



Understanding the shift from permanent employment to contract work among retail workers who accepted voluntary retrenchment packages in 2017

Lorenzo Daniel Andrews

ANDLOR003

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**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

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## Abstract:

Cost saving strategies gained prominence in South Africa's retail sector when the Multinational Corporation (MNC) Walmart entered South African retail industry through the Walmart/Massmart Merger in 2011. Retail companies such as Pick n Pay (PnP) adopted workplace-restructuring strategies to maintain a competitive edge in the retail sector. This study draws attention to the effect of the cost saving strategies such as VRPs, and labour brokers in the workplace. This research explores the experience of retail workers who took voluntary retrenchment package (VRP) in 2017 and then returned to the same workplace as contract workers through labour brokers. This study specifically focuses on the experience of the transition from being a permanent worker with access to various employment benefits to a contract worker without access to typical benefits associated with industrial citizenship. The study adopted a qualitative research design with 10 semi-structured interviews. Using the worlds of work model and the concept industrial citizenship for analysis, this study finds that workplace restructuring strategies have led to the erosion of workers' industrial citizenship rights and has given rise to high levels of precarious working conditions. This illustrates that despite access to information sessions organised by PnP, workers were not adequately prepared for post-work life especially where finances were concerned. Due to their age, limited skills set for jobs outside the retail sector which affected their employability and the fact that they could not maintain their household needs after taking the VRP, workers returned to the same workplace as contract workers. This study finds that workers had a negative experience when they returned to their former workplace as casual workers because employment through labour brokers takes the employment accountability away from the company even though the worker is physically working under the PnP brand. Due to their long service at PnP, workers experienced the transition from being a permanent to contract worker in two ways. Firstly, by noting the erosion of industrial citizenship rights in their workplace. For example, workers experienced precarious conditions such as unfair dismissal, irregular and long working hours, less wages and received no employment benefits nor trade union representation. Secondly, by noting that there was a major shift from the traditional family-owned management style that made them feel like they were part of a family in previous years, to a corporate business set up that made them feel marginalized and unrepresented by trade unions.

## 1 Introduction:

### 1.1 Background

In 2011 Walmart acquired 51% stake in South African owned Massmart (Kenny, 2011). This prompted local retailers to find strategies to restore their market share and profits. Two of the key mechanisms used was a form of labour restructuring Voluntary retrenchment or the use of labour brokers. PnP had implemented a form of labour restructuring known as voluntary retrenchment (VR). PnP implemented VR 2011, 2014 and 2017 respectively, and it is estimated that 3000 workers were retrenched during each round (Enslin-Payne, (2011); Reuters, (2017); Crotty, (2019)). According to the South African labour law, labour restructuring falls under an employer's operational requirements (*Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 with CCMA rules and codes of good practice*, 2019: 230). Labour restructuring can be defined as techniques/strategies adopted by a business to maintain profit or ensure its survival within its specific industry (Webster, 2005: 68; Happiness, 2017). It ranges from cost saving techniques such as reduction of employees, outsourcing production, and services – but the ultimate goal is to maintain profit or increase profit (Webster and Van Holdt, 2007: 10-15).

This research explores the experience of retail workers who took voluntary retrenchment package (VRP) in 2017 and then returned to the same workplace as contract workers through labour brokers. Several studies have documented the effect that workplace restructuring has had on workers in various sectors, these studies include Lord 2020; Xaba 2006; Bezuidenhout 2007; and Miller, Nel and Hampwaye, 2008. However, little is known about the experiences of workers who are retrenched but return to their former workplaces under different employment conditions. This is possible because as noted in previous studies, factories have closed-down or relocated, hence providing no opportunity for workers to return to their former workplaces under different employment conditions (Louw, 2002; Bezuidenhout, et al, 2007). This study specifically focuses on the experience of the transition from being a permanent worker with access to various employment benefits to a contract worker without access to the typical benefits associated with industrial citizenship.

### 1.2 Rationale:

The study focuses on the workers who took the VRP in 2017 but returned to the same workplace after they found that their finances were becoming depleted. This is an issue as workers who take VR's often seek to retire and not return to the same workplace as they often

seek out new challenges. VRPs were ‘sold’ to workers as a fresh start and a new beginning. However, research has shown that when retrenchment is implemented, it often results in negative consequences for the worker and its household. Further research in retail has shown that retail workplace conditions has deteriorated. In this sense, workers lack union representation, earn low wages and receive no benefits. While PnP benefited from workplace restructuring through VRPs as Moorad (2013) argues that often workers are negatively impacted because of their loss of stable employment (1).

Workers were paid 1.5 weeks wages for every year that they worked at PnP (Fin24, 2017). The VRPs offered in 2017 affected more than 3500 workers and yielded positive profit results after staff layoffs (VRs were considered fair by the Pick n Pay CEO Richard Brasher as they had no other choice but to retrench workers due to the penetration of Wal-Mart into the South African retail industry). The VR’s were a potential turning point for workers to find new challenges, but this did not come about even though they received financial incentives.

Studies have shown that workers use their retrenchment money to pay off debt and home renovations and do not consider the fact that they will lose access to stable income which was provided through formal employment (Kinderen and Greef. 2003; Xaba, 2006). To sustain their household workers often return to work in worse conditions due to lack of skills and their education level. Scholars have discovered that there is very little success of finding new job opportunities following retrenchments, especially if corporations have moved to new locations or closed permanently (Xaba, 2006: 102; Webster and Kenny, 2005; Bezuidenhout, Khunou, Mosoetsa, Sutherland and Thiburn, 2007). In the retail sector, corporations remain present within their respective physical locations so there is a possibility of re-entering the workplace after being retrenched – which worker’s do. Therefore, it is important to understand how and why workers return to the same workplace as contract workers after taking a voluntary retrenchment and thus, losing permanent employment.

### 1.3 Research question and sub-questions:

Based on the above, this research set out to answer the following question:

How have retail workers who took the voluntary retrenchment package (VRP) experienced the transition from being permanently employed to contract employment through labour brokers in the same workplace?



How were workers industrial citizenship rights characterized as permanent employees?

How did workers participate in the build-up to voluntary retrenchment packages?

What were the factors for workers choosing to take VRP's?

How did workers re-enter the workplace?

What are the current working conditions of these workers?

What role do workers play within the same workplace when being re-employed?

#### 1.4 Theoretical concepts: Worlds of Work Model and industrial citizenship:

In order to understand the transition of workers taking the VRP's in 2017 and returning to the same workplace a short while later, I use the worlds of work model to examine how workers moved from the core to the non-core (Webster, 2005; Happiness, 2017). In this case, it will be examining how workers transition from permanent retail employment (core) to re-entering the workplace through labour brokers or franchises (no-core). I draw on the rights workers and the industrial citizenship concept by Standing (2011). Understanding the rights which workers lost during the transition from permanent to contract employment.

#### 1.5 Methodological overview:

A qualitative method was applicable to this study as it focuses on the depth of a participant and not the breadth (Spencer, et al, 2014: 297). In other words, understanding participants behavior and emotions to why they decided to take voluntary retrenchment packages to eventually returning to the same workplace. The method used to collect data was qualitative semi-structured interviews. As this form of interviews would ensure that the researcher would gain rich information of the participants experience during the transition (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 11). I was able to conduct 10 semi-structured interviews, in which 7 were done via WhatsApp video call, 1 was done via WhatsApp voice notes and two were done via face-to-face interviews. The face-to-face interviews were done during less restrictive lockdown levels and following all protocols.

#### 1.6 Thesis outline:

Besides the introduction and conclusion, there are four chapters within this thesis, each chapter consists of subsections. The first chapter is comprised of various literature in which it identifies

and discusses various literature and authors. This includes those who focus on the role of Multinational corporations (MNC) entering local markets in South Africa which resulted in worsening conditions and experiences for workers, it then goes further and examines VR in South Africa and identifies which strategies were used and why these authors argue that they were ineffective. The final subsection examines the role of Wal-Mart entering South African and through a tribunal SA trade Unions and government departments were able to ensure that there were conditions for this merger to occur.

The second chapter focuses on methodological aspects of the research, firstly by giving a contextual standing and emphasizing why a qualitative approach would best fit this study. Secondly, underlying sampling which was used within this study and tools which were used to ensure that all data was reliable and valid. The final subsection examines the limitations which were posed during field work. It then focuses on the analysis used in this research project; it argues that the thematic analysis was the best form of analysis.

The third chapter focuses on the findings, in which it details the life of a retail worker by identifying how the worker started out at PnP to eventually taking the VRP and finally returning to the workplace. In this section, it extensively examines the key themes identified in the analysis process, while still being able to detail the transition according to the workers description and identifying how workers industrial citizenship rights changed throughout the transition. It becomes evident that once workers take the VRP's it often results in less securities. This section also examines why workers would take the VRP and why they would end up coming back into the same workplace for less money and less to no worker benefits.

The fourth chapter discusses the findings in four main themes, the first being solidarity in the workplace which examines the changing nature of solidarity in the workplace in which workers are competitive with each other due to the changing nature of the workplace which included a more corporate setting. It then examines how workers felt that it was their choice and how voluntary the VR's were, and whether workers had any choice in whether staying or leaving the organisation. It then examines the unemployment period in which workers did invest their finances but needed to sustain their livelihoods and therefore leading to the final theme which is precariousness in the workplace. This theme discusses the insecurities faced by workers when returning and the future of retail throughout the Southern African region, specifically focusing on Namibia and Zambia. Finally discussing how labour policies have allowed this to occur to workers.

In the end, all the chapters will detail the existing trends in the South African retail market brought about by Walmart/Massmart merger and the impact it has had on workers.

## 2 Literature Review:

Retail in South Africa and surrounding regions have faced new challenges since the Walmart/Massmart merger. To deal with these challenges, local retail companies have implemented various labour restructuring strategies to ensure that it can compete with the Multi-National Corporation, Walmart. The following literature review will identify various studies that have examined labour restructuring in South Africa with a particular interest in the understanding the erosion of industrial citizenship. The first section identifies and explains key concepts such as industrial citizenship and labour restructuring. This is followed by an explanation of the worlds of work model to understand how and where the erosion of industrial citizenship has occurred in the retail sector. The role of MNC's as key drivers of labour restructuring is discussed in this section. The second section focuses on the Walmart/Massmart merger and how South Africa reacted to this merger as well as challenging the merger and ensuring that there were conditions placed on the merger. This was to ensure the wellbeing of the South African economy and its workers. This section will discuss retrenchment and voluntary retrenchment in South Africa. The third section outlines the effects of labour restructuring, more specifically, the role that retrenchment has on the industrial citizenship rights of workers which gives rise to bleak working conditions in the retail sector.

### 2.1 The erosion of industrial citizenship through Labour restructuring:

Industrial citizenship refers to the rights and securities of a worker to ensure the workers wellbeing and that the worker is recognized by the organisation to avoid exploitation (Kenny, 2018: 210-211). According to Standing (2011) an industrial citizen is a worker who has political and social rights which are aimed at protecting the worker against the employer and other forces which threatens the workers wellbeing (Standing, 2011: 10; Standing, 2018; Monaco, 2019; Lain, Airey, Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2019). The definition of industrial citizenship for this research project is derived from Standing's (2011) work on the precariat and Kenny (2018) research which examines retail workers insecurities in the workplace.

The inclusion of Kenny's (2018) perspective is primarily due to Standings (2011) of the precariat being criticized as it argues that there is a growing class which is categorized by uncertainty and insecurity in the workplace, no financial and psychological welfare. While Scully (2016) argues that Standing is ignoring the fact that the precariat is not a global phenomenon and that it has existed in the Global South. Thus, Kenny (2018) does explain

industrial citizenship within a South African context and examines workers and the security's they have in the store/retail space. Combined the two theories show that the workers would lose the support of the PnP and not recognized by the organisation. In the end, there are merits to his argument and does help evaluate and understand the transition of workers. In the sense, understanding the securities which are at risk to workers.

Standing (2011) explains that industrial citizenship rights consist of seven labour related security. The seven securities are labour security, employment security, job security, work security, skill security, income security and representation security. This project will be focus on five of these securities due to the aim of this study which focuses on the transition of retail workers from permanent employment through VRPs and returning as contract workers in the same workplace. The two securities which are excluded are labour security and income security. The labour security is excluded as there were income securities offered to the worker and income security was excluded as workers were earning above the minimum wage (which at this time was 2019 and 2020) (Omarjee, 2019).

These five industrial citizenship rights are vital in categorizing retail workers' rights in the workplace. These includes employment security which ensures that workers are not dismissed unfairly, and equity is considered when hiring and firing workers. The second is job security which promotes the idea that workers can have the opportunity to be promoted and not be stuck in the same position or receive higher wages. It ensures that workers can acquire skills while working and can better incomes and promotions. The third security is work security in which the worker has fixed working hours (9-5), compensation for time spent when working overtime or working outside of the traditional fixed hours the worker has agreed upon in his/her contract. The forth. is skill reproduction security in which the organisation uses its resources and invests it into ensuring that the workers gain new skills through programmes and education. The fifth security is known as representation security in which workers have the right to collective action and their opinions should be heard in the workplace.

The erosion of industrial citizenship refers to a loss of one or more of the industrial citizenship rights mentioned above due to factors which include global competition and increasing or maintaining profits (Webster, 2005: 68; Happiness, 2017). In this thesis, the erosion of industrial citizenship will be discussed in relation to labour restructuring mechanisms. Labour restructuring is used to counter global competition (Xaba, 2006: 103). As in the word itself, labour restructuring affects workers (labour) the most and there are various strategies such as

retrenchments, voluntary retrenchments, subcontracting (outsourcing) and creating flexible forms of work (Kenny and Webster, 1998: 218; Scully, 2016). The following paragraphs will focus on retrenchment – where labour restructuring has taken place. According to Collier, et al (2019; 549) retrenchment refers to downsizing and descaling of one's workforce within an organisation due to not being able to maintain these workers livelihoods (salaries) any longer.

Webster (2005) uses the worlds of work model by Von Holdt (2003) to explain the ever-changing nature of work brought about by globalization. This model describes how workers can move between three different levels: The first level, the core, suggests that workers benefit from global integration, thus, workers in the core level are often categorized by having secure jobs, decent employment and salaries with benefits. These workers in this level are also have the option to be protected by unions and are recognized by civil society and have good working conditions and in most cases these types of workers have access to industrial citizenship rights. While the second level, non-core suggests that workers still have employment, but this employment comes at worse conditions. The third level, peripheral, suggests that workers are unable to secure employment and have to rely on domestic unpaid labour or find ways to make a living. These three levels are important as it highlights where workers lack industrial citizenship. The concept of industrial citizenship highlights the idea that workers are able to be represented and protected within the industrial setting (workforce and workplace). Therefore, highlights how corporations and government view these retail workers who transition from formal employment to informal employment through VRP's.

This model will be useful for this study because it will help understand the transition of being permanently employed to being contract employee. In this sense, the worlds of work model have already established that due to globalisation, the way workers industrial citizenship can be seen, is within three levels. The lower the level, the less security one has as a worker. Thus, this model will establish how workers who had industrial citizenship rights which would have been classified within the first level (core workers) now have to fall under the second level (non core workers) where they work as contract workers.

## 2.2 The consequences of labour restructuring:

This section identifies and explains what labour restructuring is in relation to MNC's in the South African context. It then identifies what makes MNC's dangerous to local economies and uses the example of retrenchments and outsourcing labour in different regions.

