical theory encompasses specific predictions and ideas of the way knowledge is produced in the social sciences and how this knowledge is applied (Hansen, 2008). It takes into consideration the wider social context. Critical theory proposes that conflict is conceptualized and taught in a unitarist approach in the field of industrial psychology. However, responses from participants revealed that they had a more contextualized and broad understanding of industrial action. This reflected a more pluralistic understanding of the concept. This could be due to various circumstances, such as the manner in which the subject matter is taught at this specific university, or historical aspects of South Africa (i.e. apartheid, racism, oppression, inequality, etc.), which are present in contemporary society. According to Rycroft (2014), many of the strikes that occur in South Africa are unprotected and result in violence, death and hamper the growth of the economy. The awareness of the above may also result in a broader and more contextualized understanding of industrial action.

A recent example of industrial action associated with violence includes the Marikana Massacre. On the 16th of August 2012, 34 striking miners were killed by the South African Police Services (SAPS) and over 70 were injured (Botiveau, 2014). This was followed by the brutal murders of policeman and security officers at the mines (Alexander, 2013). Industrial action often takes place as a result of employee discontent. The majority of participants also expressed that more strikes are occurring because of dissatisfaction in the employment relationship. Participants expressed that many workers are not satisfied with their working conditions or salaries. Participants have shown that they have a complex and contextual understanding of the concept of industrial action. This may be a result of the way in which the concept is conceptualized in their academic curriculum. For example, this specific university encompasses a more critical and socio-theoretical approach (labour relations and conflict resolution courses) compared to that of other universities which may offer a rather unitarist approach to their curriculum, due to the lack of labour relations and conflict resolution courses in their academic curriculum (refer to Table 3 in Chapter 5).

This is further iterated by Murwirapachena and Sibanda (2014), who emphasised that most common to the demands of workers in South Africa are wage increases and/or good working conditions. It is often these feelings of discontent (i.e. wages, salaries, working conditions, etc.) which create resistance from employees. This was further emphasised by participants. It is also important to recognise that at most time's industrial action is a reaction to conflict and its manifestation in the form of strikes is perceived as the only way in which a labour dispute can be solved (Godfrey et al., 2010). In other words, industrial action is seen as a form of resistance by employees. Furthermore, employees are able to challenge the status quo. Participants also expressed that employees show their discontent through striking. Voicing on the streets has been considered the language clearly understood by employers.

Overall, the majority of participants from honours and masters level had a similar perception of industrial action. Based on their responses, industrial action was associated with strikes and discontent among workers. The majority of participants expressed negativity in relation to industrial action especially with regard to current events which have taken place in the South African context. For example, participants perceived industrial action to be associated with strikes, discontent, resistance and violence. The responses from participants also revealed that perceptions of industrial action were perceived in a more contextualized manner

among the master's participants. This shows that participants have a broader understanding of the concept of conflict; they understand that there are numerous other societal, contextual, political and economic factors which play a role in conflict in the labour relationship. Furthermore, this reflects that participants perceive industrial action as more than just conflict between an employer and employee; and that participants have a relatively critical understanding of industrial action and are aware that other factors contribute to the incidence of industrial action.

It is important to note that other factors play a significant role in causing labour unrest in the country. Such factors include union rivalry, poverty, unemployment, and inequality, the use of migrant workers, apartheid legacy, and fear of retrenchment, among others (Godfrey et al., 2010). The strike actions have far and wider reaching consequences in the economy as a whole, ranging from economic to socio-political effects, and are both immediate and long term (Godfrey et al., 2010). Participants were able to distinguish various factors which they perceived as possible contributors to industrial action in South Africa. Common trends which emerged included: employers, unions, dissatisfied employees, working conditions and the bottom line. This further reflects a pluralistic and contextual understanding of the concept of conflict and participants' understanding of industrial action in the labour relationship. It is important to acknowledge that factors such as the legacy of apartheid, inequality and oppression influence conflict and the manifestation of industrial action in South Africa. Industrial action is often seen as workers wanting more money; however, responses from participants revealed that they understood that social, economic and political factors also play a role in conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action.

The majority of participants believed that employers play a significant contribution to industrial action. In other words, employers are concerned about the bottom line (profits). This can be associated with employers who are concerned with profits at the expense of the worker. While employees may demand higher wages with better conditions, employers may wish to maximise their profits by cheap labour (Bendix, 2007). Many employees are expected to increase production and turnover, while being exploited and paid low wages. Muchinsky (2006) states workers were not seen as 'thinking' or 'learning' individuals but rather as machines that were meant to do a specific job in a specific way.

