

Developing an employee engagement strategy for Sparta Foods (Pty) Ltd

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DECLARATION

I declare that the field study hereby submitted for the qualification Master's in Business Administration at the UFS Business School at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work, either as a whole or in part, for a qualification at/in another university/faculty.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "cbotes". The signature is written over a horizontal line.

C.M. Botes

ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to develop an employee engagement strategy for Sparta Foods (Pty) Ltd. To achieve this objective, the researcher firstly conceptualised the construct of employee engagement to gain a better understanding of the different approaches and definitions relating to this concept. The dimensions of engagement were researched and the different models of engagement studied.

It was established that four levels of engagement can be distinguished. In order to determine the current levels of engagement within the organisation, the researcher studied the models of measurement of engagement. Employee engagement is closely linked to organisational performance outcomes. If an organisation can improve its levels of engagement, it can lead to higher productivity, profitability, and employee retention. If employees are not engaged, and the organisation does not address this, it could not only cost the organisation in monetary value, but also contribute to lost managerial hours spent on improving the levels of employee performance. Low levels of employee engagement could have a significant impact on the employee turnover of an organisation, morale in the office, quality of products, and word-of-of-mouth promotion.

For this quantitative research study, a positivist epistemological approach was followed. Stratified random sampling was used to sample the total population, which consisted of 792 employees. A random sample size of 400 was selected. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) questionnaire was used for the collection of the primary data. Some of the questionnaires were web-based and the remainder of the questionnaires were hard copies that were distributed by each head of department (HOD) in the organisation.

The overall results of the study indicated that the majority of the respondents were engaged. This means that the majority of the workforce has a positive attitude, but they are not entirely action orientated. The dimensions that scored high negative scores were vigour and absorption. The high negative scores for vigour indicated that some of the employees did not have a positive feeling of physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness that arise in response to their evaluation of the work they do. They also do not feel personally fulfilled by the work that they do and it does

not excite or invigorate them. Employees are thus unwilling to go the extra mile for the organisation and get tired easily when doing their jobs. The respondents did not feel like going to work in the morning and did not have high levels of energy and mental resilience. The high negative scores for absorption, on the other hand, indicate non-commitment and a lack of involvement by employees in their jobs. The employees are not immersed in their jobs and for a large percentage, their job is only a means to an end. These employees are not committed, are not inclined to put much effort into their work, and have no interest in the organisation or a desire to stay there.

To increase the level of engagement to actively engaged, the researcher proposed an input strategy of performance appraisals, training, and communication, which would deliver an output of job satisfaction, career progression, and innovation for employees, and employee retention, customer satisfaction, and growth and profitability for the organisation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
AOM	Academy of Management
B-BBEE	Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment
BeQ	Benchmark of Engagement Quotient
CEO	Chief executive officer
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CIRT	Centre for Innovation in Research and Teaching
EE	Employment equity
E EI	Employee Engagement Instrument
HOD	Head of department
HR	Human resource(s)
HRD	Human Resource Development
JD-R	Job demands-resources [model]
PCA	Principal components analysis
UWES	Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study aims to develop an employee engagement strategy for Sparta Foods (Pty) Ltd (hereafter referred to as Sparta Foods). The starting point for developing an employee engagement strategy, and in turn improving engagement, is to assess what the current position of the organisation is and to identify its strengths and weaknesses relating to engagement. This study will firstly provide an overview of the conceptualisation of employee engagement, the meaning and definition, the significant role it plays in organisations, as well as the effective measurement thereof. Thereafter the research problem and primary and secondary objectives are stated. The framework and methodology used for this study are also discussed. This study will also explore the background of Sparta Foods and its current situation relating to employee engagement. The research design, sampling strategy, and data-collection methods will be explained, and finally a thesis layout and conclusion will be provided.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Employee engagement

Rodwell (in Rice, Marlow, & Masarech, 2012, p. 1) states that “when the engagement you want isn’t there, you don’t need a survey to tell you that. You can feel it when you walk into the room”.

Employee engagement has been a topic of interest among academics and managers for the past two decades (Mohan & Nalini, 2016). In a short period of time, employee engagement, as a construct and area of research, has captured the interest of researchers and practitioners alike (Saks & Gruman, 2014) and it has been consistently rated as one of the top issues on the list of priorities of chief executive officers (CEOs) (Hoole, 2015). It has also become the main focus of attention of both academics and practitioners (Martins, 2015).

Numerous studies have linked employee engagement to an array of favourable organisational outcomes such as increased productivity, organisational commitment,

job satisfaction, customer satisfaction, reduced intention to resign, and reduced accidents (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002), and there are many claims that employee engagement is one of the key factors for the competitive advantage and success of organisations (Rich, Lepine, & Crawford 2010). The changing scenario in the world economy has placed special emphasis on the need for the enhanced performance of employees (Jha & Kumar, 2016).

As organisations struggle to maintain a competitive edge in tough economic times, many business leaders will need to turn to new strategies to increase productivity and innovation, but they will not be able to effectively execute what is required for future growth if they do not have the 'right' people, focus on the 'right' things, and willingly invest their 'discretionary effort' towards achieving the strategy of the organisation (Holbeche, 2015).

The need for organisations to maximise their employees' inputs has also contributed to the increasing interest in employee engagement. Organisational needs are driven by intense, often global, competition, which is increasing the need for employees to be emotionally and cognitively committed to their company, their customers, and their work (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010).

The cost of getting employee engagement wrong includes emotional absence and passive behaviour by employees (Krishnaveni & Monica, 2016). Aon Hewitt (2016) suggests that disengaged employees will negatively impact the work experience of engaged employees and organisations will struggle to attract new talent, which would undoubtedly hurt the organisations' bottom line. It is imperative that organisations and their leadership understand what is meant by employee engagement and the significant impact it can have on both the individual and the organisation itself (Imandin, 2015). The key to an organisation's competitive edge in a world that is constantly changing is engaged employees (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

1.2.2 Background to Sparta Foods

The Sparta Group was established in 1966 by Dirk van Reenen and is a family-owned company with over 50 years of heritage, experience, and knowledge in the meat industry. The group comprises of cattle feeding lots, farming concerns, an abattoir, and a meat processing plant (Sparta, 2017).

Sparta Foods is located in the town of Welkom in the Free State province. This abattoir is responsible for the slaughter of cattle and the processing of meat and meat products. More than 200 000 heads of cattle are slaughtered at this plant every year. This facility has the capacity to produce 400 tonnes of Sparta beef products daily and is centrally located to ensure ease of delivery across South Africa (Sparta, 2017).

The majority of Sparta Foods' workforce comprises employees who work in the different production departments of the plant. The bulk of the activities are production orientated and productivity thus plays an important role in the day-to-day activities of the workforce. If employees are not productive, it would be difficult for Sparta Foods to achieve the production goals it has set. Holbeche (2015, p. 185) suggests that "if leaders want their organisations to survive and thrive in today's challenging times, they must become intensely focused on improving employee engagement".

Sparta Foods' management has indicated that there has been a drastic increase in absenteeism over the last couple of years, which, according to Bika (2017), can be an indication that employee engagement is declining fast. There is a definite connection between absenteeism and employee disengagement. When employees do not show up to work on a regular basis, it is clear that there is a problem (Eisenhauer, 2015; Page, 2008).

The high employee turnover rate that Sparta Foods is experiencing indicates that the time, money, and energy that go into on-boarding new employees are wasted. Employees leave soon after they are hired (Eisenhauer, 2015; Page, 2008). It is impossible for an organisation to move forward without a productive workforce. Keeping employees on task is difficult when they are not engaged in their work (Eisenhauer, 2015), and because Sparta Foods is mostly production orientated, productivity plays a huge role in its day-to-day activities.

If organisations do not deal with actively disengaged employees, problems may develop throughout the organisation. Disengagement is contagious and causes low productivity and contribution. If management fails to address disengagement within the organisation, it may be a tacit signal to the rest of the workforce that the organisation will tolerate sub-par performance (Imandin, 2015). To address the disengagement of employees and to improve the engagement levels within the

organisation, an employee engagement strategy must be developed, implemented, and maintained (Page, 2008).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem is that Sparta Foods currently shows signs that the employee engagement levels of the organisation might not be at an optimal level.

Employee engagement is closely linked to organisational performance outcomes, and if Sparta Foods could improve the current employee engagement levels within the organisation, it could lead to higher productivity, profitability, and employee retention. If employees are not engaged, and the organisation does not address it, this could not only cost the organisation in monetary value, but also contribute to lost managerial hours spent on improving the levels of performance of these employees. Low levels of employee engagement within Sparta Foods could have a significant impact on the employee turnover of the organisation, morale in the office, quality of products, and word-of-mouth promotion, to name but a few.

1.3.1 Research questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

- What does employee engagement mean, and how can it be defined and/or conceptualised?
- What are the current levels of employee engagement at Sparta Foods?
- How can the employee engagement levels of Sparta Foods be improved and the shortages addressed?
- What strategies can be used to enhance employee engagement levels?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study is to develop an employee engagement strategy for Sparta Foods.

1.4.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of this study are as follows:

- To conceptualise the construct of employee engagement.
- To determine the current levels of employee engagement in Sparta Foods.
- To determine how the employee engagement levels of Sparta Foods can be enhanced.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.5.1 Research design

A positivist epistemological approach was followed during this study. This approach assumes that only facts gained through observation (measurement) can be considered trustworthy. The role of the researcher in positivism studies is to collect data and interpret them in an objective way. This approach also assumes that the researcher is separate from and does not affect the outcomes of the research.

The main goal when a quantitative research approach is followed is to determine the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent or outcome variable within a specific population. It focuses on gathering numerical data and information and transforming this information into usable statistics. Quantitative research is a structured method that uses measurable data obtained from different sources to formulate facts and to generalise them to groups of people.

The purpose of quantitative research is to quantify a problem and to understand how prevalent it is by determining the projectable results of a larger population.

1.5.2 Sampling strategy

Probability sampling was used to generate a representative sample. By using a process of selecting respondents at random, researchers largely eliminate bias from the selection of a sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Because the sample for this study should contain a proportional representation of the different departments within the organisation, the type of probability sampling that was used was stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling is a method of

sampling that involves the division of the population into smaller groups, known as strata. The strata are formed based on the members' shared attributes and/or characteristics. Stratified random sampling ensures that each subgroup of a given population is adequately represented within the whole sample population of a research study. The advantage of this type of sampling is that it captures key population characteristics in the sample that are proportional to the overall population (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The total population consists of 792 Sparta Foods employees. These employees work in different departments, which enables the population to be divided into strata with shared attributes and characteristics. There are a total of 26 departments within Sparta Foods and thus there were 26 strata for this study. Taking into account the non-statistical and statistical considerations, a random sample size of 400 was selected. The sample size of each stratum was proportionate to the total population size and was calculated by dividing the sample size by the population size and multiplying it by the stratum size.

1.5.3 Data-collection methods

The primary data of the study were collected through a self-completion questionnaire that consisted of closed-ended questions. A portion of these questionnaires were web-based to accommodate employees who have access to the Internet and email, and the remainder of the questionnaires were hard copies that were distributed by each head of department (HOD).

The benefit of using web-based options is that a link is forwarded to an individual, and when it is answered, the data are captured immediately on an online database (Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

The advantage of using hard copies to gather information is that it is easy to administer and can be done in the middle of the night before a shift starts. No computer stations are needed and it also seems to be more reliable (Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

1.5.4 Ethical considerations

Ethics has become a cornerstone for conducting effective and meaningful research. The integrity, reliability, and validity of research findings rely heavily on adherence to ethical principles. The researcher followed the appropriate guidelines for issues such as human rights, compliance with the law, conflicts of interest, and safety (Centre for Innovation in Research and Teaching [CIRT], 2017).

1.5.4.1 Permission

Conducting a meaningful and worthwhile research study requires data from either a secondary or primary means of data collection. In order to gain entrance to an organisation to conduct research, formal permission must be obtained (Nwachukwu, 2015).

1.5.4.2 Informed consent

Consent involves the procedure by which an individual chooses whether or not to participate in a study. Researchers should ensure that participants have a complete understanding of the purpose of the study and the methods used, as well as the risks involved and the demands placed upon them as participants. The consent obtained should be informed, explicit, voluntary, and documentable (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

The respondents were given an introduction to this study and its purpose. They were informed of the possible risks and benefits of the research project, and written consent was obtained from all the respondents who completed the questionnaires.

1.5.4.3 Respect for anonymity and confidentiality

The respondents completed the questionnaires anonymously and their identity cannot be linked to any personal responses. The researcher maintained confidentiality throughout all the stages of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The respondents' personal information was treated confidentially and the researcher prevented any use and communication of information that might inflict damage on the individuals who are the subjects of this research.

1.5.4.4 *Incorrect reporting*

Correct and unbiased reporting of the findings of the study are important characteristics of ethical research practice. Ethical researchers do not report the findings of a study in a way that alters the findings to serve the interest of the researcher. Ethical researchers also do not fabricate or falsify data in their studies (Kumar, 2011).

