Capturing Stories of How Young Adults Experience Entry Into the Workforce: A Qualitative Research Protocol on Data Collection During the Ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic

Erika Wall\(^1\), Anna Berg Jansson\(^2\), and Sven Svensson\(^3\)

Abstract

**Background:** In present research protocol, the project entitled “A sustainable working life for young adults—leadership, learning, and insecurity” is presented and discussed. The study which aims to describe and analyze the expectations of young adults in the retail workforce in terms of leadership, learning and development and how these aspects can be understood from a health promotion perspective. The project is limited to young adults (18–28 years) employed in a retail setting. **Methods:** The project is based on qualitative data collected through focus group interviews and individual interviews made during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) in year 2020 what here will be reflected upon. **Discussion:** It is concluded data collection carried out during the ongoing spread of the coronavirus, may be significant to what interviewees highlighted in the interviews, but also to what was not discussed in the interviews. It may be the case that the increased focus on the coronavirus meant that other issues that are important to young adults as they establish themselves in the labor market were overshadowed.

**Keywords**

COVID-19, focus group interviews, individual interviews, health promotion, retail

**Background**

The project here presented aims to contribute to a sustainable working life among young adults as they enter the workforce and establish themselves in the retail sector. Qualitative data collected through focus group interviews and individual interviews is analyzed in relation to leadership and learning and how these aspects can be understood from a health-promotion perspective (Antonovsky, 1996; Lindström & Eriksson, 2010; WHO, 1986). The project, entitled “A sustainable working life for young adults—leadership, learning and insecurity,” is funded by research grants from AFA Insurance, an organization owned by Sweden’s labor market parties. In present article, the project is presented and the data collection during the corona pandemic is discussed.

Young adults are currently facing an insecure labor market, leading the early years of adulthood to be characterized by insecurity (Arnett, 2014). On the other hand, it can be assumed that the acquisition of knowledge and skills would reduce insecurity, a process where managers, through the exercise of leadership, play a central role (Hogg, 2001; Zhao et al., 2016). In the present project, leadership is understood as a reciprocal relationship between manager and employee (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In this relationship, managers can exercise leadership in a way that communicates requirements, helps employees adapt, and ensures that employees develop their skills (Camps & Rodríguez, 2011; Zhao et al., 2016). The existing body of leadership research, however, is largely based on the

---

1 Department of Health Sciences, Mid Sweden University, Östersund, Sweden
2 Department of Business Administration, Technology and Social Sciences, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden
3 Department of Occupational Health Science and Psychology, University of Gavle, Sweden

**Corresponding Author:**
Erika Wall, Department of Health Sciences, Mid Sweden University, Kunskapens väg 1, 831 25 Östersund, Sweden.
Email: erika.wall@miun.se
perspectives of employers and managers (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). To address the needs of young adults and create the conditions that allow them to thrive in the workforce, studies are needed that specifically target the perspectives of young adults and uncover what good leadership means to this group. This is especially important since previous research has demonstrated that the quality of leadership is important for the health of employees (Montano et al., 2017; SBU, 2014). The relationship between employees and managers/supervisors is also critical to learning on the job (see, e.g., Parding & Berg Jansson, 2018). In the present project, special emphasis is therefore placed on the conditions for learning as this is seen as an essential and integral part of success and safety/security in the workforce (Ellström, 1992). Based on this perspective, learning is envisioned as a process whereby knowledge and skills are formed in a reciprocal relationship (Ellström, 2002) and where effective leadership is an important condition to support learning (Wallo, 2008). Learning and skills development are also central components in well-established occupational health theories (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Siegrist, 1996). Swedish workplace safety and health regulations emphasize the role of employers in ensuring that employees have the required skills and access to learning opportunities and social support (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2015 [AFS 2015, p. 4]), and managers play a crucial role (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2001 [AFS 2001, p. 1]). The opportunity for learning and development is thus an important resource for coping with the demands of the workplace. Gillberg (2010) shows that young people experience a sense of failure if they remain in a job that does not allow them to develop their skills. It has also been shown that young adults relate to labor market insecurity by, for example, seeking out opportunities to develop their skills (De Hauw & De Vos, 2010). Work conditions that foster learning can thus contribute to ensuring a sustainable work environment in line with the health promotion principle (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2015 [AFS 2015, p. 4]; see also Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Siegrist, 1996).

