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Investigating the Impact of Employee Engagement on Employee Performance. A Case of a Gauteng- Based Call-Centre.

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DECLARATION

I, Khodani Phillip Tshikotshi, do hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and that its contents are only the result of the work, experience, readings and research I have conducted and that all citations stated in this thesis have been acknowledged.

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I dedicate this to my children Bonofulu, Zoe and Adah and may they be inspired to reach even greater heights in life.

ABSTRACT

Though the importance of employee engagement concept in enhancing staff performance is well documented, there is currently a dearth of information regarding its impact within South Africa's call centre industry. The aim of this study was, therefore, to investigate the impact of employee engagement on employee performance at a Gauteng-based call-centre company. The study was necessary in that its findings could aid in the conceptualization, development and implementation of context-specific policies and strategies aimed at enhancing employee engagement within the call centre industry. Such could lead to improved employee motivation, build cohesion between company leadership and employees, enhance staff retention and improve company productivity.

A quantitative research approach was adopted to determine the level of employee engagement within the sampled company. A self-administered questionnaire was given to 167, randomly selected participants to complete. Collected data through this instrument was analysed to determine the following: (i), the extent of employee engagement within the sampled company, (ii) participants' perceptions on the impact of employee engagement in staff performance.

The results of this study revealed that employee engagement has positive impact on employee performance. Results further revealed that engaged employees display positive attitudes towards their work, are highly motivated, look forward to coming to work, are proactive, are creative, innovative and are result-driven.

The study recommends that:

- Employee engagement be an inclusive process where all employees are involved regardless of their positions and that management must create a safe platform where employees freely express their views during engagements without fear of reprisal.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BPO	Business Process Outsourcing	Business process outsourcing (BPO) is a business practice wherein an institution contracts with an outside service provider to carry out an important business function or task.
USA	United States of America	The United States of America is the fourth largest country in the world in area after Russia, Canada and China. The country has a population of more than 333 million people and has one of the largest economies in the world
IES	Institute for Employment Studies	IES is an independent, apolitical, international centre of research and consultancy in employment policy and human resource issues
SHRM	Society for Human Resources Management	The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is an organization whose mission includes educating and informing Human Resource officials, providing them networking opportunities and advancing the ever-changing profession.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

This introductory chapter introduces the reader to the study by firstly providing a brief background on the subject under investigation. Secondly, the chapter outlines the research problem which necessitated the carrying out of this study. The chapter further outlines the aims and objectives that the study sought to achieve as well as the research questions that it aimed to answer. The chapter further describes the significance of the study, justifying why there was a need for this study to be carried out. A conclusion, giving a summary of the entire chapter is also presented.

1.2. Background of the study

Engagement is considered a key concept in research and management practices. Its associations with numerous factors, such as job performance (Inamizu & Makishima, 2018). Engagement is considered a key concept in research and management practices. Its associations with numerous factors, such as job performance (Inamizu & Makishima, 2018). Engagement is considered a key concept in research and management practices. Its associations with numerous factors, such as job performance (Inamizu & Makishima, 2018).

The employee engagement concept has been a subject of interest amongst the organizational development, management, and industrial psychology fields for more than three decades (Jeung, 2011; Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2013; Mercurio, 2015). The concept was introduced in the 1990s by Industrial Psychologist, William Kahn, a professor of organizational behavior at Boston University's Questrom School of Business. Kahn implore managers to, "approach employees as true partners, involving them in continuous dialogues and processes about how to design and alter their roles, tasks and working relationships – which means that leaders need to make it safe enough for employees to speak openly of their experiences at work" (Burjek. 2015: unnumbered). The concept has received a lot of attention from both scholars and researchers alike over the past three decades as its benefits on staff performance became evident (Kortmann, Gelhard, Zimmermann, Piller, 2014 and Zondo 2018). It is estimated that improvement in employee engagement could result in about 21% increase in organisational profitability (Zondo, 2020).

These findings are congruent with those of early studies (Harter, Schidt, Agrawal, & Plowman, 2013 and Farouk, 2014). In a study titled, “The relationship between engagement at work and organizational outcomes”, Harter, *et al* (2013) found that actively engaging employees significantly enhanced their work performance. On the other hand, Farouk (2014) found that actively engaged employees are twice likely to be successful in their jobs when compared to their disengaged counterparts.

1.3. The research problem

Despite the availability of evidence showing the impact that employee engagement has on the employees' performance, existing figures reveal that South Africa corporations continue to perform dismally as far as employee engagement is concerned. A 2017 global survey on the state of global workplace reveal that a meagre 15% of the country's workforce are actively engaged by their employers (Gallup, 2017). The problem with disengaged employees is that it has severe ramifications for companies' productivity and profit margins. A 2013 survey by Gallup revealed that disengaged employees have 37% higher absenteeism, 18% lower productivity and 15% lower profitability as compared to their engaged counterparts (Gallup, 2013). The implications of employee disengagement are not only limited to companies but extends to the countries' economy as well. In the United States of America (USA) statistics reveal that corporations lose about \$350 billion annually as a consequence of disengaged employees (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). An investigation by Gallup estimate that the South African's economy could be losing as much as R700 billion in lost revenue annually as a consequence of effects of disengaged employees (Gallup, 2017). This is regrettable for a country with an economy that has literally collapsed and in desperate need for motivated workforce to help it get back to its feet. Despite the graveness of the situation, there is currently a dearth of information on the extent to which the country's private sector engages with its employees and the implications thereof. The same observation was made by Zondo (2020). Lack of information means companies continue to rely on findings from studies done in other countries for guidance and strategies to adopt. The challenge is that such strategies might not be applicable to South African-based companies due to different dynamics and environments under which they operate.

1.4. Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of employee engagement on employee performance at a Gauteng-based call-centre company.

1.5. Research objectives

- To identify the current employee engagement levels at a Gauteng-based call-centre company.
- To determine the effect of employee engagement on employee performance at a Gauteng-based call-centre company.
- To make recommendations to call-centre companies on strategies that they can employ to enhance employee engagement.

1.6. Research questions

- What are the current employee engagement levels at a Gauteng-based call-centre company.
- What is the effect of employee engagement on employee performance at a Gauteng-based call-centre company.
- What are some of the strategies that call-centre companies can employ to enhance employee engagement?

1.7. Significance of the study

The private sector plays multifaceted role in any country. In South Africa, the sector injects billions of rand into the country's economy annually through business taxes. This is in addition to being the source of employment for millions of the country's citizens.

South Africa is considered one of the most attractive Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) location in the world, based on its reputation as a reliable, cost effective, and high-quality destination for outsourced business services. The overall South African BPO market is valued at \$461 million (Mckinsey & Company,2020). This growth is credited to the success of the call centre industry in South Africa.

Many international countries are looking to South Africa for call centre solutions which in turn injects millions of rand in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The above are a clear indication of the critical role that the sector plays in the country's economic growth. Employees play a pivotal role in ensuring that companies within the sector fulfil these above-mentioned obligations while at the same making profit in a sustainable manner. It is

therefore, critical that companies continuously implement strategies geared at ensuring that their employees always perform at their optimal level. It was earlier shown how employee engagement plays a significant role in enhancing employee performance. There is, therefore, a need for studies of this nature whose findings are likely to conscientise companies on the significance of employee engagement and subsequently guide them on how to best implement their employee engagement strategies.

1.8. Format of the study

- Chapter 1 – Introduction and background: the chapter gives background of the study, outlines the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions and its significance amongst others.
- Chapter 2 - Literature Review: the second chapter gives a detailed description of the existing literature review related to the topic and scholarly views on the subject under investigation.
- Chapter 3 – Research Methodology: gives an overview of the procedure used in conducting this study. This comprises its design, study area, its populace as well as the sample and sampling procedure used. Data collection and data analysis methods are also outlined in this chapter. Ethical concerns observed during the study are also presented.
- Chapter 4 – Results: the chapter outlines the presentations and discussions of the results.
- Chapter 5 – Summary of results, conclusions and recommendation: the final chapter outlines the summary of results, conclusions and commendations.

1.9. Conclusion

Background to the study was outlined in this chapter, giving the reader a general idea on the present state of the subject under investigation. The chapter also included the following aspects: statement of the problem that necessitated this study, motivation and the importance of the study as well as the objectives that the study aimed to achieve. The chapter further covered the definitions of key concepts relating to the study. The subsequent chapter reviews the existing literature in relation to the current study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Employee engagement has been a subject of interest for many scholars with interest in the human resources sector. The aim of this chapter is to review the existing literature relating to the role of employee engagement in companies. Some of the topics covered include examination of the historical development of the construct of employee engagement

The success of a company and the hunt for quality production of goods and services depend not only on how the company makes the most out of human competences, but also on how it stimulates commitment in the employees. Hence, for a company to achieve excellence in its daily activities, it must create an environment that promotes employee commitment. Committed workers build a sturdy work environment, which is significant for organisational steadiness. Furthermore, some of the positive outcomes a company might benefit from as a result of its committed employees are an increase in productivity, a reduced turnover rate and improved organisational citizenship behaviour. However, it is unlikely to achieve total commitment to an organisation by employees. This chapter will, therefore, discuss the empirical and theoretical literature on organisational commitment, the models of commitment, the developing stages as well as its significance and challenges.

2.2. Background

The emergence of the “employee engagement” concept is attributed William Kahn who is still considered as its founding father. However, the concept remained relatively unknown within the human resource management field until it appeared an article by International Employment Studies (IES) titled ‘*From People to Profits, the HR link to the service-profit chain*’ appeared in an academic journal in 1990 (Barber, Hayday and Bevan, 1990). The paper demonstrated how employee attitudes and behaviour could improve customer retention and consequently sales performance (Barber et al, 1990). Authors such as Caffman and Harter (1998) became the first to advocate for the implementation of the concept in organization. Their focus was mainly on viewing employee engagement as a leading business indicator and recommended that organizations should start identifying and studying areas of success within themselves (Caffman

and Harter, 1998). Since then, the implementation of the concept, “employee engagement” has gained momentum amongst human resources practitioners and consultants (Shuck and Wollard, 2010).

2.3. The role of Employee engagement: World’s perspective

In the United States of America employee engagements is identified as one of the major contributors to company’s success. As such, many of the country’s companies have since adopted it as one of the many tools used to enhance employee productivity. Consequently, for a decade the country experienced an upward trajectory in terms of employee engagement as more and more employers embraced the concept (Harter, 2022). However, this trajectory seems to have changed somewhat with figures showing that the country has experienced a slump in engaged employees over the past few years. Statistics by Gallup reveal that employee engagement dropped by 2% from 36% in 2020 to 34% in 2021. The figures further dropped down to 32 % in early 2022 (Harter, 2022).

In China, findings reveal that employee engagement is often shaped by a variety of several factors. This includes financial rewards and participation in key organizational decisions, job autonomy and performance feedback (Jen, 2019). Despite this, previous figures reveal that as with the USA, the country has been experiencing a gradual decline in the levels of employee engagement over the past decade. After initially seeing a significant increase in engagements from 68.20% in 2012-2013 financial year to 78.45% in 2014-2015, the country to observe a downward trajectory in the years that follow. For instance, levels of engagement dropped to 65.25% in 2016-2017 period. This was followed by another drop to 62.46% during the 2018-2019 period (Daxue Consulting, 2020). This consistent decline could be attributed to factors such as companies’ unwillingness to invest in employees and cultural differences. For instance, it was found that foreign companies operating in China were unwilling to invest time and resources that are geared at improving the satisfaction levels amongst their employees. Cultural differences on how companies in China are organized and operated in China (Hedley, 2022).

2.4. The role of employee engagements: African’s perspective

Several studies have been carried out to determine the role of employee engagement amongst employees within individual countries of the African continent. In Ghana, findings reveal that support cultures play a significant role in public sector employees feeling actively engaged (Brenyah and Obuobisa-Darko, 2017). On the contrary, power culture was found to have negative

consequences on employee engagement (Brenyah and Obuobisa-Darko, 2017). Power culture is defined as a type of culture where the central leader wields power and control over his subordinates. Leaders who subscribe to this culture often operates informally and are guided by few rules and procedures (Brenyah, 2017). The challenge with this culture is that subordinates in the company are more likely to accept as normal the unequal distribution of power within the organization (Cooper, 1983). As such, subordinates tend to accept the leader's decisions without any questions. The challenge with this culture is that employees often feel disengaged as the leader makes decisions without consultations for this reason that these authors recommend that for the Ghanaian public sector to enhance employee engagement, it should focus on promoting support culture over power culture.

2.5. The role of employee engagement: South African's perspective

In South Africa, the Gallup 2016 survey indicated that 9% of the South African workforce is actively engaged. South Africa's decline in labor productivity in the manufacturing sector is a cause for concern. Organizations are faced with the challenge of promoting innovative productivity improvement among employees (Zondo, 2018). Research done in the South African landscape suggests that there is a direct link between performance management, productivity and employee engagement.

Govender and Bussin (2020) concluded that a relationship exists between performance management and employee engagement and an increase in the level of employee engagement would result in an increase in performance. Their study further found that employees were not satisfied with the way in which they performance was managed, and a greater level of employee engagement is required. In their recommendation, they emphasized that it is imperative that organizations operating within South Africa actively seek initiatives that will meet employee expectations in terms of managing performance and employee engagement.

2.6. Definitions of concepts

The evolution of the employee engagement concept over the years has led to the coining of different definitions as researchers and practitioners alike attempt to put it into context. However, for the purpose of this assignment the following definitions are adopted:

Engagement

Schaufeli et al. (2002:74) define engagement “as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption.”

Wellins and Concelman (2005) defined the term “engagement” as that illusive force that propels employees to perform at their optimum level.

Engagement is often delineated in the management literature as a ‘positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind, which is categorised by vigour, dedication and absorption’ (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker, 2002:74).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is defined as “the degree to which workers feel job satisfaction and an emotional connection to the success of their business, resulting in improved productivity, innovation and retention” (Abraham, 2012).

Saks (2006:602) defined employee engagement as “a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performance”.

Tanwar (2017:51) views employee engagement as a relationship between the employee and the enterprise. An engaged employee is the one who is entirely engrossed in and ardent in their job, and so take constructive action to further the reputation and objectives of the organizations. The construct employee engagement is built on the foundation of concepts like organization citizenship behavior, employee commitment, and job satisfaction.

2.7. Theories of employee engagement

One of the most common concepts relating to employee engagement is the engagement concept introduced by William Khan in 1990. According to Khan (1990) people’s ability to either engage or disengage is determined by three psychological conditions. These conditions are, namely, psychological safety, psychological meaningfulness, and psychological (Khan, 1990). It is his premise that “people express or withdraw and defend their preferred selves on the basis of their psychological experiences of self-in-role” (Khan, 1990:702). He argued that employees within a company seem to unconsciously ask them three critical questions in every situation they find

themselves in. These questions are: (i) “How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance?” (ii) “How safe is it to do so?”, and (iii) How available am I to do so?” Khan argues that answers to these questions will determine whether people engage or not (Khan, 1990). Khan further contends that employees vary their personal engagements based on their perceptions of the benefits, meaningfulness, guarantees and safety they perceive in situations (Khan, 1990). The relevance of Khan’s three conditions to employee engagement was later collaborated by others authors (Byrne, 2015 and May, Gilson and Harter, 2004). Some of these authors argue that these conditions have the ability to influence a range of antecedent factors on engagement. For instance, Byrne (2015) found that excessive negative politics within the organization were most likely to prevent one’s psychological safety. His argument is that organizational politics are likely to place more focus on certain individual employees at the expense of other employees. This in turn threatens the psychological safety of those who feel neglected (Byrne, 2015).