The majority of participants revealed that they believed unions do in fact contribute to increased industrial action. South Africa has the most vibrant, organised, and soundly developed labour movements on the continent. Trade unions in the country have a rich history that stretches back to the apartheid era (Murwirapachena & Sibanda, 2014). They have been instrumental in shaping the political, economic, and social fabric of the country. Participants revealed that unions serve their own agenda and do not always represent the interests of workers. This in turn contributes to industrial action, as the worker's voice cannot be heard. Voicing on the streets has been considered the language clearly understood by employers.

The majority of participants expressed that employees who are not content or dissatisfied contribute to the incidence of industrial action. Discontent among employees includes aspects of segregation and race, social/status comparisons, wages, working conditions and lack of communication, among other factors that contribute to industrial action. The remainder of participants attributed wages, working conditions and lack of communication, among other factors that contribute to industrial action. Many South Africans continue to face these unequal circumstances in their living and working conditions and this further entrenches their destitution. This often results in conflict between the employee and the employer. Based on the responses from participants, it was evident that they had a contextualized and critical understanding of industrial action. Furthermore, this reflected that the manner in which these participants are taught reflects a more critical approach which takes into consideration the wider societal context (i.e. structural and contextual aspects of South Africa).

Do the perceptions of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action reflect a pluralistic/contextualized understanding?

The study found that all participants had a relatively sound perception of the concept of conflict. This was influenced by their exposure to the concept in their curriculum as well as practical examples such as employee dissatisfaction in the South African labour market (i.e. Marikana). Participants described conflict as disagreements, opposition of interest, two or more people not seeing eye-to-eye, or some sort of problem or issue that needs to be clarified which prevents two parties from moving forward. 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. Responses from participants revealed that it is not just economic and individual factors that play a role in conflict and the manifestation of industrial action; broader contextual and social factors play a role as South Africa is a divided and unequal society.

Participants indicated that conflict is a complicated concept and that there are numerous factors influencing their perception of the concept, such as: dissatisfaction among employees, the relationship between conflict and industrial action and their academic curriculum. Conflict is inevitable in a country inundated by ideology, diversity, class and race. Fox (1966) defines conflict as the incompatible objectives or goals between members in the employment relationship. This includes dissatisfaction or discontent among employees, which was discussed previously. Conflict is created between employers and employees when there are opposing goals, for example, employees demand higher wages which employers do not always agree to. Over time negotiation procedures and good faith bargaining seems to have been lost and wildcat strikes, which are illegal, have replaced them. This emphasises the conflict between employees and employers. It is noteworthy that participants acknowledged that conflict is more than just a problem between employers and employees. Instead, participants understood the concept of conflict in a broad, contextual and critical capacity. A more critical approach, encompassing the wider societal context, is reflected in the manner in which students are taught about this concept in their academic curriculum. This is based on responses from participants.

Conflict can result from differing values, objectives or interests (Chidi & Okpala, 2012). Most often it is the employee who has different values and goals to that of management and it is those values and goals which are in conflict with that of management (Chidi & Okpala, 2012). This is often the reason for conflict in the labour relationship and the emergence of industrial action. According to Scott (2014), industrial action can be seen as a marker of conflict. It is evident that there is a relationship between conflict and industrial action. Participants indicated that industrial action and conflict coexist. In other words, there cannot be industrial action without conflict. Industrial action is often seen as a result of conflict in the labour relationship. It is also important to recognise that at most times industrial action is

a reaction to conflict and its manifestation in the form of strikes are perceived as the only way in which a labour dispute can be solved (Godfrey, Maree, Du Toit & Theron, 2010). Participants have begun to think in a critical way and based on their responses, it is evident that they understand that conflict is prevalent in South Africa. Furthermore, they understood that there is a link between conflict and industrial action in South Africa, and that societal, political and economic factors play a role in both conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action. According to Bendix (2007), South African industrial relations systems have always reflected a socio-political system. Industrial psychology tends to neglect an organisation's political context and does not always deal with social structures within an organisation effectively (Fullagar, 1983).