1.5.4.5 *Harm to participants*

The Academy of Management's (AOM) Code of Ethical Conduct states that it is the responsibility of the researcher to carefully assess the possibility of harm to research participants, and, to the furthest extent possible, minimise the probability of harm (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It is important that researchers protect the welfare of respondents. This research did not cause any harm to respondents, whether it be physical or emotional. The respondents participated voluntarily, and the use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language was avoided in the formulation of the questionnaire (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

1.5.4.6 *Invasion of privacy*

The researcher ensured that the private information of the respondents, such as beliefs, attitudes, and opinions, were not shared with others without the respondents' knowledge or consent. The researcher will also not intrude on the respondents' privacy or abandon normal respect for the respondents' values (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

1.5.4.7 *Integrity and deception*

The researcher is responsible for the trustworthiness of her own research. Falsification, fabrication, plagiarism, and similar serious violations of good academic practice are incommensurate with trustworthiness. The researcher ensured that no intentional misrepresentation of facts related to the purpose, nature, or consequences of the investigation occurred (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD STUDY

The focus of the study was firstly to define and conceptualise the term “employee engagement”. This enabled the researcher to establish which was the best instrument for measuring the levels of engagement in Sparta Foods, taking into consideration the multicultural composition of the organisation. Once the levels of engagement were successfully established, an employee engagement strategy could be developed and implemented to address the areas that require improvement. The study was conducted at Sparta Foods situated in Welkom. This is the abattoir and meat processing plant division of the Sparta Group. The workforce of the organisation was involved in this research study. The field of the study is Human Resource Management.

1.7 THESIS LAYOUT

This study will consist of the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Research Problem
- Chapter 2 – Employee Engagement
- Chapter 3 – Research Methodology
- Chapter 4 – Research Findings and Interpretations
- Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Proposed Strategy

1.8 CONCLUSION

This first chapter served as a brief introduction to the study. It is evident that if an organisation can create the correct conditions for improved levels of engagement and develop a behaviourally engaged workforce, it will have accomplished something that its competitors will find very difficult to imitate.

The next chapter provides an in-depth review of literature pertaining to employee engagement, the levels and dimensions thereof, and the strategies linked to improved employee engagement.

CHAPTER 2: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1 the reader was introduced to the scope of the study. An orientation was provided to the background, problem statement, methodology, and the ethical considerations of the study. Chapter 2 will present extensive theory on the meaning, conceptualisation, and definition of employee engagement, as well as the levels of employee engagement and the measurement thereof. Finally, the importance of an employee engagement strategy will be discussed.

2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION, MEANING, AND DEFINITION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Since the inception of the employee engagement concept, various meanings and definitions have been associated with and linked to this concept. It has been defined in many different ways by researchers and practitioners (Mohan & Nalini, 2016) and has attracted much empirical research; however, no agreement has been reached on its precise meaning (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011). To date, there is no one single and generally accepted definition of the term 'employee engagement', and Albrecht (2010) concluded that it is unlikely that there will be universal agreement about a single definition and the measurement of engagement, but that it is important that measures of engagement reflect what is conceptually at the core of the construct.

The concept of employee engagement has been defined in many ways, to the extent that various studies often use the concept interchangeably with work engagement (Cole, Walter, Bedeian, & O'Boyle, 2012). According to Schaufeli and Salanova (2011), employee engagement is a much broader concept than work engagement, while Schaufeli (2013) states that employee engagement and work engagement are used interchangeably. Harter et al. (2002) and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) suggest that employee engagement is referred to as the individuals' involvement and satisfaction and enthusiasm for work, whereas work engagement is a multidimensional affective-cognitive measure of wellbeing.

Academics prefer to use the concept 'work engagement' because of the focus on the relationship employees have with their work activities (Nienaber & Martins, 2015; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). Consequently, much confusion is created by the misuse of the terms 'employee engagement' and 'work engagement' (Cole et al., 2012; Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

As conceptualised by Kahn (1990), who is seen as the founder of engagement, engagement is a positive psychological state that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions, and comprises two distinct yet related types, namely job engagement and organisational engagement (Saks, 2008), whereas Nienaber and Martins (2015) conceptualise employee engagement as engaged employees at both the individual and organisational level, who are fully absorbed in and enthusiastic about their work, and thus take positive action to further the organisation's reputation and interests (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Harter et al., 2002).

There are also those who view engagement as the positive antithesis for burnout (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Roma, & Bakker, 2002; Schaufeli, 2017). According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), engagement and burnout are at opposite ends of a single continuum. Energy, involvement, and efficacy, which are the characteristics of engagement, are seen as the direct opposite of the three burnout dimensions, namely exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of accomplishment. Engagement, a concept in its own right, is thus defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli, 2013). Albrecht (2010) states that this is perhaps the most widely cited definition of engagement.

Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey, and Saks (2015) state that considerable progress has been made with respect to clarifying and defining the employee engagement construct, distinguishing it from related, although not identical, constructs and understanding its antecedents and outcomes. Dozens of studies have been published on employee engagement, as well as several meta-analyses. However, there continues to be concerns about the meaning, measurement, and theory of employee engagement and, despite its popularity in the workplace, a precise definition remains elusive because of continued research and redefinition surrounding the topic (Du Plessis & Martins, 2017; Albrecht et al., 2015; Imandin, 2015).

Erickson (2005) and Macey and Schneider (2008) articulate the same view that engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with employment arrangements or basic loyalty to the employer – characteristics that most companies have measured for many years. Engagement, in contrast, is about passion and commitment – the willingness to invest oneself and expand one’s discretionary effort to help the employer succeed.

For the purposes of this study, the terms ‘work engagement’ and ‘employee engagement’ are used interchangeably. Both these concepts refer to (1) the relationship the employee has with his/her work, and (2) the employees’ relationship with the organisation. Although direct definitions of engagement might differ, all include the line of thought that engagement is concerned with the emotional commitment of the employee to the organisation, taking into account the discretionary effort they are willing to expend on behalf of their employer. The definition of engagement that will therefore be adopted for this study is based on the conceptualisation of Schaufeli et al. (2002), who define engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. This correlates with Kahn’s (1990) conceptualisation, that engagement is the harnessing of employees to their work roles and them being able to express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and mentally during their work performance. Both indicate that engagement refers to the state of mind of the employee towards the organisation and their work role, as well as the levels of effort and emotional commitment to their work and organisation. These levels of effort by employees can be measured and studies have indicated that four different levels of engagement exist, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 LEVELS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

One of the reasons employee engagement has received so much attention is that it is believed to be associated with important employee and organisational outcomes. Various studies have found that employee engagement is related to higher commitment by employees, better health conditions, enhanced performance, and lower turnover intentions (Saks & Gruman, 2014).

Four levels of employee engagement have been identified (Page, 2008; Harshita, 2015; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Jha & Kumar, 2016). Page's (2008) model (see Figure 2.1) consists of two dimensions. The first dimension is employees' attitude, whether positive or negative, towards the organisation, their colleagues, and the customers they serve. The second dimension is their level of enthusiasm and their drive towards activity, be it positive (active) or negative (inactive).

Employee engagement can be divided into the following four levels:

- 1) Actively engaged – positive attitude and action orientated;
- 2) Actively disengaged – negative attitude and action orientated;
- 3) Engaged – positive attitude but not action orientated; and
- 4) Disengaged – Negative attitude and not action orientated.

Positive attitude	Engaged	Actively Engaged
Negative attitude	Disengaged	Actively Disengaged
	Inaction	Action

Figure 2.1: Engagement levels

Source: Koban Page (2008, p. 13)

The degree to which people demonstrate a positive attitude and their type and levels of activity can be translated into likely engagement patterns. Table 2.1 presents the behavioural patterns that can be seen with regard to the different levels of engagement, as well as the characteristic phrases each type may use (Page, 2008).

Table 2.1: Behavioural patterns for the different engagement levels

Level of engagement	Behavioural patterns	Characteristic phrases
Actively disengaged (Cynics)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative attitude towards change - Very vocal about their dissatisfaction - Always focus on the negative - Criticise ideas and solutions 	<p>"I won't" "I can't"</p>
Disengaged (Victims)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative attitude and lacking drive - Negative approach towards new ideas - Do not take an active part in organisational life - Avoid confronting issues - Avoid risk - Do the minimum - Lack of confidence means they do not seek other employment or put in an effort to improve their current working life 	<p>"I won't" "I can't"</p>
Engaged (Yes men)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reluctant towards change - The are not actively engaged or disengaged - Avoid taking risks - Keep a low profile - just drift along - Do not like to draw attention to themselves - Comfortable watching from the sideline 	<p>"I would" "I could"</p>
Actively engaged (Stars)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive attitude towards change - High energy - Enthusiastic - Give discretionary effort to serve customers - Realistic about obstacles and how to overcome them - Likes to be challenged and stretched 	<p>"I will" "I can"</p>

Source: Koban Page (2008, pp. 10-13)

According to Page (2008), employee engagement is personified by the passion employees have to give their best to the organisation and it is about the willingness and ability of employees to make sustained discretionary effort to help the organisation succeed. Employees who are disengaged can be turned into engaged employees when management creates the right opportunities and guides them towards achieving their personal goals. Actively disengaged employees will no longer benefit the

organisation in any way (Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015). The levels of engagement are determined by measuring the different dimensions relating to engagement.

2.4 DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Based on the perspectives of Kahn (1990), Schaufeli et al. (2002), Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), Page (2008), Macey and Schneider (2008), Jha and Kumar (2016), and Nienaber and Martins (2016), employee engagement comprises at least three dimensions.

The first dimension is a physical component, also described as vigour and trait engagement. This dimension refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience at work, the willingness to invest in one's work activities, and persistence in difficult circumstances. This includes employees' attitude, whether positive or negative, towards the organisation, their colleagues, and the customers they serve (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

The second dimension is a cognitive component, also referred to as dedication and state engagement. Dedication is characterised by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and challenge in relation to one's work, and has been defined as the degree to which an employee psychologically relates to his or her job and the work performed therein. This includes the level of enthusiasm of employees and their drive towards activity, whether active or inactive (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

The third dimension is an emotional component, also referred to as absorption or behavioural engagement. Absorption refers to the feeling of being focused on one's work and finding detaching oneself from work activities difficult. It entails a pleasant state in which employees are totally immersed in their work, forgetting about everything else. Imandin, Bisschoff, and Botha (2014) state that behavioural engagement can be understood as the direct levels of effort towards achieving organisational goals (see also Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Nienaber & Martins, 2016). Just as there are several conceptualisations of engagement, there are also several models and theories of engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014). The origin of these models stems from two primary areas of research,

namely the needs-satisfying approach of Kahn (1990) and the burnout-antithesis approach of Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) and Schaufeli et al. (2002).

2.5 MODELS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

A number of theoretical perspectives have been proposed that each emphasises a different aspect of employee engagement; however, these perspectives cannot be integrated into one overarching conceptual model. Four approaches are discussed in the following sections.

2.5.1 Kahn's model of engagement

Kahn's model (1990) of engagement (see Figure 2.2) is considered the first grounded model of personal engagement and personal disengagement.

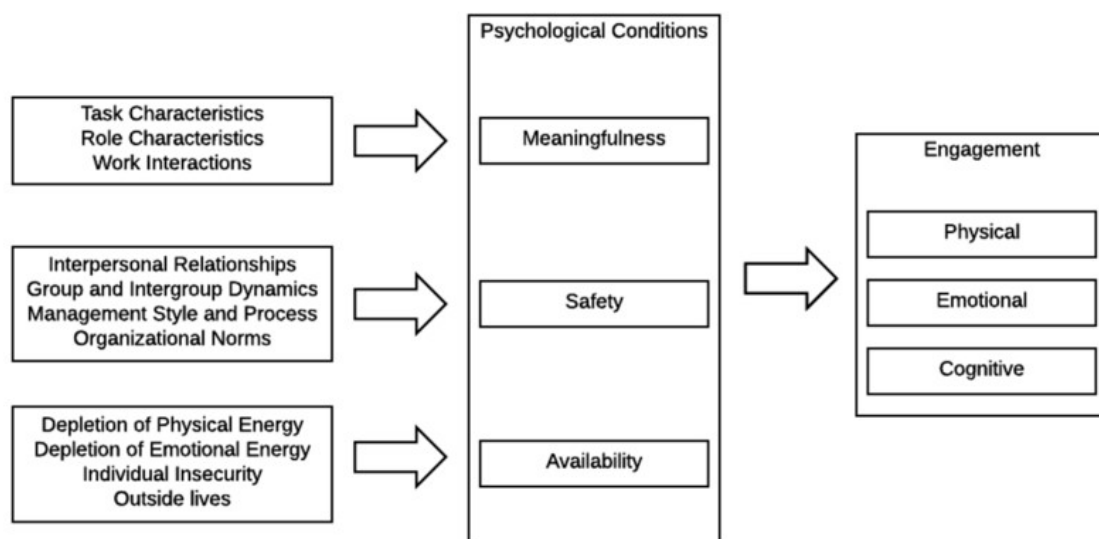


Figure 2.2: Kahn's 1990 model employee engagement

Source: William Kahn (1990, p. 704)

According to this model, employees can be engaged on three different levels, namely physical, emotional, and cognitive levels. The model emphasises that there are three psychological conditions that are associated with these levels of engagement, namely meaningfulness, availability, and safety. Kahn (1990) found that employees were much more engaged in work situations that offered them more psychological

meaningfulness and safety and they were psychologically available (Phadi & Panda, 2015).

While Kahn's (1990) work is regarded as the starting point for engagement research, his work has not been extensively empirically tested. Even though his model did not receive extensive empirical interest, research on engagement did not come to a halt (Raatikainen, 2015). Kahn's (1990) work conceptualised employee engagement and is therefore considered a seminal work on the topic that has contributed significantly to developing the concept further.

2.5.2 A theoretical model of the antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement

Rana, Ardichvili, and Tkachenko (2014) used Dubin's (1978) method to propose a theoretical model of the antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement, illustrated in Figure 2.3. Dubin's (1978) theory-building method is widely recognised and regarded as one of the most comprehensive theory-building methods available. It is based on two distinct and related conceptual and methodological components.