2.8. Factors contributing to employee engagements

Several contributory factors to employee engagement have been identified. Research has identified the following as some of the factors contributing to employee engagement:

2.8.1. Leadership

Several research conducted confirm that there is a direct link between leadership and employee engagement. Leadership is the ability of a leader to induce their subordinates with respect, loyalty, and cooperation (Mkheimer, 2018). Employees who feel that they are disrespected or not cared for by their leaders are most likely to be disengaged. Leadership style has become the most influential factor towards the employee engagement followed by work-life balance, communication and pay and benefits (Ganesan et al., 2017). In addition, the behavior of a leader will encourage the motivation of employees to work effectively and play important roles in developing a positive working environment (Dari, Jabeen, and Papastathopoulos, 2018).

2.8.2. Compensation

Compensation can be defined as all forms of financial returns that an employee receives as rewards through an employment relationship (Karia and Omari, 2017). Employees who are poorly compensated are most vulnerable to low levels of engagement. The previous studies have proven that compensation could increase the engagement between employee and organization if

employees received pay according to their competencies and performance (Feraro-Banta and Shaikh, 2017)

2.8.3. Organizational culture

Organizational culture can be defined as a value, and assumptions about the company among the employees that can drive employees to perform well in their jobs (Pepra-mensah and Kyeremeh, 2018). Organizational culture can also be described as organization's expectation, philosophy and value that will guide the employee attitudes, and it will express the employee self-image, and interaction with other people regarding the future outlook (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018). Employees who do not associate themselves with the company's values and culture are vulnerable to low levels of engagement. Further, organizational culture also has a positive association with employee engagement in the organization as a healthy corporate culture will lead to the high level of commitment as their role in their work (Pepra-mensah and Kyeremeh, 2018). Several organizational cultural practices have been identified as key catalysts to effective employment engagement practices. The Following are some of the factors as identified by Manor and Hassan (2016):

2.8.3.1. Teamwork and Collaboration

Mansoor and Hassan (2016) found that good teamwork enhances employee engagement within an institution. They found that if implemented well, good teamwork is likely to yield positive results on aspects such as quality improvement, product development or customer service. This then implies that a working environment that promotes teamwork is likely to create a "family-like" environment where employees have a sense of belonging. Such an environment is likely to go an extra mile in ensuring that they perform at their optimum level.

2.8.3.2. Company management

Mansoor and Hassan (2016) have also identified company management as a key contributor to employee engagement. Their study findings revealed that a leader's ability to establish strong relationships as well as the ability to build a strong team interaction will create an enabling environment for employees to perform at their optimum level (Mansoor and Hassan, 2016).

2.8.3.3. Communication

Communication has been identified as one of the key factors that drive productivity within a company. It is therefore not surprising that authors such as Sköld (2019) and identified

communication as the key enablers of employee engagement. These authors argue that a company that constantly informs its employees about the happenings within the company and allowing them to feel in control decreases stress and uncertainties amongst its employees. Simply put, communication is the most important enabler of employee engagement. It will be virtually impossible for employees to engage in a company where communication channels are non-existence. For engagement between employees and management to happen, the company needs to establish a clear communication channel through which the two parties engage (Pongton and Suntrayuth, 2019).

2.9. Importance of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, if implemented properly, has been found to be beneficial for both employees and employers. This section reviews these benefits as documented in existing literature.

2.9.1. Importance of Employee Engagement on Employees

Existing literature have identified several positive effects that an organization's effective employee engagement processes have on employees. These sections will discuss some of the most common benefits as highlighted in previous studies.

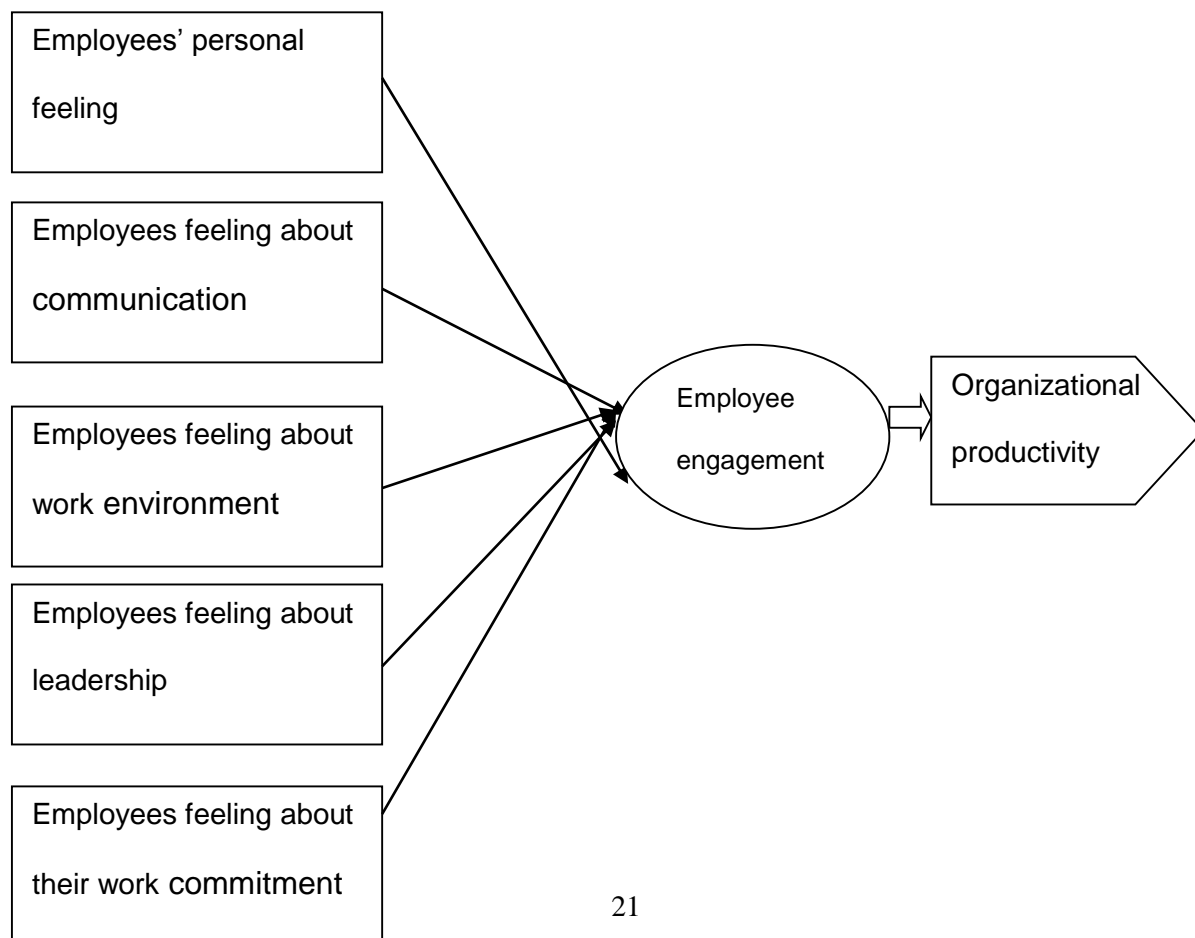
2.9.1.1. Increased productivity

Employee engagements have been found to have a positive impact with regard to the performance of employees. Findings of preceding studies reveal that employees from organizations with higher employee engagement levels seem to perform better as compared with their counterparts from organizations with low engagements levels (Harter, 2018 and Pongton and Suntrayuth, 2019). In an online article titled, "Employee Engagement on the Rise in the U.S", Harter (2018) reveals that organizations with highly engaged employees attain earnings-per-share growth that is four times higher than their competitors with low engagements levels. Harter further outlines the characteristics of highly engaged employees within the business setup. Firstly, it has been found that highly engaged employees tend to engage with customers better. Secondly, it was found that these employees perform better and are willing to stay within the company. These views are consistent with those of Pongton and Suntrayuth (2019) who found that an organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results. In South Africa, in a study titled, "the relationship between engagement and organizational productivity of sugar industry", Moletsane, Tefera and Migiro (2022) to improve productivity, employers within the sugar industry needed to

improve the engagement levels with their employees. They suggest that this be done through the enhancement of job satisfaction and instilling a sense of pride in the company. These authors have identified the Human Resources (HR) division as the main catalyst that should spearhead this process. They argue that the division should be responsible for developing an HR strategy that is aimed at encouraging communication and interaction between management and employees (Moletsane et al, 2022).

The importance of employee engagement to employees and how it translates to increased productivity was further demonstrated by Anitha (2014). In her attempt to demonstrate the importance of employee engagement, Anitha (2014) designed a conceptual framework through which an attempt was made to demonstrate how employees' positive perceptions about their work translate into increased productivity.

Figure 2 1. Conceptual framework on the factors that affect employee engagement and their impact on productivity



Source: Adopted from Anitha (2014)

The above figure demonstrates that employees' feelings play a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of a company's engagement process. It is clear from the figure that employees' perceptions on different aspects of the organization are key in determining whether the employee engagement will be effective or not. As such, it is safe to conclude that employees are the cornerstone of a successful employee engagement strategy. It is, therefore, important for management of organizations to develop employee-centred rather than employer-centred strategies that infuse the feelings of employees

2.9.1.2. Employees' commitment to the institution

The fact that employees are actively engaged further increases the likelihood of them staying within the company. This submission is congruent with the views of Pongton and Suntrayuth (2019) who found that engaged employees are often committed to the company and are more likely to stay in its employ longer, be its advocate and its products and services, and contribute to bottom line business success. They will normally perform better and are more motivated. There is a significant link between employee engagement and profitability. Thirdly, highly engaged employees cause fewer work-related accidents and report better health outcomes as compared to their counterparts from low engaging companies (Harter, 2018).

Pratama and Aima's (2018) study results indicate that what affects organisational employees' performance is their engagement in organisations.

Some of the advantages of Engaged employees are:

- They form an emotional connection with the company. This impacts their attitude towards the company's clients and thereby improves customer satisfaction and Service levels.
- It builds passion, commitment and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals
- Increases employees trust in the organization
- Creates a sense of loyalty in a competitive environment
- Provides a high-energy working environment boosts business growth
- Makes the employees effective brand ambassadors for the company

2.9.2. Importance of Employee Engagement on the organization

Employee engagement plays a significant role in the success of the organization. There are several organizational advantages related to engage employees. Saks (2021) argues that organizations with caring human resources management practices are more likely to create a climate where employees care about their organization and vice versa. Organizational productivity is determined by employees' efforts and engagement (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). This suggests that employees who are engaged are more committed and engaged resulting in increased productivity within the organization. Organizations that focus on improving employee engagement will benefit from an improved employee performance. Saks (2021) also agrees that improving employee engagement will positively affect an employee's job performance and organizational profitability. Organizations with highly engaged employees experience increased customer satisfaction, profits, and employee productivity (Vandenabeele, 2014). Organizations with highly engaged employees will have a competitive edge and record higher profits. Organizations that have highly engaged employees have greater profits than those that do not (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2014).

The survival and sustainability of the organization also depends on employees who are continuously engaged. Biriowu and Chikwe (2020) argued that employee engagement is a critical element in maintaining the organization's vitality, survivability and profitability.

2.9.3. Psychological benefits and Job Satisfaction

Employees in the workplace are happier when they have a sense of belonging. A further exploration of the sense of meaningfulness (sense of coherence) can be regarded as another psychological resource that can spark employees to feel engaged in their work and to find a sense of meaning in remaining in the company (Adil and Baig, 2018). These findings are consistent with those of Ngwenya and Pelser (2020). In studying the importance of employee engagement study results indicate that boosting employee levels of job satisfaction improves organisational productivity in the economy, as psychological capital positively and significantly influences employee performance. The more and deeper the employees are engaged, the increase in their performance levels is. The higher levels of job satisfaction amongst employees in organisations are bound to increase employee performance significantly. The more satisfied the employees with

their jobs, the more they are willing to be engaged for betterment of the organisations operating in a distressed economy (Ngwenya and Pelser, 2020).

Job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are seen as opposites, the more favourable the common factors the more likely an employee is to experience job satisfaction (Popović, Maletić, and Paunović, 2015). Spector (1985) suggested that the concept is a sum of nine favourable factors, namely pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work and communication. Rabbanee, Yasmin and Mamun (2016) explained these as follows:

- Pay: Refers to the wages that form part of an employee's compensation package for a given job. The perceived appropriateness of the level of wages to workplace demands is as important as perceptions of fairness when compared with those earned by other employees within the organisation and industry at large.
- Promotion: The importance of access to promotional opportunities within the organisation for employees stems from the prospect that these would also provide for personal growth, improved social status and increased responsibility.
- Supervision: This factor is concerned with how immediate supervisors manage their subordinates. A good supervisor can create an environment where employees feel safe and confident to fully express themselves. This can be achieved by valuing the opinions and views of employees and coming across as friendly and knowledgeable.
- Benefits: These refer to employee fringe benefits, often seen as employers' way for providing personal protection, which are made over and above pay and includes medical aid cover, tuition reimbursement and retirement savings.
- Contingent rewards: These rewards may be of a financial or non-financial nature made by employers with the specific intention to express appreciation for outstanding performance.
- Operating procedures: It refers to the collection of various rules, procedures and processes applicable within the organisation. An example would include the process for which project approvals would need to undergo before implementation. Too much red tape has the potential to discourage employees.
- Co-workers: Given the rather protracted periods spent at work, social interaction is necessary for most employees. Having friendly co-workers who can provide advice and support in the achievement of individual performance goals is preferred.

- Nature of work: Work is enjoyable only if its employees are satisfied with its various aspects. These include basic daily tasks and other periodic or special tasks that may be required from time to time.
- Communication: The extent to which employees are informed about the organisation and things that impact the organisation is important, particularly those who pertain to their obligations to the organisation and work demands. Communication is critical at all levels and should not be limited to the immediate supervisor and subordinate level.
- This study relied upon the operational definition of concept, which is provided as the sum of the nine factors of Spector (1985).

2.10. Barriers to employee engagement and its consequences to employees

The previous sections have revealed the benefits associated with active employee engagement for both employers and employees. This includes high productivity, employees' commitment to the organization as well as having happy employees. However, existing literature reveals that several barriers currently hinder many organizations from enjoying these benefits. This section discusses some of the most common barriers that result in many organizations failing to fully enjoy the benefits of engaged employees. Kang and Sung (2017) have identified poor communication, a hostile work environment and poor leadership as the main barriers to employee engagement in most organizations.

Leaders have been identified as the principal role player to any organization's success, big or small. However, there are two types of leadership. On one extreme there is good leadership and on the other extreme there are bad leaders. Good leaders give direction, motivate employees, and empower employees to work at full potential and are concerned about the wellbeing of their employees. These leaders play a leading role in spearheading the development of their organizations' engagement strategies by demonstrating ideas and characteristics that define the existence of the institutions (Mazetti and Schaufeli, 2022). These leaders appreciate that employees are core components of their organizations' existence (Kang and Sung, 2017). Poor leaders have been found to be a direct opposite to good leaders. Poor leaders have been found to be mostly self-centered who are often inconsiderate of their employees' feelings. Like Mazetti and Schaufeli (2022), these leaders often take unilateral decisions. Lack of transparency in the decision-making process often leads to a culture of mistrust and suspicions which in turn hinders

open and honest communication between employer and employee. The views are consistent with those of Mishra et al (2015) who found that the existence of these barriers breeds a culture of lack transparency and mistrust between employees and employers. In addition, the lack of open communication channels coupled with hostile environment have been found to have a negative impact on employees' wellbeing. Existing findings found that employees' poor wellbeing has a detrimental impact on employee engagement (Kang and Sung, 2017 and Moletsane et al, 2022). Recently published research findings revealed that employees often lose interest in their jobs when they feel that the management do not care about their wellbeing and that they are not given the latitude they need to redesign their jobs. This could in turn lead to decreased profitability and employee commitment (Moletsane et al, 2022).