Participants indicated that there are numerous social, political and economic factors which contribute to conflict in the labour relationship. This further emphasises their critical thought process of the concept of conflict. This may be attributed to the manner in which they are taught the subject matter, as well as factors relating to the South African context. The majority of participants attributed economic, social and living conditions as contributors to conflict in the labour relationship. Participants suggested that these factors are interrelated and together contribute to disagreements which often lead to conflict. The majority of participants expressed that economic (i.e. wages, increases, etc.) factors act as a significant contributor to conflict in the labour relationship. South Africa is a country that has a history which involves inequality, racial and gender discrimination, job reservation for white people and oppression during the apartheid era. These were enforced by a separatist ideology by the dominant party which governed the country. In order to implement such systems of inequality the ruling party implemented numerous acts in attempts to serve their own interests. This further reiterates that participants have a relatively contextualized understanding which could be reflective of their exposure to the concept in their academic curriculum, historical aspects of South Africa (i.e. apartheid, racism, inequality, oppression, etc.) and the South African context (i.e. strikes, boycotts, etc.) which have become a frequent occurrence (Rycroft, 2014).

In the South African context income levels are a major contributor to conflict in the labour relationship, especially regarding wage increases and wage cuts. A large number of strikes in South Africa are to petition employers to either increase wages or improve the working conditions. According to the 2012 edition of the Industrial Action Report, wages, bonus, and

other compensation still remain the main reasons for work stoppages in South Africa. Conflict is intrinsic in South Africa due to the struggles during apartheid regarding diversity, ideology, discrimination, inequality, class and race. The main purpose of the Labour Relations Act no 66 of 1995 is to protect the rights of people, however many individuals continue to be victims of exploitation and inequality. Participants are aware of the structural and contextual factors which contribute to conflict in the labour relationship. This also reflects a pluralistic understanding of the concept; many participants expressed that conflict is inevitable. Responses from participants revealed that they have a critical way of thinking. This may be influenced by the contextual manner in which they are taught at their university. It is evident that their critical perspective is linked to the fact that they have been taught modules which have adopted a contextual perspective on issues of conflict and labour relations. This allows participants to have a critical theoretical perspective.

Often students of industrial psychology are not exposed to conflict in a realistic manner. This is a core factor of critical theory (Hansen, 2008). The concept of conflict is often dealt with in a superficial manner at universities in South Africa (Fullagar, 1984). Honours participants indicated that they have not had much exposure to the concept of conflict. They revealed that they had only been exposed to this concept in a third year module in their undergraduate degrees. Industrial psychology often reflects a unitarist approach to the manner in which conflict is taught, especially at university. It promotes a rather unitarist, non-complex and simplistic understanding of conflict in the workplace. Masters participants revealed that they received more theoretical and practical exposure to the concept of conflict during their coursework. This reflects a more pluralistic and critical understanding of the concept. Many students in industrial psychology leave university without a broad understanding of the concept of conflict and its influence on organised labour (Fullagar, 1984). This is due to various reasons, such as a lack of contextual/critical perspective or a management biased approach to name a few (Fullagar, 1984). It is important to understand industrial action in the context of the labour relationship, and that conflict in the labour relationship influences industrial action (Boiteveau, 2014). According to Fullagar (1984), an analysis of texts showed that only 0.6% of the sample's contents addressed the issues of organised labour and trade unions in South African universities. It is often the case that union, labour and labour relations issues don't get a bigger expression in the teaching of industrial psychology. Critical theory is a useful framework for teaching students about conflict in a society, such as South

Africa, which is immersed with issues of conflict and incidence of industrial action. This is significant, as this approach seemed to work for participants of this study who had a contextual understanding of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa.

The unitarist approach suggests that an organisation is cohesive and unified and that it comprises of a common set of principles and goals which are subscribed to be all members (Salamon, 1998). This approach allows for authoritative management styles to be accepted as legitimate, and managerial prerogative is therefore rarely challenged. Whereas the pluralist approach presupposes that organisations are multifaceted, complex groupings of individuals who align themselves with other members of the organisation sharing similar views, values and objectives. The pluralist approach suggests that society is made up of disparate, challenging interests through legitimate conduct (Finnemore, 2002). This emphasises the perception that conflict is a natural and innate constituent of the labour relationship in which the general interest to sustaining a livelihood is what makes the relationship possible and essential (Isaacs, 2000).

It was evident that honours participants had a broad and contextual understanding of conflict and industrial action, but not a critical understanding. This did not reflect a unitarist perception, despite participants revealing that they had limited exposure. This is possibly due to the manner in which industrial psychology is taught in their academic curriculum. Masters participants had a more pluralistic perception compared to honours participants. Conflict in the employment relationship can be seen as constructive as this allows for improvements in numerous aspects for both the employer and the employee. However if conflict remains unaddressed this can result in destructive incidents such as the Marikana Massacre and the farm workers strikes in the Western Cape (Bendix, 2006). The honours students perceived conflict and industrial action to be negative and that industrial action is associated with strikes and violence. Every South African employee has the right to partake in industrial action. The abovementioned perspective views conflict as 'goal-directed' in the sense that parties seek to hurt, weaken or injure one another in an effort to attain their desired goals (Anstey, 1991).