Within the South African context, Webster, Lambert and Bezuidenhout (2011) examines the white goods sector in three factories including (at the time) South African owned Defy which falls under the manufacturing sector. Webster, et al (2011) acknowledges that Multi-national Corporations (MNC's) are profit driven and MNCs have greater access to resources at a much lower cost (Webster, et al, 2011: 32-33). These resources include access to cheaper workers that are able to create more productivity. Since MNCs are able to move its production to regions with lower labour costs MNCs can earn greater profits. This has dire consequences on the local communities, as workers lose their form of income which sustains their livelihood when production is moved to a new location. Webster, et al (2011) argue that MNC's are a great threat to local economies and communities, and it is up to the government to ensure that these local corporations are protected.

A consequence of global competition is that it often leads to workers getting retrenched as the corporations or companies close-down (Webster, et al, 2011). Several scholars have explored retrenchment and voluntary retrenchment in South African context due to global competition and the impact it had on the worker. Bezuidenhout, et al (2007) examines the effects of retrenchments in the textile industry. on households. Bezuidenhout, et al (2007) focuses primarily on the effects after retrenchment (post-work life). They argue that retrenchments contribute towards poverty because workers are unable to provide for their families. Thus, workers participate in unpaid domestic labour or be caught in precarious working conditions to sustain their households (Bezuidenhout, et al, 2007: 554). Social grants are emphasized as a major source of income, as it relieves pressure within the household. Social grants are often seen as the lifeline for workers who are retrenched, as the retrenchment packages are not sustainable enough for as long as one is without a job. These social grants take the form of old-age pension and disability grants (Webster, 2005: 64; Happiness, 2017). These grants help with the household expenses. According to Webster (2005) and Bezuidenhout, et al (2007) most workers had access to grants due to relatives receiving these forms of income due to various circumstances which includes disability, child-care, and old age. Research shows that access to grants is seen as just a lifeline, and retail workers still need to access to the job market. This highlights the idea of workers having some form of a passive income and that they are dependent on other family members when unemployment or limited resources.

Bezuidenhout, et al (2007) research reveals that with the rise of global competition factories were relocated to cheaper sites outside of South Africa. This resulted in many factories closing

down and workers were retrenched. Bezuidenhout, et al (2007) reiterated that retrenchments have negative implications on the South African economy and households because the loss of wages led to poverty. Furthermore, by examining companies that closed-down scholars found out that workers cannot find new employment due to their age and lack of skills (Bezuidenhout, et al,2007: 555-558).

### 2.3 The South African civil actors vs Walmart/Massmart merger:

In South Africa, the state tried to intervene and place conditions on the Massmart/Walmart merger. The merge wasn't openly welcomed and there was a lot of resistance from unions such as South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (SACCAWU) to ensure that the merger would not develop. SACCAWU had support from international actors such as Global Union Federation UNI Global and the United Food and Commercial Workers (from the United States) (Kenny, 2014: 173).

Walmart had a reputation of exploiting workers; thus, unions were cautious in bringing this Multinational Corporation into South Africa (Kenny, 2018: 212). In sum, what made Walmart different from other retailers is the fact that Walmart was one of the first retailers in America to invest into information technology, it invested into this resource in the 1960's and it has been thriving ever since and this has given it the competitive advantage (Bernhardt, 1999: 11-12; Barley and Orr, 2018: 13). Walmart has 2.2 million workers and operates in 27 different countries (Basker, 2007: 190). This highlights the impact that this multinational corporation such as Walmart has on the South African industry as it was a leader in the retail sector, in many fronts which included investments into information technology, its idea of having a variety of products so that you only need to shop at the store for anything and finally its logistics and supply chain approach (Basker, 2007: 178). As it can be noted above, its intention was aimed at being an efficient retailer and none of their aims were about the worker and wellbeing, hence concerns from South African government and unions.

According to Kenny (2014) the merger would only be granted if it did not pose a threat to the public or violate any regulation in the South African competition law. This is primarily due to the fact that Walmart had access to global suppliers which would have heavily impacted local suppliers within the agricultural and manufacturing sector (Kenny, 2017: 174). Thus, many ministries and departments such as economic development, trade and industry, and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries would argue that conditions would need to be put in place to ensure



that this merger benefits local actors as well (Kenny, 2017: 174). In this, Walmart would need to ensure that they use local suppliers as well as give South African owned companies access to their global network.

Bezuidenhout and Kleynhans (2014) examined how the Walmart/Massmart merger was challenged by government and unions to ensure that the Multinational corporation did not take advantage or put the South African government at risk (Bezuidenhout and Kleynhans, 2014: 94). The aim of the SA government and union was to ensure that South Africa's interests are protected within this acquisition (Bezuidenhout and Kleynhans, 2014: 94-95). If the merger had been brought in without any questioning and had gone about smoothly, local actors such as suppliers and retailers would have suffered. It is evident that the merger was successful, and Walmart had their foot in the door within the South African retail market, however, it did come with various conditions which included, that they do not retrench any workers within the first two years. Secondly, they would need to set up funds such as the R200 million fund to help small and medium businesses in South Africa (Kenny, 2017: 176).

Walmart saw that Massmart was the perfect partner due to them having similar values such as ensuring cheaper prices for the benefit of consumers (*Walmart Stores Inc and Massmart Holdings Inc.* 2011: 9) Both companies wanted to access the untapped African retail market and Massmart had already formed a base within the African region and ultimately Massmart had already started to occupy space in the rest of Africa. Wal-Mart representatives also argued that the positives outweigh the negative – this includes the idea that the merger would create more than 15000 new jobs, it will contribute towards the local knowledge within the retail sector as Walmart does have a large knowledge within the retail sector but more importantly argued that they would fund a \$8.75 Million dollar project for suppliers and local companies (*Walmart Stores Inc and Massmart Holdings Inc.* 2011:38-40). This was to ensure that development would occur within South Africa. Therefore, Walmart/Massmart merger argued that their expertise and knowledge plus their consistent drive to ensure that prices are cheapest for customers enjoyment would ensure that the merger does happen.

South Africa did handle this merger well as it allowed South African companies to implement strategies which will benefit the local companies. Such as implementing quotas to ensure that a certain percentage of supplies are sourced locally and secondly ensuring that Walmart invests into local enterprises (*Walmart Stores Inc and Massmart Holdings Inc.* 2011). As mentioned

earlier, where Walmart has to implement a R200 million to help fund small and medium businesses.

However, when it came to the rights of retail workers and ensuring that the trend of Walmart exploiting retail workers did not persist in South Africa, but there was no agreement or discussion on what workers' rights would be guaranteed. Instead, there was consistent discussion on Walmart/Massmart would do regarding ensuring lowest prices for the consumers. Secondly using their global knowledge to advance the local suppliers. There is no discussion of how Walmart/Massmart aims to achieve this without compromising the workers' rights, although it was brought up by both Saccawu and government officials – there is no evidence that shows this was resolved effectively and sustainably (*Walmart Stores Inc and Massmart Holdings Inc. 2011: 9*). Although the tribunal did discover that more jobs would be created and there wasn't sufficient evidence within Walmart/Massmart merger that retrenchments would occur (*Walmart Stores Inc and Massmart Holdings Inc. 2011: 12-15*).

It is no secret that Walmart prides itself on ensuring that customer satisfaction in the form of providing a pleasant experience and further ensuring that the lowest prices for their products (Liebman, 2005: 1). This comes at the expense of the workers and as mentioned above, the Walmart/Massmart merger was contested by unions and government officials and conditions were still placed on the organisation – however, these conditions did not include the overall wellbeing of workers. Due to the merger, there was much restructuring from local organisations as they feared that they would lose their market share.

In the previous paragraphs it becomes evident Massmart/Walmart merger were willing to invest in the South African market. However, there was still little discussion on how this would affect the workers, but they painted a taint picture of what life for retail worker would be like. As within Walmart's global trend, it became evident that workers were not taking care of and retail workplaces deteriorated. This was Saccawu's biggest worry, the idea that workers would not find employment in this industry and ensured that for the first two years the merger would not make any retrenchments, this only referred to merger but did not refer to other retail corporations such as PnP and Shoprite. In the case of PnP, labour costs were a major expense to the organisation, and they were quiet far behind compared to other top retailers such as Shoprite and Walmart (Moorad, 2013: 1). Thus, they were able to adopt strategies such as voluntary retrenchment to address this issue.

## 2.4 Retrenchment and Voluntary retrenchment in South Africa:

The following discusses texts on retrenchment and VRP's in South Africa: Retrenchments can be characterized by a necessary process in which an organisation reduces its workforce due to lack of resources such as profit (Crompton, 1984: 10). This implies that workers are not given the option to decide to stay at the workplace, while VRP's allows the worker to decide whether they would like to stay or leave the workplace but if they decide to stay, they would get circulated to a different department as the position they currently occupy is seen as redundant (White, 2017: 1). Thus, forms of labour restructuring such as VRP is often seen as a choice, while both retrenchment and VRP often happens when a company cannot afford its workers and therefore retrenches workers to ensure it maintains its market share within the industry (in this specific case, the retail industry).

According to Clark (2005: 245; Bergström and Arman 2017) the steps within VR strategies, involves the offer of financial incentive to encourage employees to “volunteer for redundancy” . Thus, what distinguishes VR from normal retrenchment is that the workers sign off on not suing the company for unfair dismissals – in this instance, the VR protects the company by stating that it was the workers decision to leave (Laubscher and Vellem, 2011: 1). Ultimately, it is a strategy which is downsizing its workforce through “a planned elimination of positions or jobs” (Clark, 2005: 245; Bergström and Arman 2017). It is seen as one of the best strategies to use when company's wanting to avoid or minimize conflict between employees and other stakeholders (Lord, 2020 413).

When looking at retailers in South Africa such as PnP, it is evident that they did not plan to retrench or lay off any workers (White, 2017). As mentioned earlier, it was a necessity for retailers to adopt labour restructuring practices due to global competition and to maintain its market share. This was the case as there were positive profit growths after these retrenchments occurred (Enslin-Payne, 2011). This would make labour restructuring mechanisms such labour brokers more favorable among retailers as all companies aim to achieve a profit and stay within their industry (Barrientos, Gereffi, and Rossi, 2011: 323).

But within PnP, it was argued that their labour capacity was not as effective as other retailers (*Shevel and Tshandu, 2017: 1*). Thus, these strategies implemented by PnP would not spill over to other retail companies as PnP was just aiming to become a more efficient workforce. However, the consequences on the workforce was still unknown at that time but as noted

earlier, labour restructuring does affect workers negatively and has consequences on their livelihoods.

It is important to note the role of trade unions during the retrenchment process. 2000 jobs were saved during the 2011 retrenchment process at PnP (Crotty, 2011: 1). While in 2017, SACCAWU instigated that they would fight the retrenchments happening at that time, there was little discussion about its subsequent success or how successful they were in preventing retrenchments. However, it should be noted that PnP achieved its goal of 3500 retrenches (Velapi, 2017: 1). Although it should be noted that trade unions were active during the retrenchment process they emphasized that consensus needs to be made between workers and the organisation and there should be negotiations between the two parties (White, 2017:1).

This brings up the question raised by Clark (2005) is whether voluntary retrenchment is just an expensive form of involuntary retrenchment for corporations. But Gordon (2019) argues that there is no difference between the two, in fact – voluntary retrenchment can have major implications on the taxable income for workers. VR's can be seen as unfair to workers as according to De Villiers (2019) higher tax deductions will come at the expense of the workers (De Villiers, 2019: 1). Thus, workers would receive less money as it would be seen as their choice to be retrenched and not necessarily the company forcing them to do so. Gordon (2019) argues that when the employer decides when an employee is retrenched, there is nothing voluntary about it and it is important for companies to ensure that the workers are educated on this matter, especially when looking at how voluntary retrenchment in relation to how it is taxed (Gordan, 2019: 1). There is a higher taxable amount on your package if you voluntary retrench, than through involuntary retrenchment.

Although voluntary retrenchments cost the company more money because they need to pay workers higher packages and entice them to leave the corporation, the long-term benefits of not having to be responsible for workers lead to higher profit gains. Yet retrenchments are when workers are given some form of a choice in the matter and can choose to take the package or be relocated (der Kinderen and Greefe, 2003: 85). According to both Clark (2005) and der Kinderen and Greefe (2003) most workers choose to take VRP because workers have been working for long periods of time and often there is low worker moral and motivation to continue working in their specific industry. Many of them do not seek new challenges within the same working environment, thus they would take the packages. As in der Kinderen and Greefe's (2003: 86) study on teachers who were offered VRP, they discovered that teachers

feared being redeployed to areas which they did not approve of and therefore opted to take the VRP instead.

It seems not enough emphasis is placed on how workers who were once permanent workers adapt to not receiving the same income any longer. Therefore, lifestyle choices would need to change as workers adjust to receiving a lower income from their retrenchment packages and/or pension fund. The workshops discussed in Xaba's (2006) research is based on workers generating an income. While it is necessary for such workshops, employers should also ensure that workers know how to sustainably use their packages. As it is evident that after a few months or within a year, most of the worker's payouts are withdrawn due to investing in things that they value such as renovations within their homes. Innovations for workers to generate income after retrenchment is not successful due to various factors identified by Xaba (2006). These various factors include not being able to find an alternative workplace to continue earning a living. It also included not being able to run a successful business as the findings and discussions chapter one will note that these workers were only equipped with skills to ensure the productivity of the organisations. When they leave the organisation they are at odds with, to what they want to go into and if the option to return to what they know, these workers would return to it, even under worsening conditions.

## 2.5 Effects on industrial citizenship

As noted earlier, due to global impacts, workers end up losing these securities or as it is termed, there is an erosion of industrial citizenship. Within the South African context, the historical context of industrial citizen was racial Fordism in which blacks' (non-white) were seen as producers of products and whites were seen as consumers (Webster, et al. 2011: 31). This is primarily due to social protections South Africa were given to white settlers and Africans were excluded. Thus, workers were categorized according to their race (Kenny and Webster, 1998: 216-217; Kenny, 2018: 10-11). Therefore, it is also important to note the legacy of industrial citizenship in South Africa which is racial identity. Race was always a key determinant of what rights workers had and what work they had access to as most black employees could not become managers and would instead be considered general workers and uneducated (Webster, et al, 2011: 32). This shows that white workers were often considered employees, while black workers were seen as laborers (individuals who do manual labour) – and this affected what benefits and securities workers would receive. This shows that there were always a group of workers within the retail sector that were vulnerable and that there is no fairness within the

retail industry, although policies such as Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) to ensure that fairness is achieved (Baker, 2007: 3-4). Throughout the thesis, I have used labour and work interchangeably in reference to the worker and their respective experiences (Verboven and Laes, 2017: 1,2,7). I would often use the word labour to relate to what the political, and social aspects of the worker and work was used in relation to the mental and physical effort and input of the worker. I am not using the words work and labourer to define what kind of work they are doing, as historically work would imply skilled and labour would imply unskilled (Siegal, 2020: 1).

## 2.6 Industrial citizenship in retail

Many scholars have examined the consequences of workplace restructuring and argue that it contributes to increased insecurity for workers (Mathekga and Maciko, 2018; Kenny, 2018 and Xaba, 2006). Both Kenny (2018) and Mathekga and Maciko (2018) specifically identify insecurities in the retail sector. This includes longer working hours, not adequately compensated for overtime work and not recognized by trade unions. This leads workers to take drastic measure to ensure that they are being heard when there are limited support structures to address their grievances. Kenny (2018) provides an example that examines how female workers laid a complaint against a store manager with the human resource department because he sexually assaulted many contract workers who were employed through labour brokers, the manager promised the workers access to permanent jobs. Human resources and management (HR) were unable to assist, and workers had the manager removed themselves (Kenny, 2018: 226-227).