At a conceptual level, this method can be presented as a continuous theory-research cycle composed of two parts; the first being the theoretical side and the second the research operation side. Successful completion of the first part of the cycle results in an informed, conceptual framework of the theory, whereas successful completion of the second part results in an empirically verified and trustworthy theory (Lynham, 2002).

The major antecedents of employee engagement (see left-hand side of Figure 2.3) were identified as job design and characteristics, supervisor and co-worker relationships, workplace environment, and individual characteristics (Rana et al., 2014).

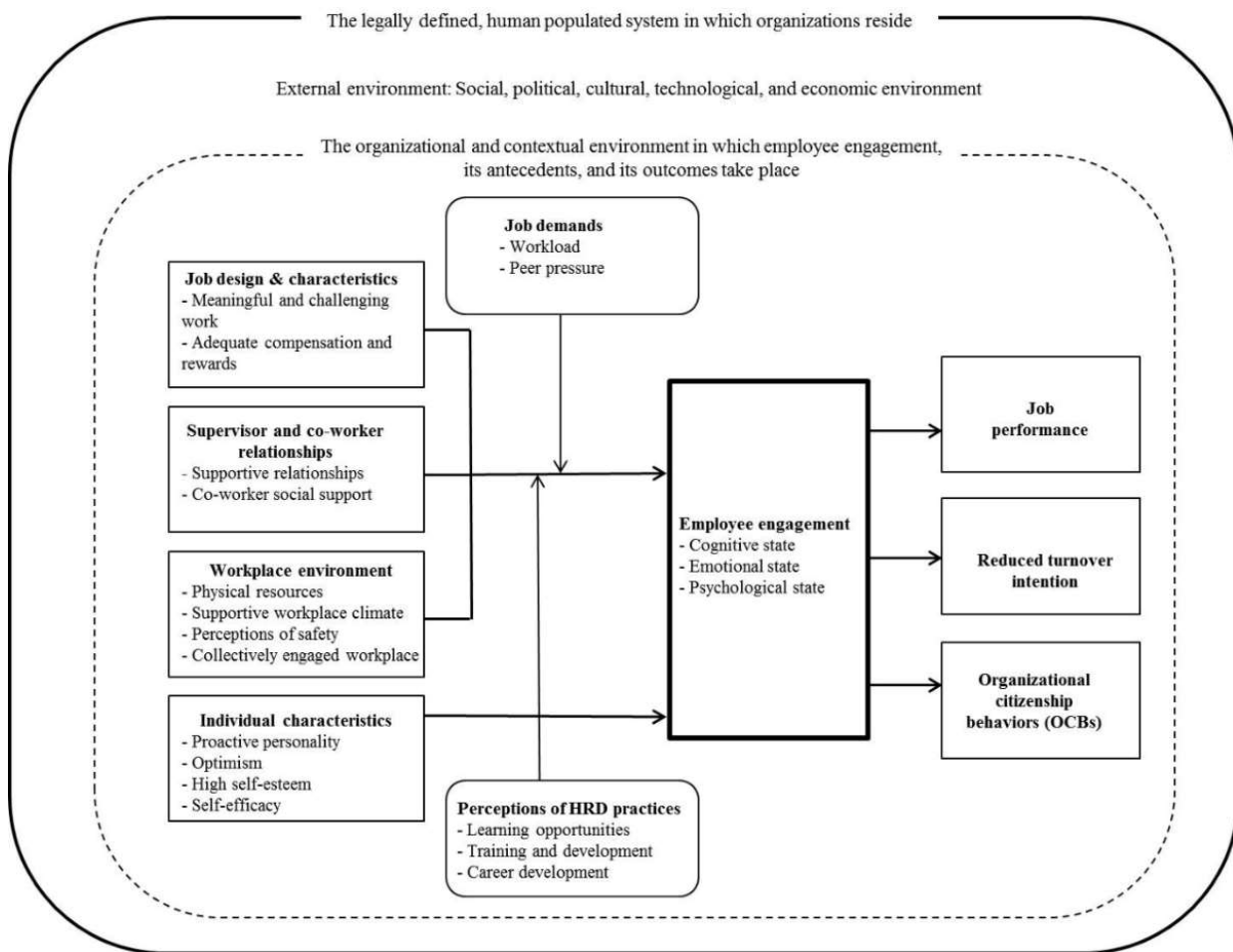


Figure 2.3: A theoretical model of the antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement

Source: Sowath Rana et al. (2014, p. 31)

Job design and characteristics

According to Kahn (1990), meaningfulness is one of the three main psychological conditions that influence an employee’s engagement and disengagement at work. Rana et al. (2014) suggest that meaningfulness thus plays an important role in engaging employees and management should therefore seek to enhance meaningfulness through effective job design and characteristics.

Supervisor and co-worker relationships

Kahn (1990) argues that the psychological condition of safety, where employees feel they are able to try and fail without fearing the consequence, is vastly influenced by the employees’ interpersonal relationships, the group and intergroup dynamics within

the organisation, as well as the management style. The psychological condition of safety will thus enhance engagement and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) provide empirical support for this relationship between engagement and social support from co-workers and supervisors. Employees would feel safe to voice their ideas and would see criticism as constructive rather than destructive (Rana et al., 2014).

Workplace environment

The workplace environment consists of co-workers, supervisors, the policies and procedures of the organisation, physical resources, as well as intangible elements such as supportive work climate and perceived levels of safety. The workplace environment is integral to having engaged employees (Rana et al., 2014). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), employees should be provided with adequate physical, psychological, social, and organisational resources that will enable them to reduce job demands, to function effectively in their work role, and to stimulate their own personal development and growth.

Individual characteristics

Rana et al. (2014) suggest that individual characteristics could be antecedents to employee engagement. These individual characteristics can thus be very powerful in impacting on an individual's level of engagement at work. Rana et al. (2014) propose that optimism, high-achievement orientation, conscientiousness, and self-efficacy are salient antecedents of employee engagement.

Job demands and employee perceptions of Human Resource Development (HRD) practices serve as important moderators to the relationship between the abovementioned antecedents. Employee engagement, in turn, plays a very important role in improving employees' job performance and the organisation's employee turnover, as well as enhancing employees' organisational citizenship behaviour (Rana et al., 2014).

In this model, engagement refers to employees' cognitive, emotional, and physical state (Kahn, 1990) that is influenced by certain antecedents. This cognitive, emotional, and physical state of engagement translates into favourable outcomes to the extent that when engaged, employees will express themselves cognitively, emotionally, and

behaviourally (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The job demands-resources (JD-R) model developed by Schaufeli (2013) is also based on the outcomes of the emotional state of the employee.

2.5.3 The job demands-resources (JD-R) model

The JD-R model (see Figure 2.4) was introduced more than a decade ago to enable researchers to understand job burnout. In recent years, the model has been supplemented with work engagement, which is a positive, fulfilling psychological state characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Nienaber & Martins, 2016; Schaufeli, 2017).

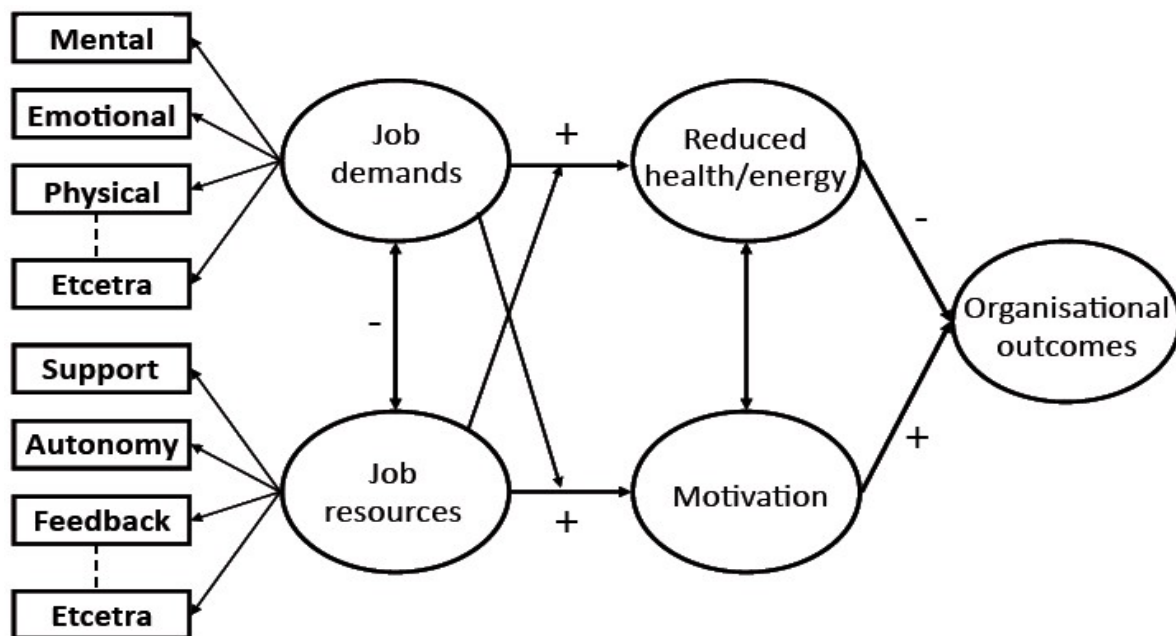


Figure 2.4: The JD-R model

Source: Wilmar Schaufeli (2013, p. 8)

A host of studies on work engagement have used this model as an explanatory framework (Bakker et al., 2011). These studies particularly relate to those who believe that engagement is the antithesis of burnout (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli, 2017; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011). According to this model, all jobs consist of two different categories, namely job demands and job resources. Schaufeli (2017) defines job demands as the aspects of a job that require sustained mental or physical effort. These are the negative aspects at work that drain energy, like conflict with others, job insecurity, and work overload (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). In contrast, job resources

are the good aspects that are defined (Schaufeli, 2017) as the aspects of the job that are functional at achieving work goals, reducing job demands and the associated 'costs' (physiological and psychological), and stimulating personal growth and development (Albrecht, 2010; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Schaufeli, 2013).

According to this model, job resources will energise employees, make them focus on their efforts, and encourage them to persist. Resources thus foster engagement in terms of vigour, dedication, and absorption. This engagement will produce positive outcomes such as job performance. The model postulates that work engagement mediates the relationship between job and personal resources and positive outcomes, which is called the motivational process (Albrecht, 2010; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Schaufeli, 2013).

The reduced health/energy process is ignited by job demands. These job demands are the aspects of an employee's job that require sustained physical or mental effort. If this is high, additional effort will be required to achieve work goals. This additional effort comes with physical and psychological costs such as irritability and fatigue. When recovery is not sufficient, employees may gradually use up all their backup energy, which can eventually lead to burnout. This may lead to negative outcomes for the organisation and will diminish engagement levels (Albrecht, 2010; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2015; Schaufeli, 2013). Cross-links also exist between the reduced health process and the motivational process. This suggests that poor resources may lead to burnout, whereas job demands may increase work engagement. However, this may only be true for job demands that promote personal growth and future gains (Albrecht, 2010; Schaufeli, 2013).

This theory is very flexible and can be applied to all work environments. It can be tailored to the specific occupation under consideration (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014) and will assist organisations in the development process that aims to increase work engagement and prevent burnout. The model will also play a major role in prioritising and implementing future actions to increase engagement (Schaufeli, 2017). Fleck and Inceoglu's (2010) model of engagement also indicates that engagement is related to the state people are in when they perform their work. This correlates with the findings of both Kahn (1990) and Schaufeli (2013).

2.5.4 Fleck and Inceoglu's model of engagement

Fleck and Inceoglu (in Albrecht, 2010, p. 76) found that due to the diverse conceptualisations of employee engagement, it becomes problematic when recommendations for actions must be made and when accumulating a coherent body of research knowledge. The model of engagement (see Figure 2.5) was developed to address these issues and the main aim of the model was to develop and offer a definition of engagement.

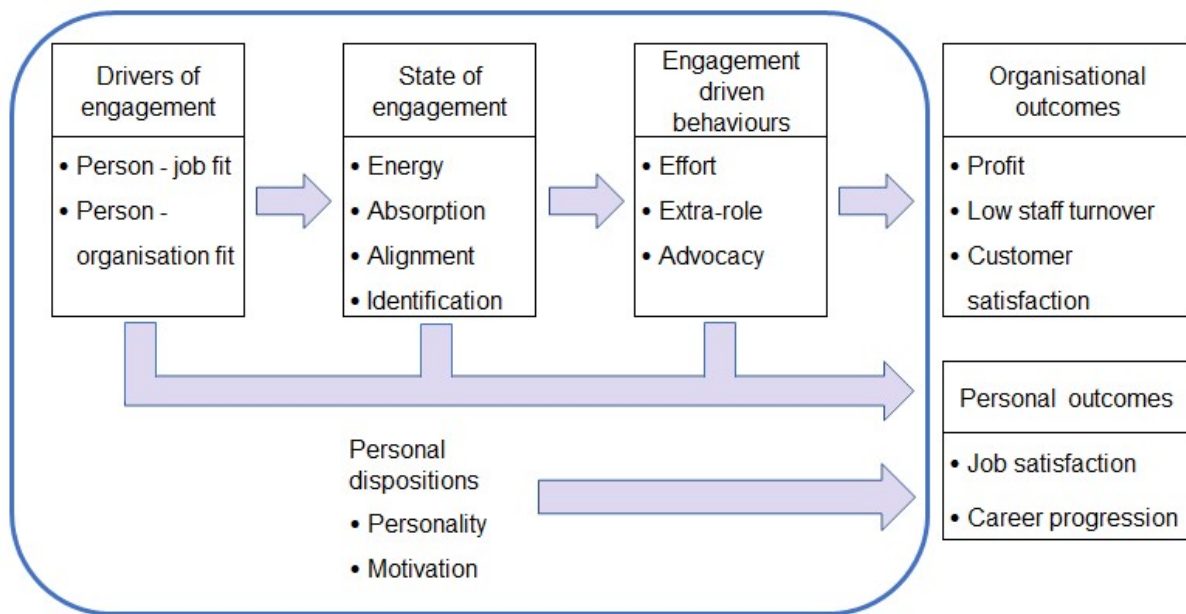


Figure 2.5: Fleck and Inceoglu's model of engagement

Source: Simon Albrecht (2010, p. 76)

Two principles form the core starting point of this model. Firstly, that engagement is the state people are in when they perform their work. This means that the intensity of this state may vary over time. Secondly, that it is necessary to separate the predictors of the state of engagement, the state of engagement itself, and the consequences of being in this state. Deploying these principles may help resolve many problems that are associated with other definitional approaches to employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010). On the left-hand side of the model are the drivers of engagement. These drivers represent the characteristics of the work environment within the organisation. This work environment is expected to play a crucial role in determining employees' state of engagement. As Kahn (1990) states, organisational context enhances or undermines people's motivation and sense of work. These drivers of engagement will lead to higher levels of employee engagement, which in turn will motivate employees to more

frequently demonstrate behaviours that are beneficial to the organisation. When employees demonstrate these behaviours, both they and the organisation will experience secondary benefits (indicated on the right side of the figure) (Albrecht, 2010).