It is important to note that both honours and masters participants showed a rather critical and contextual understanding of the concept of conflict overall. Participants mentioned that they have completed a course in labour relations (undergraduate) and conflict resolution (masters) in their academic curriculum. This could possibly influence their understanding of the concept in a more critical manner. It is possible that their academic curriculum enables students to have a more structural and contextual understanding of the subject matter. They are exposed to these modules which may allow for a more nuanced manner compared to students at other universities. For example, only three universities out of eight (University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Pretoria and Stellenbosch University) offer courses relating to labour relations or conflict, either at honours or masters level (see Table 3 in Chapter 5).

Reduction of conflict and industrial action in South Africa is of significant importance. During the interviews, many participants expressed that more practical exposure and awareness in their academic curriculum will aid in a contextual understanding and linkage between their theoretical knowledge and its practical implementation. However, the majority of participants did not provide any suggestions that they thought would reduce industrial conflict in South Africa. Some participants acknowledged and linked conflict and industrial action to apartheid and a separatist ideology however they did not provide ideas on how to reduce this. One participant did however provide a more critical response which took into consideration the human side of the organisation. This participant expressed that one should not ignore the mechanistic side to an organisation and that inclusion of the subjective side of human beings are important. Furthermore, this participant expressed that it is important to understand the subjective aspects of conflict between the employer and the employee, in order to really make a contribution to society and to understand and reduce these problems. Overall, based on the responses provided by participants, most participants did not seem to have an idea of political solutions. The majority of participants acknowledged apartheid, ideology and inequality however they did not provide any ideas on how to reduce this, for instance, a change in our social system (i.e. socialism). Participants did not express this opportunity for change outside industrial capitalism.

The manner in which industrial psychology is taught in South Africa reflects the criticisms of critical theory which reflects that ideological factors and managerial ideology have penetrated the academic system. Based on the abovementioned, it is evident that in relation to conflict

and industrial action, students are exposed to technical solutions not political solutions. Furthermore, critical theory suggests that in a social system where you have dominant values, those dominant values impact on society, including the manner in which science is taught. The science of industrial psychology, which has a very technical approach to conflict and industrial action, is not taught in a political approach. If students at university level are being taught in a technical and structural manner, reduction of conflict and industrial action becomes limited and the field of industrial psychology ineffective. Based on the abovementioned, a closer look needs to be taken at the academic curriculum for industrial psychology at South African universities.

What are the perceptions of the role industrial psychology plays in conflict in the labour relationship?

Industrial psychology is considered an applied discipline which is founded in psychology and is also seen as the study of human behaviour and the manner in which the human mind operates. For instance, critical theory questions the way in which conflict is conceptualized and taught in industrial psychology. Critical theory proposes that industrial psychology reflects a relatively unitarist, non-complex and simplistic understanding of conflict in the labour relationship; rather than providing a more critical, contextual and nuanced understanding of the concept. This is also reflected in the academic curriculum of many universities in South Africa. This is supported by findings from a study conducted by Fullagar (1984) which revealed that many students in industrial psychology leave university without a broad understanding of the concept of conflict and its influence on organised labour. In association with industrial psychology, several trends emerged from participants: apartheid versus democracy (segregation, resistance, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, exploitation and power), capitalism (exploitation in the workplace and profit over people), employee versus employer (communication breakdowns, contradictory goals and cheap labour), and unions as mediators (union politics).

Conflict can be seen as a complex concept which involves the struggle for power, decision making and the manner in which people talk to each other, as well as unresolved issues. This is often not reflected in academic curriculums at university (see Table 3, Chapter 5). Conflict focuses on the situation or circumstances that lead to conflict or the behaviour of disputants

that produce perceptions of disagreement (Cupach, Canary & Serpe, 2001). This reflects a contextualized approach to the concept of conflict. The LRA (1995) is a fundamental legislation which is intended to redress the inequalities of the past, advance social justice, ensure that individuals' rights are protected and that all receive fair and equal rights and enhance labour peace in the employment relationship. Conflict is intrinsic in South Africa due to the struggles during apartheid regarding diversity, ideology, discrimination, inequality, class and race. According to Fullagar (1984), industrial psychology has traditionally tended to neglect the area of organised labour (industrial action/strikes) 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.