Kenny (2018) examines precarity within the workplace through the use of labour brokers. Precarity refers to the idea that workers do not have sufficient protection and benefits which permanent workers would have, this includes regular working hours and being compensated fairly for any overtime work conducted. It also includes employee benefits such as provident funds and medical aid. She argued that workers were still lacking industrial citizenship which moved away from racial identity and more based on market hegemonic order (Kenny, 2018: 124-125). In this sense, it refers to workers in retail sector are continuously placed in a competitive environment (Webster, 2005: 60; Happiness, 2017). The cost cutting, and growth of the company comes at the expense of workers through restructuring workplace relations “have infused with the imagination of workers and managers” (Kenny, 2019: 176-181). This implies that labour restructuring does have consequences on how workers see themselves.

Mathekga and Maciko's (2018) research provides further examples of how easily contract workers are exploited within the workplace. For example, contract workers work the same hours as permanent workers but are paid less wages and they do not get the same representation from trade unions as permanent workers (Maciko and Mathekga, 2018: 43). This example captures what some scholars have referred to as a 'crisis of representation' (Sitas, 2004. Webster, 2005: 58; Happiness, 2017).

Labour broking leads to the loss of industrial citizenship rights, which will be discussed in the following section: store conditions section, not only in South Africa but the rest of the Southern African region as well.

## 2.7 Store conditions:

Key observations made by Kenny (2016) in the Walmart/Massmart stores known as Cambridge as stores which offer low wages and poor working conditions (Kenny, 2016: 174-175). Many retail firms had adopted the use of labour brokers in their stores (Kenny 2016: 175). This also makes it difficult for trade unions to organize effectively.

In other stores such as Shoprite and PnP, there has been an increased use of retrenchment mechanisms which makes way for more workers (Shevel and Tshandu. 2017). However, there is limited discussion on how workers would be reintroduced to the workplace. It is clear that there is an agreement that retail companies have implemented the use of labour brokers, and it is seemingly increasing.

The aftermath of this merger led to companies adopting strategies to stay competitive in the retail market. The following section will look at the Southern African region and the implications this merger had on this Southern African Development Community (SADC). The primary focus will be Zambia.

## 2.8 Retail conditions in Southern Africa: A case of Zambia:

The Southern African region is a good example of retail workers who do not have industrial citizenship rights. As Miller, et al (2008) examines the experience of Southern African retail workers, specifically the South African owned Shoprite and PnP stores.

Miller, et al (2008) and Crush & Frayne (2011) examined the food retail sector which includes stores such as Shoprite in Zambia and argues that there is an exclusion of retail workers because

these African regions retail sectors are often informal. In this sense the services offered by companies such as PnP and Shoprite are often informal traders (Miller, et al, 2008: 118; Aceska and Heer, 2019). This gives way for labour brokers to exploit this situation, so the workers transition in other parts of Africa might differ from the ones occurring in Africa. However, the fact that these retail workers lack industrial citizenship rights remain prominent. Miller, et al (2008) who examines the idea of casualization and the use of labour brokers increasing in South Africa. When examining the data of how many workers are permanent vs contract, it is evident that there is not a big difference between these two categories (Miller, et al, 2008: 131, 140; Aceska and Heer, 2019). In other words, according to Miller, et al (2008: 131; Aceska and Heer, 2019: 50-52) there is about a 200 workers difference in favor of permanent workers to contract workers.

It is evident that these workers would often earn very low wages and would argue that they would rather take up these jobs in retail than be unemployed or on the streets (Miller, et al, 2008: 142; Aceska and Heer, 2019). While examining the working conditions of workers in Zambia, workers often lack benefits such as pension funds, medical aid and paid leave days (Miller, et al, 2008: 138; Aceska and Heer, 2019). When companies such as Shoprite take over state owned enterprises, they often retrench older workers to make way for younger workers and it is concluded that the older workers do not get re-employed instead have to rely on younger family members and often end up unemployed (Miller, et al, 2008: 130; Aceska and Heer, 2019). Reiterating the idea that much of Southern Africa composes of informal traders in the retail market and corporations such as Shoprite is able to exploit these situations. Hence, it is clear that workers often face precarious situations in the retail space.

## 2.9 Trade unions:

According to Kenny (2018) there are three key shifts towards union representation. The first taking place during the 1920's-1960's in which the employees was only regarded based on being white. The second shift is where militancy by black workers during the 1970's and 1980's allowed the industrial citizenship to transpire to black workers (where they were permanently employed). The third shift was during the post-apartheid labour reform which saw different categories of retail workers (contract, part-time and permanent) being considered industrial citizens (Kenny, 2018: 10-13). The three shifts highlighted by Kenny (2018), highlights the idea of how retail workers were categorized as industrial citizens and how these workers gained industrial citizenship within the stores during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These industrial



citizenship rights were achieved through various strategies which included collective bargaining and protests, strikes, boycotting which resulted in organisations and companies being forced to provide better livelihoods for these workers (Kenny,2018: 192). By the end of the century and into a democratic South Africa, it became evident that industrial citizenship was no longer categorized by racial identity.

Several scholars argue that workers are under-represented by unions and often have to resort to informal action in order to get their voices heard, thus these workers form are pushed into more precarious and intensive working conditions because of global competition (Mathekga and Maciko, Kenny 2018, Xaba 2006, Webster 2005). The consensus from this body of scholarship is that increasingly workers are employed through labour brokers and not recognized in the workplace. The examples above highlight the erosion of industrial citizenship and the type of insecurities many workers face in the retail sector.

MNC's cause workers to lose their livelihoods or forces them into unsecure situations. As noted in the South African retail context, Walmart acquired a 51% stake in Massmart which caused retail companies such as PnP to implement strategies to ensure its survival in the sector, while ensuring that it is more effective. This Is only possible through workers moving from formal working conditions to informal conditions:

## 2.10 Conclusion:

This chapter examined the role of MNC's and its effects on local economies and argues that the literature states MNC's has negative effects on the local companies and its communities that depend on it for their livelihood. Thus, literature speaks about retrenchment being a strategy used by local companies in which they are either downscaling or closing-down their operations due to not being able to compete with MNCs. Employees are a major expense to organisations, and this affects companies' profits. Thus, cost saving strategies such as VPR's and paying third parties such as labour brokers to get employees are increasing within organisations. This is particularly the case in PnP as it is an older organisation and need to adapt to the technological advanced taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ultimately employees are expensive and global trends have adopted outsourcing its workforce which leads to more productivity and profits. Thus, local companies who continue to exist adopt strategies such as retrenchment or labour broking to reduce expenses. This means that workers will lose their industrial citizenship rights and be financially compensated. While in most cases this financial

compensation does not replace their income and they often struggle to find new employment after that financial income has run out. This leads workers into precarious working conditions often categorised by job uncertainty and if workers find jobs it is often low waged employment with no benefits and insecure working conditions. Hence, there is a trend to reduce core workers who had benefits which cost the company more, and an increase in non-core workers. This is due to non-core workers being more beneficial towards the organisations profits as there are less liabilities associated with these types of workers – in this case companies would just pay the workers wages and not other expenses such as medical aid. This chapter also highlights literature which has identified Walmart/Massmart Merger and the threat it posed to South African retails. While taking into account the civil servants attempt to place conditions on the merger scholars argued that retail store conditions have worsened. The following chapter will examine and justify the methodological approach used in this research project.

### 3 Methodological chapter:

This study aimed at exploring a under researched topic in South Africa: the way workers experienced labour restructuring – in particular, their transition from being permanent workers to contract workers at PnP after taking the 2017 VRPs. This study therefore aimed to examine the participants experience and to understand what real life is like, in this context, for workers (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 11). This chapter begins by explaining the qualitative approach and why it was suitable for this study. This is followed by explaining the sampling data collection strategies, data analysis process and finally the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

#### 3.1 Qualitative research

A qualitative method was used as it was the best method to understand the participants experiences of the transition from being a permanent employee, to taking the VRP in 2017 and returning to work as a contract employee (Mason, 2002: 3). This is due to the aims of a qualitative method which seeks to address what is “within” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 11). Within implies that one considers the reasoning and in-depth understanding of the participant. I adopted a qualitative approach consisting of in-depth interviews which took between 30 mins to 1 hour. The qualitative approach would be suitable for this research project as it allows me to understand the workers experience in the workplace, to taking the VRP’s and eventually coming back into the same workplace. It would allow one to understand this transition from the workers perspective (Goodman, 2011: 349). To do this and understand it from the workers perspective, I used semi-structured questions for the interviews specifically focusing on the participants work life and identified recruitment strategies within the organisation, to eventually using questions to understand the participants experience during the transition from being a permanent employee to taking the VRP’s and eventually returning to the workplace. Semi-structured questions are defined as pre-determined questions but is a conversation between the interviewer and participant. In which the interviewer allows the participant to define the conversation and highlight their experiences and what they believe to be important to that situation (Longhurst, 2003: 144-145). Thus, the knowledge is constructed between the interviewer and researcher.

### 3.2 Research Setting

I chose PnP as I had worked there for a few months.. I was hired through a labour broker and noticed the trend of workers who were previously permanently employed being re-employed. Thus, sets up the criteria for how I chose my participants, in which I focused on participants who took voluntary retrenchment packages at PnP in 2017.

### 3.3 Sample criteria

As the criteria for identifying participants for this research project, two aspects were considered, firstly did the worker take a VRP from PnP in 2017, and secondly did they return to the organisation. When referring to the organisation, I am implying any of the branches that fall under the PnP group which consists of boxer stores, franchises known as family stores and PnP, among others (PnP, 2020: 11). At the time of this thesis was conducted, PnP did not own Bottles yet, a digital store which delivers to customers (Businesstech, 2020: 1). According to its latest annual report, PnP group has 1866 stores of which are 774 franchised and 1092 are company owned stores (Pick n Pay, 2020: 34). I included franchises as it still contributes towards PnP overall revenue even though it is owned by individuals.

### 3.4 Sample size and sampling strategy:

I interviewed 10 PnP workers within the space of three months. I did not use any organisation to help find these participants. In fact, I only used networking with workers I was familiar with leaving the organisation during the 2017 retrenchment process. This amounted to about 15 participants of which only three were willing to partake in my research project. Hence, I chose to do the snowball sampling approach, as it allowed me to find more participants which would be willing to partake in the research and find those who meet the criteria for the research project. In other words, not having access to a database and knowing only a few people who took the Pick n Pat VRP's in 2017 I believed that the approach was the best option as participants were difficult to find and snowballing was cost efficient (Etikan, Alkassim and Abubakar, 2016: 55). Snowball sampling is defined as a method of interviewing a participants immediate social setting, what they are familiar with and who they know (Goodman, 2011: 348).

After finding the three participants willing to participate, I asked them if they knew any other participants who fit the criteria and from those three participants, I was able to contact four more potential participants and that's how the snowball sampling approach followed

(Goodman, 2011: 349-350). Using snowballing approach gave me very little control of the research sampling method, as sampling bias as the participants would recommend potential future participants that they knew well (Etikan, Alkassim and Abubakar, 2016: 55). To avoid these bias – I would ensure that the participant would give more than one referral or ask the referrals if they knew anyone who would fit the criteria. Thus, avoided those bias and lack of control by following the criteria for potential participants and getting more than one referral from each participant who could recommend potential participants.

### 3.5 Participant’s profile

All participants who were part of this study were over the age of 45, with the oldest participant being 57 and the youngest participant being 49. 80% of participants had worked for the organisation for more than 30 years, where there is longest serving participant worked for 37 years and the shortest was 20 years. The initial participant list consisted of male and female but only females were available to be interviewed – the men were always stating that they were busy and I could not interview male participants in time – but there were male workers who were back at PnP as well. Regarding race, I interviewed 5 coloured women, 3 black women, 1 Indian woman and 1 white woman.

The demographic profile of the sample is reflective of the Apartheid retail employment practices. Kenny (2018) noted that white people were granted industrial citizenship rights while non-white people were only granted industrial citizenship rights after mass protests occurred (172). In this instance due to the political and economic system known as Apartheid used to benefit the white minority in South Africa, white workers were classified as primary workers while non-whites were classified as secondary workers(Kenny, 2018: 11). The sample profile is typical of employment profiles in the retail sector, especially based on the legacy of apartheid. For example, women were typically employed as store workers and men were preferred for high level positions such as managers (Kenny, 2018: 178). *A description of participants are as follows:* This includes the date they were interviewed, their name, years of service and job description of when the worker started at PnP and what their positions were when they left the PnP.

Interview schedule	Name	Years of service	Started as:	Retired as:	Returned as:

10 August 2020	Janice	30 Years	Lady in Red (customer service)	Creditors clerk	Cashier
11 August 2020	Ellen	23 years	Cashier	Creditors clerk	Store Supervisor
12 August 2020	Berenice	28 years	Shelf packer	Support office supervisor	Support office: Customer service
17 August 2020	Jenny	34 years	Shelf packer	Creditors clerk	Cashier
18 August 2020	Mickey	35 years	Supervisor	Frontline coordinator	Cashier
19 August 2020	Shanel	30 years	Till packer	Creditors clerk	Store Supervisor
21 September	Nonzi	30 years	Shelf packer	Supervisor	Cashier
23 September 2020	Kelly	29 years	Cashier	Creditors clerk	Creditors clerk
02 October 2020	Danielle	33 years	Shelf packer	Support office clerk	Cashier

08 October 2020	Layla	35 years	Shelf packer	Cash clerk	office	Cashier
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Table 1: Profile of participants

### 3.6 [Data collection](#)

I collected primary data through interviews but used I various books and authors who have looked at retail work and retrenchment in South Africa to guide me through the process and understand what is currently occurring in the retail environment. According to Parvaresh-Masoud and Varaei (2018) collecting data and the type of interview is dictated by temporal conditions, the type of participants which dictates the kinds of resources they have access to and the research question and objectives (Parvaresh-Masoud and Varaei, 2018: 1). Thus, in order to collect information for this research project, I did apply interview schedules which were initially planned to be face to face interviews but due to COVID19, only three interviews were face to face and the rest were done on WhatsApp. Due to data (internet connections and airtime) concerns, with some interviews.

When it came to face to face interviews, it was done during level one (October 2020) – where travelling, mobility and meeting people in safe conditions and following regulation was allowed. In which the interviewer went to the participants house and followed all protocol – in which wearing a mask, hand sanitizer and physical distancing. It was the only way to access these participants as it should be noted that with electronic interviews, data is needed and so is a cell phone with a functional camera plus it needs the accurate software and hardware to perform the interviews. Which in this case these participants did not have access to any data, cell phones with functional camera and software, and I had to compromise in order to do the interviews. Finally, I could not find store workers on LinkedIn or social media, these workers are often invisible from the digital space, and it requires one to physically go to these locations to interact with these workers. However, as stated earlier, a snowball sampling approach was used, and no stores were approached for any potential participants, and all were done through the initial 15 participants of which three agreed thereafter until 10 participant were reached.

Digital medium was used to collect data which consisted of only WhatsApp interface, as it was a mobile messaging application which all participants had access too. An important aspect of

the digital interface and communicating via social media applications for interviews is that, it's an effective communication platform between the participant and researcher throughout the interview process [This includes before the interview and after the interview] (Gibson, 2020: 7). This platform can be used to ensure that issues are resolved before engaging with the participant as technology allows a lot of flexibility when conducting interviews. One issue is to ensure that both the researcher and participant has enough data to do the video calls and perform the research. It should be noted that South Africa has one of the most expensive costs when it comes to data (Bottomley, 2020). Fortunately, all participants were willing and had access to data to conduct the interview. WhatsApp was affordable and therefore the conventional method for conducting interviews. All 7 participants who were interviewed using WhatsApp did not have access to other forms of technology which includes skype and zoom. Another issue was the time allocation, it is important to negotiate a specific amount of time for the interview to take place, and even though it is flexible, one needs to ensure that you are in a quiet place.