In investigating preventive approaches to promote a sustainable working life and promote health, young adults are a particularly relevant group to study. Sick leave is increasing among young adults in Sweden, with the largest increase among young women. Among young people, mental health issues are the most common cause of sick leave (Försäkringskassan, 2014, 2017). Young adults are entering the workforce in a situation characterized by uncertainty in terms of expectations (Koivisto et al., 2010; Miller & Jablin, 1991). This degree of uncertainty can partly explain the increased risk that young people will develop ill health (Koivisto et al., 2010; Schmidt et al., 2014). Young workers also tend to differ from older workers in their expectations for work, their own work efforts and reciprocity in the workplace. Previous studies have shown that, compared to older workers, young workers have greater expectations for tangible reciprocity and value leadership that emphasizes social relationships and the employee’s own individual rewards, as well as autonomy and influence in the workplace (for an overview, see Lyons & Kuron, 2014). From an occupational health perspective, it is reasonable to infer that individuals who do not perceive that they receive the leadership and working conditions that correspond to what they deserve run the risk of developing ill health (Siegrist, 1996). To highlight the employees’ perspectives and the conditions for a sustainable working life, the focus of the present project is young worker’s perceptions of leadership, based both on current conditions in the workplace and the type of leadership employees would like to see in the future. This approach allows us to analyze how leaders can work according to the health promotion perspective and better support young workers.

The project aims to describe and analyze the expectations of young adults in the retail workforce in terms of leadership, learning and development and how these aspects can be understood from a health promotion perspective. The project is limited to young adults (18–28 years) employed in a retail setting and sets out to answer the following questions:

- What do young retail employees expect from leadership?
- How can experiences and expectations of leadership be understood in relation to young worker’s expectations of working life and adulthood?
- How can experiences and expectations of leadership be understood in relation to the conditions for learning?
- How can knowledge about young adults’ experiences and expectations of leadership be understood in relation to health promotion in working life?

Against this background, the present project aims to contribute to the understanding of young people’s working lives to better understand how to provide young workers with a positive, healthy start and the means to maintain a sustainable working life. In present article, the data collection during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) will be reflected upon.

**Method**

**Explanation and Justification of Method**

In accordance with the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (WHO, 1986), a study design was created to enable those who are directly impacted to express their views. Based on this approach, the project is based on two sub-studies: a focus group interview study (sub-study I) and an interview study (sub-study II).

The focus group interview study aims to provide insight into the experiences of young adults as they establish themselves in the labor market and how this can be understood from different perspectives in encounters with other young people. The individual interviews are conducted to provide a more in-depth understanding of specific aspects relating to leadership, learning and managing insecurities in working life. This means that continuity is maintained between the two sub-studies by focusing on the project’s main purpose and research questions, but they differ in terms of the type of data collected. The focus
group interview study provides special insight into the participants’ views about leadership, learning and insecurities in working life. The individual interviews provide special insight into individual experiences and reflections on the same subjects.

**Sampling and Recruitment**

**Inclusion criteria.** Prior to the recruitment of participants for the two sub-studies, information was distributed seeking respondents between the ages of 18 and 28 who had worked in a retail setting (in stores) at some point during the past 3 months. For the focus group interviews, work experience also included internships in a retail setting.

**Recruitment of participants.** Prior to conducting focus group interviews, teachers at schools with Business and Administration programs in various cities in Sweden were contacted. Recruitment was done in communication with the teachers at each school, who invited students to participate. Participants in the individual interviews were primarily recruited through social media platforms, but a couple of interviewees were recruited through social contacts. Advertisements were distributed through Facebook and Instagram with a link to a recruitment page on the university website where the project is based. The recruitment page contained information for informed consent and allowed participants to register. For those who registered, we confirmed they had received information about the project and the university’s handling of personal data (GDPR). Potential participants confirmed this by actively checking boxes on the website, which was required before they could submit a reply with contact information. The potential participants were distributed among the researchers in and were personally contacted (via email) by the respective researchers. After making contact by email, an agreement was reached on an interview time.

**Focus group interviews.** Information about the focus group interviews was given in writing before the implementation of interviews. To secure that the informants had read and understood the content of the information given was secured by asking them orally before each focus group interview. In connection with this, it was emphasized in particular that participation was voluntary and that they had the opportunity to cancel participation, at any time without special reason, without any further consequences. Informed consent was formally obtained by each interviewee signing an informed consent form.

Before each interview, the participating researchers introduced himself/herself (name and employer/university) along with the purpose of the interview and repeated the conditions for participation. All interviewees were then able to ask questions. The focus group interviews were conducted according to an interview guide and stimulus cards focused on three themes: leadership, insecurity and learning. The questions were thematic in nature and designed to steer the conversation toward expectations of leadership, learning and the participant’s own experiences or thoughts about insecurities in working life, rather than the participant’s assessment of their current situation and work conditions.