2.11. Challenges of employee engagement

Employee engagement has emerged as one of the greatest challenges in today's workplace. With complexities and stringent regulations in many organizations, employee engagement will continue to challenge organizations in the future (Mishra, Boynton, and Mishra, 2014). In the context of South Africa, study findings reveal that employee engagements remain a big challenge in most organizations (Govender and Bussin, 2020). Some of the challenges in employee engagement involves organizational negligence in acknowledging gaps in leadership to manage employees better. According to Allam (2017) managers need to acquire the role of a coach for his subordinate where the long-term as well as short- term needs of the subordinate are taken care of. He further posits that the relationship must be 'an empowering relationship that facilitates the creation of meaningful, challenging work that tests employee's resourcefulness'. Some organizations make the mistake of not involving their employees in decision making while taking employee impacting decisions. This in turn would lead to disengaged workforce. Disengaged workforce would in turn lead dissatisfied customers. The modern consumers are no longer willing to accept insufficient customer service as the future of these work environments' demand quick responses to queries, resulting in customer hostility and abuse if customers' demands are not being met (Frost and Sullivan, 2018).

Leaders of organizations that fully support employees, promote continuous learning, and are transparent in their decision-making, have a greater impact on the increased level of employee engagement (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). It is for this reason that Zondo (2020) argues for

the need for South African organisations to review their performance management systems and create employee engagement strategies that help accomplish their new business goals.

Another challenge confronting employers regarding employee engagement is the increase in the number of millennial workforces joining organizations in the past few decades. Millennial refers to employees between born 1980 and 2000 (PWC, 2011). Presently there are an estimated 2 billion millennials across the world, aged between 17 and 37 years (Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research, 2017). Recently published findings have identified this group as one of the reasons why effective employee engagement remains evasive in most organizations (Jha, Sareen and Potnuru, 2019). The main drawback in appointing individuals from this group is that they possess high self –esteem and high expectations, combined with reluctance to give wholehearted effort to anything that they consider not very meaningful for their career (Schullery, 2013). Findings further reveal that they struggle with issues of patience and that they prefer doing work that will yield immediate results for their efforts.

According Schullery (2013) their high ambitions coupled with the desire to grow quickly means these group often feels that companies with rigid corporate structures hold them back. They expect their employers to challenge but not micromanage them. They desire a flexible environment with abundant opportunities to better them in their career. As such, they often struggle to patiently wait for career growth/promotion in one company. Instead, they frequently seek new job opportunities with the hope that the new employer will accelerate their career growth faster than the previous one. Their need to be constantly in the move in pursuit of growth makes this group the most difficult group to engage with (Jha et al, 2019). It then becomes even more imperative that organizations have leaders with the skills to manage this workforce.

Several suggestions have been brought forward as possible solutions to this problem. For instance, Jha et al (2019) suggest that companies should revisit their employee engagement strategies with the aim being to ensure that such strategies cover the desires and aspirations of all age groups in the company. The argument is that having an inclusive strategy will go a long way in ensuring that employees go an extra mile to perform and are more involved in the entire organization. Engaged workers are highly efficient, can enhance the loyalty of customers and improve operational productivity. HR officials must recognize the correct factors of commitment and adopt appropriate methods to include their workers in the endurance of the competitive advantage of the company. Employees are the assets of every company, and companies should take impeccable steps to create a dedicated workforce for their main individuals (Jha et al, 2019).

This submission supported by Chillakuri (2020) who argues that with the millennials and the Generation Z entering the workforce, it is binding on the organizations to reassess their current models to suit the needs and demands of these cohorts.

2.12. Consequences of Disengaged Employees

Disengagement can be regarded as the decoupling of the psychological self from the work role and involves people retracting and guarding themselves during role performances (Kahn, 1990). Allam (2017) defines employee disengagement as referring to a display of a lack of interest, commitment and enthusiasm by employees in the workplace.

Allam (2017) considers employee disengagement an epidemic to an organisation due to negative attitudes displayed by disengaged employees in the form of deficient organisational citizenship behaviour, a lack of enthusiasm and commitment. Promoting teamwork is difficult when employees display little cooperation and collaboration to be part of a team. Allam further contends that violence and workplace bullying can manifest in situations where employees are disengaged. The manifestation can take the form of relentless abusive and teasing jokes, aggression, physical assault and threatening behaviours. Conflict can result, and acts of misconduct can escalate when the employees are disengaged.

There are several factors that can lead to employee disengagement. Below is a list of four key factors identified in Rastogi et al. (2018):

- Lack of Job Resources- this refers to the absence of the various aspects of a job that supplement the work experience things that provide a support structure, promote growth and development, or aid directly with job activities.
- Lack of Job Control- this refers to the inability for an employee to make decisions about their work (i.e. the path or approach taken toward task completion). A lack of job control is associated with lower autonomy and decisiveness among employees.
- Lack of Job Complexity- this refers to a lack of creativity, complexity or challenge associated with assigned tasks. Monotonous and repetitive tasks contribute directly to disengagement among employees.
- Lack of Organizational Support- this refers to a lack of support from supervisors, co-workers, and the organization itself. Examples of a lack of organizational support include

excessive job expectations, uncooperative co-workers, and lack of supervisor consideration

There are several consequences of disengaged employees. Some of them are listed as follows:

- Negative impact on organization's profit – disengaged employees are most likely to leave the organization resulting in key skills not being retained. The rising level of disengaged employees can have a significant impact on an organization's profit, ability to retain skilled employees, and employee citizenship (Berens, 2013).
- Employees disconnect from work roles and thus negatively impacting performance – Hochschild (1993) states that disengaged employees display incomplete role performances and task behaviours become effortless, automatic or robotic.
- Low productivity - disengaged employees will result in reduced workplace productivity and decreased customer service skills (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). This then means the organization's profitability would reduce.
- Disengaged employees often develop a negative job attitude -the consequence of such an attitude is that employees start engaging in deviant behaviour such as vandalism, sabotage, and spreading negative rumours amongst other things (Allam, 2017). These employees are likely to use platforms such as The Glassdoor Policy to spread rumours by posting negative reviews about the company. For instance, in 2016 a Forbes staff member, Susan Adams wrote of a disgruntled San Francisco firm employee who accused the company's senior executives of creating "hierarchies with several executive assistants as gatekeepers (Adams, 2016). Comments like this to harm the company's reputation and scare off potential skilled employees with ambitions to join the company.
- Specifically, to the Call Centre Industry, disengagement of employees may lead to high levels of attrition. Call centres in Africa have become notorious for having the highest attrition rate of any industry (Frost and Sullivan, 2018). Disengaged employees because of low morale may lead to change in behaviour which in turn affect efficiency. Changes in call centre agents' behaviour include a reduced sense of professional efficacy which is characterised by low morale and an inability to cope (Frost and Sullivan, 2018). Not properly supporting employees may lead to burnout and emotional outbursts. The levels of exhaustion stem from requiring dealing with challenging and frustrated customers (Shkoler and Tziner, 2017). Frustrated employees would result in decline in performance. The emotional outbursts accompanied by irritability and anger are considered the main

reasons for declining performance (Frost and Sullivan, 2018). Exhaustion and fatigue are evident in these work environments that lead to a decreased level of organisational commitment (Shkoler and Tziner, 2017). Dhanpat et al. (2018) provided insights in terms of factors affecting retention of call centre agents and their levels of intention to leave. The findings of the study suggest that certain retention factors are crucial in influencing employees' intention to leave. Such factors include compensation, career advancement, supervisor support and work–life balance. To enhance retention and yield low turnover rates, they encouraged call centre organisations to ensure that agents are remunerated well and are provided with a work environment where they are able to grow and advance, in addition to a work environment that supports their work and personal life.

2.13. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to review existing literature relating to the subject under investigations. For employees, effective engagement results in job satisfaction as well as psychological and emotional wellbeing. For organization, having effective employee engagement leads to committed employees and increased productivity. Lastly, the reviewed literature revealed that that poor communication, hostile environment and poor leadership could act as barriers to employee engagement, leading to disengaged employees. As the information shows, disengaged employees could lead to employees becoming de-motivated, non-committal as they feel unappreciated. Based on the reviewed literature, it is safe for one to conclude that employee engagement plays a significant role in the success of a company. Consequently, employers are encouraged to develop employee engagement strategies that will ensure that employees feel empowered, appreciated and that they contributions to the organization are being recognized and acknowledged. The following chapter outlines the research methodology that the researcher employed in carrying out this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed existing literature regarding the impact of employee engagement on employee performance. Chapter three outlines the research method and design used in this study. The chapter starts by outlining the research philosophy that was adopted for this study. This is followed by the descriptions of adopted research design and research strategy respectively. The population as well as the sampling methods used to sample the required number of participants who participated in the study is also outlined in this chapter. The nature of research instruments, how they were developed and administered, is also described in detail in this chapter. The chapter further outlines the data analysis method which the study adopted. Validity and reliability issues relating to this study are also discussed. Finally, the ethical considerations considered in conducting this study are addressed.

3.2 The Research Philosophy

A positivism research philosophy was adopted for this study. According to Aliyu, Bello and Kasim, et al (2014:81) positivism is seen as “a research strategy and approach that is rooted on the ontological principle and doctrine that truth and reality is free and independent of the viewer and observer”. On the other hand, Studies with positivist paradigm are often guided solely by facts and consider the world to be external and objective (Wilson, 2010). Philosophy was relevant in this study for several reasons. Firstly, the paradigm relies specifically on scientific evidence such as statistics to uncover the true nature of how society operates. The selection of the philosophy was further influenced by principles governing positivism. One such principle is its focus on objectivity. Positivism assumes that objectivity is the basis of world existence. As such, objective rather than subjective methods should be used to measure whatever becomes our subject of interest (Kajenthiran, 2017). Its focus on objectivity means the researcher’s role is limited to data collection and its interpretations (Collins, 2010). This virtually eliminates biases because of the researcher’s influences, shortfalls in experimental design or outliers of data. This in turn enhances the objectivity and credibility of the findings of this study (Collins, 2010). A quantitative approach was adopted for this study. A quantitative method emphasizes objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected from methods such as polls and questionnaires (Babbie, 2010). The quantitative method uses structured questionnaires as a tool

for data collection. For this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. The adoption of this approach means places more emphasizing on counting, describing and using standard statistics such as means and standard deviation. In this study quantitative approach was used to collect information such as the demographic information of respondents (age, gender, marital status, level of education). Such information was gathered using a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions as primary sources.

3.3 The Research Design

Research design refers to an overall plan or strategy that the researcher employs in executing their study project. Such a plan creates a platform that allows for the integration of the different segments of the study into a coherent and logical way (De Vos, 2001). There are several research designs for researchers to consider in carrying out quantitative research studies. The following are descriptions of these designs:

3.3.1. Experimental research design

Experimental research is often carried out when the investigator seeks to trace the cause-and-effect relationships between defined variables (Tanner, 2018). Prasetyo (2018) has identified different types of experiment research design. This includes Classical experimental design, Pre experimental design and Quasi experimental and special design. These designs can be carried out either in the laboratory, in the classroom or in the field. Two distinct attributes define experimental research. Experimental research often involves two groups of units, an experimental group and a comparison group even though there are instances where the researcher can conduct the experiment with only one group. The following are some of the characteristics of experiment research as identified by Pandey and Pandey (2015). Firstly, the design is based on the law of single variables. Secondly, this method is maximum in use in educational /social research where the factors can be controlled. Thirdly, the methods emphasize control of conditions and the experimentation of certain variables in controlled conditions. Lastly, the method employs standardized tools for experimentation and makes the evidence very much objective.

The experimental research is further divided into true experimental, quasi experimental and pre-experimental. True experimental design is aimed at testing the effectiveness of an intervention/ treatment or a program and observes the difference it makes in intervention group. Quasi-experiments are often applicable when there are independent variables that cannot be assigned

(Lillykutty and Samson, 2018). Lastly, pre-experimental design are research schemes in which a subject or a group is observed post the administration of a treatment. This is often done to determine whether the administered treatment has the potential to cause change (Frey, 2018).

3.3.2. Correlational research design

Correlational research is a quantitative is quantitative in nature (Lillykutty and Samson, 2018) and “involves the measurement of two or more relevant variables and an assessment of the relationship between or among those variables” (Stangor, 2011:16). The primary purpose of this research is to reveal variables that show systematic relationships with each other” (p. 16). Unlike other research types as outlined above, correlational research measures two or more pertinent variables within the same sample with the intention being to measure a relationship between or among them (Lillykutty and Samson, 2018). The correlational analysis creates the outline of scores (co-vary) among the variables and to what extent do these variables are interconnected. Perhaps the main drawback with correlational research is that it does not prove that one variable causes a change in another variable (Lillykutty and Samson, 2018).

3.3.3. Descriptive research design

Descriptive research design is a type of research design that seeks to attain data that will assist in describing a phenomenon, situation, or population. Researchers who adopt descriptive research design often seek to obtain answers regarding what, when, where, and how questions regarding the research problem instead of the why (De vos, 2001). The descriptive method often involves the utilization of a variety of research methods to investigate variables in question. It predominantly employs quantitative data, although qualitative data is also used sometimes for descriptive purposes. However, descriptive research design differs with experimental research in that the investigator does not control or manipulate any of the variables. Instead, the variables are only identified, observed and measured (Mann, 2003).

3.3.4. Explanatory research design

An explanatory research design was adopted for this study. This design is guided by the positivism approach which has been selected as the philosophy for this study. The relationship between positivism and explanatory design was highlighted by Sciarra, Kopala and Suzuki (1999). According to these authors, the primary aim of positivism inquiry is to produce explanatory

relationships that will eventually lead to prediction and control of the phenomena under investigation. As such, it was envisaged that the adoption of explanatory inquiry in this study would help generate a causal relationship between employee engagement and staff performance and provide recommendations on how this could be enhanced.

3.4 Research Strategy

A research strategy is defined as an overall plan that a researcher adopts while conducting a research study. Its primary aim is to provide guidance during the planning, executing, and monitoring of the study (Johannesson and Perjons, 2014). The following are the main research strategies available for researchers to adopt in carrying out quantitative studies:

3.4.1. Experiment

The experiment refers to a study that is often carried out through the application of general empirical methods wherein processes and phenomena are tested in a carefully controlled condition. The main principle that guides the experiment study is in changing the selected individual component in the test procedure while the remaining components remain unchanged. The experiment research process involves the researcher introducing a new factor to the process, thereby modifying its rate. The introduced factor is called an independent variable or an experimental factor. On the other hand, factors changed under the influence of an independent variable are dependent variables (Novikov and Novikov, 2013).