Video calls were used for 6 interviews and for the 7<sup>th</sup> interview voice notes were used. I did a voice note interview due to this being the participants request. These interviews were successful as I had continuously kept in contact with the participants a few days before the agreed date of the interview, hence communication is vital when it comes to using technology for interviews. The voice note interview on WhatsApp was quite effective but time consuming. although not seeing the participants face, I was still able to hear the participants voice and discern their emotions. According to Parvaresh-Masoud and Varaei, (2018) the benefits of electronic interviews are you are able to interview people who are difficult to access, due to covid19 it became impossible to do face to face interviews (Parvaresh-Masoud and Varaei, 2018: 4). Limitations were mentioned above with internet access and lack of non-verbal reactions (Parvaresh-Masoud and Varaei, 2018: 5).

### 3.7 Data Analysis

I conducted thematic analysis to establish patterns and themes which were highlighted within the interviews. According to Clark, Braun and Hayfield (2015) a thematic analysis can be referred to as the process of analyzing and Identifying patterns, segments within the data (Clark, et al, 2015: 1). The first process within the thematic framework is familiarization and I did this by transcribing all 10 interviews and reading through it thoroughly. The transcripts were directly recorded into nVivo 12 and from there initial codes were formulated based on



the worlds of work model by which identified those in the *core*, the workers with industrial citizenship rights due to globalization, and the second being *non-core* where workers forced into precarious situations and globalization causing an erosion of industrial citizenship rights, however these workers remain within some form of livelihood (Webster, 2005: 66-67; Happiness, 2017: 62). The final sphere is *periphery* where workers who were forced out of their jobs due to globalization (Webster, 2005: 66; Happiness, 2017). There is a constant movement because of globalization between these three spheres. The analysis process constantly followed this form of deduction.

This highlighting Braun, Clark and Grey (2017) idea of the researcher actively engaging with the subjective opinions of participants during the analysis process (Braun and Clark, 2017: 1). As the researcher, I am able to engage and interpret the data, thus creating “a robust and systematic framework for coding the raw data” (Braun and Clark, 2017: 1-2).

By conducting first level coding, I was able to identify six main broad headings, which are retail work seen as a place to grow ones’ career, growing exhausted of working for the company, labour restructuring mechanisms and technological advancements influences workers decision to leave the company, the role of trade unions, cheaper goods coming at the expense of workers wellbeing and happiness and finally, the transition back into the same workplace. Secondary coding involved understanding different benefits within the organisation, the culture and wellbeing of workers and finally the role of trade unions (why workers saw retail as a place to grow their careers.).

After re-reading the initial codes/nodes within NVivo 12 and rechecking the nodes I discovered four main themes, which were as follows: work experience, VRP process, unemployment period/post-work life and finally coming back into the working world. Sub-themes were created to distinguish between work experience examining work experience as a contract and permanent employee, age and service to PnP and organisational support with (Spencer, et al, 2014: 297).

In the end, each theme was to understand the workers transition, as in the participants decisions, perceptions and attitudes towards voluntary retrenchment. Eventually, their wellbeing and security once they did return to the same workplace and how things have changed in PnP.

I believed that the qualitative approach would work best to identifying the characteristics of workers in transition, within this specific context (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 329). This

context refers to the transition of workers taking the voluntary retrenchment package and finding themselves back in the same workplace. The interviews were the best tools as it highlighted the workers experiences in their own words and identified why these workers decided to take voluntary retrenchment. A test interview was done in December 2019 and it was done through a informal interview with someone who partook in the 2017 VRP's and from there I was able to build and fill in all the gaps which was missing in my interview process.

### 3.8 Reliability and validity of data:

One of the first issues was ensuring that I had asked the participants the right questions and it was relevant to the research question. Therefore, I conducted a pilot interview in December 2019, in which I had drawn up the questionnaire based off the various literature discussed. In the pilot interview I was able to draw on where the research project might fail (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001: 3-4). While also being able to ask the right questions. During the pilot interview, I discovered that asking about the participants retrenchment amount as this would complicate the process, in which, the amount would be an entire question on its own, especially with regards to how workers spent it. Workers would keep some money out but would invest most of their retrenchment funds and provident funds in fixed savings accounts and with various financial organisations.

One of the biggest challenges when it comes to qualitative research is ensuring that all data is valid and reliable. "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" (Golafshani, 2003: 602). It is quite difficult to do this as qualitative data is considered subjective as it uses a naturalistic approach (Golafshani, 2003: 600). Not all authors argue that reliability and validity have a function in qualitative study as the purpose of qualitative data is explore or understand a social setting (Huberman and Miles, 1994: 10). Thus, my study needed to ensure that data generated and represented is accurate to natural setting which is being studied.

During the data generation process and interviews, I ensured that I explained the research project to each participant and have a consent form for each participant – via spoken word which was recorded on a recorder. For participants which, were met, and face-to-face interviews were done, there were written consent forms included. During the interview schedule, as the researcher I ensured that the participant detailed their experience as a worker in and examine their transition from starting their careers at PnP to leaving through VRP and

decisions leading workers to enter the workplace again. All interviews were subjective, and the participants own views, and I did acknowledge that workers would be vulnerable to social desirability. Therefore, when it came to questions which would make the participant seem more desirable to the organisation and make the organisation seem desirable, the interviewer used third person to illustrate the question. This is as follows:

“How did the company offer voluntary retrenchment to the employee?” or “How did the company assist employees during the voluntary retrenchment process?”. Further, using thematic analysis to interpret the qualitative data: As mentioned in the methodology chapter.

In the end, as the researcher, I drew conclusions that were related to what the participants and resources (Peer reviewed Journal articles, Books and Academic papers) were arguing. Thus, not only identifying work that reaffirms the findings but also disputes the findings.

### 3.9 Research ethics:

Ethics can be considered doing good and causing minimal harm to the participants (Miller, Birch, Mauthner and Jessop, 2012: 54). When planning and strategizing how I would conduct my thesis, I constantly thought of the implications it will have on my participants, thus being as ethical as possible.

In qualitative research, participants are often expected to share personal information, and this is something that they should not be forced into doing (Queirós, Faria. and Almeida, 2017: 370, 373, 377-378) This idea highlights two issues, firstly the consent form and secondly my positionality in the interview when interacting with participants. Firstly, all participants were given pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity. Consent forms were used before the interview took place, and in the case of the 7 interviews which were done electronically, verbal consent was given and this was recorded Consent are seen as essential part of research as it informs the participant of the research project, about the researcher and highlights any harm that could be caused to the participant as well as the option to withdraw if the participant feels uncomfortable at any point (Miller, et al, 2012: 67). The consent forms are attached in Appendix B.

The second ethical dilemma which was raised before and during the interview process was my positionality as a researcher. I had worked for the organisation; thus, I was well rapport with the initial participants, and it was easier for participants to be open with me about their experience as a retail worker and taking the VRP's and coming back into the organisation.

The third ethical dilemma which was raised was the intention. In this case it was aimed at discovering and recognizing the truth of retail workers in South Africa, especially the workers who established themselves before the Massmart/Walmart merger and how this merger affected them (Miller, et al, 2008: 44; Aceska and Heer, 2019). Thus, I always made this clear to all participants throughout the interview process, ensuring that this is their story.

As the researcher, I needed to consider who benefits from this research project. I explained to all participants that the research is being conducted to ensure that I fulfill all the requirements to obtain a masters degree, while also emphasizing the importance of how significant the research project will be to contributing to the retail studies in South Africa. There is not enough discussion on these type of workers in retail.

The more recent ethical dilemma which was raised earlier, was COVID-19 in South Africa in which harsh lockdown on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 in which rules were put in place where citizens mobility was restricted to staying in side their homes and only going out if they were essential workers or needed groceries. Thus, I needed to avoid face-to-face interviews and if it was the only option, I needed to make sure that it was legal, and all regulation was followed during the interview process (Horn, and Saner, 2021). Three interviews were done face-to-face as noted, I exhausted all options to do interviews via electronic, but the participants did not have devices to do the electronic interviews thus, I adopted face-to-face interviews. I firstly made sure that I was healthy – ensuring that I did not feel sick and did not have COVID19 symptoms. I was not in contact with anyone that had COVID-19 and did not show any symptoms associated with COVID-19 – this shows that I could not take the COVID-19 test. A day before the interview, I would always contact the participant to ensure that they are feeling well, and they do not have any symptoms of COVID-19. I met all three participants in locations which were sanitized, and the appropriate psychical distancing was used – as well as all equipment used was sanitized.

### 3.10 Limitations:

Time was a limitation within the research (Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, 2017: 379). The fact that I was not able to interview the desired number of candidates due to COVID19 and participants being occupied during the time of my field work. Due COVID19, I could not conduct face to face interviews with all participants and had to find unique ways to get the information. I conducted interviews through Whatsapp, by using video calls. Another way was

through voice notes via WhatsApp (Due to airtime and limited data) – the interview process was the longest one yet, it took about 1 hour and 30 minutes. This is due to all the logistics involved with voice notes – as the interviewer had to record the question and send it to the participant and only once the participant received the message and listened to it, would they have been able to respond to it. However, I was able to get in all the questions and got the most out of the interview.

Workers' finances were not discussed in detail, as they would not disclose how much they received but it was evident that these workers were the breadwinners in their families and that the retrenchment money was used to sustain their households. Eventually the cash flow would be running low and these workers made the decision to return to work to sustain their own household. In some cases participants had children who were working, with these participants, they were only sustaining themselves. Finally, when it came to salaries, participants were more open about how much they earned and did indicate that compared to when they were permanently employed. I, as the researcher did not directly ask them about their finances or how much they were earning, many participants told me voluntarily. At the end, maintaining within the boundaries of the research objectives which is to understand the participants' experiences. Finally, the findings cannot be generalized to the overall population as the aim of this dissertation was to understand the transition of workers from permanent (core) to contract employment (non-core) after taking a VRP (Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, 2017: 178-179).

### 3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted why it is important to use the qualitative method in this specific research project. While justifying the use of semi-structured interviews as its aim was to understand the subjectivity of participants during their transition through the VRP. It also highlighted the impact of Covid-19 and the use of digital medium and WhatsApp (IM) to conduct interviews. The following section will highlight and critically engage with all the key findings from what I discovered during my fieldwork.

## 4 The life of a retail worker

This chapter consists of four sections in which it focuses on the working life of a retail worker to understand the transition from when they first started out at PnP to eventually taking the VRP and then returning to PnP as contract workers. Through this transition one will notice that workers do enjoy doing their jobs but once they take the VRP's it becomes clear that returning to the same workplace affected workers negatively. The first section discusses PnP workers employment journey, from the start of their retail careers to the shift from casual to permanent employment followed by their decision to take a VRP. In this phase of their career workers has access to different privileges and benefits PnP, with permanent employment being the most rewarding. The second section discusses workers encounter with VRP's in 2017, how the process was conducted, what individuals or departments assisted workers during the retrenchment process and the incentives workers received. The third section examines the post-work life of workers by focusing on what they did after being retrenched, their struggle to find new employment and how they handled their finances. The final section examines workers experience of returning to PnP either through labour brokers or within the franchises by focusing on their reasons for returning to work and the working conditions they faced.

### 4.1 Recruitment strategies:

All participants started at the PnP in the late 1980's or 1990's. It was evident that all participants used a similar recruitment strategy. Ellen explains:

We had some friends over at our house, this one girl, her name is Jane Doe and she was a worker there at PnP Hypermarket there in Bloemfontein -there within the stores. So, I asked her if there are no vacancies available there and the Monday she phoned and she speaks to the frontline manager of that store and she said I must come in the next day – to come do a test. So, there is where I started. [Ellen, 11 August 2020].

This quote highlights the idea that when Ellen joined PnP for an entry-level position, the recruitment process was informal. This meant that Ellen would find out about entry-level positions through word of mouth – or inquired if positions are available. Ellen was called in for an interview with the store manager and completed a competency test to identify whether Ellen could work for the organisation.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century South Africa labour brokers existed but race played a vital role in who gets high paying jobs with benefits and those who don't (Kenny, 2018: 110). Labour brokers were not needed as much due to industrial citizenship rights were classified by your race, and not how you are employed (Kenny, 2018: 110). In other words, the workers status in retail: their job description, title, their salary and benefits within the organisation was justified according to Apartheid laws. In which white workers had the most beneficial conditions with regards to industrial citizenship rights. Thus, the company knew how they would save money when it came to employee expenses as all workers were not treated equally, from the beginning, the worker engages with the PnP directly. In this sense, they are recognized by the organisation, where workers are on the main database. Whereas with labour brokers Pick n Pay does have each individual on their database instead only the labour broker agency's name. If the worker does want his or her records, she would need to contact the labour broker agency to find out what their details are and not Pick n Pay. As Pick n Pay was a family-owned store part of its strategic growth plan in the way it is now.

## 4.2 Transition from casual to permanent employment:

Now that one understands how workers entered Pick n Pay at the start of their careers, it would be best to examine their work experience. This includes workers transition from being a casual worker to becoming a permanent employee and the benefits and challenges they experienced.

### 4.2.1 Casual employment:

When it came to starting out at a retail store, most participants, (70%), started as frontline casual workers and stayed within this role for several years before applying for permanent positions. The participants were mainly working to earn a wage, either to support themselves or to support their family. As Jenny indicated:

I had to leave school to assist my parents and brother financially – with the household, so I had to leave school and that was grade 10. [Jenny, 17 August 2020].

The extract above shows that Jenny took up casual positions in the retail store as a which does not require much education, as this Jenny did not finish school. This was similar to the other participants who started out at PnP. With regards to this aspect, most workers who did start in these positions did not intend to stay within the retail stores but instead just needed some way to fund their livelihood, whether that be family responsibility or working to over the school

holidays to have some pocket money or sustain yourself as a young adult. This was reiterated by Kelly, in which she stated:

That time it was casual, (it had another name – which Kelly could not get to) but I liked it. I was earning R100 a week (it was a lot of money that time). You know, R500 for five weeks, I would be able to afford my toiletries and other necessities... I liked it. [Kelly, 23 September 2020].

Knowing that workers had fairly no unique skills which contributed to their jobs, it was seen as a position where one could sustain one's lifestyle but do seek out better opportunities within the organisation or outside the organisation.

A reason why workers would seek other opportunities is due to casual workers having very little benefits and workers would only work there to earn some form of wage. Participants acknowledged that benefits for casual workers were limited and not as good as being a permanent employee:

I was going to finish my studies and find another job in fashion design but Mr Walker (he was the manager at the store at the time) could see the potential in people. So he would like motivate you, he would ask you don't you want to become permanent because he sees that you a good worker ...that's what he said to me. And then I was like okay. [Janice, 10 August 2020].

Being casual is something that was not a long-term goal for workers. Many acknowledged that the money they earned sustained their lifestyles. This quote highlights multiple reasons why the participants would not want to stay in their positions. All the participants started working at PnP straight after high school or while they were in high school. So, these workers, as noted in the above quote, had other aspirations and saw these opportunities as steppingstones to something better. That was either through finding permanent positions at PnP or finding other opportunities outside of PnP. One of these opportunities inside the organisation was permanent positions and as noted in the quote above, workers would be intrigued to take up these opportunities but there was thought within the process.