At the start of the interviews, the participants answered questions about their working life expectations and which people/roles have special significance in their working life. The first stimulus card Leadership was then presented, and the participants were asked to answer the question, “What do you think leadership means in the workplace?” Then, 19 cards were handed out in which different roles or positions that might be relevant to a retail workplace were described. The different roles were: Parent, Sibling, Relative, Friend (outside of work), Work friend, Colleague, Customer, Trade union, Trade union representative, Supervisor, Manager, Store manager, Payroll manager, HR person, Salesperson, Supplier, Cleaning staff, Caretaker and Technical support. The focus group participants were asked to sort the cards to reflect the positions or roles they saw as important for leadership in the workplace. The instructions were to place the most important position or positions at the top and to sort out the positions they thought were irrelevant. Positions they thought were of equal importance would be placed at the same level in the hierarchy. After the Leadership stimulus cards were collected, the stimulus card Learning was presented. The participants were asked, “What do you think learning means at work?” The sorting exercise described above was then repeated. After sorting, the participants were asked to answer the question, “What is the most important function that learning in the workplace serves for you?” The Learning cards were again collected, and the last themed card Safety and security was presented along with the question, “What do you think the words safety and security mean at work?” The cards with roles/positions were then handed out a third time and the participants completed the sorting exercise. Lastly, the study participants were asked to answer the question “In what ways are safety and security important for you at work?” To conclude, questions were asked about the participants own perceptions about the safety and security they experienced in their working lives and whether they had any further reflections in relation to each theme: leadership, learning and safety/security.

**Individual interviews.** The individual interviews were conducted via telephone (10 interviews) or video conference (three interviews). In both cases, the content was in focus, that is, non-verbal communication was not seek for within this project. Even when video conference where used, only the audio was recorded as basis for future analysis. In recent years, there has been an increased interest in telephone interviews, and/or interviews focusing on content without including non-verbal communication, in the literature (see, e.g., Burnard, 1994; Burke & Miller, 2001; Carr, 1999; Carr & Worth, 2001; Chapple, 1999; Holt, 2010; Lechuga, 2012; Novik, 2008). From a researchers’ perspective, there is several advantages using such alternatives. First of all, using telephone/video interviews expand the pool of potential informants, thus the interviewees can be far away from the researcher (Chapple, 1999; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Sweet, 2002). They also permit the researcher to take
notes unobtrusively, thus allowing for conversations to occur more naturally (Carr & Worth, 2001; Smith, 2005; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Tausig & Freeman, 1988). Since face-to-face interviews most often are either analyzed from transcripts with no information provided on non-verbal communication or overlooks the impact of non-verbal information when analyzing data, decreases the risk for the researcher to mislead the reader as regard what data that have been analyzed (Lechuga, 2012). Another advantage is that there is no risk for the researcher to misunderstand non-verbal gestures and actions since such data is not being collected (Burnard, 1994; Chapple, 1999; Fontana & Frey, 2005). At the same time, the major disadvantage using digital solutions for data collection is the absence of visual and non-verbal cues and body language (Aquilino, 1994; Groves, 1990; Lechuga, 2012; Novik, 2008) and the loss of contextual data (Novik, 2008). However, the analyses in present project are not related to such information.

Information about the individual interviews were given in writing on two occasions in connection with registration of interest. First in the form of information on the project’s website, located at the Mid Sweden University’s domain. To mark their interest in participating, participants had to take a formal stand by checking a box for consent. Informants also had to accept Mid Sweden University’s handling of personal information.

In that context, information on ethical aspects of participation in the project, approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority, were available via a hyperlink. When agreeing on date and time for the interview, the same information on ethical aspects of participation in the project that was given via email. As in the case of the focus group interviews, the informants were asked orally at the beginning of each interview if they had read and understood the content of the information regarding research ethics. At this point, informants were specifically informed that participation was voluntary and that they had the opportunity at any time, without given reason, to cancel participation without any further consequences.

Before each interview, the responsible researcher introduced himself/herself along with the other participating researchers (name and employer/university) and the purpose of the interview and repeated the conditions for participation. All interviewees were then able to ask questions. Before the interview began, all interviewees were given the opportunity to consent or refuse to audio recording. All interviewees consented to audio recording, but due to technical difficulties, one of the interviews was not recorded. During this interview, the responsible researcher instead took thorough notes (direct transcription).

The interview guide formulated for the individual interviews focuses on the participants’ experiences and expectations for their working life and entry into the labor force based on the following themes: background (work experience, form of employment, significance of work), big picture and relationships (starting work, person(s) who are and have been important during the first few years), learning and development, risk and safety/security, leadership and health at work (see Appendix). The analyses performed relate to theoretical perspectives, which emphasize the social contexts for understanding the experience of entering the labor market. This means that no questions are included that concern individual risk behaviors (e.g., alcohol and drug abuse).

**Participants.** Data collection for the focus group interview study lasted from February 4, 2020 to March 2, 2020. Four focus group interviews were conducted with 28 participants in total. All interviews were conducted with students who were enrolled in Business and Administration programs at the high school level. Focus group interviews 1–2 and 4 consisted of students who were studying at a high school and focus group interview 3 consisted of students who were studying in a municipal adult education program (KomVux). All interviewees had experience working in the retail sector through internships in connection with their studies and most had additional experience working substitute and summer jobs. Some interviewees had experience working as substitute staff in the restaurant and entertainment industry.

Data collection included students from schools in three locations in Sweden: two cities with approximately 100,000 inhabitants each and one locality with approximately 20,000 inhabitants.