Many participants expressed that racial division and segregation stem from the apartheid era. Furthermore, participants perceived that these inequalities are still present in democracy. South Africa is a country that has a history which involves inequality, racial and gender discrimination, job reservation for white people and oppression during the apartheid era. These were enforced by a separatist ideology by the dominant party which governed the country. In order to implement such systems of inequality the ruling party implemented numerous acts in an attempt to serve their own interests. Industrial psychology is often associated with this unequal history and many individuals still hold these negative perceptions. It is evident that these participants are aware of the societal, political, economic, structural and contextual factors which are linked to conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa. This reflects a pluralistic, critical and contextualized understanding, encompassing the wider societal context. This may be attributed to the manner in which they are taught the subject matter in their academic curriculum. These participants are exposed to these concepts in two different modules (i.e. labour relations and conflict resolution). In comparison to other universities, the University of KwaZulu-Natal provides more exposure to issues of conflict and labour relations than other universities in South Africa.

Many South Africans continue to face these unequal circumstances in their living and working conditions and this further entrenches their destitution. This often results in conflict between the employee and the employer. Conflict is entrenched in the employment relationship in South Africa mainly because it is an economic relationship (Ndlovu, 2013;

Cunningham & Slabbert, 1990). The Rand Rebellion of 1922 is an example of how unresolved labour disputes can result in detrimental consequences. Although South Africa is now a democratic country these labour inequalities regarding wage disputes and working conditions still exist and are reflected through the dominant ideology.

Power and conflict are inherent and inevitable in the employment relationship in South Africa mainly due to the inequalities and exploitation which was eminent during apartheid and has had a trickle-down effect into democracy. South African workers in the mining, education, health care and service delivery sectors are in a perpetual state of conflict due to competition for limited resources. Employees demand higher wages or salaries which the employer does not always agree to. Over time negotiation procedures and good faith bargaining seems to have been lost and wildcat strikes, which are illegal, have replaced them. This emphasises the conflict between employees and employers. Conflict can result from differing values, objectives or interests (Chidi & Okpala, 2012). Most often it is the employee who has different values and goals to that of management and it is those values and goals which are in conflict with that of management (Chidi & Okpala, 2012). This is often the reason for conflict in the labour relationship and the emergence of industrial action.

According to Bendix (2007), the labour relations system does not operate in a vacuum. This means that it is influenced by the wider societal and contextual factors of the country. Simplistically, it can be said that the labour relations system is an open system, as it both influences and is being influenced by the environment (Bendix, 2007). This is where employee relations become relevant. In South Africa, the industrial relations system has always reflected the socio-political system of the time. Nevertheless, since the industrial relations system is structured by the societal factors, the dominant ideology of the time will largely determine the governing laws of that society (Bendix, 2007). In South Africa, the apartheid discourse espoused a notion of a separatist ideology. As a result, legislation that was institutionalised was purely meant to define and enforce segregation, according to race. The labour relationship can be complex and result in conflict between the members.

In what way is conflict conceptualized in the curriculum at universities in South Africa?

This section will discuss the information gathered from several South African university prospectuses. Perusal of these prospectuses revealed that the majority of universities had limited exposure to the concept of conflict and industrial action in their academic curriculum. This highlights the concern that students in industrial psychology often leave university without a comprehensive understanding of the true nature of conflict, labour relations and unions in relation to organisational behaviour (Fullagar, 1984, as cited in Barlington, 1988). One can assert that exposure to these concepts at a university level plays an important role in industrial psychology.

The following trends emerged from the perusal of the university prospectuses in Table 3:

- The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) offers a masters course module on conflict resolution. Perusal of various university prospectuses revealed that UKZN is one of the few universities across South Africa which offers a course on conflict at a master's level.

- Perusal of the abovementioned prospectuses revealed that the University of Pretoria offers a course on labour relations at honours level.

- Lastly, the University of Stellenbosch offers a course on employment relations and labour legislation at honours level.

- It is noteworthy that these three universities from a list of ten universities have designated modules accommodating conflict and labour relations. Postgraduate industrial psychology students should have a holistic understanding of these concepts which is not reflected in the majority of universities in South Africa.

The problem that arises involves the academic texts used in the courses of industrial psychology at universities across the country (Fullagar, 1984). This facilitates a limited understanding of conflict for postgraduate students in industrial psychology, and this was reflected by the responses of the majority of participants. Both honours and masters participants indicated that they would prefer more practical exposure included in their

academic curriculum. This would complement the theoretical exposure they receive and allow them to have a more holistic and critical understanding of concepts and application. It was also evident that master's participants had a more contextual understanding of concepts whereas honours participants had a limited understanding and articulation of concepts. It is important to understand the possible neglect of these concepts and the impact it may have on the discipline and the perceptions of industrial psychology postgraduates (Marrin, 2006).