3.4.2. Observational studies

Observational studies refer to studies that “provide critical descriptive data and information on long-term efficacy and safety that clinical trials cannot provide, at generally much less expense” (Gilmartin-Thomas, Liew and Hopper, 2018). Observational studies include case reports and case series, ecological studies, cross-sectional studies, case-control studies and cohort studies. Perhaps the most distinct feature of these studies is that the role of the researcher is that of an observer and he/she does not interfere with participants. Observational studies are divided into three categories, namely, Cohort studies, Cross sectional and Case-control studies. Cohort studies are quantitative studies mainly used to investigate incidence, causes, and prognosis (Mann, 2003). Cross sectional study is one of the types of observational studies. Cross sectional studies are mostly quantitative in nature. In using this kind of study, the researcher selects the sample according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria adopted for a given study. After selecting the participants, the researcher assesses the exposure and results following the task. Cross-

sectional studies are used to assess the incidence of diseases in clinical samples and for population studies (Setia, 2016). One of the advantages of cross-sectional studies is that they are often cheap and quick to execute. Its main disadvantage is that it is a one-time measurement of results, making it difficult to determine a cause-and-effect relationship from the findings. On the other hand, case-controlled studies are often used in instances where researchers seek to compare groups retrospectively. These kinds of studies are often used in the medical field with the primary aim being to study rare diseases (Mann, 2003). Those who subscribe to case-controlled studies often use them to generate hypotheses that can then be studied via prospective cohort or other studies.

3.4.3. Survey strategy

A survey strategy was employed for this study. Check and Schutt define survey research as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (2012, p. 160). The adoption of this strategy in this study was beneficial in several ways. Firstly, it provided several methods through which to recruit respondents, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. Secondly, the strategy enabled the researcher to obtain data from large samples of individuals of interest relatively quickly (Ponto, 2015). Thirdly, the use of surveys permits the researcher to study more variables at one time than is typically possible in laboratory or field experiments, whilst data can be collected about real world environments. Quantitative analytical techniques were then used to draw inferences from this data regarding existing relationships between employee engagement and employee performance.

3.5. Target Population

The target population is defined as the complete set of elements for which the survey information is to be used for conclusions (Lavrakas, 2008). On the other hand, Burns and Grove (1997:236) define the population as "the entire aggregation of respondents that meet the designated set of criteria". For this study, the target population was employees of a call-centre company that is based in the Gauteng Province, South Africa. The company currently has a total of 1200 employees. The target population was relevant for this study because its members are directly involved in the call-centre environment which was the primary focus of this study. As such, the researcher was of the view that the fact that their involvement in the call centre industry meant they were best placed to answer provide accurate data necessary for this study.

3.6. Sampling

Sampling is defined as “the process of selecting a few elements (a sample) from a bigger group (the sampling population) to become the basis for estimating or predicting the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or outcome regarding the bigger group” (Kumar, 2011:177). The sampling process is necessitated by the unfeasibility of including the entire population in the study mainly due to financial costs and logistical challenges. As a result, researchers resort to employing sampling procedures to select a sample of the population. There are currently two broad sampling strategies, namely, non-probability method and probability sampling method. One yields probability samples in which the probability of selection of each respondent is assured. The distinction between the two-sampling strategy relates to participants’ probability of being selected into the sample. In probability sampling, all members of the population have an equal opportunity of being selected into the sample. In contrast, the use of non-probability sampling means members of the population’s chances of being selected into the sample are unknown (Polit & Hungler 1995 and Lavrakas, 2008).

3.6.1. Sampling methods for quantitative studies

The quantitative research sampling method refers to a procedure of selecting units that will be representation of the overall population. There are four types of probability sampling methods that are usually associated with quantitative studies. This includes cluster sampling, stratified, systematic and simple random sampling methods. Below are the descriptions of each of these methods.

3.6.1.1. Cluster sampling

Cluster, also known as Area sampling, is a probability sampling method where the researcher divides the larger population into smaller groups known as clusters (Thomas, 2022). On the other hand, Erwee and Mullins (1994:45) define it as a procedure where, “a specified acreage would be divided into sections according to a number of vertical and horizontal grid lines drawn across the total area” (Erwee and Mullins, 1994:45). Cluster sampling method is often used in instances where the populations to be investigated are too large, especially those that are dispersed geographically. The selection of sample using cluster sampling involves four steps as identified by Thomas (2022). The first step involves the researcher clearly defining the population they wish to investigate. The second step involves dividing the identified population into individual clusters. An example could be dividing the population of a municipality into wards. The third step involves randomly selecting clusters to be included into a sample. The last step involves collecting data

from the selected sample. Cluster sampling can cut down on costs such as travelling time, which is important in populations distributed over large areas, or when there are problems of getting to areas. The problem with this method is that the several stages involved in the clustering process have been found to compromise its internal validity (Thomas, 2022).

3.6.1.2. Stratified sampling

A stratified sample is a probability sampling procedure in which the target population is divided into different strata or subgroups (Crossman 2013). This type of sampling is often employed in instances where the principal investigator aims to highlight specific subgroups from within the population. Such subgroups will have distinct characteristics such as ethnicity, race, gender, age or socio-economic status. Researchers adopting stratified sampling methods aspire to have their sample that is characterized by a fair representation of each subgroup or strata (Birchall, 2009). Stratified sampling could be a sampling of choice in a situation where the researcher wants to determine whether gender played a role in influencing people regarding a subject under investigation. The main advantage of stratified random sampling is that as with simple random sampling method, all subjects from each subgroup have equal opportunity of being chosen to form part of the study sample. However, the disadvantage with this method is that depending on the set characteristics (i.e. male or female) the researcher might sometimes struggle to classify every member of the target population (Murphy, James and Kvilhaug, 2021). For instance, in case where gender (i.e. male or female) is the main characteristic the researcher might struggle to classify those who identify themselves as non-binary.

3.6.1.3. Systematic sampling method

System sampling method is defined as a type of sampling procedure in which the researcher selects the sample from the population according to a random starting point with a periodic interval called sampling interval (Hayes, Boyle and Li, 2022). The process includes generating target sample points by identifying a random starting point and then picking every n^{th} element in succession from the list (Erwee and Mullins, 1994). The randomization of the way a sample is drawn from the population is done in order to minimize the sampling error (Hayes, Boyle and Li, 2022).

Systematic sampling is divided into three types, namely, systematic random sampling, linear systematic sampling and circular systematic sampling. Systematic random sampling is a procedure where subjects are selected at a predetermined interval. Linear systematic sampling focuses on creating a skip pattern using a linear path. Lastly, a circular systematic uses a process

wherein the selection of a sample starts again from the point it ends (Subramani, 2018). The main advantage of this sampling method is its ability to eliminate the phenomenon of clustered selection and reduce the risk of data contamination. Its disadvantage is that it carries an increased risk of either overrepresentation or underrepresentation of patterns and greater risk of data manipulation (Hayes, Boyle and Li, 2022).

3.6.1.4. Simple random sampling

For this study, a probability, simple-random sampling method was used to randomly select the participants. The process involved several steps. Firstly, the researcher obtained a sampling frame. A sampling frame refers to a complete list of all elements in a population (De Vos, 2001). Obtaining a sampling frame involved the researcher approaching the Human Resources Department of the company under study to obtain a complete list of its employees. Upon receiving the sampling frame, the sampling process moved into the second stage. This step involved the researcher writing the names of all employees into small pieces of paper and placing them in a bowl. A volunteer was then requested to randomly pick out names from the bowl and every employee whose name was drawn out automatically became part of the sample. The process was carried out until the required sample number was achieved. A total of 176 participants who participated in this study were selected through this process. An advantage with simple random sampling method is that all employees had the same probability of being selected into the study.

3.7 The Research Instruments

Columbia University (undated) defines a research instrument as a “tool that is used for the purpose of collecting, measuring and analysing data relating to the subject under investigation. Such an instrument is often determined by the principal researcher and is usually tied to the chosen research methodology (Columbia University, undated). A questionnaire was chosen as data collection instrument for this study. –Questionnaire remains one of the most popular data collection instruments amongst researchers. Its popularity is largely attributed to its ability to assist researchers in gathering data concerning knowledge, attitudes, opinions of participants regarding a subject under investigation (Sathiyaseelan, 2015). Several reasons justified the selection of questionnaire as data collection instrument for this study. Firstly, the selection of the questionnaire was consistent with the chosen philosophy. As shown earlier, positivism philosophy strongly advocates to produce evidence characterized by truth and reality and is free and independent of the viewer and observer”. As such, a questionnaire was deemed to be relevant as the researcher had minimal interference as compared to interviews which is often considered to be open to

researcher's interferences. The aim behind the adoption of the questionnaire was to collect data that would objectively represent the views of the participants with minimal interference from the researcher. Secondly, the study adopted survey strategy which mostly require questionnaire as the data collection tool.

3.8 Questionnaire construction

The development of the questionnaire used in this study involved several steps. Firstly, the researcher drafted the questionnaire items in line with the aims and objectives the study sought to achieve as well as the questions it aimed to answer. This was to ensure that the data to be collected was accurate. The questionnaire items were designed in line with the principles of the Likert-type scale which required close-ended answers (i.e. agree, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree). Secondly, the draft questionnaire was sent to a Human Resources Manager as well as a PhD holder for review. The role of the Human Resources was to review the content of the questionnaire in terms of the actual content of the questionnaire and to offer advice on other potential items to be included on the questionnaire. On the other hand, the PhD holder's role was in two-fold. Firstly, he was to offer advice on how the items could be formulated in line with the Likert scale principles. Secondly, he offered guidance on ethical issues by helping the researcher identify, eliminate, or rephrase items that could be seen as offensive and discriminatory to certain groups of the society (e.g. homosexuals, foreigners, females, etc). The questionnaire was divided into four sections (A, B, C, and D). Section A contains items that were aimed at gathering participants' biographic information (i.e. gender, age, educational qualifications etc). Section B section contains items that were aimed at determining employee engagement levels. Section C contains items that were aimed at determining the impact of employee engagement on employee performance. Lastly, section D comprises of items aimed at obtaining recommendations to enhance employee engagement in call-centre companies.

3.9 Pilot Study

Pilot study is defined as, a small study that is normally carried out to test research protocols, sampling strategies, data collection instruments, and other research techniques in preparation for a larger study (Hassan, Schattner and Mazza, 2006). The aim of the pilot study was basically to pre-test the data collection tool (i.e. questionnaire and interview guide) to be used in the main study to determine their validity (Walliman, 2011). The pilot study will allow the researcher to determine the content validity of these data collection tools. In other words, it will help to determine

whether the contents of these tools are relevant in answering the research questions of this study. The process entails the researcher carrying out a mini study using a different sample to the one identified for the main study but with similar characteristics. In this study, the pilot study was carried out using participants from the identified company's sister company based in Sunninghill, Johannesburg. About ten employees were randomly to participate in the pilot study. The determination of the sample number was influenced by Fink (2003) who argued that a pilot study should have at least 10 participants. The aim of the study was mainly to determine the validity and the reliability of the questionnaire. Regarding the validity, the pilot study was used to determine if the items of the questionnaire were relevant in helping the researcher to answer the research questions. In terms of reliability, the pilot study was geared at determining the consistency of the questionnaire. The issue of validity and reliability is discussed in detail in the following sub-section.

3.10 Administration of Questionnaires

A self-administered questionnaire approach was adopted for this study. The process involved giving participants the questionnaire to complete at their own time and return it after completion. All participants were requested to sign a consent form before they could be given the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire was emailed to participants. Emailing the questionnaire instead of physically handing it out was done to comply with the COVID-19 social distance regulation. Participants were given a period of two weeks in which to complete and return the questionnaire to the researcher. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to contact the researcher for clarity whenever they experienced challenges while completing the questionnaire

3.11 Collection of Questionnaires

Collection of data for this study was done during the COVID-19 pandemic. This means government regulation implemented to curb its spread such as social distancing were still enforced. To comply with these regulations participants were required to email back the completed questionnaire instead of handing in hard copies which could have increased the risk of COVID-19 infections.

3.12. Data Analysis

Mrinde (2014: 39) defines data analysis as “a process of synthesizing data, searching for patterns, discovering what is important as well as what is to be learned and deciding what to tell others”. The author further argues that data analysis is necessary because it “enables the researcher to summarize, categorize and organize the collected data in such a way that it is possible to adequately answer the research questions”. Data analysis process is performed in both qualitative and quantitative research. For this study, the first step in data analysis involves the capturing of the collected data. A template was designed using an MS Excel program for the purpose of capturing the collected data. The principal researcher captured the data into the template. The MS Excel file containing the captured was then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 for Windows for analysis purposes. This was done for statistical analysis to be carried out. Firstly, descriptive statistics were applied to perform basic characteristics of the sampled respondents. This was done by employing both frequency and means to describe the data. This includes data related to gender, marital status, age, education level, and employment status of the sample respondents. Column graphs and pie charts were generated to clearly present the results. The method was relevant for this study in that it will help show the characteristics of the sample. The characteristics considered included gender, age, education status and employment status of the respondents. Frequency distributions were used to obtain descriptive statistics to calculate the percentages for the regularity in which respondents respond to specific questions. Cross-tabulation with the sex of respondents illustrated whether differences exist between male and female respondents in terms of how they respond to questions. Cross-tabulation was also used to determine whether factors such as age groups, level of education, and level of education and the tenure of participants had an influence on how participants perceived the impact of employee engagement within the company.

3.13 Validity and Reliability

3.13.1. Validity

De Vos et al. (2011:172) refers to validity as the “extent to which empirical measure adequately reflect the real meaning of the concept under consideration”. On the other hand, Whiston (2012) defines validity as the process in which the researcher obtains that that is suitable for the anticipated use of the measuring instrument(s) (Whiston, 2012). In this case, validity means the questionnaire aided in the collection of the appropriate data according to the aims and research

questions of the study. Oluwatayo (2012) has suggested different types of validity that researchers can consider determining the validity of their measuring instruments. Some of the most common types of validity includes content validity, Predictive validity, Concurrent validity, Content Validity, Criterion-Related Invalidity, Internal validity, External validity and Construct validity. Two types of validity, namely, content validity, external validity and face validity were determined in this study.

Content validity

Content validity was used to determine the validity of the questionnaire in this study. The fact that the researcher had to develop the questionnaire from scratch meant its content had to be validated. Several measures were employed to validate the content of the questionnaire. Firstly, a pilot study was carried out prior to the commencement of the study. The aim of the pilot study was to determine the relevance of the questions of the questionnaire in aiding the researcher to achieve the study objectives. Secondly, the researcher obtained expert opinions on the content of the questionnaire (Çapraz, 2018). A Human Resources Manager and a PhD holder were consulted to evaluate each expression in the developed questionnaire in terms of the content in terms of its appropriateness to the study aims and research question (Rubio et al., 2003). Their comments and inputs were then infused into the finalized copy.

External validity

External validity is defined as “the extent to which the study results can be generalised beyond the sample used in the study” (Burns and Grove, 1999:191).

The achievement of external validity is usually reliant on the degree to which the study sample is representative of the population under investigation. For this study, samples were drawn up from only one call-center company based in the Gauteng province. The fact that the sample was drawn from only one company might have led to low external validity in this study since its results could not be generalised by the general population of employees working for call-center companies based in Gauteng.

Face validity

As with the content validity, face validity was determined with the help of experts. This is in line with the submission by Sürücü and Maslakçi (2020). According to these authors, assessment of face validity is usually carried out by expert staff or by academic staff on the formation the

measuring instrument is trying to determine. The following criteria suggested by Sürücü and Maslakçı (2020) were considered in determining face validity in this study. Firstly, it was ensured that the purpose of each statement included in the questionnaire was appropriate. Secondly, the statements in the questionnaire were clear and easily understood by the participants. The researcher was readily available to answer any query or clarity seeking question that participants might have had in the course of completing the questionnaire. Lastly, through the guidance of the experts, the researcher ensured that the difficulty of each item in the questionnaire was appropriate for the level of all participants from junior staff to senior management.