Data collection in the interview study lasted from January 15, 2020 to June 12, 2020. Thirteen individual in-depth interviews were conducted. All participants lived and worked in Sweden in cities with between 60,000–150,000 inhabitants. Of those interviewed, eleven were women and two were men. Two-thirds of the participants had temporary positions (hourly, substitute, as needed) and one-third had permanent positions. Of those with permanent positions, two worked full-time or close to full-time.

**Data and Analysis**

**Material.** To gain a deeper understanding of the processes, conditions and structures that young people encounter as they enter the workforce, analyses are carried out based on qualitative data. In the two sub-studies, qualitative data were collected as audio recordings and written material. The focus group interviews were recorded using an audio recording app on a mobile phone or computer. The result from each card sorting task was photographed. In addition, notes and memos were taken for each interview. The individual interviews were conducted via the telephone- or video communication app on a computer and were recorded, separately, with audio recording (the phone’s audio recording app). Material obtained through digital data collection (telephone/video interviewing) have in previous studies been found to be rich, detailed and of high quality (Geertz, 1973; Novik, 2008), similar to data collected by face-to-face interviews (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004, p. 115).

After data collection was complete, the audio files were transferred to a secure location for storing data files (at Mid Sweden University). The original audio files were deleted.
from the respective phone used for recording. Then, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts from the focus group interviews and individual interviews as well as notes and memos were compiled after data collection and constitute the main source of data used in the analysis.

Analysis strategy. In line with the overall aim of the project, the main analysis method used is thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke (2006). The project’s study design (data collection and management, analysis and presentation of results) has therefore been planned in accordance with the process for thematic analysis as presented by Nowell et al. (2017). This process is intended to create the conditions to meet the quality criteria defined by Guba and Lincoln (1982, 1994), Lincoln & Guba (1985, 1986; see also Rigor).

Thematic analysis involves a reflexive approach for interpreting data with the intention of identifying patterns and selecting those that are of interest in relation to the purpose of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005). In practical terms, this means that all researchers in the project individually perform several readings of the empirical material. In the present study, this primarily refers to transcripts from the focus group interviews and in-depth interviews as well as notes and memos. Initial interpretations are then discussed based on these individual readings, and the researchers jointly identify initial themes for each analysis. Based on these initial themes, researchers then perform in-depth readings and code the material. In this step, the parts of the material that relate to the initial theme are coded and interpreted. From this organization of data, several themes are then created, each of which refines the understanding of the material in some way.

Once the research group comes to an agreement on a number of themes that are deemed to reliably represent the material in relation to the respective research question, the analysis is verified by revisiting the raw data. This step involves interpreting coded statements in relation to the overall context of each interview. This ensures that the way a quote is interpreted aligns with the context from which it was taken. Once the themes have been examined against the raw data, the process proceeds to re-reading and critical discussions within the research group regarding whether and how the resultant themes give meaning to the data in relation to the research question. During this interpretation and theme creation process, it is also noted whether any item is too thin in the sense that it does not have enough supporting data or whether there is a theme that does not meaningfully contribute to answering the research question. If this is found to be the case, the theme in question is removed from the analysis.

Once the theme creation process is completed, the respective theme and associated data are interpreted in relation to similarities and differences both within and between themes. After this final step has been completed, the research group makes a joint decision on a final analysis, which uses themes and underlying themes to describe and interpret the material in relation to the specific purpose of each individual analysis.

Ethics

Prior to data collection, the project underwent an ethics review by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority, which did not identify any ethical risks associated with the project (registration number: 2019-03885). To create the best possible conditions in terms of research ethics, data collection and the handling of data in the project are based on the Swedish Research Council’s (Vetenskapsrådet) research ethics guidelines (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017).

Ethics risk assessment. The data collection methods used in the project have not been such that they could present any obvious risks of serious discomfort for participants. Prior to commencing data collection, we assessed that the project’s scientific contribution and contribution to society exceeded any risks that participation in the study may entail for the interviewees. However, prior to data collection, minor ethical risks related to conducting interviews and publishing research results were identified.

The candidness and familiarity that can arise between researcher and participant when conducting interviews can mean that participants share narratives that they find painful, embarrassing and/or evoke difficult memories. Regardless of the content of the interviews, participation in the interviews may entail psychological or social risks, namely, participants may become upset/anxious or feel insulted/offended in conversations that relate to the participant’s expectations of leadership, learning and/or insecurities in their working lives. We therefore set out to create the best conditions possible for participants to assess what data collection entailed and what inclusion in the study would mean for them. Despite the measures taken to assure informed consent, it is difficult to foresee what narratives will arise in conversations between participants and researchers. There is also a risk that after publication of the research results, participants may experience emotional distress concerning what is written about them. Even though pseudonyms are used, and only general descriptions are given, which are intended to make it impossible to trace data back to an individual, results can be (mis)perceived as identifying of an individual and cause discomfort. The ability to engage in dialogue with researchers about questions and issues that arise due to participation can also have a positive impact on participants.