Critical theory "is relevant for the field of conflict resolution because it offers practitioners and scholars a framework that can guide them in assisting parties to overcome societal and interpersonal oppression and injustice" (Hansen, 2008, p. 406). The central idea of critical theory is emancipation of human beings, with particular reference to industrial action and conflict. In the case of the abovementioned findings in the study, students are not receiving adequate knowledge relating to the concept of conflict and industrial action in their academic curriculum. Students are unable to contextualize these concepts in a critical manner. According to a study conducted on the types of prescribed books for organisational behaviour and industrial psychology across several universities in South Africa revealed that only 0, 6 percent of the contents addressed issues of organised labour and trade unions (Fullagar, 1984).

There has been much confusion regarding the identity of industrial psychology in terms of differentiating between the disciplines of industrial psychology, among the public, students as well as academics (Schreuder, 2001). Most individuals perceive industrial psychology and human resource management as synonymous, which posed a negative reflection on the operational relevance of industrial psychology as a scientific practice (Schreuder, 2001). It is often assumed that this is the role that will be filled by students of industrial psychology. Universities groom their students to pursue such aspects of industrial psychology and align themselves to organisations' ideologies (Schreuder, 2001). Industrial psychology has ignored the issues of conflict and labour relations issues in South Africa during apartheid and contemporary South Africa (Fullagar & Paizis, 1986). During apartheid, industrial psychology was aligned with the managerial ideology and reflected a rather mainstream and unitarist approach to its practice.

Furthermore, the perusal of several South African university prospectuses revealed the following:

- The academic curriculum for postgraduate industrial psychology students reflects a human resource management structure.

- Universities exhibit a technical, apolitical and a historic focus in their curriculum.

Critical theory "encourages a public critique of ideology" (Steffy & Grimes, 1992, p. 196). This is extremely vital as South African universities are still facing challenges with ideology based on apartheid and the transition to democracy. Industrial psychology is meant to expose organisations as political entities and this is not reflected in the curriculums offered at universities in South Africa. Universities reflect a technical, apolitical approach, whereas a socio-political and economic approach to studies is required. Individuals are seen as active agents that construct their environment and institution through the process of communication, and emancipate themselves (Habermas, 1996).

Universities are limiting the potential of students as they are sculpting them to align themselves with managerial ideology and associating themselves with a more human resources approach. Students are being exposed to technical solutions rather than political ones. In other words universities groom their students to pursue such aspects of industrial psychology and align themselves to organisations' ideologies (Schreuder, 2001). If industrial psychology takes on a human resource approach in its curriculum this threatens the relevance and purpose of industrial psychology as a whole. Furthermore there may even be a lack of focus on the concept of conflict which does not allow the student to understand the practical implementations. The lack of inclusion of the concepts of conflict and industrial action in the academic curriculum therefore poses a great concern. Industrial psychology can be seen as an organisational service, whereby it loses credibility in terms of its scientific objectivity and independence (Fullagar, 1983).

Participants indicated that there is a lack of research conducted in this specific area of industrial psychology. Participants revealed that there should be more research conducted regarding this aspect in industrial psychology. According to Godsell (1982), there is a

concern involved in the lack of publications in South African Journals of Psychology regarding industrial relations or conflict. This is a cause for concern as this poses questions to the relevance of the field as a whole. South Africa is faced with numerous conflict issues in the labour relationship which often result in industrial action. Without a holistic education of such a concept it becomes difficult for students of industrial psychology to understand and assist in improving these situations. Studies suggest that there has been a decline in the number of qualifying industrial psychologists as well as a lack of academic research and articles in some areas of the field (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2009). Orpen (1978) suggests that there is a contemporary tendency in industrial psychology to neglect the sphere of conflict and labour relations. It is therefore possible for a student of this discipline to review literature on industrial psychology and still lack the knowledge concerning the reality and effect of labour relations and conflict in organisations (Fullagar, 1984).

5.3. Summary

This chapter focused on providing a discussion and explanation of the results of the study and also links the findings to previous research by highlighting similarities and differences. It was evident that both honours and masters participants had a broad and contextual understanding of concepts. It is significant that only three out of eight South African universities offer modules of conflict and labour relations in their academic curriculum.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions drawn from the results and discussion chapters. The practical implications and "value-add" of the study are also highlighted. Recommendations are made for future research and limitations of the study are presented.