3.13.2. Reliability

Reliability refers to the constancy of the measuring instrument used and its consistency in its application over the period. For an instrument to be reliable, the measure instruments should be able to give similar results when applied at different times (De Vos, 1998). There are different types of reliability.

Test-retest reliability

Test-retest reliability is often used to measure the consistency of results wherein the same test/questionnaire is administered to the same sample at a different point in time (Collins, 2007). The results of the two tests are then compared to determine their level of correlation. Test-retest reliability is often used when measuring something that researchers expect to stay constant in the sample over a period (Beaton and Tugwell, 2017). A study is considered to have high test-retest reliability if the correlation is large. Test-retest reliability could not be determined in this study since the sample only completed the questionnaire once.

Interrater reliability

Interrater reliability (also called interobserver reliability) measures the degree of agreement between different people observing or assessing the same thing. Multiple researchers making observations or ratings about the same topic (Middleton, 2022). The process of measuring interrater reliability involves having different researchers carry out the same measurement or observation using the same sample. This is then followed by the calculation of the correlation between the researchers' different sets of results. The study is considered to have high interrater reliability if all researchers give similar ratings (Middleton, 2022). Interrater reliability could not be determined for this study since only the principal investigator oversaw its execution and as such his findings could not compare with another researcher.

Parallel form of reliability

Parallel form's reliability measures the correlation between two equivalent versions of a test. In using parallel forms of reliability, the researcher will provide participants with two different assessment tools that are designed to measure the same thing (Middleton, 2022). The study is considered to have a strong parallel form of reliability if the results from the two different tools are similar (John, 2015). Parallel form of reliability could not be determined in this study since only one assessment tool (self-administered questionnaire) was given to participants to complete.

Internal reliability

The aim of internal reliability is to determine the consistency of individual items of a test. Several measures were implemented to ensure reliability for this study. Firstly, the study was implemented in line with scientific research methodology. As Legesse (2014) noted, methodology is the science and philosophy behind all research. The use of proven scientific research methods in this study means other researchers interested in the subject that was under investigation would be able to replicate the study under similar conditions and come up with the same results. It was, therefore, critical that the methodology was clear and easy to execute, starting from the sampling methods used in the data analysis method. Thirdly, participants were given the same questionnaires with the same questions to answer. Lastly, the fact that the researcher was always available to answer any query from the participants provided consistency in how the questionnaire was administered.

3.14 Limitations of the Research

According to James and Murnan (2002) limitations of the study refer to features of the adopted research methodology that might have compromised the quality of the study outcomes. The following limitations might have compromised the quality of this study's findings. The first limitation relates to the researcher's lack of research experience. The principal researcher was never exposed to research prior to this study. His lack of experience in the field could have compromised the quality of the findings. However, few strategies were implemented to counter the researcher's lack of experience. Firstly, the researcher received guidance from his supervisor. Secondly, the researcher consulted a lot of literature on research and research methodology. Lastly, the researcher also consulted people who have successfully completed their theses and dissertations for advice. Another limitation could relate to the scope of the study. The scope of this study was limited to one call-centre company. As such, its findings cannot be a representation of all the call-

centre companies in the country. It is recommended in the recommendation section that a larger study on the subject be considered. Thirdly, a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data, and it is possible that some participants misunderstood certain questions. This could have in turn, comprised the quality of answers given. To counter this, participants were encouraged to consult the researcher whenever they needed clarity on any aspect of the questionnaire.

3.15. Elimination of Bias

The employment of a probability, simple-random sampling method in the selection of participants eliminated all potential biases and significantly decreased the possibility of discrimination against certain elements of the population. The fact that participants who participated in the study were randomly picked out from a bowl containing all employees' names meant everyone had an equal chance of having their names drawn out regardless of their gender, religion or race.

3.16 Ethical Consideration

Ethics is defined as a "code of behaviour considered correct (Van Tonder and Pera, 1996:4). The following ethical considerations were observed during the carrying out of this study:

3.16.1. Ensuring that participants have given informed consent

Informed consent refers to providing a thorough explanation of the aim of the study and processes to be followed aid the potential participants in deciding whether to participate in the study or not (Walliman, 2011). Accordingly, the researcher should clearly articulate the aim of the study, using a simple language that is easily understood. According to Walliman (2011) providing a detailed and clear explanation allows potential participants an opportunity to make a fair evaluation of the study to give informed consent. For this study, several efforts will be made to secure participants' informed consent. Firstly, the collection of data was preceded by the researcher explaining the purpose of the study as well as the process to be followed to the sampled participants. The explanation involved informing participants that their participation was voluntary and that they would not be remunerated for their efforts. The researcher further informed the participants that they always reserve the right to withdraw their participation at any stage without having to justify their withdrawal. Lastly, those participants who agreed to participate after the researcher's explanation were given a consent form to sign as a sign of their consent to participate in the study.

3.16.2. Ensuring that no harm comes to participants

One of the most important ethical considerations is ensuring that participants are protected from any kind of harm, be physical, emotional or psychological harm. When collecting data, researchers are expected to carefully examine their data collection tools to ensure that they do not expose participating subjects to any form of harm (Kumar, 2011). Accordingly, researchers are advised to recognize potential risks that might befall participants and carefully choose research that can help mitigate these risks. Walliman (2011) further urges researchers to desist from making any revelations that could do reputational damage to participants' dignity and/or privacy. The following measures were employed to safeguard the wellbeing of the participants. Firstly, participants were not involved in any activity that could cause them "discomfort, anxiety, harassment, invasion of privacy, or demeaning or dehumanizing procedures" (Bailey, 1978: 384). Secondly, all the data collection tools (i.e. interview guide and questionnaire) did not contain questions that required participants to give private and intimate personal information (i.e. sexual orientation, religious affiliation) that might put their lives at risk if released to the public.

3.16.3. Confidentiality and anonymity

Kumar (2011) cautions researchers against disclosing of participants' information for purposes other than research as this is unethical. It is also argued that participants will freely participate in a study when they know that their identity will not be revealed (Bailey, 1978). As such, researchers should always ensure that the confidentiality and anonymity of their participants are guaranteed. One way of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality is to ensure that the information provided by participants cannot be traced back to the source (Kumar, 2011). The following strategies were employed to safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Questions that would require participants to reveal information that reveals their identity (i.e. names, postal and physical addresses and telephone numbers) were omitted from the questionnaire. Secondly, numbers were used to identify participants during the capturing and analysis of the collected data.

3.16.4. Ensuring that permission is obtained

Permission was obtained from relevant stakeholders. Firstly, the researcher sought to obtain permission to conduct the study from the Regent Business School. Such permission was in the form of an ethical clearance certificate. The researcher sought permission from the identified call-

centre company. Such permission was in the form of a letter from the company giving the researcher permission to carry out the study using its employees as participants. Lastly, the researcher sought permission from all participants to include them in the study. Such permission was in the form of signed consent forms.

3.17 Conclusion

This chapter outlines the research methodology used carrying out this study. The topic covered includes how participants were sampled, how data was collected and analyzed. The chapter further outlined the ethical considerations that were employed during the researcher's interactions with participants. The following chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

Employee engagement has been identified as one of the strategies that companies use to enhance the performance of their employees. The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of employee engagement on employee performance, focusing specifically on a company operating within the call-centre space. To properly complete this study, it was necessary for the researcher to collect, and analyses data needed to answer the questions the study sought out to answer. The aim of this chapter is therefore to present and interpret the findings of the data collected. The data for this study was collected from 176 randomly selected participants. A self-administered questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. All participants who participated in this study signed a consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the study prior to completing the questionnaire.

4.2. Presentation of results

4.2.1. Biographical information of participants

4.2 1. Composition of participants according to gender

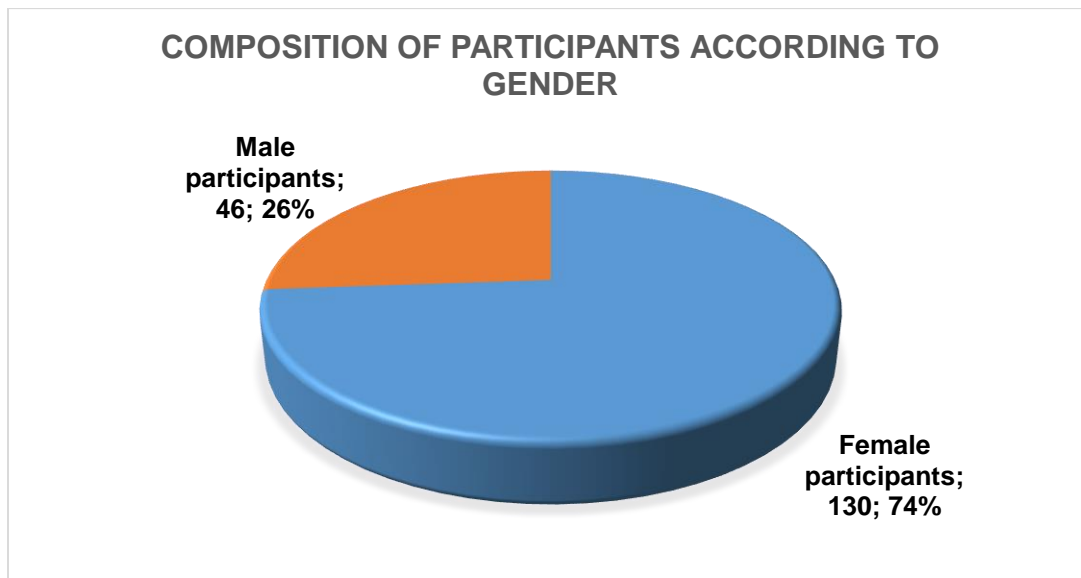
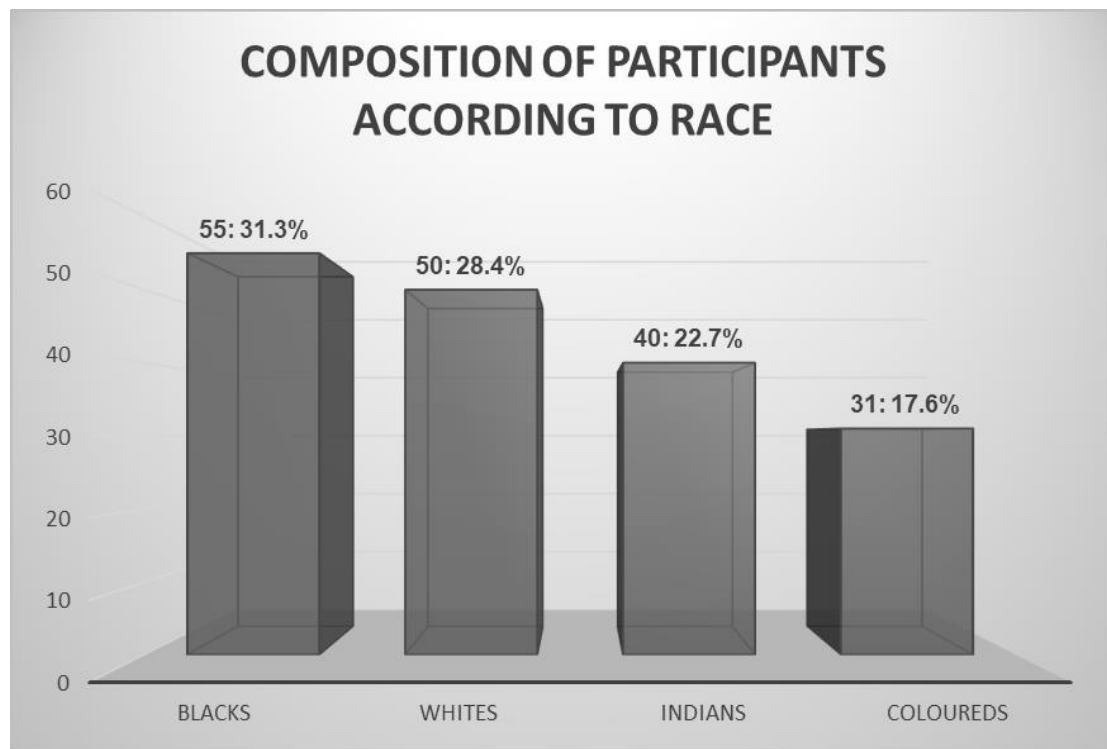


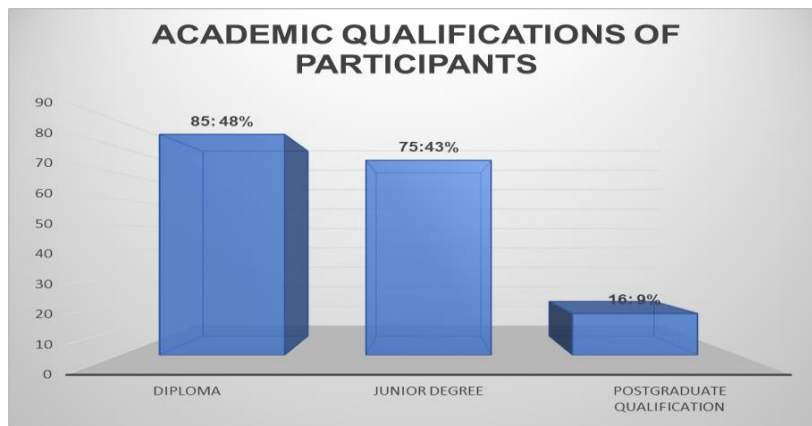
Figure 4.2.1 presents the demographics of participants according to their gender. The figure shows that about 130 or 74% of participants who participated in the study were females while only 46 or 26% of the participants were males.

Figure 4.2 2. Composition of participants according to race



The above figure presents the composition of participants according to race. About 55 (31.3%) of those who participated in the study were Blacks. White participants constituted the second highest race with 50 (28.4%) participants. About 40 (22.7%) of the participants were Indians. Lastly, about Coloureds were represented by 31 participants which translated to 17.6%.

Figure 4.2 3. Academic qualifications of participants



The above figure presents the academic qualifications of participants who participated in the study. About 85 or 48% of the participants listed a diploma as their highest qualification. The figure also shows that 75 or 43% of the participants listed a junior degree as their highest qualification. Lastly, 16 or 9% of the participants had attained a postgraduate qualification.