To minimize the identified ethics risks, special measures have been taken in the recruitment of participants, the design of the interview guides and the handling of the collected material. Participants were recruited through advertisements on social media and registration via an information page on the university’s website, which meant that there was no personal contact between researchers and potential participants before the informed consent information had been received. Also, there were no relationships between researchers and
participants other than the strict professional relationship described in the study.

Data collection in the present project concerns the individual in his or her profession, i.e., in the role of employee in the retail sector. No questions were asked with the intention of accessing private and/or sensitive personal data or personal data about criminal offenses. When drawing up interview guides for the focus group interviews (sub-study I) and individual interviews (sub-study II), special importance was given to clarifying what information was relevant to the scope of the interviews. In the process of handling the research material after the completion of data collection, the focus group interviews were assigned identification numbers (1–4) and the interviewees who participated in individual interviews have been assigned pseudonym’s taken from Statistics Sweden’s name database (the most common names in 2019). During data collection, no questions were asked regarding names and/or social security numbers due to research ethics. Further, using telephone/video for the individual interviews might have decreased the ethical risks, thus the relative anonymity during the interview process permits increased privacy and the sense of safety (Carr & Worth, 2001; McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004) and allows interviewees to “remain on their own turf” (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006, p. 399).

The risks reported above apply to all persons included in the study, both in the data collection phase during focus group interviews (sub-study I) and the in-depth interviews (sub-study II). However, the data collection methods used in the study are such that it is unlikely that anyone other than the interviewees can be affected. The methods used in the study are not deemed to harm or benefit persons or groups of people who did not participate as interviewees; however, the project aims to make a positive contribution to the lives of other individuals who did not participate in the project, specifically, to contribute to future health promotion efforts to strengthen the conditions for young adults to maintain a sustainable working life in the retail sector.

Rigor

The present project set out to gain a deeper insight into the processes, conditions and structures that young people encounter as they enter the workforce. The project is therefore based on qualitative data, which is collected through focus group interviews and individual interviews with young adults currently working in the retail sector. This study design aims to obtain rich and qualitatively detailed descriptions, so-called thick descriptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 75), rather than presenting representative results for generalization and falsification/verification of hypotheses. The project thus proceeds from the assumption that it is impossible to reach an absolute, value-free description of the social reality being studied. This view is important for determining what criteria will be used to evaluate the quality of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Against this background, what follows is a discussion of the methods and approach used in the study based on the quality criteria that is specifically relevant for qualitative research within a naturalistic paradigm, namely authenticity and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The first concept, trustworthiness, is linked to the following aspects: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is achieved when the research results are recognized and accepted by interviewees and/or other recipients with insight into and/or knowledge of the applicable context. In addition to following all applicable research ethics guidelines (Swedish Research Council 2017), we also apply researcher triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This means that we use peer debriefing in all phases of the project, whereby all participating researchers are involved from the planning stage to data collection and analysis, and specific project activities are designed for this purpose. An example of the latter is the method and analysis seminars carried out within the framework of the project.

To ensure it is possible to assess the transferability of the results, i.e., whether the project results can be transferred to another similar environment, we strive to provide rich and qualitative descriptions of results and analysis as well as of the contextual factors that are characteristic of young people’s working lives (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). This is in line with the concept of analytical generalization, which means that results and conclusions can be used as a starting point for reflection in relation to other similar contexts and settings (Yin, 1994). For an assessment of “...the soundness of the generalization claim” (Kvale, 1996, p. 233) to be possible, clear “evidence” is needed that supports the analysis and conclusions and the researcher(s) must present explicit arguments (Kvale, 1996).

To ensure dependability, i.e., the opportunity for outside parties to review the research process in its entirety, we create audit trails as described by Nowell et al. (2017) to document the various phases of the project and the decisions that are made during the process while striving to ensure a reflexive approach. A concrete example of the latter is that after each interview, we write analytical reflections (memos) and jointly discuss these. We also conduct analysis seminars to promote reflection and discussion around the empirical material and engage in continuous analysis by jointly addressing critical questions and clarifying our personal experiences and prior knowledge.

Finally, we strive to ensure the confirmability of study results by clearly showing how the interpretation and analysis are based on the empirical material, for example, by presenting detailed quotes that allow the reader to concretely review and evaluate the work.

As it pertains to the criteria for trustworthiness presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985), we proceed according to the belief that these are primarily linked to an action-oriented research approach (cf. Bryman, 2011). As the present project does not reflect this type of approach, we consider these criteria to be less relevant to our discussion. Nevertheless, we believe that
the (popular science) publications and dissemination activities planned within the framework of the project offer an opportunity to help participants understand their own social situation (ontological authenticity) and that these activities provide opportunities to contribute to change (catalytic authenticity; Bryman, 2011, p. 357).

Discussion

Reflections on Data Collection During the Ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic

On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. To reduce the spread of infection, this declaration was followed by a range of restrictions, including, for example, recommendations to avoid domestic travel and face-to-face meetings. The advent of the pandemic also had an impact on the content of the data collected within the framework of this project.