#### 4.2.2 Permanent employment:

What motivated workers was the idea that they would become permanent if the vacancy came about. There was evidence of growth in the stores at PnP, as workers did move up throughout



the years. The process involved workers moving from casual or part-time to permanent positions, usually includes the worker applying for the position through the job shop within the store and it would depend on the store as some workers would start off permanent while others would have to work their way up and apply through job shops. As soon as permanent positions become available, casual workers end up applying for these jobs.

I first started off as a casual cashier, yes, that was 1994, for a year, and then in 1996 there were vacancies out for permanent positions, so I'd apply for permanent positions and went for my interview. Once that was done, they did let me know that I did get the permanent position as a cashier. [Berenice, 12 August 2020]

The process involved either a superior encouraging the worker to apply for a permanent position being offered or the worker seeing the advert in the job shop and they would apply for it, as noted in the above paragraph. Thus, in summary of the application process for a permanent position, the workers would be made aware of permanent positions opening up and apply through sending in their Curriculum Vitae, be shortlisted and do an interview and eventually being made permanent. As noted in the quote, these workers were applying for the same positions but just on a permanent basis which resulted in more benefits.

All participants in this study, experienced permanent working conditions and would acknowledge the fact that permanent employees would get preference over part-time and casual as indicated by one of the participants. Thus, casual workers would be motivated to become permanent workers:

It's never nice to work over weekends, but that was retail, and you were required to do the job. So the permanent employees got preference. Working on weekends or the late shifts was mostly for the causals and part timers. [Mickey, 18 August 2020].

#### *4.2.2.1 Benefits for permanent staff:*

The characteristic that distinguishes permanent from casual employment, is the idea of benefits which is much more rewarding to the permanent workers and their wellbeing. Apart from financial security and the company takes on responsibility to provide for your needs which includes social interactions through group activities outside of work and this provides essential benefits. These benefits included (but not limited to) maternity leave, medical aid and loans. Whereas something that many workers considered a privilege is the low cost of food at the

stores for employees and being able to attend social gatherings with their colleagues. Thus, the following will firstly identify how workers understand benefits and then discuss privileges.

Due to the fact that only women were interviewed, maternity leave stood out as a benefit as participants would define paid maternity leave as benefit as it allowed them to start a family and continue their careers within the retail stores and still earn a percentage of money, Layla gave a detailed description of maternity leave and it is as follows:

so luckily for me, where in PnP they have very good benefits for women, where there is maternity leave for 11 months which 9 months is paid and 2 is not paid. However, the 9 months is also split in parts in which you first get 90% of your salary (or 70% of your salary, I am sorry). And then the rest of the period, you get less percent as you spent your time coming back, and I think 25% was the least amount that you got. So once again you get good benefits where you go, like we called it the clinic day where you go for your medical check up's, which PnP, pay you for and your nine months (as I said before). [Layla, 8 October 2020].

The statement above again states the importance of feeling like these workers belonged to something bigger, the company take care of their wellbeing, ensuring that if they do end up starting a family or falling pregnant. The company would contribute towards your medical bills for check-ups and ensure that you are taken care of. Allow the worker to take time off to take care of the baby, with some financial compensation. Thus, Emphasizing the idea of a partnership with the organisation as a permanent worker. The fact that the voluntarily contributed towards the maternity leave as it is not a requirement. Over time, as noted the PnP's payments become smaller and they department of labour's portion becomes bigger. This reiterates the idea that this is the responsibility of the department of labour, This idea also emphasizes that the organisation will be taking care of your needs and does believe that you are in some form of a union with the organisation. Whereas casual workers would have to go through the department of labour if they do require financial compensation when taking maternity leave.

There were various types of leave for permanent employees, this includes sick leave, annual leave (which is offered to all employees) and family responsibility leave. Family responsibility leave is important as the organisation acknowledges that you have a family and there are

instances where you might not be able to come to work. As participants highlighted different forms of leave:

the only thing that they did give you were family responsibility leave – where you can phone in sick when your child is sick, so they were a bit lenient when it came to that. [Berenice, 12 August, 2020].

This is important as current literature examining retail in South Africa by Kenny (2018) and Mathegka and Maciko (2018) acknowledges that most workers have to sacrifice family issues as they are working longer hours. They would not be paid for the time which they have taken off to ensure the wellbeing of their family.

What further reiterates the form of unity among the organisation and the worker is the idea that workers get shares after working for PnP on a long-term basis.

Our shares would go up every time for every five years. [Kelly, 23 September 2020].

The idea of being a part of the company because one's longitude of service is highlighted in this statement. The statement acknowledges that the company understands that the worker contributes towards its organisation and deserve to have shares in the organisation. The only problem is that the worker does not receive any profits but will be able to sell their shares if they retire or wish to do so at any stage of their career. This is up to the worker, whether to keep it or sell it. Again, these factors contribute towards the employee and employer solidarity. There is a lot of debate around this topic of Employee share ownership (ESO). Robinson and Zhang (2005) argue that this option is only used to safeguard the company's human capital (Robinson and Zhang, 2005: 482). In other words, the company would offer these options to workers who have gained scarce skills through the organisation. There is an agreement among Robinson and Zhang (2005), McCarthy, Reeves and Turner (2010) and Sengupta, Whitfield and McNabb (2007) that ESO's does not primarily result in a motivated workforce.

But these are part of the benefits as a permanent employee. As a casual worker, you would not qualify for these benefits, and the years worked as a casual worker is not taken into account when receiving ESO's. As Janice had worked for 11 years before receiving her first shares within the company. As she was casual for 6 years before becoming permanent and received her first shares after being permanent for five years.

One benefit that was not looked at in detail is the role of medical aid, as it should be noted that medical aid is only offered as a compulsory benefit if you fall under salaries, but it is optional if you are within the waged department. Most workers at store level fell under the waged department so they did have an option to decline medical aid:

you had to apply for things such as medical aid because that was salary scheme, so uhm wages was for stores – where you weren't compulsory to have medical aid but when you move over to salaries you had to join the medical and that was a good part because it saved you a lot on doctors bills and all of that. [Shanel, 19 August 2020].

This is an important observation as it highlights that even among the permanent staff, benefits are not the same.

When examining at the transition of workers at PnP, it should be noted that participants interviewed had been given opportunities to grow within the organisation. This includes the process of workers beginning their careers directly with PnP, there are no middle men involved and they would be employed as casual or permanent staff. When workers are employed as casual workers, they would have to work themselves up to being permanent by performing their job descriptions. Although this process was often longer than anticipated. It would vary based on whether the store needed permanent workers, as the shortest period one participant needed to wait was 1 year and 7 months, while the longest period a worker was casual was for 7 years. This section ultimately highlights the idea that the employer always played a proactive role in the workers career as the employer worked directly with the worker. It highlights a shared form of solidarity among the employer and worker with regard to benefits received whether you are permanent or casual.

#### *4.2.2.2 Benefits vs Privileges:*

The section above has discussed how workers would define benefits, but something which is often acknowledged only in the informal sphere of a PnP retail worker is privileges. Privileges were family outings, buying food at discount prices and receiving beverages in the kitchen and not having to bring any of your own products to drink during office hours. These are not requirements from the labour law and the employer does not have to abide by any of these services offered. Instead, these privileges vary from store to store and might not be available in some stores as Janice acknowledges:

I think we are spoiled by corporate. It's something we don't realize as workers are being looked after and our wellbeing is being taken care of or that you are being looked after well. There are tea breaks, and lunch breaks and the availability of everything else that we get – there are things such as paying under R10 for a plate of food and getting all tea's and coffees in the office. [Janice, 10 August 2020]

In this quote, one can hear the boastfulness as she acknowledges that it was the best as she was comfortable in her workplace as essential products such as food was much cheaper for staff. The quote above also relates to how workers viewed their benefits as permanent workers compared to their experience after returning to PnP, after taking the retrenchment packages. In short, workers returned to the same workplace but experienced more precarious working conditions. Workers considered the permanent working conditions and benefits as convenient because it allowed them to have the lifestyle which they had. Which includes having children and being able to take care of their responsibilities.

This is reiterated by Jenny:

There was, what other benefits was there. They also had they also had the, cook meals for the staff where you at that time you only paid about R7 a plate of cooked food, because there was a lady who cooked at that store, oh my word! – if you wanted Breyani, it was the best Biryani you could ever get in Cape Town! [Jenny, 17 August 2020].

Once can see in the quotes that this makes the worker feel valued and it is evident that by just providing these basic needs. In the case of these workers, there were times where the company would organise that they have social events. This brings me to my final point about privileges you receive as a worker. This is the idea of worker community, that is the role of outside or group activities amongst workers. As more 6 participants discussed activities which occur outside of work hours among workers:

the thing that I was, probably not seen as benefits (but actually thought about it last night and it was actually a benefit) – so every year they would allocate a certain amount of money to each store, to have a Christmas Party! It was the most amazing, out of the world, because they didn't hold back – so we had the most amazing Christmas parties [Jenny, 17 August 2020]

The memories created within the workplace is important but also emphasizing the networks one forms in the workplace and that workers should be able to enjoy their time at work as well. Thus the organisation acknowledges that you are a person beyond work and goes further by including your family in certain events. As Ellen recounts:

A family day is where they once took us to Ratanga Junction, so your whole family goes – so if it was me and my Husband and my two Children, the whole family goes – where you get food for the day for the whole family, and it was awesome. They would just give awesome parties. [Ellen, 11 August 2020].

When it comes to privilege/ being spoilt as a worker, it refers to services offered by the organisation which is not usually within the contract agreement or obligated by law and something which can contribute towards the workers sense of what they consider wellbeing, in the context of the organisation. As Ellen had argued that they came from a time where the worker felt that the organisation would care about the wellbeing of the worker and would know about their personal life and participants would indicate that the company has changed which will be discussed in the following section.

#### 4.3 Organisational changes that influenced workers into taking the VRP's:

The participants explained that they were aware of various organisational changes before taking the VRP's. These changes affected their work ethic and overall attitude towards the company. Kelly notes that these changes were primarily due to the company's objectives and strategies:

The direction in which the company is going now. Like I said about the general manager that paid for my husband's scan and also the relationship we had. Relationship, there is no relationship with the employees, and it is turnover driven. [Kelly, 23 September 2020].

This quote highlights that workers felt that the strategies the company was implementing showed a shift from a traditional family-owned management style to a corporate approach. This shift made workers feel excluded because there was no relationship or communication between the organisation and its workers. Many participants shared a similar view to Kelly. This is evidence that the company culture was changing from family style approach to corporate style approach is when was PnP technological advancements and the acquisition of Massmart by Walmart affected PnP's approach to business. These changes led to PnP adopting strategies to

reduce one of their greatest expenses – labour costs. This shows that PnP who was traditionally a family run store was now adopting corporate approaches through various labour restructuring strategies.

But this wasn't effectively communicated with the workers as Danielle said:

In 2017, when I took the voluntary retrenchment, it was the second time that PnP did it. Why did they feel the need to offer voluntary retrenchment. Which is just a nice word for retrenching the people. [Danielle, 02 October 2020].

This shows that the communication between the worker and PnP was blurred, hence, a more corporate approach can be seen as being adopted, as in the worker did not understand why the company offered workers option to be retrenched. If it was clearly communicated to the workers, then it should have been evident that the workers knew exactly why PnP was retrenching workers. In this case PnP needed to act effectively to ensure that they are in par with other retailers. In the end this statement by the worker shows that the workers were not aware of the reasons for PnP retrenching workers.

#### 4.4 VRP process

This section will firstly identify how VRPs were introduced to workers and the conditions for taking the package. In other words, I will summarize the steps of the VRP process. In addition, I will identify and discuss the organisational support workers received during the process and finally discuss how the workers left PnP and how they felt about leaving after being a permanent employee for more than 17 years.

When the company offers VR, it sends out letters to all workers explaining what the program is about, why they feel the need to offer VR and how it can be beneficial to the worker. In this letter, the company informs the worker how much they will get, such as their provident fund, retrenchment package and sweeteners (Laubscher and Vellem, 2011: 2). Provident fund refers to the workers monthly contribution to one's retirement savings, while the retrenchment package is one weeks pay for every year the worker worked for the organisation. Finally, the sweetener is the extra amount these workers would receive if they volunteered to leave (The M&G Online, 2019). Thus, workers who took VR's would receive 1.5 weeks wages for every year worked, instead of one weeks wages. This implies that the sweetner was only 0.5 weeks wages for every year worked as the workers were already entitled to the one weeks wages if there were too be retrenched. The other vital information conveyed in the letter is that the worker cannot sue the company for unfair dismissal and accepts the fact that their services are

redundant to the organisation and that is why they are volunteering to leave the organisation (Laubscher and Vellem, 2011: 3).

After workers receive the letter, a meeting is scheduled between the Human resource manager (HR) and the workers. The workers will meet with their group of workers in the store or department. This is to allow further explanations from the company and allow workers to ask questions about the VR. Taking the VR is up to the worker. In the sense that the worker has the option to take the VR or not. Workers were normally given a short period (a month) to decide whether they would take the package. Once they decided to accept the VRP offer they send their acceptance to their relevant HR. Workers then go for an interview with that HR manager. In the interview they discuss what their plans are after they take the package, to identify if workers are competent enough to take it. The company decides whether to approve the workers application and once the application is accepted the worker can leave at the end of the month, or any time leading up to that month end.

Participants were familiar with the VR process because this was the second time they were offered a VRP. Layla explains:

I think in all my years of PnP – I wasn't seeing voluntary retrenchment happening and I always thought that we create jobs and not take away jobs, so it was a shock to me and what was happening in the company – why did they feel the need to offer voluntary retrenchment. [Layla, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020]

The quote highlights that Layla, like other workers, could not understand why the organisation needed to retrench its workforce even though this was the second time VRs were offered to workers. This shows a conflicting feeling from the worker as she believed that the organisation was there to create jobs, not take them away. Workers did not understand why this was happening, no communication between PnP and the worker was done to explain this process for workers to understand why the company is offering VR's. However, it should be noted that this was the second time VRPs were offered at the workplace. This means that participants in the study were familiar with the VRP process and had all experienced the first round of VRP's in 2011. Although many workers argued stated that this was the second time they experienced VR's – there is evidence that the first round of VRPs in 2011 was directly after Walmart/Massmart merger and many trade unions were against the VR's in which they claimed that it saved over 2000 jobs (Crotty, 2011). The second round of VRPs was in 2014 and this is



the VRP that all participants remember. Many participants in the interview had also argued that they had decided after the previous round of VR in 2014, that if a another one should arise, they would be willing to take it. These workers believed that they worked for PnP for a long time and were financially capable of deciding to leave PnP as they did consider all the elements involved in taking the package. Janice explains how she came to the conclusion of wanting to take the VR;s and her logic of not having any financial responsibility as her children were adults and finishing varsity. While also considering her credit and loans and whether she will be able to pay these off:

When the interviews are done, they ask you if you work out your finances and is it reasonable for you to do it, do you still have a husband that works. Do you still have children that is uhm in school or studying (Talking about children that are in your house and dependent on you financially). Do you still have money house, do you still have money for food and electricity because that is what your money goes – [Janice, 10 August 2020].

When it came to other employee support such as interviewing the workers to ensure that they are financially stable to take the next step. In which the organisation would want to know what are their future plans, what they plan to do with the money that they will receive and go as far to offer these workers and also if they will be sustainable with their money:

So they were very concerned about what is your fall back plan, do you have follow up plan – how you going to sustain yourself in the event that money dry up, as obviously they won't be able to take you back. [Kelly, 23 September 2020].

This quote illustrates that there was a consensus that although the organisation did ensure that workers could afford taking voluntary retrenchment by have all these process in place such as interviews about your futures, setting you up with financial advisers and making sure that this is what the worker wants to do and by constantly asking if the worker does want to leave the organisation.