Figure 4.2 4. Composition of participants according to their work positions

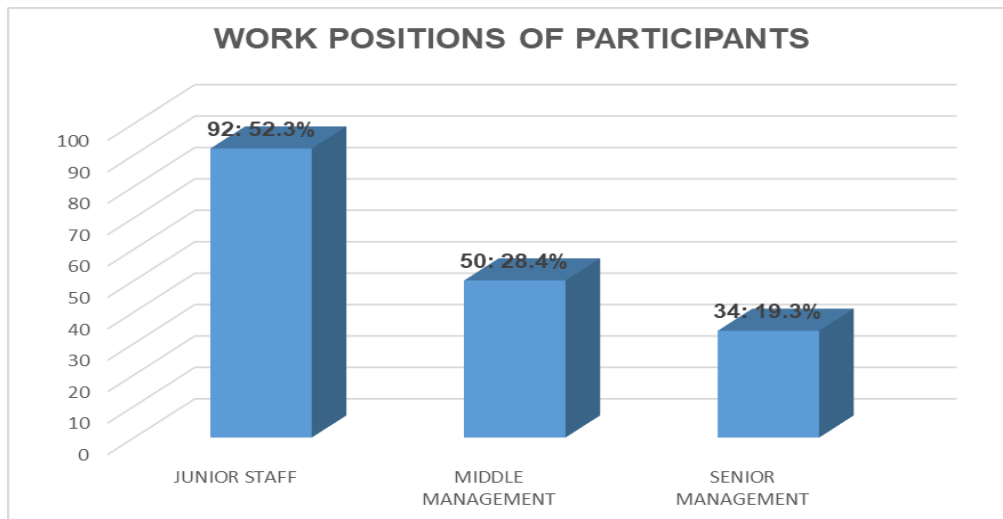
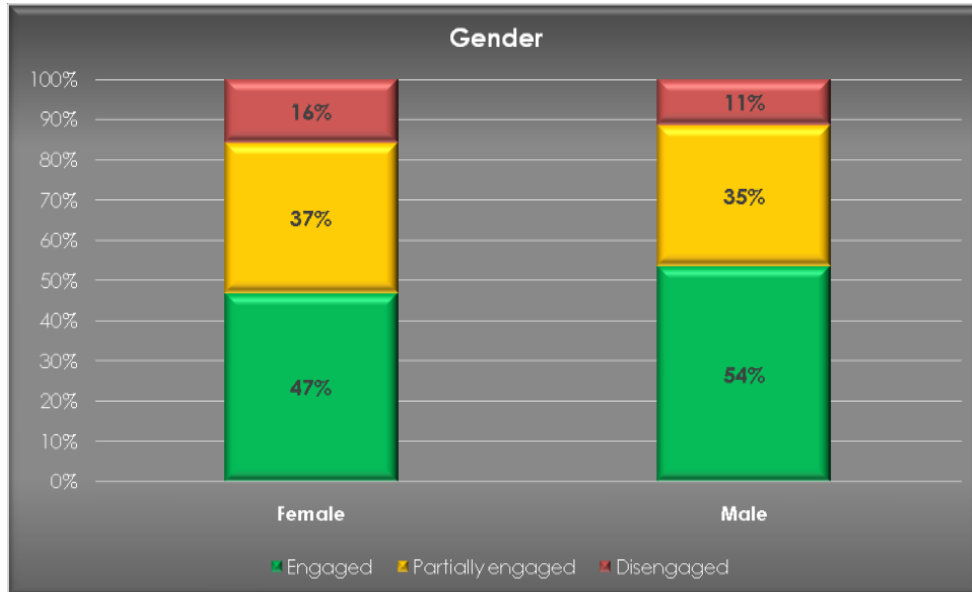


Figure 4.2.4 presents the work positions held by participants who participated in the study. The figure shows that 92 (52.3%) of the participants were junior staff members. About 50 (28.4%) of the participants occupied positions classified within the middle management level while the remaining 34 (19.3%) occupied positions within the senior management level.

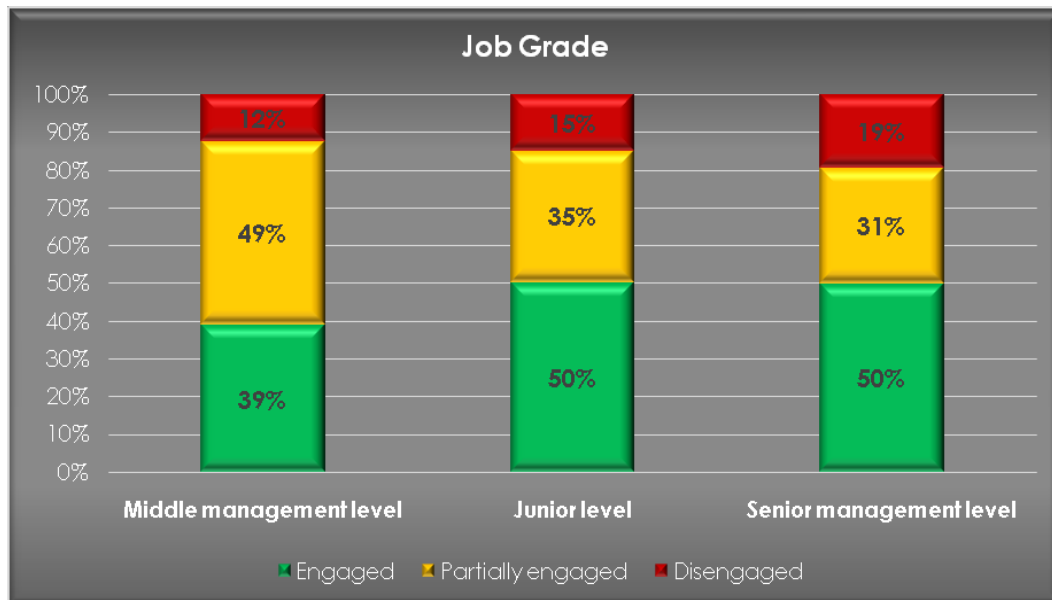
4.2.5. Level of engagement

Figure 4.2 5. Level of engagements according to gender



The above figure reveals that male participants feel more engaged as compared to their female counterparts. About 54% of male participants reported being fully engaged as compared to only 47% of the female participants. On the other hand, about 37% of female participants feel partially engaged as compared to about 35% of male participants. Lastly, 16% of female participants reported being disengaged as compared to only 11% of male participants. The findings of this study are not an isolated case. Previous studies have shown that female employees are less engaged as compared to their male counterparts (Carli, 2020; Miller, 2020; Rozman, Zabukovsek, Bobek and Tominc, 2021). Gender inequality in the workplace has been identified as the main reason why female employees remain less engaged as compared to their male counterparts. Although a lot has been achieved about women empowerment in the workplace, perceptions still exist that women are only meant for domestic responsibilities and that they should stay away from the boardroom. It is the same perception that results in many company executives preferring to engage more with male employees than with female one. However, the danger of selective engagement is that the less engaged and actively disengaged groups become despondent and eventually lose the zeal to work (more on the impact of less engaged employees in the following section).

Figure 4.2 6. Level of engagements according to job grade



The above figure reveals that majority of participants within the middle management level (49%) feel partially engaged as compared to 39% of participants who feel fully engaged. About 12% of participants from the middle management level category feel completely disengaged. On most participants (50%) from the junior level category feel completely engaged as compared to 35% (partially engaged) and 15% (disengaged) respectively. Lastly, the figure shows that as with the junior level category, about 50% of participants from the senior management level category feel engaged as compared to 31% (partially engaged). About 19% of the participants from this category feel disengaged. These findings are congruent with those of a study done in other industries. For instance, in studying engagement according to levels amongst Indian workers in the fishing industry, Bhattacharya (2014) found that those at senior management level had higher level of engagements than those at junior level. The reason for this difference lies in the level of authority amongst the two groups. It has been found that employees at the senior management level have the authority to make executive decisions as compared to junior staff.

Figure 4.2 7 Level of staff engagements according to age group

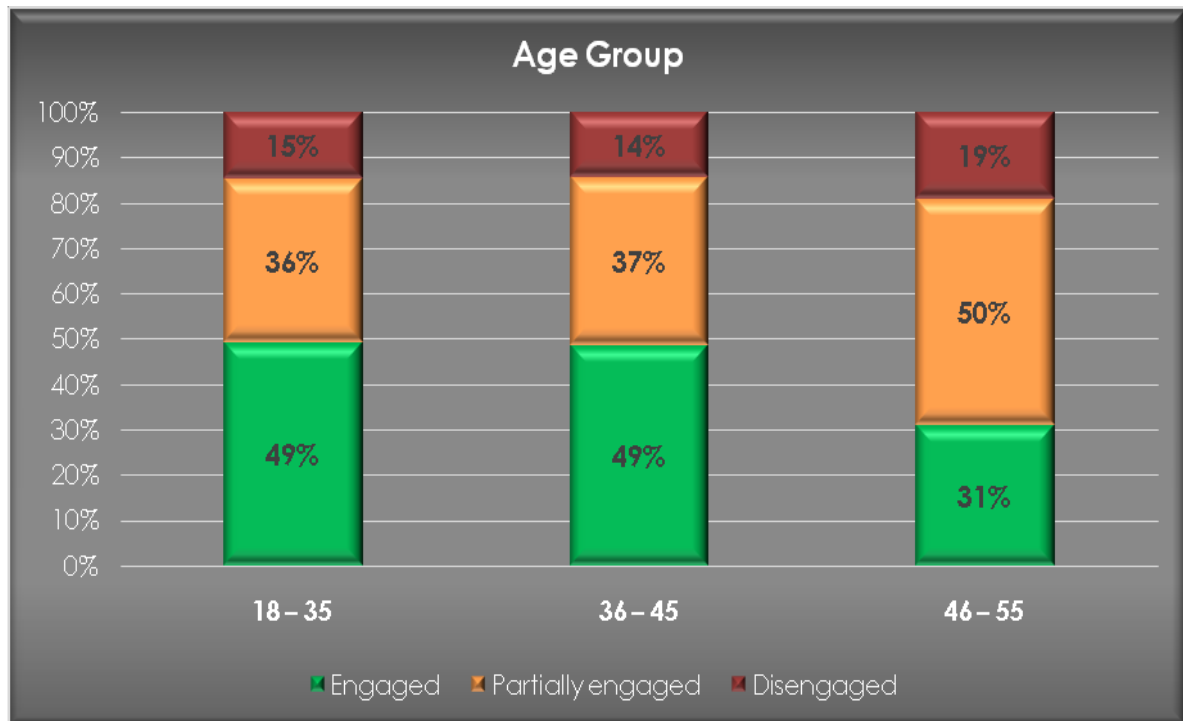
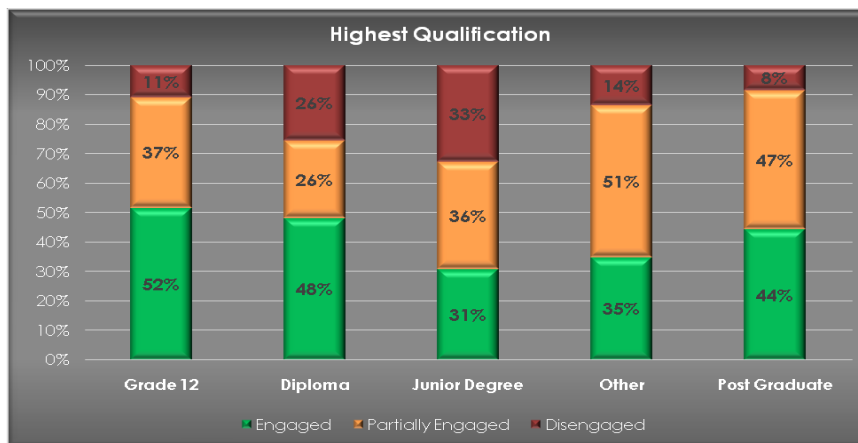


Figure 4.2.7 presents the results of the level of engagements according to the age group of the participants. The results reveal that majority of participants (49%) from the 18 – 35 age group feel engaged as compared to 36% (partially engaged) and 15% (disengaged) respectively. These results are consistent with those of participants from the 36 – 45 age groups. About 49% of participants from this group feel engaged as compared to 37% (partially engaged) and 14% disengaged respectively. On contrast, majority of participants (50%) from the 46 – 55% age group feel partially engaged while only 31% feel fully engaged. About 19% of the participants from this group feel disengaged. These findings confirm earlier findings (Gallup report, 2013). In a study titled, “The 2013 State of the American Workplace”, the report found that employees above the age of 49 to be the least engaged group in the workforce. Future uncertainties, difficulties in making career changes due to age as well as feelings of being overworked and undervalued have been identified as some of the reasons why this group is largely disengaged.

Figure 4.2 8 The level of staff engagements according to education qualification



The above figure presents the results of the level of staff engagement according to the participants' level of education. The figure shows that more than half (52%) of the participants with only grade 12 feel fully engaged as compared to 37% (partially engaged) and 11% (disengaged) respectively. About 48% of participants with a diploma feel fully engaged, 36% feel partially engaged while 33% feel completely disengaged. On the contrast, the figure participants with a junior degree who feel engaged are in the minority (31%) when compared to those who are partially engaged (36%) and those who feel disengaged (33%) respectively. Majority of participants (51%) who identified "other" as their highest qualification reported feeling partially engaged as compared to 35% (engaged) and 14% (not engaged) respectively. Lastly, majority of participants (47%) with a postgraduate qualification feel partially engaged while 44% feel fully engaged. Only 8% of this group feel completely disengaged.

Figure 4.2 9. Level of staff engagement according to the tenure of participants

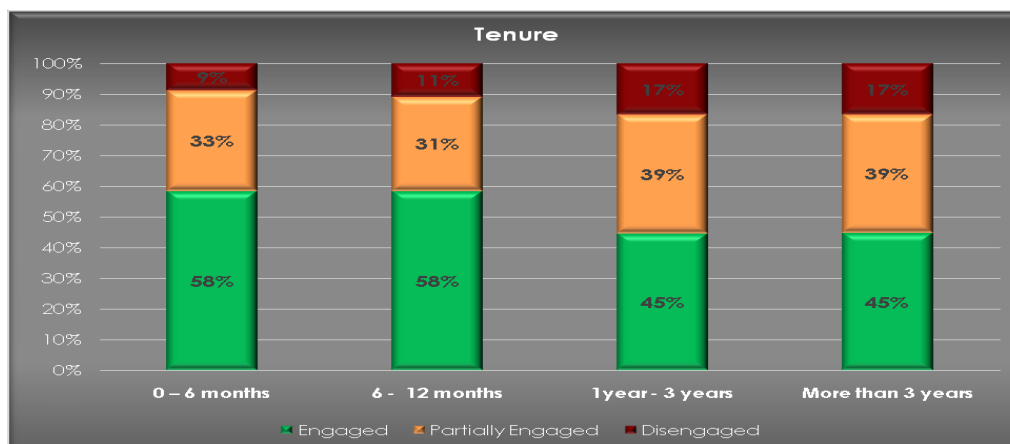


Figure 4.2.9 presents the level of staff engagement according to the tenure of the participants. The figure shows that more than half of participants (58%) with less than six months in the organization feel fully engaged. About 33% of participants within this group feel partially disengaged with only 9% feeling disengaged. About 58% of participants with between 6 and 12 months in the company feel engaged with 31 % feeling partially engaged and 11% feeling disengaged. Of those participants who have been in the company for between a year and 3 years, the figure shows that 45% feel engaged, 39% feel partially disengaged with 17% feeling disengaged. Lastly, the figure further shows the engagement levels of those with more than 3 years in the company are identical with those of participants with between 1 and 3 years (45% engaged, 39% partially engaged and 17% disengaged). The findings reveal no significant relationship between levels of engagement and the tenure of employees. These findings support those of earlier studies (Bhattacharya, 2014).