As a result of the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s recommendations to avoid domestic travel, to avoid crowds and the government’s decision to move upper secondary education to a distance learning model, it became difficult to conduct further focus group interviews. This means that fewer focus group interviews were conducted than were originally planned. Further, due to the government’s recommendations to avoid face-to-face meetings, all individual interviews were conducted by telephone. This means, to a certain extent, that the material is characterized by aspects related to the coronavirus and/or the consequences of the ongoing pandemic. The pandemic was not explicitly raised in all interviews, but issues relating to the coronavirus were central in some interviews. Among the short-term consequences of the pandemic that were highlighted were changed working conditions, with more/fewer customers during the initial outbreak of the pandemic. Some interviewees also reported that their work was affected, for example, in terms of the way they interact with customers while maintaining physical distance. Some interviewees report feeling anxiety about being infected with the coronavirus at work. There were also long-term consequences associated with the pandemic. For example, one of the interviewees lost his/her (substitute) job in the retail sector due to the impact the pandemic had on the company and another respondent reported concern about the risk of termination as a result of the coronavirus, which became a central aspect of the collected material.

In reviewing the results and interpretation we present here, it is important to consider that data collection was carried out during the ongoing spread of the coronavirus, which may be significant to what interviewees highlighted in the interviews, but also to what was not discussed in the interviews. It may be the case that the increased focus on the coronavirus meant that other issues that are important to young adults as they establish themselves in the labor market were overshadowed. It is possible that if the interviews had been conducted during a period not marked by the presence of the coronavirus pandemic, the study would have yielded different analytical material as a basis for analysis.

Concluding Reflection

In the protocol presented here, we have described the background and method in the project entitled “A sustainable working life for young adults—leadership, learning and insecurity.” This project aims to provide increased knowledge about young people’s working lives and to contribute proposals for concrete measures and initiatives that can help strengthen the conditions for young adults, so that they can get a healthy start as they enter the workforce and maintain a sustainable working life. To achieve these aims, the present project is based on a health promotion perspective. This means that future analyses in the project will take their starting point from the health promotion perspective (Eriksson & Lindström, 2008; Rootman et al., 2001; WHO, 1986). This perspective means that all activities that enable and support health in society and working life are included. Health promotion activities can therefore consist of policies, supportive environments, enhanced social measures, support through occupational health services and individual support (Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986). From a health promotion perspective, it is particularly important to focus on the initial years of an individual’s working life—as we have done in the present study—in order to create the right conditions for a sustainable working life over the long term. The need for additional research and more in-depth research based on the health promotion perspective has been emphasized by, for example, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2012) and the Nordic Council of Ministers (Kines et al., 2013). The hope is that the present project will help strengthen this body of research and help support the conditions for young adults to establish and maintain a sustainable working life.

Appendix: Full Copy of Interview Schedule

Interview Guide, Sub-Study I

Introduction

- Information for informed consent
- Brief work background
- Tell us briefly about your work experience? (Where? Form of employment? When/entry date?)
- How important is work in your life right now?
- How important would you like work to be in your life?

Relationships

Experiences

- What was it like for you when you first started working?
- Tell us a little about the people who are/have been important to you at work during your first years at work?
Expectations
– If you think about how things are right now and what you have experienced, how would you have liked things to have been when you started working?

Learning
Experiences
– What does learning mean for you at work?
– Did you learn anything new because you started working?
– Do you learn anything new in your day-to-day work? What? How? Does it mean you are allowed to develop, i.e. learn new things/gain new perspectives?
– Can you give an example of a situation that you associate with learning and/or development?
– Is there anything in the way your work is organized (arranged/ set up) that supports or prevents your learning?
– Which person/people (in the workplace) are important for your learning?
– How do they help? (e.g., who is involved in that process and in what ways do they contribute to your learning?)

Expectations
– If, for a moment, you disregard how things are right now and your past experiences and instead focus on the future, what do you hope to learn in your future working life (linked to work and work tasks/as a person)?
– Who do you want to contribute to your learning in your future working life and what do you want them to contribute?

Risk and Safety/Security
Experiences
– What do you think of when I say the word “risk?”
– What does risk and safety/security mean for you at work?
– Do you experience any specific situations that make you feel insecure/unsafe and/or risks in your work? (Possible follow-up questions: Can you give a specific example of a situation where you felt unsafe/insecure? Can you think of any examples of a risky, insecure or unsafe situation that has been cleared up? How was that situation resolved? Who was involved in that process as support?)
– Who is involved when unsafe situations/risks/insecurities arise? How?
– Is there anything in particular or any person/people that make you feel safe/secure at work? (Possible follow-up questions: Do you have an example of a situation? Which person/people are important for you to feel safe/secure at work? How do these people contribute to your feelings of safety/security?)