Organisations will be able to see a positive impact on turnover, customer satisfaction, profitability, and staff turnover, while employees will experience higher levels of job satisfaction. This will ensure a feeling of wellbeing among employees and they will find that they are making more career progress. The employees' personal dispositions are expected to influence many elements of this model. These dispositions are likely to play a role in how frequently employees become engaged. They play a key role in understanding behavioural outcomes such as job satisfaction, effort, and wellbeing (Albrecht, 2010). Macey and Schneider's (2008) model, discussed in the following section, not only focuses on state engagement, but also includes trait and behavioural engagement.

2.5.5 Macey and Schneider's tri-dimensional model of engagement

Macey and Schneider (2008) used the tri-dimensional model of engagement (see Figure 2.6) to present a conceptual framework to assist researchers to recognise the variety of meanings employee engagement subsumes and the research that supports these meanings. This model shows that engagement is the positive disposition of employees, characterised by enthusiasm. It shows how workplace conditions, including the nature of the work (e.g. challenge and variety) and the nature of leadership, affect the engagement of employees. The nature of leadership has a direct effect on trust, which is a core requirement of an engaged workforce (Kelly.co.za, 2017).

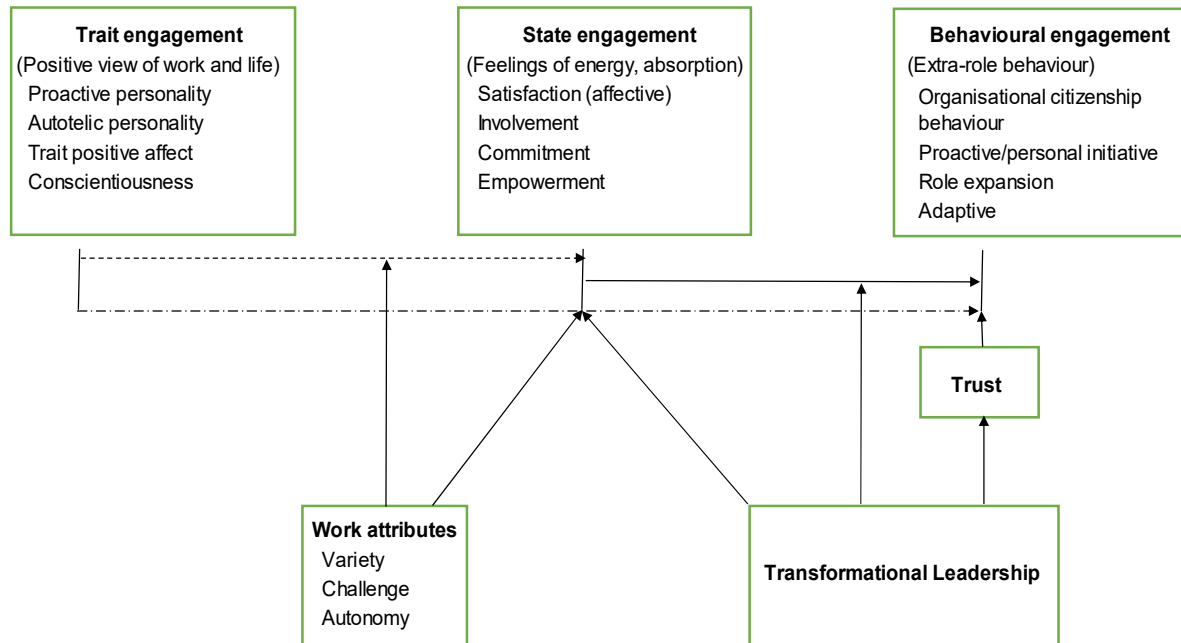


Figure 2.6: Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement

Source: William Macey and Benjamin Schneider (2008, p. 6)

Macey and Schneider (2008) consider employee engagement as not only a set of constructs, but also as a tightly integrated set, interrelated in known ways, and comprising clearly identifiable constructs with relationships to a common outcome. They distinguish three broad conceptualisations of employee engagement, namely state engagement, trait engagement, and behavioural engagement. They propose that trait engagement comprises a number of interrelated personality attributes, including trait positive affectivity, conscientiousness, the proactive personality, and the autotelic personality. These all suggest the inclination to experience work in positive, active, and energetic ways and to behave adaptively in displaying effort in going beyond what is necessary and initiating change to facilitate relevant outcomes. In this sense, trait engagement would be a significant cause of and be directly related to state engagement and indirectly to behavioural engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

State engagement can be defined from two perspectives, namely engagement as an extension of the self to a role (Kahn, 1990), and employees' work activities as a reference for engagement (Bakker et al., 2011; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Macey and Schneider (2008) propose that state engagement concerns positive affectivity associated with the job and the work setting connoting or explicitly indicating feelings of persistence, vigour, energy, dedication, absorption, enthusiasm, alertness, and

pride. As such, state engagement has components of organisational commitment, job involvement, and the positive affectivity components of job satisfaction (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Behavioural engagement follows from state engagement and is broadly defined as adaptive behaviour. Adaptive behaviour is a useful concept for describing a range of behaviours that support organisational effectiveness. What is common is the fundamental notion that engagement behaviours are typically not prescribed and that they go beyond preserving the status quo to instead focus on initiating or fostering change in the sense of doing more and/or something different (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Another model that was developed based on Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation is the South African model of engagement by Kock and McNamara (2010). This model focuses on the state of mind of employees when they perform their work.

2.5.6 A South African model of engagement

Kock and McNamara (2010) developed a South African employee engagement model (see Figure 2.7) that is based on Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation. Kahn (1990) states that employee engagement, as a psychological state where employees connect and identify with the personal, job, and organisational dimensions of their work, results in retention and improved performance. This model integrates important factors that contribute to employee engagement, such as the relationship between team members and supervisors (Kock & McNamara, 2010). According to Kock and McNamara (2010), employee engagement is driven by three key factors. The first factor is the relationship employees have with their direct manager; secondly their belief in senior leadership; and thirdly the pride they have of the organisation they work for.

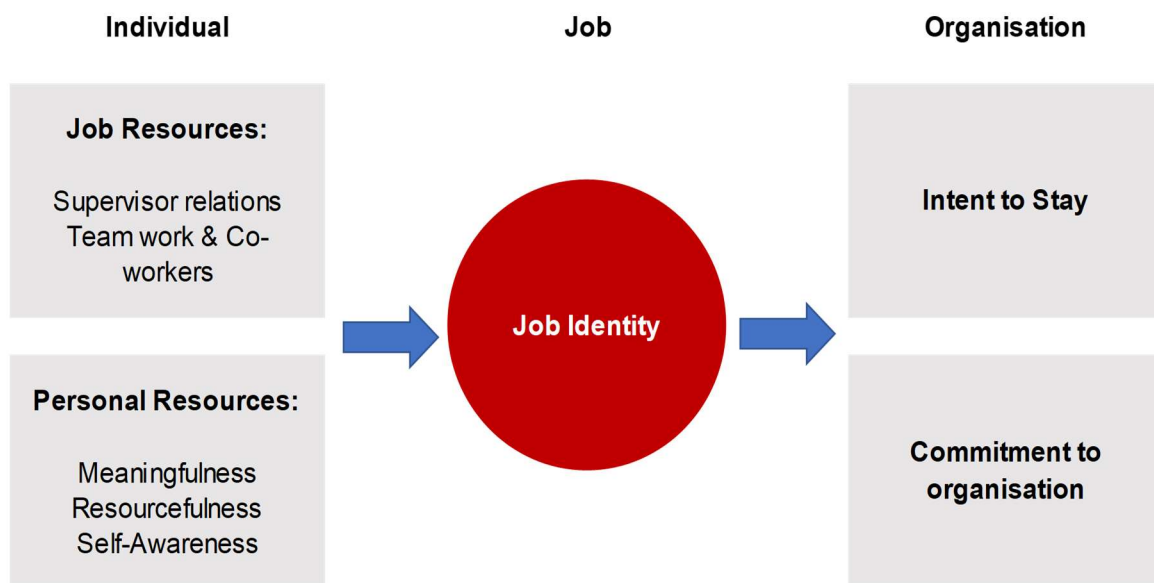


Figure 2.7: South African model of engagement

Source: Ruwayne Kock and Kent McNamara (2010, p. 2)

The model can be applied to assess engagement in organisations and the degree of connectedness among employees to their jobs and the organisation. The results can provide a guide to identifying measures for retaining competencies and experience (Kock & McNamara, 2010).

All the models discussed in this chapter suggest that engagement is influenced by the psychological state of the employee. Employees will be much more engaged in work situations that offer them more psychological meaningfulness (job enrichment, work-role fit, and work interactions), safety (interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, and organisational norms), and psychological availability (physical and emotional energies). The antecedents and drivers identified by each of the models (see Table 2.2) are very similar and it can be concluded that the emotional state of the employee will be influenced by their direct work role and the stimulation they receive from their day-to-day tasks, the relationships they have with management and their peers, the culture of the organisation, and the tools available to them for personal growth and development.

Table 2.2: Summary of the models of engagement

Model	Author (Year)	State of engagement	Antecedents / Drivers
Kahn's model	Kahn (1990)	(1) Physical (2) Emotional (3) Cognitive	(1) Meaningfulness (2) Availability (3) Safety
A theoretical model of the antecedents and outcomes of engagement	Rana et al. (2014)	(1) Physical (2) Emotional (3) Cognitive	(1) Job design and characteristics (2) Supervisor and co-worker relationships (3) Workplace environment (4) Individual characteristics
JD-R model	Schaufeli (2013)	(1) Physical (2) Emotional (3) Cognitive	(1) Vigour (2) Dedication (3) Absorption
Fleck and Inceoglu's model of engagement	Fleck and Inceoglu (2010)	(1) Psychological	(1) Person-job fit (2) Person-organisation fit
Macey and Schneider's tri-dimensional model of engagement	Macey and Schneider (2008)	(1) Positive disposition of employees	(1) Work attributes (2) Transformational leadership and trust
A South African model of engagement	Kock and McNamara (2010)	(1) Psychological	(1) Job resources (2) Personal resources

These models served as the basis for developing various methods to measure the impact the antecedents and drivers of engagement have on the psychological state of employees.

2.6 MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Given the lack of consensus on the meaning and definition of employee engagement, it should not be surprising that there have also been concerns about how to measure employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014). The popularity of this concept has given rise to a number of studies by academics and practitioners who all promote their own measuring instruments. In a number of instances, these measuring instruments have been validated for a specific population group, organisation, sector, or cultural group (Martins, 2015).

2.6.1 The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)

To measure employee engagement, Schaufeli et al. (2002) developed the self-report UWES. Vigour, dedication, and absorption are addressed, and are regarded as central features of the construct of employee engagement (Nienaber & Martins, 2016; Schaufeli, 2013). This scale has been validated and used in a number of countries, including South Africa. To date, most academic research on engagement has used the UWES (Schaufeli, 2013), and it is the preferred measurement instrument based on extensive empirical research studies that have shown its psychometric properties to assess engagement (Nienaber & Martins, 2016). Compared to needs satisfaction, the UWES refers to work engagement rather than personal engagement and proposes that engaged employees are likely to perform better than their disengaged colleagues (Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

2.6.2 The Employee Engagement Instrument (EEI)

The EEI was developed by Nienaber and Martins (2015) for a diverse, multicultural environment. This scale measures employee engagement concurrently at the individual and organisational level. The instrument consists of two sections: one that collects biographical and/or demographic information, and one that solicits responses, using a five-point Likert scale, to statements regarding engagement at the individual level, team/departmental level, and organisational level. Nienaber and Martins (2016) validated this instrument and their study proved that researchers can use the questionnaire with confidence. Both the factor analysis and the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed its validity and reliability, and CFA statistics explain that the theoretical specification of the factors matches the constructs of employee engagement adequately (Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

2.6.3 Imandin's theoretical model to measure employee engagement

Imandin (2015) developed a theoretical model to measure employee engagement based on her theoretical study and the identified constructs. Imandin (2015) tested the framework in her doctoral thesis and found that it provided a theoretical framework for empirical research to measure employee engagement in South Africa. It also ensured that a wide array of employee engagement constructs and their context of previous

application were identified. This is a sound methodological approach that is strongly recommended (Imandin, 2015).