Figure 4.2 10. Impact of employee engagement on employees

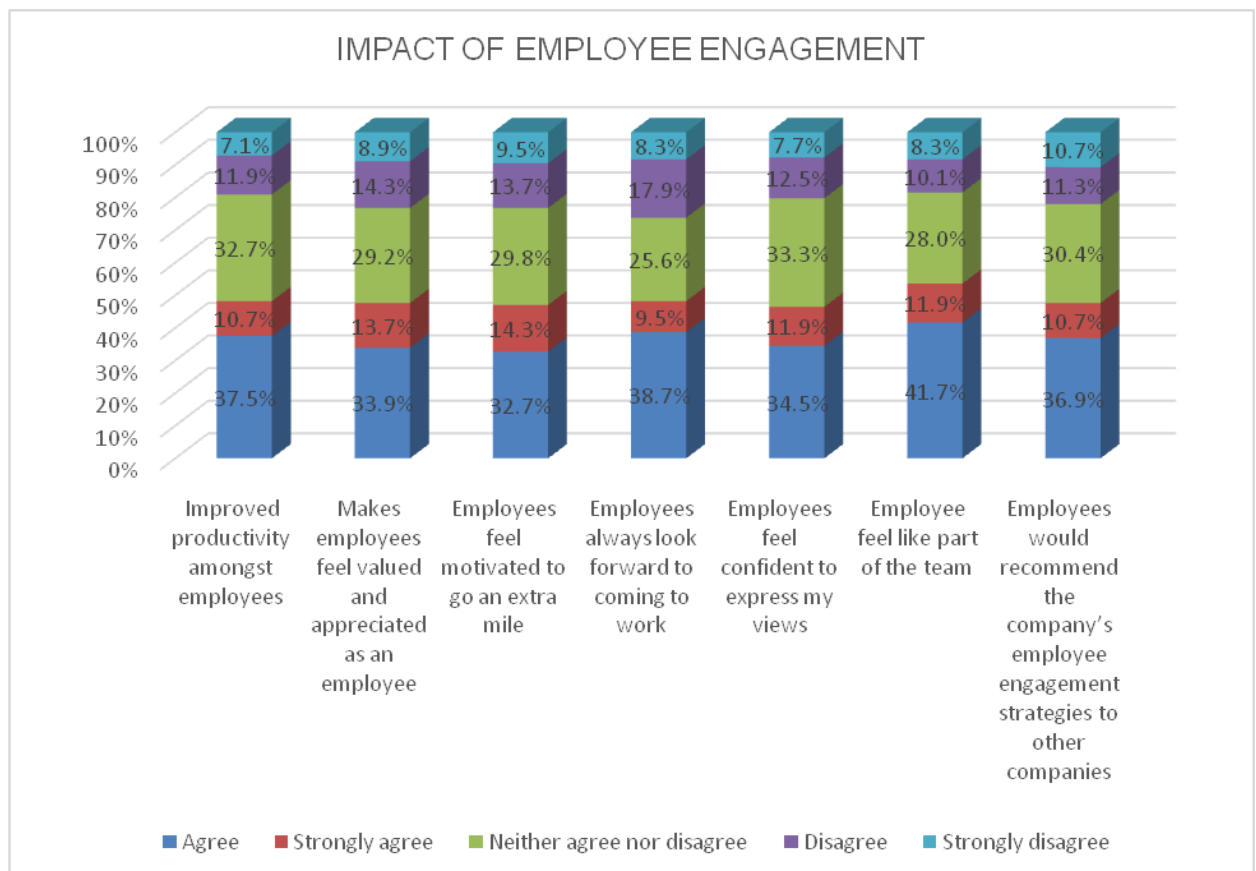


Figure 4.2.10 presents the impact of employee engagement as outlined by the participants. The figure shows that a total of 48.2 % of the participants agree that employee engagement “improved productivity amongst employees”. Of the 48.2%, 37.5% agreed with the statement while about 10.7% strongly agreed with the statement. This is in comparison to 32, 7% (neither agree nor disagree), 11, 9% (disagree) and 7.1% (strongly disagree). These findings are consistent with those of earlier studies (Hoole and Bonnema, 2015 and Govender and Bussin, 2020). In studying performance management and employee engagement in South Africa, Govender and Bussin (2020) found that there was a correlation between increased employee engagement and improved performance. The importance of increased employee engagement was earlier articulated by Hoole and Bonnema (2015). These authors submit that organizations with highly engaged workforce were more likely to have a competitive edge to meet their performance targets as compared to those with low levels of engagement. Robertson-Smith and Markwick (2009) attributed the performance of highly engaged employees to how they approached their daily duties. According to these authors highly engaged employees fully commit themselves to their work, resulting in them performing 20% better than their less engaged counterparts.

The figure further reveals that majority of participants agree that employee engagement makes employees feel valued and appreciated. About 33.9% of these participants “agree” with the statement while about 13.7% of the participants “strongly agree” with the statement. The remainders of the participants’ responses are divided as follows: 29.2% (neither agree nor disagree, 14, 3% (disagree) and 8. 9% (strongly disagree). The importance of ensuring that employees are feeling valued cannot be overemphasized. The significance of having a workforce that feels valued as well as the implications of keeping unvalued employees was highlighted by several authors (Shuck and Reio, 2013; Murphey; 2013, White, 2015). On one hand, organizations that value their workforce create a positive working environment where employees feel that they are adding value to the organization and that their efforts are recognized and acknowledged (Murphey 2013). On the other hand, being in a company where employees feel unvalued creates a negative work environment. This in turn leads to employees display behaviours that negatively affect the productivity levels of the organization. For instance, White (2015) noted a positive relationship between unappreciated employees and high rate of absenteeism, drop in productivity, higher staff turnover and high rate of tardiness. Employees who constantly encounter negative work environment have been found to develop negative emotional episodes, resulting in feeling of loneliness and exclusion, increased level of irritability and burnout (Shuck and Reio, 2013; Murphey; 2013). It is therefore not surprising those employees with

feelings of being unappreciated will often stay away from work and experience drop in productivity. Consequently, one can deduce that employee engagement also plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the mental state of employees remains healthy and stable. This is in turn beneficial to organizations as their employees stay motivated with an increased level of productivity.

The figure also reveals that majority of participants, about 47%, concur with the statement that employees feel motivated to go an extra mile at work when they are actively engaged. Of these participants about 32.7% agree with the statement while about 14.3% strongly agree with the statement. Of the remaining participants, 29.8% neither agree nor disagree with the statement; about 13.7% of the participants disagree with the statement while 9.5% of the participants strongly disagree with the statement. Employees are prepared to go an extra mile for a company where they feel valued and appreciated. These sentiments were also shared by Schaufeli (2013). In an article titled, "What is engagement?" Schaufeli argues that engagement in a business setup comprises of several elements, namely, job satisfaction, commitment to the organisation and extra-role behaviour. Schaufeli found that employees with these elements have been found to be willing to go beyond what is expected of them as per their job description. This behaviour is often influenced by employees' belief in the company's values and vision and their desire to see such a vision come to fruition. As such, these employees will often strive to find better ways through which they can efficiently execute their daily duties (Rozman, Zabukovsek, Bobek and Tominc (2021).

About 48.2% of the participants agree (38.7% agree and 9.5% strongly disagree) that active employee engagement results in employees always looking forward to coming to work. This is in contrast with the views of 25.6% of participants who neither agree nor disagree with the statement, 17.9% who disagree with the statement and about 8.3% who strongly disagree with the statement. These findings are consistent with those of earlier findings (Robertson-Smith and Markwick, 2009). Actively engaged employees develop passion for their work and a deep connection to their company (Robertson-Smith and Markwick, 2009). Such employees always look forward to getting to work. Having people who are passionate about their work have been found to be assets to the company. These individuals drive creativeness and innovation within their companies and are result-driven. These views are supported by recent findings on the subject. In studying gender differences in work satisfaction and work engagement, Rozman, et al (2021) found that engaged employees are always cognizant of the importance of innovation for their company. On the

contrary, findings reveal that unengaged and actively disengaged employees often do not pull weight and are burdens to their companies. It has been noted that not-engaged workforce invests neither energy nor passion into their daily work. Instead, they sleepwalk through their workday with minimal effort. On the other hand, actively disengaged people have been found to actively act out their unhappiness by undermining the efforts of those actively engaged (Robertson-Smith and Markwick, 2009). These findings are yet another confirmation of the significance of employee engagement. Employees are the main drivers of the company of any company's success. As such, it is very important that company executives have measures in place to ensure that their workforce remains actively engaged. As the findings reveal, the actively engaged workforce becomes an asset and positively affects the company's productivity while not engaged and actively disengaged groups become liability and negatively affect the company's performance. Figure 4.2.10 further reveals that majority of the participants agree that employee engagement results in employees feeling confident expressing their views with about 34.5% agreeing and 11.9% strongly agreeing with the statement. Of the remaining participants, 33.3% neither agree nor disagree with the statement, 12.5% disagreed with the statement and 7.7% strongly disagreed with the statement.

According to the figure 4.2.10 majority of the participants agree that employee engagement makes employees feel like part of the team. About 41.7% agreed with the statement, with about 11.9% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement. The remainder of the participants are divided as follows: 28% (neither agree nor disagree), 10.1% (disagree) and 8.3% (strongly disagree) respectively. The importance of employee engagement in creating a unified workforce was also highlighted in previous studies (Fredrickson, 1998 and Shuck and Albornoz, 2011) Employees spend a considerable amount of their time at work. It is therefore crucial that companies always strive to create a working environment where employees have a sense of belonging. By actively engaging their workforce, employers create a supportive working environment that enhances positive emotion. This in turn widens employees' ability to think and consciously build their available psychological and emotional resources (Fredrickson, 1998). It was therefore not surprising that majority of the participants in this study felt that being actively engaged made them feel like part of the team. This is because those who are consulted in the company's decision-making process have a sense of being appreciated. This could in turn lead to enhanced productivity. On the contrary, non-engaged and actively disengaged employees often feel alienated, which could then lead to a decrease in productivity.

Lastly, participants were asked if they would recommend the company's employee engagement strategy to other companies. Figure 4.2.10 reveals that majority of participants indicated that they would with about 36.9% agreeing and about 10.7 strongly agreeing. About 30.4% of the participants neither agreed nor agreed with the statement. About 11.3% disagreed and about 10.7% strongly disagreed.

Figure 4.2 11. Recommendations on how to enhance the employee engagement strategy

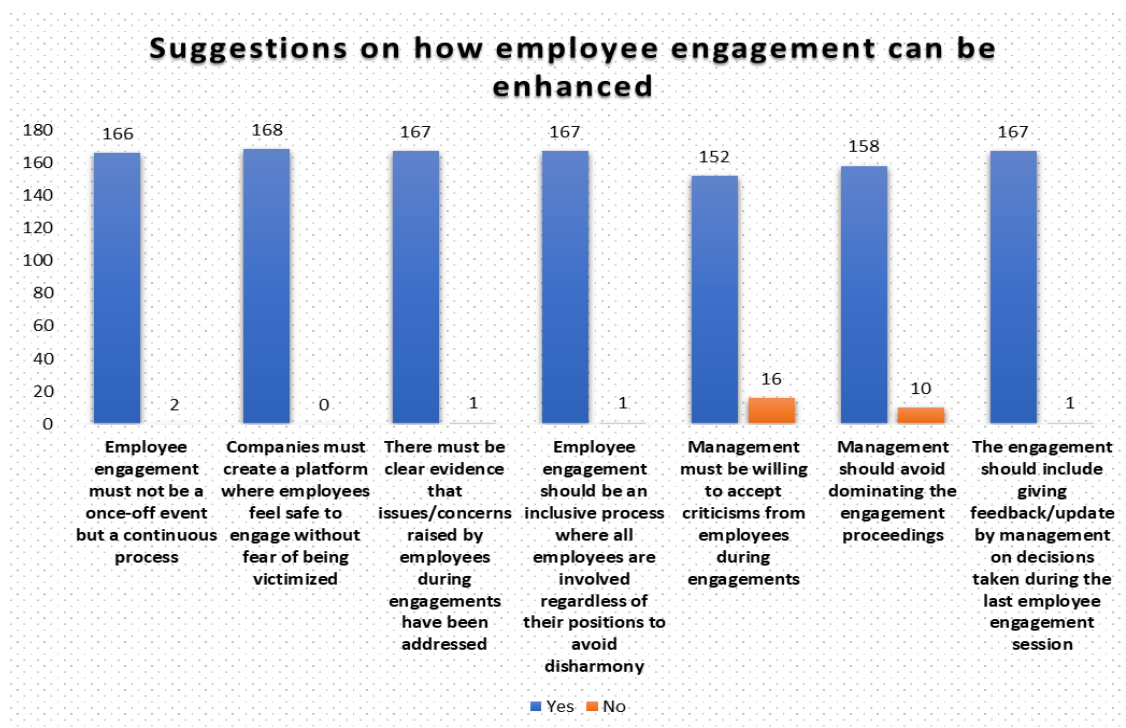


Figure 4.2.11 reveals the main recommendations made by participants on how companies can enhance their employee engagement strategies. All but two of the participants agreed with the fact that employee engagement must not be a once-off event but a continuous process. The importance of continuous engagement was highlighted by Govender and Bussin (2020) who argue that consistent engagements between employers and employees ensures that work-related issues or problems with the potential to affect the business are quickly identified and resolved. About 100% (168) of the participants agree that companies must create a platform where employees feel safe to engage without fear of being victimized. Employees are not just brainless subjects whose job is only to help the company achieve its objectives. Instead, employees also desire to be given a platform through which their voices can be heard. In cases where they are not given a platform to be heard, employees often feel disempowered and demotivated (Govender and Bussin, 2020). These views are congruent with those of earlier study by Morrison (2014) who

argued that employees without a proper platform to raise their views or give inputs regarding the company operations eventually become demotivated and become silent. This, however, has a detrimental effect on the company since the silence of these employees often deprives it of key information that might be useful for its operations. Consequently, it is critical for employers to create a platform from which they can freely raise their views without fear of victimization or intimidation or victimization (Morrison, 2014). It is therefore not surprising that all participants agreed that companies should provide a platform from which employees could freely engage with employers

More than two thirds (167) of the participants agree that there must be evidence that issues/concerns raised by employees during engagements have been addressed. All but one participant (167) agrees that employee engagement should be an inclusive process where all employees are involved regardless of their position to avoid disharmony. About 152 of the participants agree that management must be willing to accept criticisms from employees during engagements. About 16 participants disagreed with this sentiment. The figure further reveals that about 158 participants agree that for employee engagement to be effective, management should avoid dominating the proceedings. About 10 participants disagreed with this sentiment.

Lastly, almost all participants (167) agree that engagement should include giving feedback/update on management decisions taken that emanated from employee engagement exercises. The importance of providing feedback to employees was also highlighted by previous studies such as that of Aguinis (2013). According to Aguinis (2013) timeous and meaningful feedback assist employers in correcting performance of employees to achieve both individual and business objectives.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the data analysis and interpretation with reference to the literature review. The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of employee engagement on employee performance. The main findings of the investigation were summarized in each section. Chapter 5 concludes the study, discusses its limitations and makes recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the findings of the study. This chapter presents an overall summary, conclusion and the recommendations for the research conducted on the impact of employee engagement on employee performance at a Gauteng- based call –Centre Company.

5.2. Findings from the Literature Review

Level of employee engagement

Previous studies have shown that female employees are less engaged as compared to their male counterparts (Carli, 2020; Miller, 2020; Rozman, Zabukovsek, Bobek and Tominc, 2021). Gender inequality in the workplace has been identified as the main reason why female employees remain less engaged as compared to their male counterparts. Although a lot has been achieved with regard to women empowerment in the workplace, perceptions still exist that women are only meant for domestic responsibilities and that they should stay away from the boardroom. It is the same perception that results in many company executives preferring to engage more with male employees than with female one. However, the danger of selective engagement is that less engaged and actively disengaged groups become despondent and eventually lose the zeal to work (more on the impact of less engaged employees in the following section).