Leadership
Experiences
– What does leadership mean to you?
– Can you give an example of a situation that you associate with leadership?
– Which people in your workplace were part of the situation/context that you describe as leadership?
– How did they contribute to leadership/the exercise of leadership?
– Which people in your workplace are the most important for guiding/leading you in your work?

Expectations
– If, for a moment, you disregard how things are right now and your past experiences and instead focus on the future, how would you like members of leadership to act toward you in your future working life, if you could choose anything you want?
– What are the goals in your workplace? (Your goals? The organization’s goals?)

Health Promotion
Experiences
– How do you feel (physically and mentally) in relation to your work? (health)
– Who is important for you to feel good (physically and mentally) at work? (health promotion)

Expectations
– If you think about how things are right now and your past experiences, what conditions would you hope for in order to be able to feel really good (physically, mentally) at work?

Conclusion
– Does anything else come to mind about your initial period at work? What exactly?

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding
The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The research reported was supported by a grant from AFA Försäkring, Sweden, through the project named “Ett hållbart arbetsliv för unga vuxna” [A sustainable working life for young adults].
References

Alvesson, M., & Spicer, A. (2012). Critical leadership studies: The case for critical performativity. *Human Relations, 65*(3), 367–390.

Antonovsky, A. (1996). The salutogenic model as a theory to guide health promotion. *Social Science and Medicine, 36*(6), 725–733.

Arbetsmiljöverket. (2001). *Systematiskt arbetsmiljöarbete. Arbetsmiljöverkets föreskrifter om systematiskt arbetsmiljöarbete och allmänna råd om tillämpningen av föreskrifterna* [Systematic work environment strategies. The Swedish Work Environment Authority’s regulations on systematic work environment strategies and general advice on the application of the regulations] (AFS 2001:1).

Arbetsmiljöverket. (2015). *Organisatorisk och social arbetsmiljö. Arbetsmiljöverkets föreskrifter om organisatorisk och social arbetsmiljö samt allmänna råd om tillämpningen av föreskrifterna* [Organizational and social work environment strategies. The Swedish Work Environment Authority’s regulations on organizational and social work environment as well as general advice on the application of the regulations] (AFS 2015:4).

Arnett, J. J. (2014). *Emerging adulthood*. Oxford University Press.

Aquino, W. S. (1994). Interview mode effects in surveys of drug and alcohol use: A field experiment. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 58*(2), 210–240. https://doi.org/10.1086/269419

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bryman, A. (2011). *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder* [Methods in social science]. Liber.

Burke, L. A., & Miller, M. K. (2001). Phone interviewing as a means of data collection: Lessons learned and practical recommendations. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 2*(2), Article 7. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-2.2.959

Burnard, P. (1994). The telephone interview as a data collection method. *Nurse Education Today, 14*(1), 67–72.

Camps, J., & Rodriguez, H. (2011). Transformational leadership, learning, and employability: Effects on performance among faculty members. *Personnel Review, 40*(4), 423–442.

Carr, E. C. (1999). Talking on the telephone with people who have experienced pain in hospital: Clinical audit or research? *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 29*(1), 194–200.

Carr, E. C., & Worth, A. (2001). The use of the telephone interview for research. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 6*(1), 511–524.

Chapple, A. (1999). The use of telephone interviewing for qualitative research. *Nurse Researcher, 6*(3), 85–93.

De Hauw, S., & De Vos, A. (2010). Millennials’ career perspective and psychological contract expectations: Does the recession lead to lowered expectations? *Journal of Business and Psychology, 25*(2), 293–302.

Ellström, P.-E. (1992). *Kompetens, utbildning och lärande i arbetslivet. Problem, begrepp och teoretiska perspektiv* [Skills, education and learning in working life. Problems, concepts and theoretical perspectives]. Publica.

Ellström, P.-E. (2002). Lärande—i spänningsfältet mellan productionens och utvecklingens logik [Learning—in the field of tension between the logic of production and development]. In I. L. Abrahamsson, T. Björkman, P.-E. Ellström, K. Abrahamsson, & J. Johansson (Red.), *Utbildning, kompetens och arbete* [Education, skills and work] (pp. 335–353). Studentlitteratur.

Eriksson, M., & Lindström, B. (2008). A salutogenic interpretation of the Ottawa charter. *Health Promotion International, 23*(2), 190–199. https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/dan014

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. (2012). *Health promotion among young workers: A summary of good practice cases* (Facts Issue 101). https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/fact-sheet-101-health-promotion-among-young-workers-summary-good-practice-cases/view

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 695–727). Sage.

Försäkringskassan. (2014). *Socialförsäkringsrapport 2014:4. Sjukfrånvaro i psykiska diagnoser* [Social insurance report 2014:4. Sick leave in mental diagnoses]. https://www.forsakringsskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/03dcfe19-c989-4f46-a7f5-760d573b8d1f/socialforsakringsrapport_2014_04.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Försäkringskassan. (2017). *Socialförsäkringsrapport 2017:13. Sjukfrånvarons utveckling 2017. Sjuk- och rehabiliteringspenning* [Social insurance report 2017:13. Development of sick leave 2017. Sickness and rehabilitation allowance]. https://www.forsakringsskassan.se/wps/wcm/connect/1596d32b-7ff7-4811-8215-d90cb9ce2f38d/sjukfranvarons-utveckling-2017-socialforsakringsrapport-2017-13.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&VID=

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures* (pp. 311–323). Basic Books.