Although a month is not a long time to complete the VRP process, it should be noted that the organisation offered support to workers by advising them on what to consider before making their final decision. This highlights that the VRP seemed to be a very personal process and decisions were made individually, no participant discussed anything with anyone. The only time these workers were grouped together was when they were being told about the entire

process and what their options are. The company did what it needed to do to ensure that workers were not financially irresponsible and that they would not be coming back to corporate to get their jobs back. As noted, the VRP's were being offered in a sense to avoid conflict. In other words, by agreeing the VRP, the worker would be acknowledging that their skills is not necessary for the organisation, while legally agreeing to not take PnP to court for unfair dismissals. So the underlying factor is that they would likely not get their jobs back as they were seen as unnecessary to PnP and did not fall under their strategic goals. Yet workers would come back to the PnP:

They do express in the vast of people who took the package, and then within a few months, not even a year – that same people come back looking for their jobs. [Berenice, 12 August 2020]

The idea that the organisation was aware of the of workers coming back to the organisation after they took retrenchment. Workers were aware that many people after retrenchment were coming back to PnP in search of their old jobs, thus, it could be argued that PnP was aware of this too. It is clear that there was a crises in which PnP needed to address before conducting further VRP's but as one will see in the final section of this chapter workers too came back to the organisation in worse conditions. But before that they did first need to leave the organisation and as soon as the VR agreement was signed the worker had the option to leave the organisation whenever they wanted to leave as Jenny states:

My manager said, you can leave anytime you want, you can leave, today, tomorrow or at the end of the week, you can leave any time – and that is one of the benefits that goes with this package [Jenny, 17 August 2020].

This quote shows that Jenny did not feel like there was anything holding her at the organisation because of the treatment she experienced, and passively told the worker that they should leave. They can leave at any time.

#### 4.5 Leaving Pick n Pay:

As noted, when it came to leaving the organisation, workers could decide between leaving on any day before the month ends. In other words, if workers VR's got accepted and they were notified on the 7 August 2017, they could leave any day between the 7<sup>th</sup> August 2017 and the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2017

so yes after almost 34 years of working there, I left PnP without even a chocolate in my hand. And that for me was sad. And even at the end of the day, they could have called us back, they could have called me back, I don't know about the others, maybe there was – just to be called back to say thank you and yes there was no thank you from my side, just everything of the best so yes, the day I walked out of PnP after 34 years, I realized... (silence for five seconds) – you can be replaced easily. [Jenny, 17 August 2020].

The quote highlights the idea that workers were not feeling appreciated in the organisation any longer – that solidarity once felt among the organisation and worker was non-existent. The idea of the worker feeling like it was contributing something more to the organisation was not there any longer. They did sense like their value to the organisation was not needed any longer and was quite disappointed that they spent a large chunk of their career at the organisation and did not even get a farewell. Jenny did state that when she decided to leave the organisation, colleagues came over to find out what was happen as she stated:

people just started rushing over to me and were like “What”, “WHAT!!!”, and I was like yes I am going so yeah, they were upset with it and I was upset with it because that day because then I started crying. [Jenny, 17 August 2020].

This quote shows how meaningful these employees felt at Pick n Pay, the idea that the company was run as a traditional family store and these workers were apart of that. Then workers were exposed to this the strategic measures taken to corporatize the organisation and evolve with the retail industry influenced by Walmart. Thus, the workers were extremely sad and upset as mentioned in the quote.

#### 4.6 Post-work life:

All participants took some form of a hiatus before deciding to return to work. It came in the form of holidays or relaxing at home. Their justification for this was they work for the organisation for a long time and they did want some break from work. They firstly paid of all debts as they were aware that they would not have a stable income, this falling in the periphery level of the worlds of work model. They would then keep some money out and invest the rest. As Mickey indicates:

I paid off most of my debt – because I am not working and I don't want people to phone me and the rest I invest by the bank – with a three year investment and a 5 year investment. [Mickey, 18 August 2020]

The organisations assistance was only regarding the financial side of their wellbeing. This quote highlights that workers could make responsible decisions regarding their finances and ensure that their money is able to sustain itself and that it does not deplete too quickly. It is clear that with no source of income in the meantime, their nest eggs were getting less due to the cost of living, as Nonzi highlights that her nest egg was getting less:

so rental was a lot of money – so basically not having any income and having to pay rental all the time, it depletes and makes your nest egg a little bit smaller – so now you have to think of other things so before you get to the point where you don't have sustainability where your finances is concerned and I just needed to find a job as I am still of age where I can work [Nonzi, 21 September 2020].

What this quote highlights is the role in the workers finances were getting less and they were becoming worried about whether their investment would last their entire life. Thus, being of a age, in which the participants are still eligible to work – they did end up looking for opportunities:

Well when you find out in the real life or maybe people don't tell you or what you don't perceive (You know) is now that companies, they wont take older people, they want younger people – and you don't have the skills younger people have, you know. If you older than 50 or rather 55, because I was 57 when I took the package. [Mickey, 18 August 2020].

This quote highlights that the worker feels as they do not qualify for anything else, especially since they did not learn any new skills. They believe that their age is against them. The idea to return to work was also due to their skills specifically being centered around retail as Nonzi highlights:

Retail was my whole life whereas you can now hear, I went straight into retail when I got out of school. [Nonzi, 21 September 2020].

There are also no other jobs for these workers, or they were tired of looking for a job. The aim of having the current occupation was to ensure that workers did maintain the nest egg that they worked towards. This quote also shows that the participants had an erosion of skills reproduction security.

Many of the workers would go back to sustain their livelihood as the opportunity would arise:

one of my colleagues who I previously worked for had a opening for a cashier and if I wanted to take the job and I thought, why not. [Shanel, 19 August 2020].

Shanel did not want to be at home anymore and the opportunity came where there was a job on the table for her at PnP as a cashier. She knew that this colleague had worked for a franchise, which meant that it was not part of the PnP group. This meant that the worker was contingent on offer by the store owners and not necessarily what the PnP group. Employee benefits would be determined by the owners of the store. This was not an issue as she got the opportunity to do something which she is skilled in, but it does underline the idea that these workers return to the workplace through alternative forms of recruitment such as labour brokers or returning to same workplace through franchises.

At the end of July we came back to Cape Town and I went to say hello to my ex-colleagues again, and the financial director – she wanted to see her and I asked her is there a possibility were I can get my position back and she said that you know we love to have you back yeah, but unfortunately I couldn't go back to that department and she sent me to a agency [Ellen, 11 August 2020].

This quote is more directly highlights the idea that the company would not take these workers back directly but would use an alternative form of employment. The two quotes above shows that it becomes about who you knew and whether there are job openings. However, those workers who took VRP's have to be reemployed through external actors, these individuals and organisations who represent or work for PnP. The quotes above specifically identifies the sub-question of how workers re-entered the workplace, as the quotes highlight that after the worker takes the retrenchment package, there are unable to find new forms of employment as jobs are often limited. Lain et al (2019) examines the role of older workers and the idea that they are unable to find jobs due to intensifications and being let go, thus resulting in them taking on precarious jobs which have low pay and lack of employment security. In this sense, the workers

would return to PnP because the organisation still operates and they have a good understanding of the organisation. Thus, running out of money and exhausting all options, returning to PnP but with precarious working conditions was an option as noted by the workers.

Similarly, Ellen states the same idea of being recruited by organisations, it is through internal staff which helps workers get job opportunities in the organisation as she stated:

she was the HR in our department at that time, she told me too, she said I could get a transfer to go work in one of the stores in George and when I am not going to earn the same amount of money, and that it would be cut in half and that we do not really have any benefits. [Berenice, 12 August 2020]

When the worker did decide to go back there were channels which needed to be followed such as interviews, and it would normally be through external actors as mentioned above, but there are other instances in which workers have to restart their careers with PnP and not receive any benefits and earn much less than what they used to earn. However, workers would go back due to believing that they were skilled in retail:

Yeah, I wanted to work and I didn't want to go back to PnP but I was old, so there was an opportunity there [Janice, 10 August 2020].

When workers did send in applications for new job opportunities, it became evident that the option to return to PnP was present. Workers would take up these opportunities as retail was their entire lives, especially when it came to leaving school and their first job being in retail. These workers had looked elsewhere but the opportunity for working with PnP again is still present.

You just want to enjoy your time at home, and study further at a college. [Mickey, 18 August 2020]

Even though these workers are reaching the end of their careers, they were aiming at upskilling themselves. The organisation had advised workers on how to be more financially responsible by providing financial advisors and financial incentives. Workers were not motivated to pursue their passions and there was nothing in place to ensure that these workers achieved these goals and would end up at PnP again. This shows that workers were not adequately prepared for post-life work due to returning to the same workplace under worse conditions, and the erosion of

the skills reproduction security was present before they returned to the workplace. As there was not enough done to equip workers and skilling them in fields in which they could use elsewhere. Thus, returning to PnP was the best option to maintain their finances.

#### 4.7 Returning to Pick n Pay: Deteriorated Working conditions

For all participants the dream was over, the idea that they could find something outside of retail became a challenge in itself. Workers would go back to PnP seeking opportunities or opportunities at PnP would present themselves due to their skills being in retail. When workers did return, it was often categorized by lower wages, unpredictable long working hours, lack of union representation or unaware of unions in the store and finally limited regulations on hiring and firing of these workers.

##### 4.7.1 Erosion of Job security:

Its important to note that these workers have a lot of experience in retail, however, it does seem as though these workers were having to restart their careers at in retail at PnP despite having the experience. One way in which this was done was through how much the worker received once they started at PnP again as Ellen stated:

No they not really the same as corporate store as my salary the cut it in more than half and told me that I will not receive what I had received in the office. And they don't really have much benefits and their working hours is not nice. [Ellen, 11 August 2019].

Workers were aware of the changes that was happening when they were permanent employees, but they were not affected until they returned. Although as the quote above highlights, that when workers returned, they did not receive the same amount of money instead would make very little for performing similar tasks to what they were doing when they were permanent. Whereas workers would earn between R8000 to R10000 as permanent staff, once they would return, these workers would only earn R4000.

##### 4.7.2 Erosion of work security:

There was very little to no benefits. When it came to privileges, these were also not within the stores,

There is a different time with local where there is not all those facilities. There is sometimes coffee, tea, and milk -many of the times I have to bring my own things. –

there are sometimes where people would not have at home and in corporate, they would have these privilege. [Shanel, 19 August 2020]

This quote highlights that workers did not have the same privileges which in stores which they once enjoyed before taking VRP's. facilities were limited in stores which promotes the idea that retail is now a place for ensuring profits.

#### 4.7.3 Erosion of representation security:

There was very little discussion on trade unions when the worker went back into the same workplace, as Nonzi highlighted that:

No, the local stores do not have, aren't unionized like the corporate stores. [Nonzi, 21 September 2020]

When doing further investigations into this statement and finding out why trade unions do not reach participants, Layla elaborates on this idea by stating:

I didn't ask the people that work there if there are unions where people represent them when something did happen because I don't know. [Layla, 8 October 2020]

This quote highlights that unionization was also not visible to these workers as some workers. As the workers did not know about trade unions when going back into the store,

#### 4.7.4 Erosion of employment security:

These workers knew what working conditions were like in the store before they took the package, and it became evident that they had not had pleasant experiences when going back into PnP. Thus, workers were still exploring and applying for other job opportunities as the retail conditions were not what they wanted to work in due to lack of security and working conditions which included working long hours, earning much less than when the worker was permanent and not receiving the privileges they once had when they started out at PnP.

I was there for 7 months on the other side of the creditors department, but on the other side of the butcheries – and end of June last year, the call us (a few ladies) and they said that they will not be extending our contracts anymore. [Kelly, 23 September 2020].

This highlights the instability of working in retail today, especially through an alternative form of employment. Kelly was working through a labour broker, and she was called in, in which



she was told she was no longer needed. The idea that these contracts run on a month-to-month basis, as we should not that Kelly did not work their for a year but 7 months, highlights how companies like PnP are able to save money on human capital. In the end, this is very unstable for the worker.

The quotes in the four sub-sections above illustrate the conditions workers faces after returning to the workplace. It is clear that the workers experience an erosion of the four industrial citizenship rights discussed previous sections/headings. As depicted through the worlds of work model, workers experience a loss of benefits and a change in their working conditions and employment status because of labour restructuring as the PnP was forced to retrench workers to ensure they maintained their market share. In other words, these workers were affected negatively by the MNC, Walmart's entry into the South African market.

This section draws on workers experiences of not being employed directly through the company but instead being employed through third parties. It also identifies the reasons, workers returned to the organisation – that is, to maintain their nest egg and because they struggled to venture into businesses or find another job opportunity.

## 5 Conclusion:

This chapter detailed workers transition from casual to permanent employment and then much later from permanent to casual employment after taking the VRPs in 2017. It is evident that when workers initially started out as casual workers they had limited to no benefits. However, after eventually becoming permanent they gained access to benefits and privileges. Workers categorized PnP as a family run store that took care of their employees. The working conditions went beyond performing tasks in the workplace, and they would often do team building activities as well as family events outside of work hours. The chapter notes that workers chose the VRP because they felt as though they had achieved everything they could within the organisation. The VRP process was outlined, highlighting that PnP offered financial advisors to the workers to ensure that these workers could make better decisions with their finances. However, workers finances would deplete, and they would worry about how they could sustain their finances and would apply for other jobs outside of retail but would be unsuccessful. Thus, workers approached their previous colleagues at PnP and to re-enter the same workplace through labour brokers or through franchises. Their working conditions were characterized by reduced pay and long and unusual working hours with no benefits or privileges. There was also

no visible sign of union representation and workers did not know if unions operated in their stores. Therefore, it is important to note that even though I use contract and casual work interchangeably, it both implies that a worker is employed by PnP without the benefits or entitlements which are afforded to permanent employees.

This chapter has shown that after taking the VRP's and returning to the same workplace as casual workers they experienced a loss of industrial citizenship rights and precarious working conditions in the store. Although in this chapter there is a period in which workers are within the periphery, this level being when workers are unemployed right after they take the package and not having a stable income. This was not the focus of my master's thesis. It is focusing on the transition of the worker from when they were permanently employed to taking the VRPs and returning to the same workplace. There are certain rights which have been eroded, this includes job security, work security, representation security, employment security and skills reproduction security. In the end when workers would often return due to not having acquired any skills outside retail, and their return would be categorised by lower wages, would not have any benefits or privileges, and work long hours. In other words, the shift from non-core to core and then from core to non-core employment status.

## 6 The future of retail and its workers

This chapter aims to explore and understand the workers transition from being a permanent employee to taking the VRP and returning to the same workplace as contract workers. In the transition from permanent to casual workers, one will note that the workers' industrial citizenship rights were eroded and working conditions have worsened. This chapter aims to address the central research question: How have retail workers who took the voluntary retrenchment package (VRP) experienced the transition from being permanent employed to casually employed through labour brokers or franchises in the same workplace? Based on worker's experience of the transition from core to non-core employment, I argue that workers were negatively affected after taking the VRP's. I examine this transition by focusing on four sections to explain my argument. These are: (1) the workplace solidarity – which examines the changing nature of community in the workplace and the effect of flexible recruitment strategies on the relations between management and workers. This discussion extends to (2) examining worker's belief that voluntary retrenchment was their choice and discusses their reasoning for leaving PnP. (3) Post-work life preparations in terms of how workers managed their finances and the factors that contributed workers decision to return to the same workplace. The final section discusses (4) precariousness in the workplace by focusing on the experiences of the transition, specifically the current working conditions for store workers after reentering the workplace.