These findings confirm earlier findings (Gallup report, 2013). In a study titled, “The 2013 State of the American Workplace”, the report found that employees above the age of 49 to be the least engaged group in the workforce. Future uncertainties, difficulties in making career changes due to age as well as feelings of being overworked and undervalued have been identified as some of the reasons why this group is largely disengaged.

Impact of employee engagement

Several study findings have revealed the impact of employee engagement on both the company and its employees (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017; Pongton and Suntrayuth, 2019; Saks (2021). Firstly, existing literature shows that employee engagement plays a significant role in the success of the organization. Engaged employees significantly enhances the institution’s ability to achieve high performance and superior business results (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017). These authors

found that actively engaged employees are often motivated, are innovative and are often willing to go an extra mile in the execution of their daily duties. This often translate into high performance and great results. These results are often attributed to how institutions treated their employees (Osborne and Hammoud, 2017 and Saks, 2021). According to Saks (2021), institutions that demonstrate caring human resources management practices towards their employees are more likely to create a climate where employees care about their organization and vice versa. Organizational productivity is determined by employees' efforts and engagement (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). This suggests that employees who are engaged are more committed and engaged resulting in increased productivity within the organization. Organizations that focus on improving employee engagement will benefit from an improved employee performance. Saks (2021) also agrees that improving employee engagement will positively affect an employee's job performance and organizational profitability. Organizations with highly engaged employees experience increased customer satisfaction, profits, and employee productivity (Vandenabeele, 2014). Organizations with highly engaged employees will have a competitive edge and record higher profits. Organizations that have highly engaged employees have greater profits than those that do not (Society for Human Resource Management [SHRM], 2014). It is, therefore, safe to conclude that the survival and sustainability of any institution depends largely on employees who are continuously engaged. As Biriowu and Chikwe, (2020) noted, employee engagement is a critical element in maintaining the organization's vitality, survivability and profitability.

Existing literature further shows that in addition to being beneficial to organizations, employee engagement has been found to have a positive impact on employees as well (Pongton and Suntrayuth, 2019). The literature has identified several benefits of employee engagement for employees. Firstly, employee engagement has been found to increase employees' loyalty to the organization. Pongton and Suntrayuth (2019) noted that engaged employees often stay with the company, become advocates of their company and its products and services. In addition, unlike unengaged employees who are often demotivated and detached, engaged employees are always eager and willing to actively contribute towards the business's success. Existing literature further reveals that employees who are actively engaged will often develop emotional attachment to the organization. Unlike their unengaged counterparts, engaged employees become emotionally attached to their companies and form allegiance with the organization's strategies and goals (Biriowu and Chikwe, 2020). This subsequently leads to employees becoming effective brand ambassadors of their respective organizations (Saks, 2021). It is, therefore, safe to conclude that

employee engagement has a positive impact not only on the organization's strategic goals, but also on the employees that must spearhead the attainment of such goals.

5.3. Findings from the Primary research

The findings further revealed that majority of participants with different tenures (i.e. less than six months, between 6 and 12 months and more than 3 years) felt actively engaged. However, it is worth noting that only 45% of those who have been in the company for more than three years felt actively engaged. This could be attributed to several factors and some of them could be linked to the following:

- Stagnation – Tenured employees may be feeling that their careers have become stagnant leading to them losing interest in their jobs and thus becoming disengaged.
- Poor Leadership – Poor leadership by management related to poor communication and not addressing employee concerns when raised could be a contributing factor to tenured employees being disengaged.
- Reward, Recognition & Employee Appreciation - While employees may have been optimistic in the first couple of months of joining, over a period of time, employees may be feeling less valued and appreciated.
- Ineffective Employee Engagement Initiatives – The employee engagement initiatives in place may be ineffective to stimulate on-going enthusiasm of employees leading to disengagement.
- Inadequate Pay & Benefits – Tenured employees may be feeling that their pay and benefits are no longer commensurate with their acquired skills and experience.

In using qualifications of participants to determine the level of engagement, the findings show different levels of engagement. For instance, it is only in two categories (i.e. grade 12 and others) where more than 50% of the participants felt actively engaged. On the other hand, only 31% of those with a junior degree felt actively engaged with the rest feeling either partially engaged (36%) or completely disengaged (33%). Findings further show that only 44 % of those with a post-graduate qualification feel actively engaged. These findings could be attributed to a few possible reasons such as:

Employees with junior degrees and post –graduate qualifications may be feeling that the call centre agent job is less challenging for them and perhaps they deserve better roles within the

organization and if employee internal development has not been fast-tracked, this may lead to loss of interest on the job and subsequent disengagement.

Employees with only grade 12 and others are more actively engaged which suggests that this group understands that their employability chances in jobs within other sectors may be very slim and thus they tend to appreciate the job opportunity more and make the most of it which would then lead to higher engagement levels.

The findings of this study further show that in terms of age, majority of those in age groups of 18 – 35 and 36 – 45 feels actively engaged. However, only 31% of those between 46 – 55 feels actively engaged. Some of the factors contributing to this could be as follows:

- Employees between the ages of 46 -55 could find that the employee engagement initiatives that are currently being adopted are not suitable for their age group, leading to higher disengagement levels. This could also suggest that this age group category may not be the ideal for call centre jobs.
- Employees below age 45 feel actively engaged and this could suggest that the employee engagement initiatives currently being adopted are suitable for this age group, leading to higher engagement levels. This could also suggest that this age group category may be the ideal for call centre jobs.

The findings further show that majority of participants occupying positions at both junior and senior management levels feel actively engaged. However, only 39% of participants from the middle management level feel actively engaged. This could be attributed to the following factors.

- Employees at junior management level may be actively engaged due to the support they receive from their managers in middle management, however,
- Employees in middle management may be feeling unappreciated by their senior managers. It is also possible that compensation and benefit structure at middle management is not competitive, leading to a higher level of disengagement.
- On the other hand, Senior Managers appear to be more actively engaged, and this may suggest that they could be the initiators and custodians of the employee engagement activities of the organization and as such, they are bound to be more excited about them. It is also possible that compensation and benefits structure is more competitive than the middle management level.

Impact on employees

Findings of the current study further revealed that majority of participants being actively engaged motivate them to go an extra mile in carrying out their daily duties and responsibilities. Further findings show that actively engaged employees always look forward to coming to work. Unlike their unengaged counterparts, engaged employees have been found to drive creativeness and innovation within their companies and are result-driven. The findings of the study further show that majority of participants agree that employee engagement improved productivity amongst employees. Also confirmed by the findings is that majority of the participants agree that employee engagement makes them feel valued and appreciated.

5.4. Summary of Findings

Employees are the main drivers of the company of any company's success. As such, it is very important that company executives have measures in place to ensure that their workforce remains actively engaged. The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of employee engagement on employee performance at a Gauteng-based call-centre company. The findings of this study confirmed the findings of earlier studies which showed that employee engagement has positive impact on employee performance. Unlike unengaged employees, engaged employees have been found to display positive attitudes towards their work. As with earlier studies, the findings of this showed that engaged employees are highly motivated, look forward to coming to work, are proactive, are creative and innovative and are result-driven. As with the prior study findings on the subject, majority of the participants concur with the statement that employees feel motivated to go an extra mile at work when they are actively engaged. The findings of the study concurred with what literature says on employee engagement and its drivers. It is further affirmed that that improving engagement levels would have significant benefits on business productivity. On the contrary, businesses that do not focus on improving engagement levels have greater exposure to poor productivity levels. In the current study, the findings indicate that the Gauteng-based call centre has very low engagement levels and it is safe to conclude that this has a direct impact on the performance of the call centre. The risk for poor customer service which may lead to customers leaving the brand is higher.

5.5. Recommendations of the study

In this study, participants had the opportunity to make recommendations on how companies can enhance their employee engagement strategies. Majority of the participants agree that the company should adopt the following strategies; that the employee engagement must not be a once-off event but a continuous process, that companies must create a platform where employees feel safe to engage without fear of being victimized, that there must be evidence that issues/concerns raised by employees during engagements have been addressed, that employee engagement should be an inclusive process where all employees are involved regardless of their positions, that management must be willing to accept criticism from employees during engagements, that for employee engagement to be effective, management should avoid dominating the proceedings and that engagement should include giving feedback/update on decisions taken by management that emanated from employee engagement exercises.

From this study, the participants overwhelmingly highlighted a huge gap between management and its call centre employees. Management of the Gauteng-based call centre does not appear to be paying attention to employee engagement, which has the potential to cause its high turnover and loss of customers.

It is recommended that managers focus on improving employee engagement levels, to improve productivity at the Gauteng-based call centre. The Gauteng-based call centre should also consider the following recommendations to improve performance:

- Develop an employee engagement policy
- Appoint an employee engagement committee which is diverse and inclusive
- Conduct regular surveys and work on feedback provided
- Involve employees in employee engagement activities for maximum participation
- Conduct regular management town-halls where employees provide feedback to their managers without fear of victimization
- Conduct regular management training to sensitize managers on impact of employee engagement

5.6. Areas for future research

The findings of this study as well as the existing literature reveal a need for further studies on following issues relating to employee engagement:

- There is currently a dearth of information on the impact of employee engagement in the Call-Centre Industry in South Africa. There is, therefore, a need for large-scale studies to be carried out to determine the impact that employee engagement has on employees within the industry.
- The emergence of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic had serious implications on how many companies operated with many employees being forced to work from home. There is also a need for studies that will focus on the impact that the emergence of COVID-19 had on how employers engaged with employees. Findings from such studies could help in the development of employee engagement strategies that can be used during future pandemics.
- Lastly, there is a need for studies that would focus on determining effective employee engagement strategies that companies can adopt in engaging with their employees.

5.7. Conclusion

Employee engagement has been identified as one of the main cornerstones for improving employee performance in companies. This submission has been confirmed by studies conducted both locally and internationally. Although much research has been done on the impact of employee engagement on employee performance, the majority of these have not zoomed in the Call Centre industry. The aim of this study was therefore to determine the impact of employee engagement on performance at a Call-Centre company based in Gauteng. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative phase of the study. The data was summarized and presented in tables, which were then discussed using descriptive statistics. The results of this study confirm those of preceding studies which showed a positive relationship between employee engagement and increased employee performance. There is, therefore, a need for companies to put measures in place that are geared at ensuring effective implementation of employee engagement initiatives.

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Appendix

Appendix : A. Questionnaire

SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE

Researcher's remarks

Good day participant.

Thank you very much for taking time to complete this questionnaire. Please note that there is no wrong or right answer. I therefore, urge you to respond to all questions as honestly as you can. Please use your pen/pencil to make a cross next to an item applicable to you (an example is given below).

Example of how to complete the questionnaire: Are you a South African?

<u>YES</u>	<u>X</u>	<u>NO</u>	
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The questionnaire is divided into 4 sections, and you are kind to complete all of them. Please feel free to contact on xxxxxx if you need clarity on any issue pertaining to this questionnaire.

Once again thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Regards,

Mr. Khodani Phillip Tshikotshi

Demographic details

Please make a cross next to the option applicable to you

Gender:

Male	
------	--

Female	
--------	--

Age group:

18 – 35	
---------	--

36 – 45	
---------	--

36 – 45	
---------	--

46 – 55	
---------	--

Above 55	
----------	--

Job grade:

Junior	
--------	--

Middle management level	
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Senior management level	
-------------------------	--

Highest qualifications:

Grade 12

Diploma

Junior degree

Post grad

Other

Number of years in the position:

0 – 5 yrs	
-----------	--

6 – 10 yrs	
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More than 10 yrs	
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SECTION A: To identify levels of employee engagement at a Gauteng-based call-centre company

	Items	Agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	The company's employee engagement initiatives are very effective and they result in improved productivity amongst employees					
	Employee engagement in the company makes me feel valued and appreciated as an employee					
	I feel motivated to go an extra mile as a result of these engagements					
	I always look forward to coming to work because if feel acknowledged by the company					
	I feel confident to express my views during employee engagements because I know the management values my inputs					
	Employee engagement makes me feel like part of the team and I would like to be part of this company for years to come					
	I would gladly recommend the company's employee engagement strategies to any company that want to enhance its employee' strategies					

SECTION B: To identify levels of employee engagement at a Gauteng-based call-centre company

	Items	Agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	I am familiar with the employee engagement concept					
	The company has created a platform for employee engagement					
	Management is always available to have an honest and open engagement with employees					
	Management encourages employees to actively participate and air their views during these engagements, particularly on issues that affect them					
	I personally feel free to actively participate during employee engagement sessions					
	Management accepts criticism during its engagement with employees					

	Management considers suggestions/recommendations made by employees during the engagements					
	These engagements are very effective					
	I am satisfied with the current levels of employee engagement in the company					
	A lot still need to be done to enhance the level of employee engagement in the company					

SECTION C: Determining the impact of employee engagement at a Gauteng-based call-centre company

	Items	Agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	The company's employee engagement initiatives are very effective and they result in improved productivity amongst employees					
	Employee engagement in the company makes me feel valued and appreciated as an employee					
	I feel motivated to go an extra mile as a result of these engagements					
	I always look forward to coming to work because I feel acknowledged by the company					
	I feel confident to express my views during employee engagements because I know the management values my inputs					
	Employee engagement makes me feel like part of the team and I would like to be part of this company for years to come					
	I would gladly recommend the company's employee engagement strategies to any company that want to enhance its employee' strategies					

SECTION C: Determining the impact of employee engagement at a Gauteng-based call-centre company

	Items	Agree	Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	The company's employee engagement initiatives are very effective and they result in improved productivity amongst employees					
	Employee engagement in the company makes me feel valued and appreciated as an employee					
	I feel motivated to go an extra mile as a result of these engagements					
	I always look forward to coming to work because I feel acknowledged by the company					
	I feel confident to express my views during employee engagements because I know the management values my inputs					
	Employee engagement makes me feel like part of the team and I would like to be part of this company for years to come					
	I would gladly recommend the company's employee engagement strategies to any company that want to enhance its employee' strategies					

SECTION D: PLEASE MAKE A TICK NEXT TO AN ISSUE(S) THAT YOU THINK COMPANIES LIKE YOURS NEED TO FOCUS ON TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ITS IMPACT

Items		✓
	Employee engagement must not be a once-off event but a continuous process	
	Companies must create a platform where employees feel safe to engage without fear of being victimized	
	There must be clear evidence that issues/concerns raised by employees during engagements have been addressed	
	Employee engagement should be an inclusive process where all employees are involved regardless of their positions to avoid disharmony	
	Management must be willing to accept criticisms from employees during engagements	
	Management should avoid dominating the engagement proceedings	
	The engagement should include giving feedback/update by management on decisions taken during the last employee engagement session	

Appendix B: Consent letter

Investigating the impact of employee engagement on employee performance. A case of a Gauteng-based call-centre

I,.....hereby confirm that the purpose, the procedure, the possible risks and potential benefits associated with participation in this research project have been explained to me by the researcher, Mr. Khodani Phillip Tshikotshi. I further confirm that I am neither forced nor coerced into participating in this study and that I reserve the right to withdraw my participation at any given time. Mr. Tshikotshi also informed me that the information I am going to provide during my participation will be for academic purposes and will not be used for any other purpose. I was also assured that my personal information such as names, contact details and residential address will be kept confidential and will not be shared with another person. I was further informed that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I will not receive any remuneration resulting from my participation.

My signature below is confirmation that I have voluntarily consented to participating in the study.

Participants Name (Print)

Participants Signature, Date and Time

Witness Name (Print)

Witness Signature, Date and Time