2.6.4 The Benchmark of Engagement Quotient (BeQ) model

The primary objectives of the BeQ model (see Figure 2.8) are to explore the relations between perceptions that influence organisational engagement and the unleashing of individual voices, to understand the underlying assumptions as they pertain to the individual, the group, and the organisation; to determine the level of engagement within the organisation; and to describe the over-cultural dynamics and consider the implications thereof for the organisation (Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

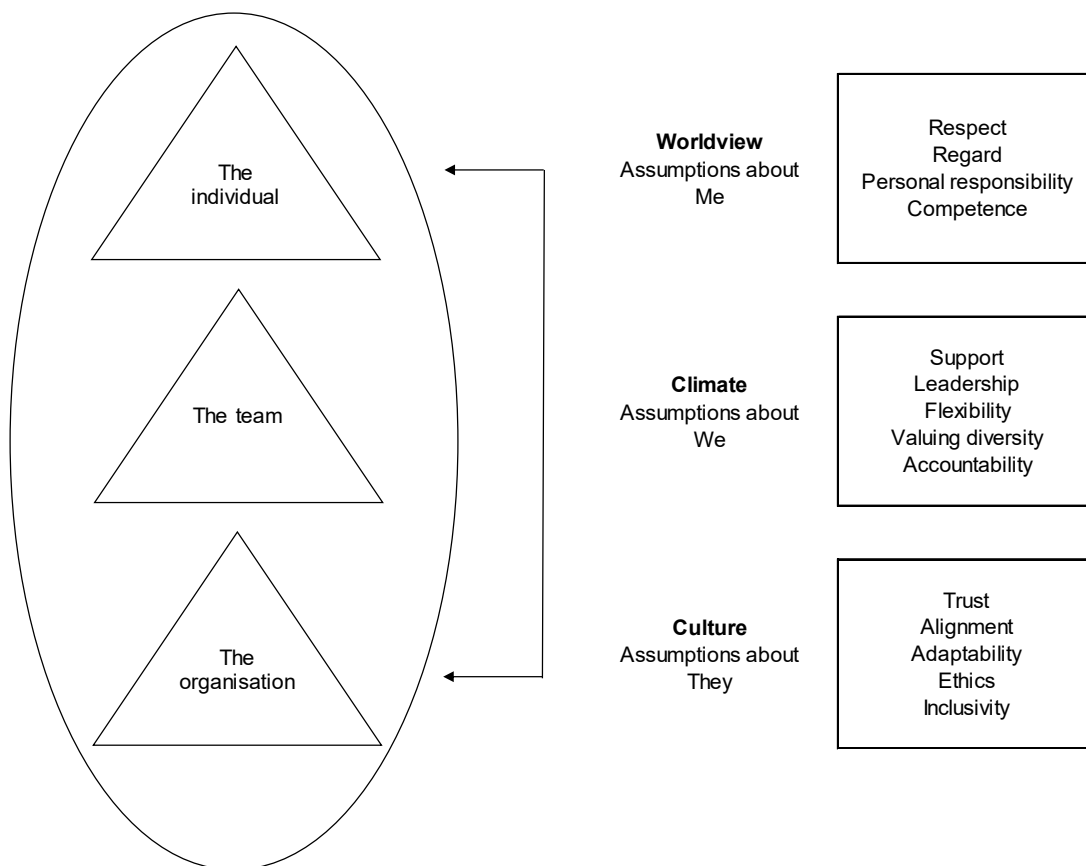


Figure 2.8: The Benchmark of Engagement Model

Source: Hester Nienaber and Nico Martins (2016, p. 44)

The BeQ model considers the multicultural interpretation of the various subconstructs on individual, group, organisational, and over-cultural domains. This questionnaire is customised to measure the unique business needs that present themselves to the

leaders of organisations, and to include dynamics unique to the country in which the organisation operates (Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

The BeQ model is not a one-time measure of where the organisation finds itself. Instead, it is a philosophy of how to rewire the energy in a system in a positive way, taking diverse worldviews into account. This methodology is not a quick check but rather an organisational development process (Nienaber & Martins, 2016).

Given the definition adopted for this study, the UWES is considered the best-suited measurement instrument. The UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) is currently the most widely used and validated measurement instrument and assesses vigour, dedication, and absorption, which are characteristics of a positive psychological state. Once the engagement levels have been determined, it will be possible to identify organisational strengths in terms of engagement, as well as areas that are in need of improvement. Once the areas of development are clear and the levels of disengagement have been determined, suitable engagement strategies can be developed to address these areas.

2.7 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Page (2008) suggests that the starting point when developing an employee engagement strategy is to firstly assess where the organisation currently stands in terms of engagement. This should allow the organisation to determine its strengths, and based on the feedback, determine areas that require improvement.

As stated by Markos and Sridevi (2010), there is a lack of sufficient literature on what the challenges leaders face could be when they aim to improve engagement levels. Most research that has been conducted on the concept of employee engagement focused on identifying the drivers that lead to engagement, but failed to indicate clearly articulated strategies to engage employees in their work. The drivers of employee engagement, as identified by Dajani (2015) (see Figure 2.9), will be used as the basis for the employee engagement strategies proposed by this research.

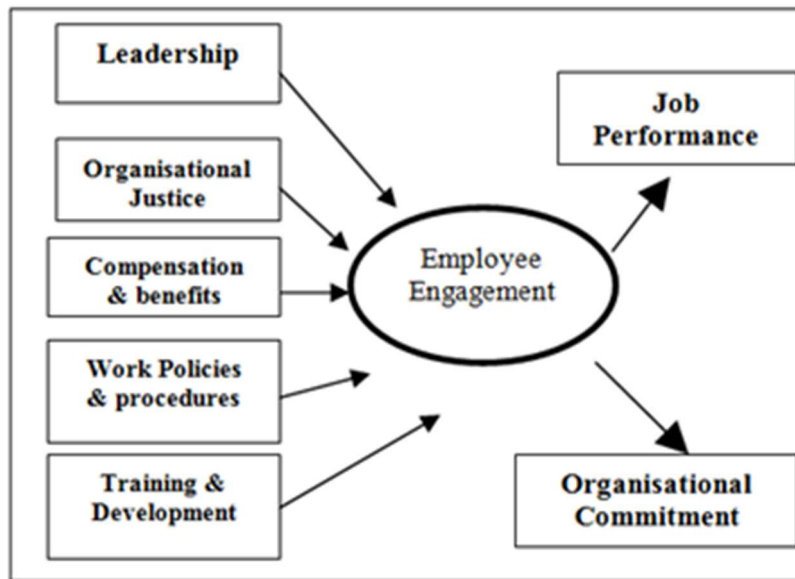


Figure 2.9: Drivers of employee engagement

Source: Maha Dajani (2015, p. 141)

Employee engagement should not only be a one-time exercise; it should be integrated into the culture of the organisation. It should also be a continuous process of learning, improvement, and action (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Management should attempt to fulfil employees' expectations (see left side of Figure 2.8), which will lead to improved engagement, job performance, and organisational commitment.

2.7.1 Leadership

Leadership has been found to be a significant antecedent of engagement. Effective leadership should support communication of information, transparency, respectful treatment of employees, and organisational standards of ethical behaviour (Dajani, 2015). Employee engagement requires commitment from leadership through establishing a clear mission, vision, and organisational values. Unless the people at the top believe in it, own it, and pass it down to managers and employees, employee engagement will never be more than just another concept (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Davila and Piña-Ramirez (2013) argue that managers have the responsibility to foster engagement. This responsibility comes through in the way they enable employees to do their work, how they conduct themselves, and how they convey messages through different channels. Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, and Derksshows (2016) found that

transformational leadership and self-leadership both have a positive relationship with employee engagement and performance.

2.7.2 Organisational justice

Organisational justice refers to the ethical manner in which organisations treat their employees. It is based on fairness perceptions, and if employees feel that they are treated fairly within the organisation, they will reciprocate by putting more effort into their work and as a result increase their engagement, in accordance with the exchange ideology (Dajani, 2015). If communication is improved between leadership and employees, it could contribute to organisational justice. Employees will feel free to voice their concerns and to point out issues relating to fairness.

Communication is seen a driver of employee engagement (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014), and organisations must recognise the importance of strengthening internal communication with their employees. Internal communication assists in building a culture of transparency between management and employees, and it engages employees in the organisation's priorities. Efforts to build trust with employees through communication can provide benefits for both employees and the organisation and can enhance the employee engagement within the organisation (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Managers should promote two-way communication and should be clear and consistent regarding what is expected from employees. This will pave the way for employee engagement (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

2.7.3 Compensation and benefits

Compensation and benefits are indispensable antecedents to employee engagement, which involve both financial rewards and non-financial benefits such as recognition (Dajani, 2015).

Psychological meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990) is critical for the development of employee engagement (McManus & Mosca, 2015). Employees must feel that their efforts are meaningful. The implementation of an employee reward and recognition system is probably one of the most important drivers for increased engagement (McManus & Mosca, 2015; Gose & Mohanty, 2016). Maslach et al. (2001) suggest

that while a lack of reward and recognition can lead to burnout, appropriate recognition and reward are important for engagement.

Management should develop both financial and non-financial benefits for employees that are linked to increased performance and engagement in their day-to-day actions. Several management theories have indicated that when employees receive more pay, recognition, and praise, they tend to exert more effort in their jobs. A clear link should be visible between performance and the incentives given to employees (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Performance management systems can have a direct positive influence on employee engagement and downstream attitudinal, behavioural, and organisational outcomes. They can also have an indirect influence on engagement through their impact on organisational climate, perceptions of job demands and resources, and on the associated feelings of meaningfulness, safety, and availability that employees experience. Rewards and recognition programmes and strategies clearly have an impact on the fulfilment employees receive on the three dimensions of employee engagement as identified by Kahn (1990), Schaufeli et al. (2002), Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), and Nienaber and Martins (2016). This aligns to the five performance management activities that influence engagement, as identified by Mone and London (2018). These activities include providing ongoing feedback and recognition, development of performance and development goals, management of employee development, conducting appraisals, and creating a climate of trust and empowerment.

For these strategies and programmes to be successful, management should show commitment to them as these will be essential to ensuring the effectiveness thereof (McManus & Mosca, 2015; Gose & Mohanty, 2016).

2.7.4 Work policies and procedures

To create a culture of engagement, human resources (HR) systems must work hand in hand with other managerial practices when dealing with employees (Dajani, 2015).

Effective orientation programmes are the first building blocks to ensuring employee retention. New employees should be given general orientation as well as job-specific orientation when they start working at an organisation. Organisations must aim to reduce newcomers' anxiety and uncertainty and to build on newcomers' entry

excitement and enthusiasm and translate these into high levels of engagement (Albrecht et al., 2015). An orientation programme should ensure that newcomers are familiar with the mission, vision, policies, and procedures of the organisation, as well as the responsibilities that directly relate to their jobs. They should also be informed about the current priorities of the department to which they belong in order to enable them to develop realistic job expectations and to reduce the role conflict that might arise in the future. After the hiring decision is made, management must ensure role-talent fit when placing the new employee in a certain position and exert all managerial efforts needed to retain that talent (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

Kock and McNamara (2010) concluded in their study that retention strategies should focus more on the personal meaningfulness of the work than merely on job and organisational connectedness. The employee value proposition should emphasise the personal factors for the attraction and retention of talent.

Engagement is an outcome of healthy culture and motivated employees, and top-performing organisations have realised that an employee engagement strategy, which is linked to bottom-line outcomes, will help them win in the marketplace (Evangeline & Ragavan, 2016). Organisations should promote a strong work culture in which the goals and values of managers are aligned across all work sections. Companies that build a culture of mutual respect by keeping success stories alive not only keep their existing employees engaged but also “baptise” new incoming employees with this contagious spirit of work culture (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

2.7.5 Training and development

Training and development are important drivers of engagement and are consistent with the scope of job resources proposed in the JD-R model (Schaufeli, 2013; Dajani, 2015). As previously noted, according to the JD-R theory (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Nienaber & Martins, 2016; Schaufeli, 2017), work engagement is most likely to develop when employees are presented with challenging job demands in combination with high job resources. The JD-R model also includes a feedback loop, which represents a positive gain cycle that describes that employees who are engaged are more able to create their own resources, which then, over time, fosters further engagement. Albrecht et al. (2015) used the JD-R model to indicate

how organisations can improve employee engagement through training and development. Three interventions to facilitate employee engagement were identified: organisations should provide the optimal mix of job demands and resources, they should optimise personal resources through training, and they should encourage employees to engage in job crafting.

Organisations can generate meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990) by giving employees the opportunity to develop their own knowledge base and skills set. Management should enable employees to update themselves by increasing their knowledge and skills through appropriate training. If employees learn more about their job, their confidence levels will increase by them being able to work without much supervision from their immediate managers, which in turn will build their self-efficacy and commitment (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Providing employees with ongoing training opportunities to develop their knowledge promotes new skills, builds their confidence, and reduces fear and job insecurities (McManus & Mosca, 2015). Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) state that employees should foster self-development behaviours to voluntarily improve their own knowledge, skills, and abilities in such a way as to be helpful to the organisation. This will lead to organisational citizenship behaviour (Rana et al., 2014), which requires a long-term focus that implies commitment to the organisation extending well into the future.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter identified the different conceptualisations and definitions of engagement by means of an extensive literature review on the topic. This was followed by a discussion and comparison of the different schools of thought relating to engagement and the various models designed to better understand the concept. The measurement instruments were also discussed, and the instrument used in this research was identified. The purpose of an employee engagement strategy and the different drivers used to develop this strategy were also discussed.