6.2. Conclusion

The conclusions below are based on the empirical findings of the present study and are in accordance with specific objectives as stated in the literature review.

The honours and masters participants reflected a broad and contextual understanding of the subject matter. This is attributed to the manner in which they are taught in their academic curriculum. In comparison to the academic curriculum of other South African universities, participants from this research study are exposed to the concept and conflict in the labour relationship and industrial action in South Africa in a critical and contextual manner. These participants are exposed to labour relations and conflict in their academic curriculum at honours and masters levels; whereas perusal of several university prospectuses revealed that the majority of universities have limited exposure to these concepts.

The perceptions of the honours and masters participants in relation to the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action in the labour relationship in South Africa reflect a broad and contextual understanding. It is important to understand industrial action in the context of the labour relationship, and that conflict in the labour relationship influences industrial action (Boiteveau, 2014). The findings of the study revealed that although students are being exposed to these concepts at university, only three out of eight universities offer modules in labour relations and conflict resolution. This is a cause for concern as many industrial psychology students in South Africa are leaving university without a contextual and broad understanding of these very important concepts. This is emphasised by Fullagar (1984) who stated that students in industrial psychology often leave university without a comprehensive

understanding of the true nature of conflict, labour relations and unions in relation to organisational behaviour (as cited in Barlington, 1988).

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 the labour relationship. Fullagar (1984) argued that the industrial psychologist ignores (or minimises) issues of conflict in the workplace, as a result, conflict remains vaguely defined and understood in industrial psychology. The study revealed that there is a neglect of exposure to the concept of conflict and that a more practical approach aligned with theory needs to be taken.

Based on the responses from participants, it is evident that students are exposed to technical and structural solutions rather than political solutions to reduce issues of conflict and industrial action. If students at university level are being taught in a technical and structural manner, reduction of conflict and industrial action becomes limited and the field of industrial psychology ineffective.

6.3. Recommendations

The results can be judged based on the criteria of transferability or applicability. This study provides a comprehensive understanding about postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions of the concept of conflict and the incidence of industrial action. 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 KwaZulu-Natal, and to only postgraduate (honours and masters) industrial psychology students. This in turn creates a gap for future research to extend upon this study and to compare and contrast industrial psychology university students' perceptions in different regions or countries. 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 area of focus should consider conducting a study across all levels of study in the field of industrial

psychology at university. An understanding of this research from undergraduate level may provide insightful information which can be used to address the lack of focus on conflict and industrial action in the curriculum. This will allow for more insightful results. Furthermore a focus on the quantitative and qualitative divide should explore the various factors that inform and shape students' perceptions.

A further research gap that has been identified during the course of this research is that there is limited or no research conducted in this area of research across several universities. There are also limited studies which explore this field in the South African context as well as in other countries in an attempt to see how the academic curriculums differ.

6.4. Limitations

One of the main disadvantages of the qualitative approach is regarding the findings which cannot necessarily be replicated for a larger population with the same degree of certainty that a quantitative approach may provide. The results can be evaluated based on the criteria of transferability or applicability. The present study provided a comprehensive understanding of the postgraduate industrial psychology students' perceptions of the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa.

There are however limitations which should be kept in mind when analysing data and making inferences from the sample. The findings would only be applicable to the South African context, more specifically postgraduate industrial psychology students at the university in KwaZulu-Natal. This creates a gap for further research to extend this study across universities in South Africa to compare and contrast the postgraduate students' perceptions regarding the topic. A broader study which is not limited by financial or time constraints would be ideal to explore.

6.5. Contribution to Knowledge

The current research has potential to contribute to knowledge in the South African context expanding on existing bodies of literature relating to the concept of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action. The current study assists in providing more

knowledge and research on a topic which is under researched. This research also assists South African universities which are implementing the industrial psychology curriculum with a human resource management approach to realise the importance of industrial psychology being implemented in a contextual and broad manner, especially in the South African context.

6.6. Summary

In this chapter conclusions were made from the theoretical and empirical findings of the study. Limitations of the study were also suggested and recommendations for future study were made. Finally potential contributions to knowledge were highlighted.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (SEMI-STRUCTURED)

Interview Length: 20 to 25 minutes

About the Interviewee:

Name:

Age:

Profession:

Date:

Time:

Introduction

Thank you for willing to participate in this interview for this research. I would firstly like to assure you that your identity will be kept completely anonymous. I would also like your permission to audio-record this interview. The main reason for recording this interview is to have an accurate set of data which will include your opinions and responses. If you do not have any further questions I would like to briefly introduce you to the subject matter of this interview. This study is concerned with your perceptions and understandings of industrial action and conflict in the labour relationship.