### 6.1 Solidarity in the workplace:

Walmart has a negative impact on countries which they have entered (Omarjee, 2019). South African civil society challenged the Walmart/Massmart merger and eventually placed conditions on the merger (Bezuidenhout and Kleynhans, 2015: 96). These conditions include the idea that Walmart could not retrench workers for the first two years. However, local companies such as PnP was not as efficient when it came to labour expenses compared to its competitors, thus they adopted restructuring strategies which reduced their operational costs. These operational costs included reduced expenses on labour, more importantly on workers (Reuters, 2018). Walmart/Massmart had more influence on the local retail companies than retail companies had on Walmart. Consequently, wherever Walmart goes it forces rival retailers to adopt similar strategies because of the success of the Walmart business model (Bernhardt, 1999: 9; Barley and Orr, 2018: 17). PnP strategies putt retail workers at risk as they were adopting workplace strategies such as promoting franchising and relying on labour

brokers to source employment. This was to ensure that it maintains its market share in the retail industry. Prior to taking the 2017 VRP's workers noted how labor brokering was becoming popular in the stores and that management styles and organisational accountability to workers was changing.

In the case of this study and in the South African context: after taking the VRP workers had firsthand experience of how different recruitment strategies create layers among the workforce because workers experience different types of working conditions and a loss of employment benefits. The worlds of work model capture the fragmented workplace because of the different layers of workers in the same workplace with differential access to industrial citizenship rights – particularly, representation security.

By employing workers through different recruitment strategies, workers are held accountable to different terms and conditions which affect their shared working conditions (Bezuidenhout and Kleynhans, 2015). These changes negatively affect workplace solidarity. Workplace solidarity refers to the collective sense among workers. Workplace solidarity can be formed in multiple ways which include similar working conditions, language, and location but I focus on similar working conditions. For example, Ellen did not enjoy her working experience when she returned to PnP as an administrative clerk in a different department through a labour broker because she felt like the permanent workers were threatened by her presence. They were not nice to her, very unhelpful and threatened because of her work experience and the fact that she did a much better job than the permanent workforce. This finding is reiterated by Boyce, et al (2007: 9) who argues that workers that come in through labour brokers are often seen as inferior to the permanent workers compared to workers who are employed directly through the organisation. Thus, labour brokers and franchising are beneficial to the company but not to the worker.

Several studies that have explored the effect of labour brokers on representation security among workers have documented similar findings (Mathekga & Maciko, 2018; Kenny, 2018). For example, Mathekga and Maciko's (2018: 53-54) study on the retail sector found that with the increase of non-standard forms of employment workers employed through labour brokers were not represented by unions. Kenny (2018: 219-220) also acknowledges that although there is no form of union representation for workers employed through labour brokers workers still collectively experienced the struggles of being a retail worker informally. Workers could not

answer any questions on trade unions concisely, in fact many dismissed them and said that they were not aware of any union activity in the stores.

Hence, solidarity was not present as there was no form of union representation and workers was not made aware of these opportunities. Mathekga and Maciko (2018) highlights these changers in the retail market arguing that that unionization is becoming invisible due to its inaccessibility to workers who are employed through different recruitment strategies (Mathekga and Maciko, 2018: 39). Although Kenny (2018) discusses some elements of informal solidarity through Abasebenzi in Cambridge stores in Johannesburg she notes that solidarity in the workplace is affected negatively as there is no formal forms of solidarity due to workplace fragmentation.

New forms of recruitment would inevitably lead to management styles changing which affected workers because they were no longer represented by PnP management instead only worked for the organisation. Thus, workers would no longer be accountable to PnP but instead to an outside organisation. PnP only bought these workers labour power so that they could perform tasks in the organisation to ensure that a minimize human resource costs which would result in a greater profit margin (Fudge and Strauss, 2014: 478). Participants reiterated this idea as Kelly (23 September 2020) said that management no longer took interest in their wellbeing, instead were turnover driven and used the example of how the manager under the old management regime (family run business), helped her when her husband needed an operation.

This section has highlighted that shared retail experiences are becoming more complex, especially regarding how the worker relate to their colleagues and PnP, as it was seen as a more competitive environment and is turnover driven. Workers who come in through labour brokers form part of the non-core- level in which they do earn a wage and receive minimal benefits such as paid leave after working for a month (Claassen, 2021: 1). There are very little conditions to their terms of employment, as they can be let go by the organisation without following any procedure, besides stating you are no longer needed and there are no benefits once the worker does leave. Thus, it has become evident that the idea of solidarity in a retail workspace is quite complex and weakened due to the implementation of various recruitment strategies and its corporate approach to running the stores.

## 6.2 It was my Choice:

Voluntary redundancy, however, has introduced a new form of job loss in which ‘the employees themselves volunteer to be the ones retrenched’ (Clark and Seward, 2000, p. 448)

Voluntary retrenchment has been around since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and extensively gained popularity during the 1980’s as the least unsatisfactory method to deal with downsizing for the organisation and the workers (Clark, 2005: 246; Bergström and Arman 2017). As it is seen as a mutual agreement between the worker and the organisation to part ways – in which the organisation offers an incentive which in this case was sweetener (financial incentive). PnP believes that workers were given the option leave an organisation and were not forced to leave. If VR does fail, then forced retrenchments would be put in place (Clark, 2005: 247; Bergström and Arman 2017). The workers themselves stated that it is something that they needed to do, as in the option was there for them to take the package, it was not forced on them – hence they volunteered for the option and none of the workers regretted the decision. Every participant interviewed was happy with their decision as they felt like they worked for the organisation for a long time and needed change.

The logic of believing that its beneficial for both the worker and organisation highlights that this is a contractual agreement between the organisation and the worker, where the worker takes the decision to accept the voluntary retrenchment being offered. This includes financial incentives in exchange for the employee not suing the organisation for unfair dismissal. This process was implemented due the company realized that it was not effective when it came to efficient labour costs, thus, offered these opportunities specifically aimed at older workers, workers who worked for the organisation for a long period of time (White, 2017: 1). Although the option was available to all workers in the organisation, and it was only implemented to ensure a more efficient and effective workforce within the organisation.

Workers felt as if they had worked for the PnP for a long time and that they could not achieve anything further within the organisation and the VR opportunity presented itself to these workers. The idea that workers felt like they achieved everything they could within the organisation is reiterated by Miller, et al (2008) who states that VRP’s would be more appealing to long term workers. This is primarily because the financial incentive (sweetener) would be higher due to their long service at PnP. Workers would receive a 1.5-week wages for every

year that they worked for the organisation. This is excluding their provident or pension funds. These workers had more flexibility with their options as these workers had more money saved up and their sweetener would be much larger due to the long service to PnP.

Workers continuously reiterated that it was their choice to leave the organisation and to take the opportunity of leaving voluntarily. The workers didn't understand why the organisation was headed in the direction of asking people if they are will voluntary retrench. This reiterate by Clark (2007; 87-88) who argues that workers are often disoriented when voluntary retrenchment does occur and do not understand why it is happening, thus coming up with their own theories on why the company is offering VR's. Berenice (12 August 2020) argued that this was not something PnP normally does as they were always creating jobs not taking away jobs. As Clark (2005) argues, workers would want to take the package, as they believe that it is a sign of the organisation failing and trying to rescue itself by reducing expenses (Clark, 2005: 247; Bergström and Arman, 2017). These workers saw it as an opportunity to get a good deal out of the situation as they would rather willing leave the organisation than involuntarily leave the organisation. This is emphasized that VRP letters going to all workers, as it highlights idea that workers can get opportunities to enter entrepreneurship or go into another occupation while receiving some form of financial compensation (Clark, 2007: 83; Andrew, 2020). Many workers made the choice to take the package as they felt that retail work is demanding and that they had spent most of their adult life in this occupation and did not feel that they could progress any further in the organisation. The workers opted to accept the VR. Other reasons for taking the package, is due to the worker believing that due to their finances could sustain their household into retirement years, thus, they are capable of taking the VR's being offered.

This section has examined what influenced the worker to take the VRP's and it is evident that the participants in this study wanted to leave because they had worked for the organisation for a long period. They felt as though they achieved everything they could within the organisation and wanted to do something different. Other factors included the fact that these participants did not have the financial stress of children in school and their household expenses were not as demanding. While also acknowledging that they made sure their finances were in order and that they could pay off all their debt with the money they would receive from the company. While still having money left over to cater for their needs. Thus, their financial incentive is much greater. This shows that it was an opportunity for them to get out of the organisation.

### 6.3 Post-work life preparation:

All the studies discussed in the literature review acknowledge that workers struggle to find employment after being retrenched or taking a VRP (Clark, 2005; Lord 2020). These workers' needed to enter the labour market because their finances deplete over time. Often workers use the retrenchment money to pay off debts, renovate their houses or spend it on something that is important to them (Clark, 2005: 245; ; Bergström and Arman 2017). The findings show that while PnP engaged with workers about the implications of taking a VRP by offering these workers the opportunity to engage with financial advisors, the workers were not adequately prepared for post-work life.

Due to PnP seeing this process as a liability, there was only one key factor the organisation focused on according to the participants; that is, ensuring that the worker was financially sustainable. It used the labour law from section 189 in which states that a company is allowed to offer voluntary retrenchment if the organisation is being threatened by global forces or technological advancement (Collier, et al, 2019: 549-550). Section 189 state that the organisation needs to offer an incentive, in the case of PnP, it was a financial incentive. It is a mutual agreement between the organisation and worker to ensure that the worker does not sue the PnP for unfair dismissal.

PnP did this through getting HR individuals to interview potential candidates for the VRP's and evaluate their plans after taking the VRP's, this includes what are the workers goals and how they intend to spend their money and recommending financial advisors to these workers.

PnP was acting well within its capacity, by providing VRP's where reasons being technological innovations leading to jobs becoming redundant and due to the global competition threatening its survival. As Lord (2020) argues that the changing nature of work is influenced by those factors (Lord, 2020: 409). The company acted within its grounds and within the laws of the country but did not adequately prepare workers for post-life work. Historical evidence shows that workers finances deplete quickly especially when receiving retrenchment package (der Kinderen and Greefe, 2003; Xaba, 2006; Bezuidenhout, et al, 2007). Thus, PnP still implemented strategies to give the worker the choice to use their financial responsibly by offering financial advisors and interviewing workers to what they will be doing once they have taken the package.



The process was a short period between when the worker applies for retrenchment and when they submit it. As the interview for where the HR evaluates whether the worker can qualify for taking the package happens during this short process. Although workers had stated that they thought about it for a long time as workers argued that if the next opportunity for VRP's arise, then they would take it, in which they had between 2014 and 2017 to consider whether they should take it or not. The process was a success to the PnP as within the months after the VRP's the company was making a substantial profit (White, 2017: 1). When it came to implementation, it was a success for the company as well as many workers took the package and they did reach their target of reducing their workforce by 10%, while staying within the budget of R250 million (Pick n Pay, 2019). Whereas for the worker, the workers financial situation deteriorated due to not having a substantial income to maintain their household needs, eventually returning to the same workplace in retail. The outcome for the PnP was a huge profit after 6 months of working while for workers, the ended up returning under worse conditions. Thus, it was not a success to workers as it did not adequately prepare them for post-work life. VRP's were promoted in such a way for workers to get out of the demanding retail working conditions. These workers did seem to have goals once they took the VRP's but due to the lack of education and financial responsibility, they were unable to achieve these goals. Mariappanadar (2003) argues that once redundancy occurs, workers often times struggle to find new forms of employment and find in precarious situations in which they rely on family members to sustain their livelihoods. Participants shared the idea of wanting to leave the organisation and not being able to find something new after working for the organisation for a long period.

### 6.3.1 Finances and sustainable living costs:

Voluntary redundancy involves the payment of a financial incentive in addition to normal severance entitlements, a payment that for long-term employees may be quite substantial (Lewis, 1993: 17).

Although workers receive a substantial amount of money due to their long service to the organisation it should be noted that most workers worried about their finances. There is a great concern for maintaining their lifestyle and the money not being sufficient until they are able to secure another form of employment or income. This is due to workers not receiving a regular income. Most of the participants finances were invested and some finances were kept out for the time these workers thought they would be at home and not receive any additional income.

This means they solely relied on the financial incentive (often referred to as a sweetener) and money which they kept out (Clark, 2007: 83; Andrew, 2020). This is vital part of the workers experience, the idea that your finances will eventually run out. Most participants did state that much of their lifestyle did change after taking the VRP. They were mindful of how they spend their money, particularly realizing that eventually their money would run out if they did not find a way to sustain a new form of income. Thus, workers had no stable income, finances would decline, forcing workers to go back into the workplace and earn an income. Xaba (2006) reiterates this point his study, noting that workers who are retrenched often struggle to find new employment and a reoccurring income or passive income to ensure that they maintain their households.

### 6.3.2 Employability:

Employability describes someone's chances of being employed in the workplace (Gowsalya, and Ashok Kumar, 2015: 343). In the case of this research project, there are three characteristics which define someone's employability. That is their age, their skill level and education. Workers did not believe that it would be difficult to find other forms of employment after taking the VRP. They thought that as experienced retail workers who had progressed within the organisation, they would gain employment elsewhere. PnP did not make them aware of this challenge. Instead, they were oblivious to this fact or did not acknowledge it until they were in the situation where they had to find recurring passive or active income.

The research findings suggest that workers were reluctant to return to PnP but due to their age, education and skills level, they were not employable in other sectors. Given labour restructuring and high unemployment levels in South Africa, workers were more likely to gain flexible and insecure working conditions (Kenny and Webster, 1998: 221; Scully, 2016). Typically, workers tried tapping into their existing networks to secure employment. In other words, this meant returning to their former workplaces because their networks consisted of workers at PnP. Therefore, workers returned to PnP stores because of their former work experience. Xaba (2006) and Kenny & Webster (1998) argue often workers would have to rely on unpaid domestic labour – as Layla (08 October 2020) did argue that she would be a housewife until a employment opportunity came along. The following section the working conditions workers encountered after returning to the retail sector.

## 6.4 Precariousness in the workplace:

There are four key changes workers discussed extensively especially when comparing their current work experience to their previous work experience prior to taking the VRP. These changes emphasise their experience of the transition from once being employed permanently to being casually employed in the same workplace. The first notable change was the use of labour brokers or ‘agencies’ to re-enter the workplace. The second change was that there were no promotions and greater chances of dismissals due to inadequate industrial citizenship rights, which resulted in no benefits and privileges. The third change was that there was poor union representation. As a result of these changes, workers experienced the transition negatively because of precarious working conditions. The following section will be discussing these for changes in relation in three themes. The first theme is “Unfortunately, Pick n Pay can’t re-employ you, but do try a agency, in which it addresses the role of third party organisations used to re-employ workers at PnP. The second theme will focus on low pay, no benefits in which it highlights the conditions the workers face which is often categorized by low pay and no benefits. The third theme will examine union representation and the consequences for non-core workers.

### 6.4.1 Unfortunately, pick n pay can’t re-employ you, but do try an agency:

The study discovered that three participants did want to return and went to their old managers but were referred to a labour broker because the company could not offer their jobs back. This shows that there was a standard process in which workers could take when returning to the organisation, as through labour brokers or returning to the franchised stores. Both forms of re-employment for participants came with decreasing job security. For example, workers were likely to be dismissed unfairly, and equity is not considered when hiring and firing people (Standing, 2011: 10; Standing, 2018; Monaco, 2019; Lain, Airey, Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2019). When it came to leaving the organisation for a second time, some workers left on their own, while others ended up with terminated contracts, and the only extra income these workers would receive when contracts were terminated was paid leave. It also became easier for workers to be dismissed from their occupation if their position is considered excessive or unnecessary, a key finding in Kenny’s (2018) research in the retail sector.