The next chapter addresses the methodology adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It is evident from reviewing existing research that engagement can affect an organisation in various ways. Engagement can influence the financial as well as non-financial performance of organisations (Jha & Kumar, 2016), and knowing the levels of engagement within an organisation can serve as the basis of a strategy to enhance the performance and productivity of employees. Improved engagement will enable employees to realise their responsibility towards group dynamics and will develop positive attitudes and behaviours among the workforce (Jha & Kumar, 2016).

The objective of this study is to develop an employee engagement strategy that will assist the organisation in addressing the problems associated with low levels of employee engagement. The levels of engagement within the organisation were determined, which served as the basis for the development of the strategy. The research question and objectives were outlined in Chapter 1. The purpose of this chapter is to explain this study's research strategy, which includes the research methodology adopted for the execution of this research.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy deals with the source, nature, and development of knowledge. It is the belief of how data about a phenomenon should be gathered, analysed, and used (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Epistemology is a philosophical approach that deals with what sources of knowledge can be regarded as acceptable in a discipline (Bryman & Bell, 2007). There are several different sources of knowledge within a research philosophy. The sources of knowledge related to business research in particular are intuitive knowledge, authoritarian knowledge, logical knowledge, and empirical knowledge. The research process may integrate all of these sources of knowledge within a single study (Kumar, 2011).

Positivism is an epistemological approach (Bryman & Bell, 2007) that enables a researcher to obtain an overview of society as a whole and to uncover social trends.

This type of sociology is more interested in identifying patterns and trends and looks for relationships or correlations between two or more variables. A quantitative method with good reliability and representativeness, like a structured questionnaire, is preferred by the positivist approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and can be described as an approach that necessitates the collection of data in numerical order and regards the relationship between theory and research as empirical (Bryman & Bell, 2007). A positivist quantitative approach was adopted for this study.

3.3 SAMPLING

3.3.1 Target population

A target population refers to all the members who meet the specific criteria for a specific research study (Alvi, 2016). The target population of this study consists of the entire workforce of Sparta Foods, which amounts to 792 employees. This is a heterogeneous population due to the common variables within the population that differ, namely gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Alvi, 2016). Due to the target population containing too many individuals to study conveniently, the research study will be restricted to a sample drawn from it. The relationship between the sample and the population must allow that true inferences can be made about the target population. The more the sample is representative of the entire population, the higher the accuracy of the inferences and the better generalisable the results will be (Alvi, 2016).

3.3.2 Research sample

Bryman and Bell (2007) define a research sample as the segment of the population that is selected for investigation using either probability sampling or non-probability sampling methods. Probability sampling makes it possible to generalise findings from the sample to the population. Non-probability sampling is the opposite, as the odds of any member being selected within a sample cannot be calculated and relies on the subjective judgement of the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2007). For this study, the sampling method used was probability sampling because this method ensures that every member of the population has a known probability of being included in the sample. This method of sampling reduces the chance of systematic errors, minimises

the chance of sampling biases, ensures that a better representative sample is produced, and that inferences drawn from the sample are generalisable to the target population. Because the population is heterogeneous, the probability sampling method used was stratified random sampling. With stratified random sampling, the target population is divided into sub-groups that have corresponding characteristics. These sub-groups are called strata. The topic and nature of a study determine on which criterion the strata will be based (Alvi, 2016; Bryman & Bell, 2007). Sparta Foods' workforce can be divided into different departments and the strata were thus based on the departments within Sparta Foods. Using the proportional allocation technique, the number of individuals drawn from each stratum was based on the percentage each of these strata contributes to the total population, as shown in Table 3.1. The percentage contribution of each department was multiplied by the sample size to determine the representation of each stratum in the total sample.

Table 3.1: Stratified random sampling table

Department	Total population	Stratum % of total population	Sample size based on stratum %	Department	Total population	Stratum % of total population	Sample size based on stratum %
Admin	33	4%	17	Offal	116	15%	59
Butchery	19	2%	10	Planning	5	1%	3
Canteen	9	1%	5	Property	9	1%	5
Clinic	1	0%	1	Refrigeration	5	1%	3
Cowheels	18	2%	9	Rendering plant	38	5%	19
Deboning	178	22%	90	Retail pack	53	7%	27
Engineering	31	4%	16	Sales	15	2%	8
Health & Safety	11	1%	6	Security	16	2%	8
Hides	12	2%	6	Slaughter floor	119	15%	60
Human Resources	12	2%	6	Stores	4	1%	2
IT	4	1%	2	Transport	15	2%	8
Laundry	5	1%	3	Warehouse	50	6%	25
Marketing	2	0%	1	Wholesale	12	2%	6
	335	42%	169		457	58%	231

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest. The research questions and the nature of the variables being investigated usually drive the choice of measurement strategy for data collection (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005). The task of collecting data begins after the research

problem has been defined and the research design has been outlined. Two types of data can be collected, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data are those that are original in character and are collected for the first time. Secondary data have already been collected by other researchers and have passed through a statistical process. The methods used to collect primary and secondary data differ due to primary data being originally collected and secondary data collection merely existing in a compilation (Kothari, 2004). Primary data were collected for this study.

3.4.1 Measuring instruments

Several measuring instruments can be used to collect primary data. The choice of collection method depends on the purpose of the study and the resources available (Kumar, 2011). A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of questions intended to capture the responses from the respondents in a standardised manner. These questions can be unstructured or structured – unstructured asking respondents to provide a response in their own words and structured asking respondents to select an answer from a given set of choices. Questionnaires can consist of open-ended questions that allow the respondent to answer in his/her own words, and/or closed-ended questions that call for short check responses. Questionnaires can be used in a variety of survey situations, for example postal, electronic, face-to-face, and telephonic (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Kumar, 2011; Nayak & Singh, 2015).

For this study, structured questionnaires were used as this measuring instrument is representative of a quantitative method of research, as well as a positivist research method. The questionnaires contained only closed-ended questions that were completed by the respondents of the study. Using closed-ended questions makes the answering process easier for the respondents and enhances the comparability of the answers, which makes it easier to identify the relationship between variables. The availability of answers may clarify the meaning of the questions should the respondent possibly not understand a question (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

The structured questionnaire used for this study was the UWES. Schaufeli et al. (2002) developed this questionnaire to include the three founding aspects of work

engagement, namely vigour, dedication, and absorption. Respondents rate their levels of engagement on a six-point Likert scale (0 = Never to 5 = Always/Every day).

Vigour was assessed by Questions 1, 4, 8, 12, 15, and 17, and refers to high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness of the employee to invest effort in his/her work, not being easily fatigued, and the persistence of the employee in the face of difficulties. Dedication was assessed by Questions 2, 5, 7, 10, and 13, and refers to the employee deriving a sense of significance from his/her work, feeling enthusiastic and proud about his/her job, and feeling inspired and challenged by the work he/she does. Absorption was measured by Questions 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, and 16, and refers to being totally and happily immersed in one's work and having difficulties detaching oneself from it so that time passes quickly and one forgets everything else around (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

3.4.2 The data-collection process

Data were collected using two methods of distribution. A portion of the questionnaires was web-based to accommodate employees who had access to the Internet, and the remainder of the questionnaires were hard copies that were distributed by the HODs of each department. The respondents who were willing to participate in the study provided informed consent by signing a consent form (see Annexure A). After signing the consent form, the respondents proceeded to complete a biographic questionnaire. After the biographic questionnaire was completed, the respondents completed the UWES questionnaire.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

After the respondents completed their questionnaires, the researcher collated the quantitative data and captured the data on Microsoft Excel. The mean scale score of the three UWES subscales was calculated by adding the scores of the particular scale and dividing the sum by the number of items of the subscale involved. A similar procedure was followed for the total score. The UWES yields three subscale scores and/or a total score that range between 0 and 5 (Schaufeli et al., 2002). The findings that will be presented in Chapter 4 of this study were analysed to establish the relative frequencies as a percentage value.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine whether the means between the different demographic groups were significantly different from each other. The null hypothesis was accepted as all the means did not differ significantly from each other (see Table 4.2). Thus, the researcher can conclude that there were no significant differences in the engagement levels of the different demographic groups of Sparta Foods.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.6.1 Permission

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher prepared a proposal, which was submitted to the management of Sparta Foods for approval. Written permission was obtained from the CEO, Estelle van Reenen, allowing the researcher to conduct the study and allowing her to gather the necessary data required for the measuring of employee engagement levels within the organisation (see Annexure E).

3.6.2 Informed consent

In every discipline it is considered unethical to collect information without the knowledge of respondents and their stated willingness and informed consent. Informed consent implies that respondents are made adequately aware of the type of information that is required from them, why the information is being collected, what the purpose of the study and the collected information is, how they are expected to participate in the study, and how the study will directly or indirectly affect them. Consent should also be voluntary and without pressure of any kind (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Kumar, 2011). Researchers should provide respondents with the opportunity to make autonomous and informed decisions regarding whether or not to participate in a study (Nayak & Singh, 2015).

Informed consent was obtained from the respondents and they were only included in the study once they were duly informed of their participation in the study and they consented in writing (see Annexure D). The participation letter (see Annexure A) included the name and contact details of the researcher and the purpose of the study. The respondents were informed of the method of data collection that would be used

and that their participation in the study involved no risks. They were assured that all information would be treated as confidential and that their right to privacy would not be violated. Participation in this study was voluntary and the respondents could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

3.6.3 Respect for anonymity and confidentiality

The information provided by respondents should be kept anonymous and it is unethical to identify an individual respondent and the information provided by him/her. A researcher must ensure that the collected information cannot be linked to its source. It is unethical to be negligent by not protecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the information and the respondents (Kumar, 2011).

Confidentiality in this research was maintained throughout the data-collection process by ensuring that all forms and questionnaires remained anonymous. The respondents completed the questionnaires anonymously and their identity could not be linked to personal responses (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The respondents' personal information was treated confidentially and the researcher prevented any use of information that might inflict damage on individuals who were the subjects of the research. The researcher ensured that these rights were protected by giving full disclosure about the aim of study, the implications of the results, the possible publication of the results, as well as the anticipated consequences. Aforementioned disclosure was provided in the form of a written participation letter, as well as a verbal explanation to the respondents to ensure cognisance of information. The respondents were made aware of the fact that they had the right to refuse participation.

3.6.4 Incorrect reporting

Research misconduct can take many forms, including fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism. The researcher avoided irresponsible research practices that would undermine the trustworthiness of the research such as carelessness, failing to report conflicting data, and the use of misleading methods. The findings of the research study were not altered in any way to serve the interest of the researcher, as this would constitute unethical behaviour. The researcher ensured that the reporting of the findings of this study was correct and unbiased (Kumar, 2011).

3.6.5 Harm to participants

Researchers should at all times attempt to minimise the risk of harm to participants. Harm to participants can be physical harm, harm to the development or self-esteem of the participants, harm to the career prospects of the participants, or emotional harm (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher ensured minimised risk of harm to participants by (1) obtaining informed consent from the participants, (2) protecting the anonymity and confidentiality of participants throughout the study, (3) avoiding deceptive practices when the research was designed, and (4) providing the participants with the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Kumar, 2011).

When the data were collected from the participants, the researcher carefully examined whether the involvement of the participants was likely to harm them in any way. The information was gathered in a way that did not harm or cause discomfort to the participants. Necessary steps were taken by the researcher to avoid feelings of anxiety or harassment by the participants (Kumar 2011).

3.6.6 Invasion of privacy

When a research study is performed, the researcher does not obtain permission to intrude on the privacy of the participants, nor to abandon the normal respect the researcher would have for the participants' values (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Privacy matters were addressed from the inception of the research study right through to the publication of the results. To protect the research participants' right to privacy, the researcher respected the participants' autonomy, their right to self-determination, as well as their general welfare (Nayak & Singh, 2015).

3.6.7 Integrity and deception

Deception is when researchers present their study as something other than what it really is (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The researcher did not communicate false information to the participants to intentionally mislead them about the key aspects of the research study. The researcher was transparent and the objectives and aims of the study were clearly understood by, and known to, the participants. No information was withheld

about the specific purpose, nature and other aspects of the study (Nayak & Singh, 2015).

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on providing a description of the research methodology that was followed during this study. The study population comprised the 792 employees of Sparta Foods and the stratified random sample represented 400 employees in the different departments of the organisation. The standardised UWES questionnaire was used to measure the work engagement within Sparta Foods. Possible measurement errors were identified prior to the study and the researcher used the knowledge of these measurement errors to enhance the reliability and validity of the data collected. Ethical aspects were addressed in the final section of Chapter 3. Chapter 4 will provide the results of the data collection.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 presented the background to the study, the research problem, and an overview of the construct of engagement. After an in-depth literature review, the researcher presented in Chapter 2 the conceptualisation, meaning, and definition of employee engagement; the dimensions of employee engagement; as well as the models and measurement models of employee engagement. This literature review focused on three-factor employee engagement, as well as the drivers of employee engagement. Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology that was followed by the researcher.

Chapter 4 implements the research design described in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data captured from the questionnaires. The purpose of this chapter is to analyse and interpret the collected data. This chapter consists of four sections, with Section 4.2 addressing the response rate of the study, Section 4.3 addresses the validity and reliability of the data, Section 4.4 consists of the responses to Section A of the questionnaire (see Annexure B) and the biographical information of the respondents, and Section 4.5 analyses the results of Section B of the questionnaire, which consisted of the UWES-17 questionnaire (see Annexure C).