1. What is your understanding of industrial action?
   - What do you think are the major contributing factors to industrial action in South Africa?
   - How would you characterize the relationship between labour and capital in South Africa?
   - What role are unions playing in the incidence of industrial action?
   - Do you think employers contribute to the incidence of industrial action?
   - What do you think are some of the reasons industrial action takes place?
2. What is your understanding of the concept of conflict?

- How would you describe conflict in South Africa?

- What do you think are some of the contributing factors to conflict?

- How would you characterize the relationship between conflict and industrial action?

3. How much of exposure have you had to the concept of conflict in your academic career in industrial psychology?

   - How do you think this influences your studies?

   - How do you think the curriculum has influenced your perception of conflict?

   - In your opinion what do you think can be done to address this situation?

   - Do you think this is relevant to industrial psychology?

   - What impact do you think this has on the field of industrial psychology?

Closure

We have covered a great deal in the subject matter. Thank you for your patience and taking the time to answer these questions. Do you think that we have missed out any details? Do you have any comments about what we have discussed or about the research as a whole? Would you like to see a transcript of the interview?

APPENDIX 2: INFORMED CONSENT

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT

<u>**Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research**</u>

Date: 3 September 2015

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Sasha Govender from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College. I am currently completing my Masters Degree in Industrial Psychology. My contact number is 083 657 0199 and my email address is sashagovender06@gmail.com.

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research in understanding the perceptions of Postgraduate Industrial Psychology students on conflict in the labour relationship and the incident of industrial action in South Africa. The aim and purpose of this research is to understand the industrial action and conflict in the labour relationship in a more holistic manner. It is significant to understand the perceptions of students who could be future industrial psychologists. It is also interesting to understand how these students perceive the concept of conflict and power in relation to the South African context. Many universities in South Africa do not provide adequate exposure to students

regarding conflict. The study is expected to include 8 participants in total. Four participants will be from the Honours class and the remaining four will be from the Masters class.

Participation in this research will involve the following procedures: You will be asked to participate in an interview regarding your perceptions of industrial action and conflict in the labour relationship. The interview will be audio-recorded and will take place on the UKZN premises. During this interview you will be asked a series of questions. These questions are designed to find out your perceptions, thoughts and views regarding the subject matter. The duration of your participation if you choose to participate and remain in the study is expected to be approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Participants will be able to ask any questions in relation to the research which will be answered. The study is funded by the researcher.

There are no known risks or discomfort associated with this research. We hope that the study will create a holistic understanding of the perceptions related to industrial action and conflict in the labour relationship. A better understanding allows for new and alternative approaches to resolve these issues in South Africa. This allows for growth in the economy and society. Postgraduate industrial psychology students are potential industrial psychologists whose role is essential in such situations. The information gained from this study will assist future industrial psychologists and researchers to understand the perceptions of society and integrate it into their resolution processes

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (referral number HSS/0587/015M).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 083 657 0199 or email sashagovender06@gmail.com or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and can withdraw from this study at any given point. In the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled. Before the interview the participant will be asked to provide a pseudo name in order for confidentiality purposes. Permission will be granted by the participant to audio record the interview which will be used for transcribing purposes. The documents will be saved on the researcher's laptop and will be protected by a password. Once the interview has been transcribed all documentation and recordings will be kept in a safe in the School of Psychology for five years and only the researcher and supervisor will have access to this. The data will be destroyed after the five years. The information obtained during this study may be published in scientific journals or scientific meetings; however the details not include any personal details of the participant.

There will be no monetary compensation for participating in this research.

The participant is welcome to ask any questions that he or she may have. These questions will be answered by the researcher to the best of his or her ability. If the participant wishes to participate in this study the informed consent will need to be signed.

CONSENT

I _____ have been informed about the study entitled Perceptions of postgraduate students on conflict in the labour relationship and the emergence of industrial action, by Sasha Govender.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study as mentioned above.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at 083 657 0199 or sashagovender06@gmail.com.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes   YES / NO

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Witness   **Date**

(Where applicable)

APPENDIX 3: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 July 2015

Miss Sasha Govender 210512828
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Miss Govender

Protocol reference number: HSS/0587/015M
Project title: Industrial Psychology postgraduate student's perceptions of conflict in the labour relationship and the incidence of industrial action in South Africa: A qualitative study

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 28 May 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dean Isaacs
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn
Cc School Administrator: Ms Ayanda Ntuli