#### 6.4.2 Low pay, no benefits and no privileges, just work:

As noted in the previous section, workers who come back through agencies had limited industrial citizenship rights. In which workers were not protected in the workplace. Workers did not expect the conditions to be the same but did believe that their experience in retail would allow them to achieve favourable jobs in these stores or in retail.

The company would take on some responsibility of one's personal and professional needs by providing paid maternity leave, paid sick leave and provident funds. When these workers started in the organisation, through their collective narratives, it can be argued that retail was seen as a place of growth due to all the civil action which took place in the mid-twentieth century (1930's-1980's). These workers fought for their place in the organisation. Unlike today where workers are only working to earn a living wage and in the case of these workers there are no benefits that come with that (Kenny, 2018: 62).

In retail, it is quite difficult to get promotions and become permanent as discussed in the findings chapter which saw many workers not being able to earn a permanent status until they have worked for the company for a few years. This permanent position would be in the same classification and job description in which they were casual. When going back to the workplace through labour brokers or franchises, it becomes even more difficult to gain promotions or higher wages. As noted, most workers hadn't worked long enough to get these promotions and complained about the wages they were receiving. As mentioned in sustaining the nest egg, worker would often earn much less wages compared to when they were permanent. In one case, a participant stated that she earned less than half of her permanent salary when she returned to PnP through a franchise. While knowing that she earned less, on some occasions she would have to stay longer at the stores due to the store being busy even after she had finished her shift. It is also clear that workers do work longer hours and have to work on weekends. This is something they did not do as permanent employees. It becomes evident that through literature casual workers do not get considered for promotions (Kenny, 2018: 170). This leads to an industrial citizenship right being eroded and that is reproduction security which states that the investment into workers to ensure that they advance their skills and education (Standing, 2011: 40; Standing, 2018; Monaco, 2019; Lain, Airey, Loretto and Vickerstaff, 2019).

The erosion of the reproductive security results in greater competitive nature of retail today. As noted in the findings section when workers returned to work, they noticed colleagues being competitive with each other. In other words, workers are only there for themselves, and it was

a case of survival of the fittest (Lord, 2020: 412-414). This is due to uncertain contracts because the organisation would notify them abruptly that they are no longer needed. Kenny (2018) and Mathekga and Maciko (2018) discussed the ongoing tensions among workers when they were put up against each other – especially regarding promotions. As non-core workers are competing for permanent positions, if positions do become available, thus these workers would be able to move into the core level and be recognized by the organisation. This results in fragmentation of the workforce as the company would employ casual workers directly through the organisation and there are permanent staff as well. This creates layers in the organisation and fragments the workers based on working hours, wages and benefits. All of the workers are working for the company to ensure the company is productive and eventually create a profit.

When workers returned to PnP they did not see any union activity or were not aware of any union that could represent them, highlights the idea that formal workers solidarity was non-existent. Often resort to informal types of solidarity which Kenny discusses as *abasebensi* (Kenny, 2018: 18). Thus, implies that workers were unable to challenge the unfair working conditions through formal procedures. These conditions included working long hours and having to stay behind even after your shift has ended especially if the shop is too busy with customers. These conditions which workers are experiencing is similar to those in Zambia and Namibia as in those areas, workers to lack benefits (Miller, et al, 2008: 138; Aceska and Heer, 2019). However, those workers would rather be retail store workers than be unemployed. This highlights that the workplace became a place where tasks are performed and where workers need to work long hours (Miller, et al, 2008: 47; Aceska and Heer, 2019). The idea that workers would be within the core level before they took the voluntary retrenchment, to having some form of stability and moving into the non-core level (Webster, 2005: 57; Happiness, 2017).

Workers took these positions because it meant that they were able to sustain their nest eggs. They complained about not having benefits or privileges which they enjoyed as PnP employees before they left the PnP.

Due to globalization retail workers are forced into the non-core level where they do have some form of protection, but they do end up giving up most of their citizenship rights, this highlights the worlds of work model (Webster, 2005: 67; Happiness, 2017). Thus, One observes how workers started out as causal workers and gained industrial citizenship rights when they started in the late 1980s and 1990's. These workers know what it's like to have benefits and be

permanent in the workplace, but they also now had experience in these precarious conditions in stores. This due to MNCS such as Walmart coming into South Africa, the Pick n Pay would adopt labour restructuring strategies such as VRP's. Workers would take up these options, due to seeing it as an opportunity to achieve their goals outside of the retail company.

## 6.5 Conclusion:

When it comes to the transition of retail workers who took VRP's in 2017, there are three themes that stand out. The first is that retail workers in South Africa are facing worse working conditions, the second is the limited or non-existent role of trade unions and the final theme, that workers got the worst end of the strategic operation of PnP. As noted, when workers did return, they were barely making a living wage which as a retail worker and there were very little to no benefits. It was also categorized by no union representation, so workers could not challenge these conditions and due to being employed by agencies or franchises, made it difficult for them to challenge these conditions. Finally, this chapter highlights that the workers did end up getting the worse end, as they were the ones who had to return to Pick n Pay.

## 7 Conclusion:

VRPs were an important workplace restructuring strategy that PnP adopted following Walmart's entry into South Africa. PnP had to adopt these strategies to remain competitive and save on operational costs. Alongside VRPs, PnP engaged other workplace restructuring strategies such as an increased use of labour brokers to source workers. This study set out to explore workers experiences of the transition from permanent to casual employment at the same workplace after they had taken a VRP in 2017. By using a qualitative research method with semi-structured interviews, I was able to hear and interpret workers reasons for taking the VRP's, the struggles they faced post work life, the reason they returned to the same workplace as casual workers and their experience of casual employment. In this chapter I summarise the main findings which inform my argument that PnP retail workers experienced the shift from core to non-core employment status negatively after taking the VRP's in 2017. Finally, I will identify key themes from this thesis which could be used for future research.

The findings and discussions highlight how workers who started in PnP in the 1980's and 1990's worked their way up to becoming permanent employees in the organisation. They recall the benefits and privileges they had but more importantly the fact that they were directly employed through PnP. As in the 1980's and 1990's, they would go for interviews with the store managers or people who work directly for PnP. However, when workers took the VRP's in 2017, they spent some time at home and later attempted to find jobs outside of retail, but they were unsuccessful. Workers did not get the jobs they applied for and believe that it was due to their age and their lack of skills which makes their chances of re-employment less likely and as noted unsuccessful. Therefore, workers returned to former colleagues to inquire about any available positions to return to the retail again. Instead of being directly employed through the company they directed to labour brokers or franchises. After returning to PnP as casual workers, their working conditions consisted of unpredictable working hours, low wages, no benefits or privileges and no formal representation in the form of trade unions. In order to explore and understand this transition I adopted the worlds of work model the transition from core to non-core had negative effects on these workers as they were not adequately prepared for post life work and had to return to the same organisation under worse conditions. Adopting the industrial citizenship rights from standings the precariat to understand how the workers' rights were eroded.

Lastly, I conclude this chapter with four future recommendations for research. Firstly, an in-depth study into other VRP cases studies to find out if any organisations have adopted a holistic approach to offering workers VRP's. For example, whether organisations focus on workers employability or business skills instead of only focusing on their financial situation and providing financial advice. In this study there was evidence that PnP only focused on the financial aspects.

Secondly, extensive research should be conducted on where retrenchment occurs. Studies on retrenchment in South Africa have primarily focused on the manufacturing industry. This thesis clearly focused on voluntary retrenchment in the retail sector and future studies could focus on how retrenchment and voluntary retrenchment occurs in retail, production, manufacturing, and restaurant sectors and how workers recover from it.

Thirdly, research can be conducted on exploring cases where VRP's have been successful for the worker, and why. It has become a norm that workers who are retrenched often struggle to find new forms of employment or maintain their household with their retrenchment package. Thus, research on successful cases and company support strategies to prepare workers post work life will be useful for ensuring that workers do not struggle.

Fourthly, additional research should be conducted on the role of trade unions during the VRP process. Workers felt that trade unions were not present during the VRP process. As noted, according to multiple news articles trade unions were present in the Walmart/Massmart merger tribunal, while also being active during the 2011 PnP retrenchment process. However, workers in this thesis did not feel as if they were present, thus, future scholars could identify trade unions involvement in the VRP process and their role in protecting workers rights, providing educational support and ensuring that worker benefit from VRP's.



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## 9 Appendix A: Nvivo Codes

Nodes								Search Project
Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By		
transition after taking package		10	31 2020/10/19 09:43	LDA	2020/12/17 21:04	LDA		
going back into the same work place		9	36 2020/10/19 09:44	LDA	2020/12/17 21:04	LDA		
contrasts to old working conditions		7	35 2020/10/20 18:35	LDA	2020/11/19 17:47	LDA		
goals and aspirations beyond retail (after taking VRP)		4	6 2020/10/21 12:25	LDA	2020/11/19 17:55	LDA		
the challenge of finding new employment		2	3 2020/10/19 06:38	LDA	2020/11/19 17:46	LDA		
Aspirations		6	9 2020/10/19 06:48	LDA	2020/12/17 21:04	LDA		
Aspirations in the workplace		1	1 2020/12/15 08:31	LDA	2020/12/17 18:35	LDA		
Work experience		10	21 2020/10/19 05:59	LDA	2020/12/17 21:04	LDA		
Moving from casual to permanent employment		2	3 2020/10/19 06:49	LDA	2020/12/15 08:59	LDA		
role of trade unions		3	4 2020/10/21 08:37	LDA	2020/12/15 08:45	LDA		
recruitment strategies		2	2 2020/12/07 20:45	LDA	2020/12/15 08:29	LDA		
mindset at work-motivation		6	19 2020/10/19 09:06	LDA	2020/10/24 20:26	LDA		
permanent work		1	3 2020/10/19 09:08	LDA	2020/10/21 13:50	LDA		
privileges		5	10 2020/12/15 08:53	LDA	2020/12/17 21:04	LDA		
benefits		5	13 2020/10/19 09:08	LDA	2020/10/31 18:07	LDA		
unions		3	6 2020/10/19 09:14	LDA	2020/10/21 13:48	LDA		
Voluntary retrenchment		1	1 2020/11/19 17:41	LDA	2020/11/19 17:42	LDA		
organisational support during VRP's		6	14 2020/10/19 06:47	LDA	2020/12/17 18:40	LDA		
trade union impacts during VRP's		5	7 2020/12/15 09:00	LDA	2020/11/19 17:45	LDA		
previous experience with VRP		2	3 2020/10/20 19:49	LDA	2020/10/21 12:37	LDA		
experiencing RVP 2017		1	1 2020/10/21 08:34	LDA	2020/10/21 08:34	LDA		
incentives for VRP's		1	1 2020/12/17 18:50	LDA	2020/12/17 18:50	LDA		
Behaviour during vrp		6	20 2020/10/19 09:28	LDA	2020/11/19 17:48	LDA		
motivations for taking the VRP		7	8 2020/12/15 08:47	LDA	2020/12/29 23:37	LDA		

## 10 Appendix B: Interview guide:

### 1. Could you tell me about how you started your journey at Pick n Pay?

- a. Did you start off as a permanent employee?
- b. What were your working conditions like?
  - i. Did you receive any benefits within the organisation?
  - ii. Were you part of a trade union?
  - iii. Did you work fixed working hours?

### 2. What was the process like when during the voluntary retrenchment (2017) period?

- a. What was the environment like once workers were notified that voluntary retrenchment would be occurring?
  - i. How was the worker notified about voluntary retrenchment?
  - ii. How was this conveyed to workers? – How did the company sell these packages to workers?
  - iii. Ho
- b. What support was given to you as a worker during this process?
  - i. Did workers organize to discuss a way forward? (Trade unions)
  - ii. Did managers offer assistance and explain how the process would be conducted.
  - iii. What did the company do to assist the worker during the process?
- c. What incentives did the worker receive when they accepted the voluntary retrenchment?

### 3. What were your goals once you decided to take the voluntary retrenchment package?

- a. Was the worker planning to return to apply for another position?
- b. Was the worker planning to start a company?
- c. Were these goals achieved?

### 4. Why did you need to return to work after taking voluntary retrenchment?

- a. What were the circumstances which lead the worker to return to work?

### 5. How did you come about your current work?

- a. The process in which the worker took to get the current role?
  - i. Interviews, exams and networking?

### 6. Did you see yourself in other working opportunities?

- a. Why did the worker choose to return to the same workplace?
- b. What other opportunities if any were available to the worker?

**7. What are your current working conditions like?**

- a. The role of trade unions?
- b. What is the workers working hours?
- c. What are the workers wages.
- d. How do they view their current role?

**8. What are your plans for the future?**

## 11 Appendix C: Consent forms



Informed consent form for \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of principle researcher:** Lorenzo Andrews

**Name of Institution:** The University of Cape Town

**Masters dissertation:** Workers in transition: Understanding the transition of retail workers through voluntary retrenchment.

**This Informed Consent Form has two parts:**

- **Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)**
- **Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)**

**You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form**

Part I: Information Sheet.

I, Lorenzo Daniel Andrews, am currently a Masters student at the University of Cape Town. I am currently completing my master's in industrial sociology and form part of the sociology department. My research project topic is: Workers in transition and it will be focusing on retail workers who took the Voluntary retrenchment package in 2017 and re-entered the same workplace.

### **Purpose of the research**

As a scholar who focuses on the wellbeing of workers and the impact globalization has on workers, the purpose of this research will be to look at whether current debates about globalization pushing workers into precarious situations persists within the South African retail industry and the introduction of Walmart into South Africa. Further, the purpose of this study will be to look at the transition of workers who took the voluntary retrenchment package in 2017 and found themselves back in the same workplace.

### **Type of Research Intervention**

This research will consist of semi-structured interviews, which will give the participant freedom to discuss their journey as a worker.

### **Participant Selection**

Research participants will be selected based on two characteristics, the first being that workers would have taken the voluntary retrenchment package in 2017 and one would have to have returned to the same workplace.

### **Voluntary Participation**

It is important to note that all participation is voluntary and due to the fact that this research project does fall under a students' requirements to obtain a Masters' degree – the student cannot afford any compensation for the participants.

### **Procedures**

Interviews will take place at the participants discretion. The participant has the choice to decide how the interview will be done, either online or face to face – these factors will take into account what resources the participants have access to.

### **Duration**

The interview will take 1 to 2 hours. There are no further obligations.

### **Risks**

To minimize the effect of contacting COVID 19, the researcher would have the option to conduct interviews online. With regards to working at Pick n Pay, the organisation has no connection or influence in this research project, and it is separate from this research project. Therefore, any information shared will specifically be used to understand the transition of workers through voluntary retrenchment.

### **Confidentiality**

All information will remain anonymous, this includes participants identity. Further, recordings and any data collected will be kept in a encrypted file.

### **Sharing the Results**

Results will be shared in the form of an academic paper. However, any personal (individual) data can be shared with the participant on completion of the research project.

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

The participant does not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect your job or job-related evaluations in any way. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish without your job being affected. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

### **Who to Contact**

The person one needs to contact is Lorenzo Andrews. The cell phone number is **0823630618** and the email address is [andlor003@myuct.ac.za](mailto:andlor003@myuct.ac.za)

**This proposal has been reviewed and approved by University of Cape Town’s sociology department.**

You can ask me any more questions about any part of the research study, if you wish to. Do you have any questions?

Part II: Certificate of Consent

**I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study**

**Print Name of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Day/month/year**