This chapter is concluded by providing a summary of the key findings, which will be used in Chapter 5 to develop an employee engagement strategy.

4.2 RESPONSE RATE

The researcher received 233 ($n = 233$) questionnaires back from a sample size of 400, a response rate of 58% was therefore achieved. According to Babbie, Mouton, Vorster, and Prozesky (2001), a response rate of 50% is considered to be adequate for data analysis and reporting.

4.3 DATA VALIDATION

Data validation is the process of checking the accuracy and quality of source data before using and interpreting them. Data validation is a decisional procedure ending with an acceptance or refusal of data as acceptable (Nayak & Singh, 2015). Different types of validation can be performed depending on destination constraints or objectives. The data validation of this study is discussed below.

4.3.1 Congeneric reliability

Congeneric reliability is tested to determine to what extent specific sets of questions measure the same aspect. It is based on factor analysis, which attempts to find an underlying factor to explain the responses to a group of questions as a whole. The measures calculated here are related to Cronbach's alpha, but are considered more accurate. Reliability measures lower than about 0.70 suggest that multiple concepts are being measured, while measures above 0.95 suggest that the same questions are being asked, just using different words. A value in the target range of 0.7 to 0.95 is therefore desired. The reliability of four sets of questions is indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Congeneric reliability values

Dimensions	Reliability factor
Total UWES	0.93
Vigour	0.85
Dedication	0.83
Absorption	0.81

All four sets of questions scored between the desired range of 0.7 to 0.95, thus the scale yielded consistent results and was therefore considered reliable.

4.3.2 Principal components analysis (PCA)

PCA is an approach to factor analysis that considers the total variance in the data and transforms the original variables into a smaller set of linear combinations. For this analysis, only strong deviations should be interpreted. If the total variation or correlation explained is less than 50%, the results are probably not trustworthy or meaningful. For this survey, the percentage variation explained by the PCA graph (see Figure 4.1) is 56%, which is meaningful and indicates that the data are trustworthy.

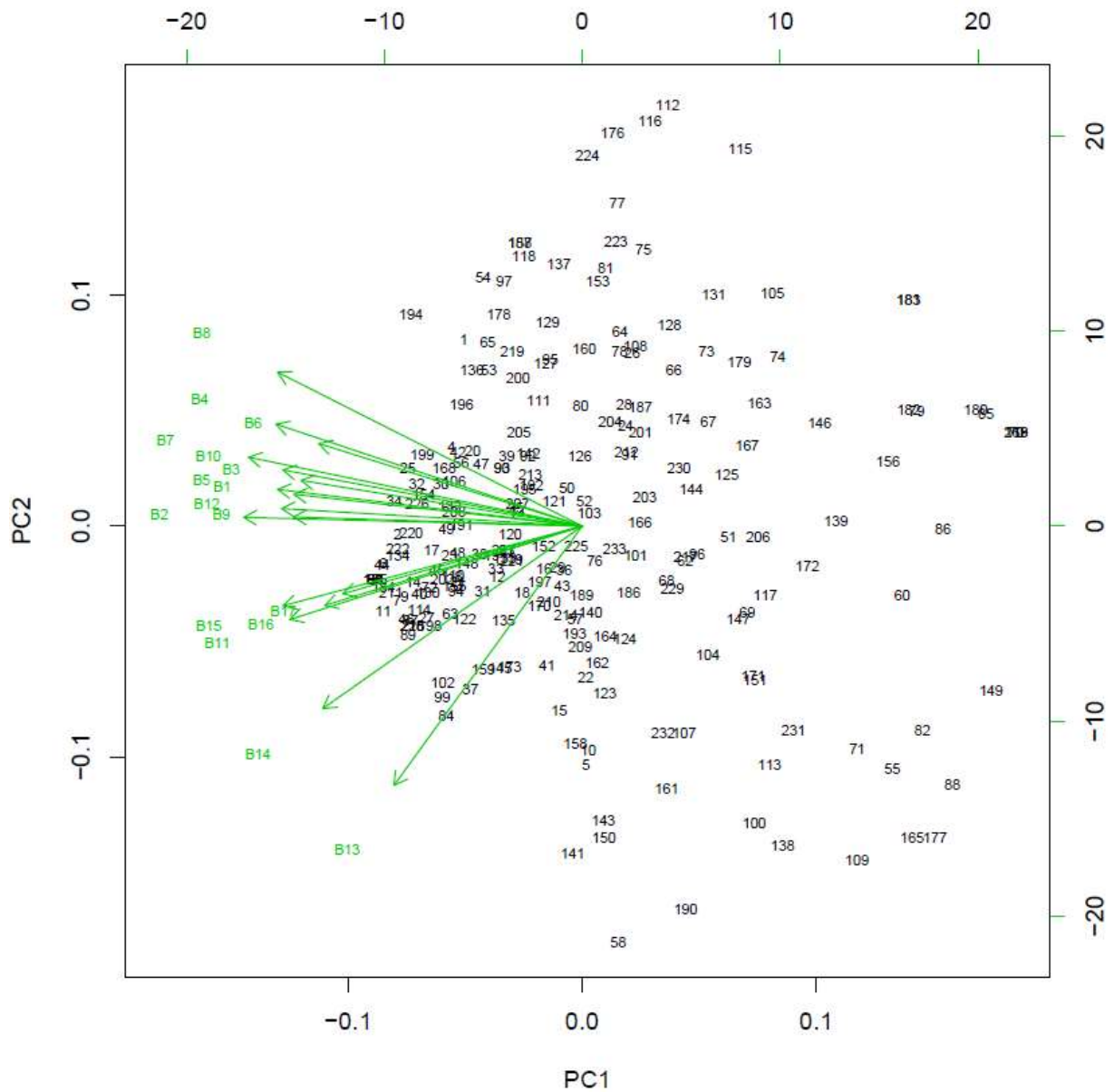


Figure 4.1: PCA graph

4.3.3 Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

The statistical technique called ANOVA was used to determine whether there were significant differences in the engagement levels among the different demographic groups.

The null hypothesis for an ANOVA is that there is no significant difference among groups. The alternative hypothesis assumes that there is at least one significant difference among groups (Kumar, 2011). The F-ratio and the associated probability value (p-value) were calculated. In general, if the p-value is smaller than .05, then the

null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is supported. If the null hypothesis is rejected, one can conclude that the engagement levels of all groups are not equal (Kumar, 2011).

The p-values for each demographic group were greater than 0.05 and the null hypothesis was therefore accepted for all groups, as indicated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: ANOVA table



Biographical characteristic	P-value	Null hypothesis
Tenure	≥ 0.05	Accepted
Age	≥ 0.05	Accepted
Gender	≥ 0.05	Accepted
Education	≥ 0.05	Accepted
Language	≥ 0.05	Accepted
Employment level	≥ 0.05	Accepted
Culture	≥ 0.05	Accepted

The p-values in respect of all demographic groups indicated no statistically significant difference between the respondents. It may therefore be inferred that all the respondents had the same engagement levels and no significant differences were present.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The biographical information of all the respondents is discussed in this section. The results obtained from Section A of the questionnaire are presented in Tables 4.3 to 4.8. This information includes details about the respondents' gender, age, ethnicity, department, job grading, level of education, as well as the period the respondent has been working for the organisation. A brief discussion of each of the data elements follows the respective tables.

Table 4.3: Graphical depiction of responses according to gender

Response	Frequency	%	0	20	40	60	80	100
Male	135	58%						
Female	98	42%						

As indicated by Table 4.3, 58% of the respondents were male, while 42% of the respondents were female. The total workforce currently consists of 72.5% males and

27.5% females. The sample is representative of the entire population as it features an almost even contribution by both genders.

Table 4.4: Age distribution of the respondents

Response	Frequency	%	0	20	40	60	80	100
20 – 30 Years	104	45%						
31 - 40 Years	82	35%						
41 - 50 Years	31	13%						
More than 50 Years	15	6%						

From Table 4.4 it is evident that the workforce of Sparta Foods is fairly young, with the majority (80%) of the respondents being younger than 40 years of age. The age group of 41 to 50 years of age had a value of 13%, and the age group of older than 50 years of age had a value of only 7%. This agrees with the overall workforce of the organisation, which consists of more younger employees. In certain departments, younger employees are preferred as they are involved in physical labour.

Table 4.5: Ethnicity distribution

Response	Frequency	%	0	20	40	60	80	100
African	172	74%						
Asian	0	0%						
Coloured	12	5%						
Indian	0	0%						
White	49	21%						

From Table 4.5. it is clear that the majority of the workforce are Africans, who represent 74% of the respondents. The second largest ethnic group is white, with 21% representation, and the third largest is coloured, with 5%. This is representative of the total population as the majority of the employees are Africans. Africans represent 90.4% of the total workforce, the coloured ethnic group 2.4%, and whites 7.2%. This is also in correlation with the organisation’s Employment Equity (EE) and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) policies.

Table 4.6: Graphical depiction of respondents by employment level

Response	Frequency	%	0	20	40	60	80	100
Top management	3	7%						
Middle management	24	11%						
Junior management	27	12%						
Working-class employee	179	70%						

The population studied in this research spanned across all levels of employment. Table 4.6 indicates that 77% of the respondents were working-class employees, 12% represented junior management, 10% represented middle management, and only 1% represented top management. Management contributed 23% of the respondents. This is in agreement with the management structure of the organisation. The hierarchy narrows to the top.

Table 4.7: Qualifications distribution

Response	Frequency	%	0	20	40	60	80	100
Grade 12 or less	85	36%						
Certificate after Grade 12	104	45%						
Diploma after Grade 12	27	12%						
Degree	9	4%						
Honours	6	3%						
Master's	1	0.4%						
PhD	1	0.4%						

From Table 4.7 it can be concluded that the majority (64%) of the respondents possessed post-Grade 12 qualifications. Twelve percent (12%) of the respondents had diplomas, 4% had degrees, and only 3% had postgraduate qualifications. It is of concern that just over one-third (36%) of the respondents only had Grade 12 or lower as their highest level of education. This lower level of education may negatively influence the possible development opportunities of these employees and this could in turn impact negatively on their engagement, as they may not have the required skills to advance in their careers. The level of education of the total population was not available for comparison purposes.

Table 4.8: Departmental distribution

Response	Frequency	%	0	20	40	60	80	100
Admin	17	7%						
Butchery	6	3%						
Canteen	5	2%						
Clinic	1	0.4%						
Cowheels	4	2%						
Deboning	22	9%						
Engineering	10	4%						
Health & Safety	8	3%						
Hides	6	3%						
Human Resources	5	2%						
IT	2	1%						
Laundry	3	1%						
Marketing	1	0.4%						
Offal	51	22%						
Planning	3	1%						
Rendering Plant	18	8%						
Retail Pack	25	11%						
Sales	6	3%						
Slaughter Floor	21	9%						
Transport	2	1%						
Warehouse	14	6%						
Wholesale	3	1%						

Table 4.8. presents the percentage of respondents each department contributed to the study. The number of questionnaires distributed in each department was determined by calculating the percentage each department contributed to the total workforce and then multiplying it with the sample size. The aim was to ensure equal representation from each department. With only a 58% response rate, some departments did not have sufficient representation in the study. Another barrier was the literacy levels of the employees within departments that require no mental abilities from employees but require more physical abilities. These employees might not be represented in the results of the study due to not being able to complete the questionnaire.

Table 4.9: Work experience distribution

Response	Frequency	%	0	20	40	60	80	100
1-5 years	164	70%						
6 -10 years	28	12%						
11-15 years	25	11%						
More than 15 years	16	7%						

Table 4.9 indicates that the majority (70%) of the employees have only been with the firm for five years or less. This correlates with the young workforce of 45% being younger than 30 years of age, as presented in Table 4.4. Another factor that also contributes to this low tenure is the high employee turnover rate of the organisation.

4.5 UWES QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The UWES measures the three underlying dimensions of engagement, namely vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Section B of the questionnaire surveyed engagement based on these underlying dimensions, as well as the composite engagement level of the respondents. The total score for engagement ranges from 0 to 6, and are grouped into five categories as indicated by Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Norm scores for the UWES-17

Level of engagement	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption	Total
Very low	≤ 2.17	≤ 1.60	≤ 1.60	≤ 1.93
Low	2.18 – 3.20	1.61 – 3.00	1.61 – 2.75	1.94 – 3.06
Average	3.21 – 4.80	3.01 – 4.90	2.76 – 4.40	3.07 – 4.66
High	4.81 – 5.60	4.91 – 5.79	4.41 – 5.35	4.67 – 5.53
Very high	≥ 5.61	≥ 5.80	≥ 5.36	≥ 5.54

Source: Wilmar Schaufeli et al. (2002)

The mean scale scores of the three UWES subscales were calculated by adding the scores of the particular scale and dividing the sum by the number of items of the subscale involved. A similar procedure was followed for the total score.

Firstly, each of the subscale scores will be discussed, after which the total employee engagement level of Sparta Foods will be addressed. The engagement level per geographical category will also be discussed.