Gillberg, G. (2010). *Individualiserings villkor: Unga vuxnas föreställningar om arbete och självförverkligande* [The terms of individualization: Young adults’ notions of work and self-realization]. University of Gothenburg.

Graen, G. B., & Uhlen-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 6*(2), 219–247.

Groves, R. M. (1990). Theories and methods of telephone surveys. *Annual Review of Sociology, 16*(1), 221–240. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.16.080190.001253

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1982). Epistemological and methodological bases of naturalistic inquiry. *Educational Communications and Technology Journal, 30*(4), 233–252.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 101–117). Sage.

Hogg, M. A. (2001). A social identity theory of leadership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 5*(1), 184–200.

Holt, A. (2010). Using the telephone for narrative inquiry: A research note. *Qualitative Research, 10*(1), 113–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109348686

Karasek, R., & Theorell, T. (1990). *Healthy work: Stress, productivity and the reconstruction of working life*. Basic Books.
Kines, P., Framke, E., Salmi, A., & Bengtzen, E. (2013). Young workers’ occupational safety and health risks in the Nordic countries (Report TemaNord 2013:569). Nordic Council of Ministers. ISBN: 978-92-2615-5.

Koivisto, P., Vuori, J., & Vinokur, A. D. (2010). Transition to work: Effects of preparedness and goal construction on employment and depressive symptoms. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 20(4), 869–892.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research* interviewing. Sage.

Lechuga, V. M. (2012). Exploring culture from a distance: The utility of telephone interviews in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 25(3), 251–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2010.529853

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. In D. Williams (Ed.), *New directions for program evaluation* (Vol. 30, pp. 73–84). Jossey-Bass.

Lindström, B., & Eriksson, M. (2010). The hitchhiker’s guide to salutogenesis: Salutogenic pathways to health promotion (Research report, 2010:2). Folkhälsan Research Center.

Lyons, S., & Kuron, L. (2014). Generational differences in the workplace: A review of the evidence and directions for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 35(S1), S139–S157.

McCoyd, J. L., & Kerson, T. S. (2006). Conducting intensive interviews using email: A serendipitous comparative opportunity. *Qualitative Social Work*, 5(3), 389–406.

Miller, V. D., & Jablin, F. M. (1991). Information seeking during organizational entry. *Academy of Management Review*, 16(1), 92–120. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1991.4278997

Montano, D., Reeske, A., Franke, F., & Häffmeier, J. (2017). Leadership, followers’ mental health and job performance in organizations: A comprehensive meta-analysis from an occupational health perspective. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(3), 327–350.

Novik, G. (2008). Is there bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research? *Research in Nursing and Health*, 31(4), 391–398.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Noules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Parding, K., & Berg Jansson, A. (2018). Conditions for workplace learning in professional work. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 30(2), 108–120.

Rootman, I., Goodstadt, M., Potvin, L., & Springett, J. (2001). A framework for health promotion evaluation. In I. Rootman, M. Goodstadt, B. Hyndman, D. V. McQueen, L. Potvin, J. Springett, & E. Ziglio (Eds.), *Evaluation in health promotion: Principles and perspectives*. WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Siegrist, J. (1996). Adverse health effects of high-effort/low-reward conditions. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 1(1), 27.

Smith, E. M. (2005). Telephone interviewing in healthcare research: A summary of the evidence. *Nurse Researcher*, 12(3), 32–41.

Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: A research note. *Qualitative Research*, 4(1), 107–118.

Sweet, L. (2002). Telephone interviewing: Is it compatible with interpretative phenomenological research? *Contemporary Nurse*, 12(1), 58–63. https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.12.1.58

Tausig, J. E., & Freeman, E. W. (1988). The next best thing to being there: Conducting the clinical research interview by telephone. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 58(3), 418–427.

Tuckett, A. G. (2005). Applying thematic analysis theory to practice: A researcher’s experiences. *Contemporary Nurse*, 19(1–2), 75–87. https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.19.1-2.75

Tvetenskaprådet. (2017). *God forskningssed* [Good research practice]. https://www.vr.se/download/18.2412c5311624176023d25b05/1555332112063/God-forskningssed_VR_2017.pdf

Wallo, A. (2008). The leader as a facilitator of learning at work: A study of learning oriented leadership in two industrial firms. Linköpings universitet.

World Health Organization. (1986). *The Ottawa charter for health promotion*. WHO Regional Office for Europe.

Yin, R. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage.

Zhao, C., Liu, Y., & Gao, Z. (2016). An identification perspective of servant leadership’s effects. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 31(5), 898–913.