4.5.1 Vigour

Vigour was assessed by the following six items that refer to high levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort, not easily being fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli et al., 2002):

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
3. I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
4. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
5. At my job, I am very resilient mentally.
6. At my work, I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

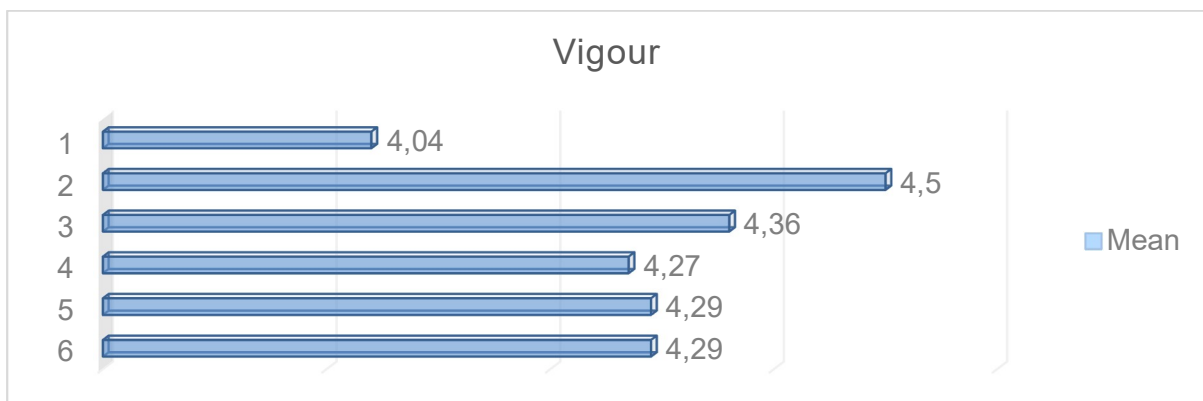


Figure 4.2: Mean for each of the questions pertaining to vigour

Figure 4.2. illustrates the scores for the six questions relating to the level of vigour present among the respondents. The respondents scored average (3.21 – 4.8) on each question when compared to Table 4.10. This indicates that only average levels of energy, stamina, and zest are present among employees when they are working (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

4.5.2 Dedication

Dedication is assessed by five items that refer to deriving a sense of significance from one's work, feeling enthusiastic about and proud of one's job, and feeling inspired and challenged by it (Schaufeli et al., 2002):

1. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
2. I am enthusiastic about my job.

3. My job inspires me.
4. I am proud on the work that I do.
5. To me, my job is challenging.

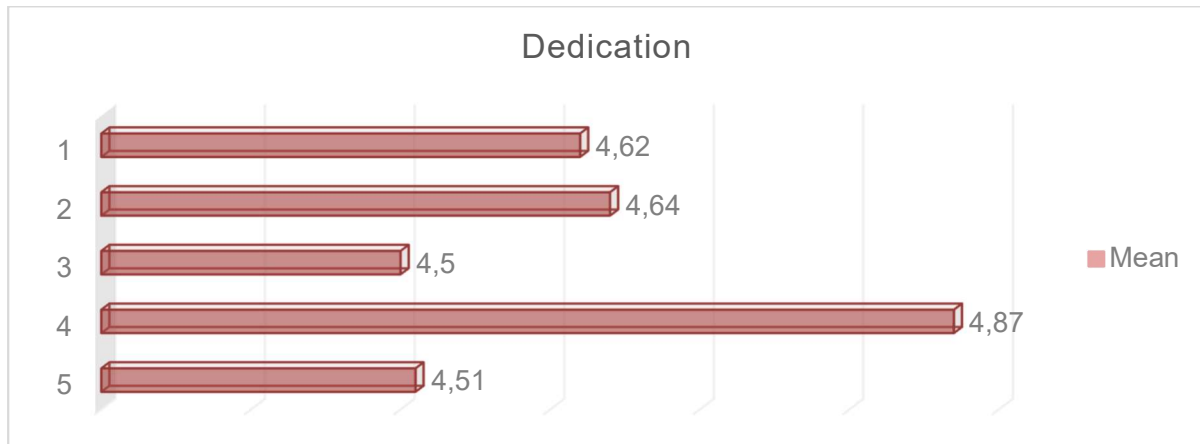


Figure 4.3: Mean for each of the questions pertaining to dedication

Figure 4.3. illustrates the scores for the five questions relating to the level of dedication present among the respondents. The respondents scored average (3.01 – 4.90) on each question when compared to Table 4.10. This indicates that only a moderate number of employees identify with their work because they experience it as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging, and feel proud and enthusiastic about it (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

4.5.3 Absorption

Absorption is measured by six items that refer to being totally immersed in one's work and having difficulty to detach oneself from it. This results in time passing quickly so that the employee forgets everything else that is around (Schaufeli et al., 2002):

1. Time flies when I am working.
2. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
3. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
4. I am immersed in my work.
5. I get carried away when I am working.
6. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.

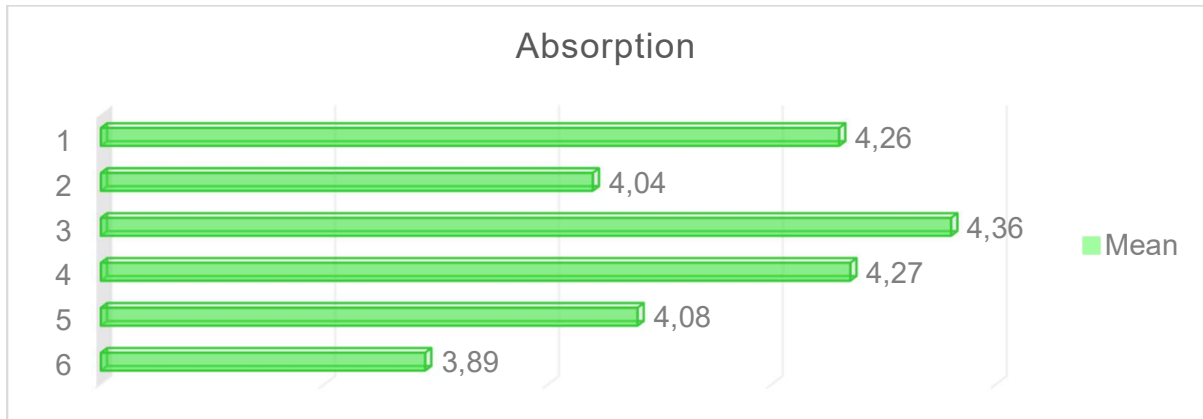


Figure 4.4: Mean for each of the questions pertaining to absorption

Figure 4.4 illustrates the six questions relating to the level of absorption present among the respondents. The majority of the respondents scored average (2.76-4.40) on absorption when compared to Table 4.10. This indicates that employees are not always happily absorbed in their work. They do not necessarily feel immersed in their work activities, and do not have a difficult time detaching from it (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

4.5.4 Engagement levels

Although the ANOVA in Section 4.3.1 indicated that the respondents all have the same engagement level and no significant differences are present, the total engagement mean score and the mean scores of vigour, dedication, and absorption were compared per demographic group. Although the engagement level per group remains the same, it would be interesting to learn which groups indicated slightly elevated levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption and which not. Figure 4.5 illustrates the engagement levels per gender group.

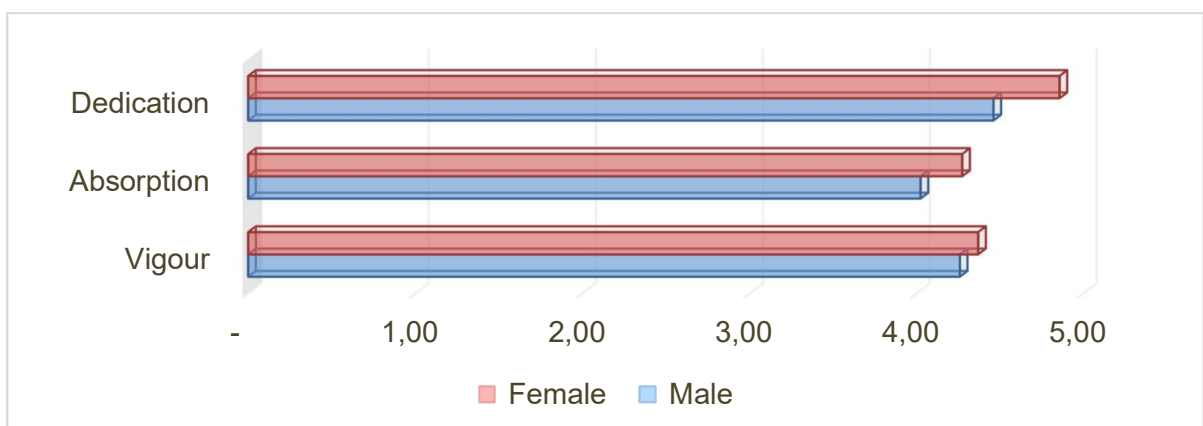


Figure 4.5: Engagement level per gender group

According to Figure 4.5, both male and female respondents indicated average engagement levels, but females had higher levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption than males. This is in contrast to Schaufeli and Salanova's (2007) findings that when using the UWES, males tend to score higher on engagement than females, but with a weak relationship.

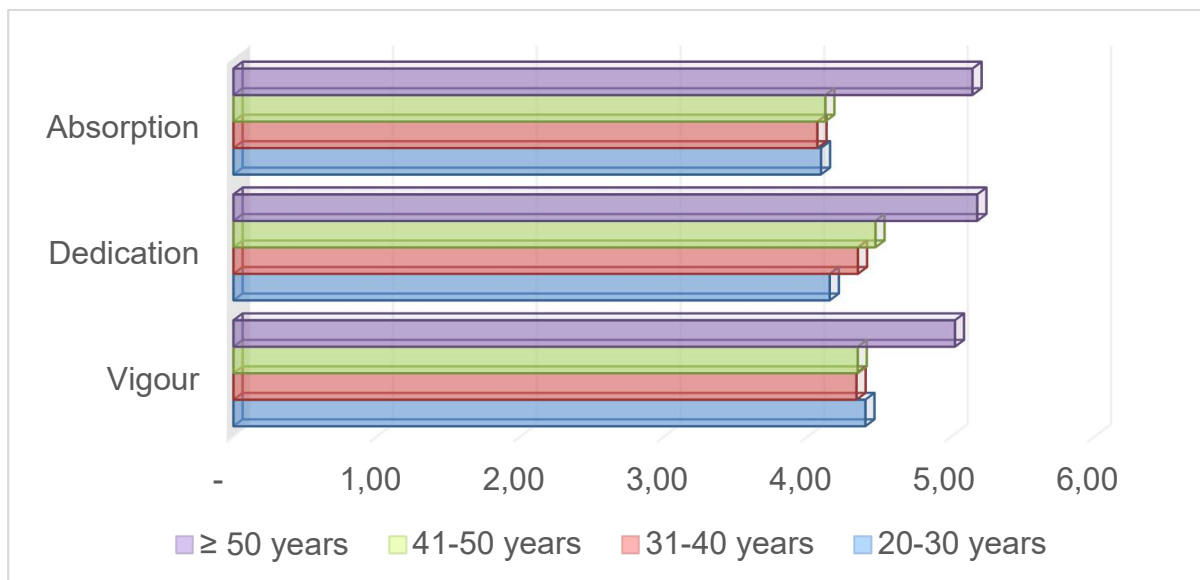


Figure 4.6: Engagement level per age group

As indicated by Figure 4.6, the age group ≥ 50 years scored slightly higher levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption compared to the other age groups. This indicates that the employees in this age group have a positive attitude to change and are action orientated. They are passionate, innovative, and connected to the organisation. The other age groups between 20 and 49 years all indicated average levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption.

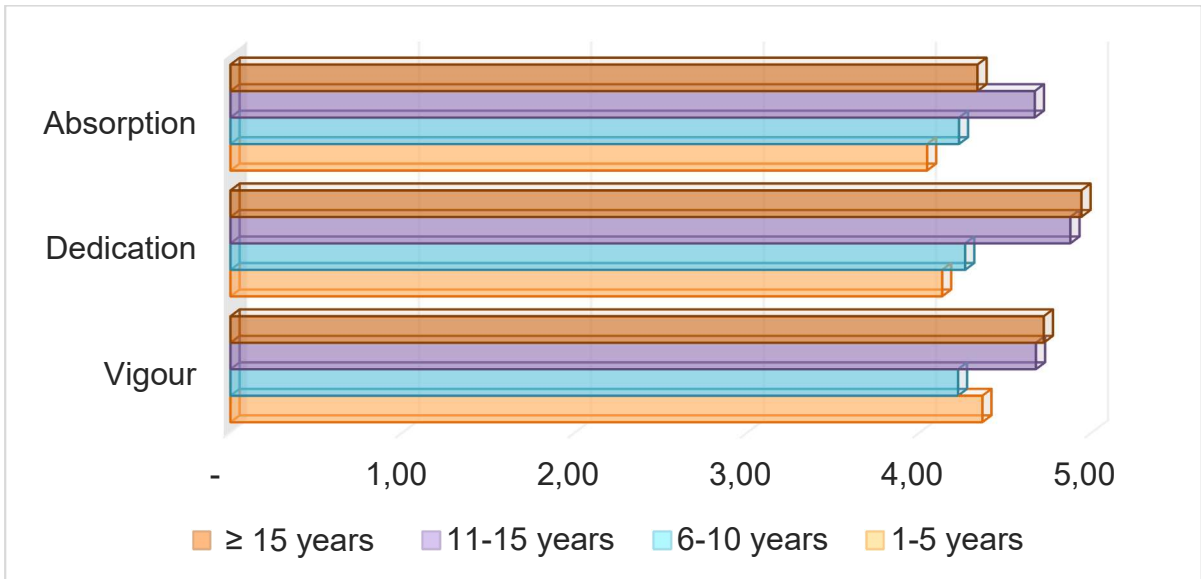


Figure 4.7: Tenure engagement levels

As indicated by Figure 4.7, employees who have been with the organisation for more than 11 years showed slightly higher levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption, while employees who have been with the firm for one to ten years scored average levels.

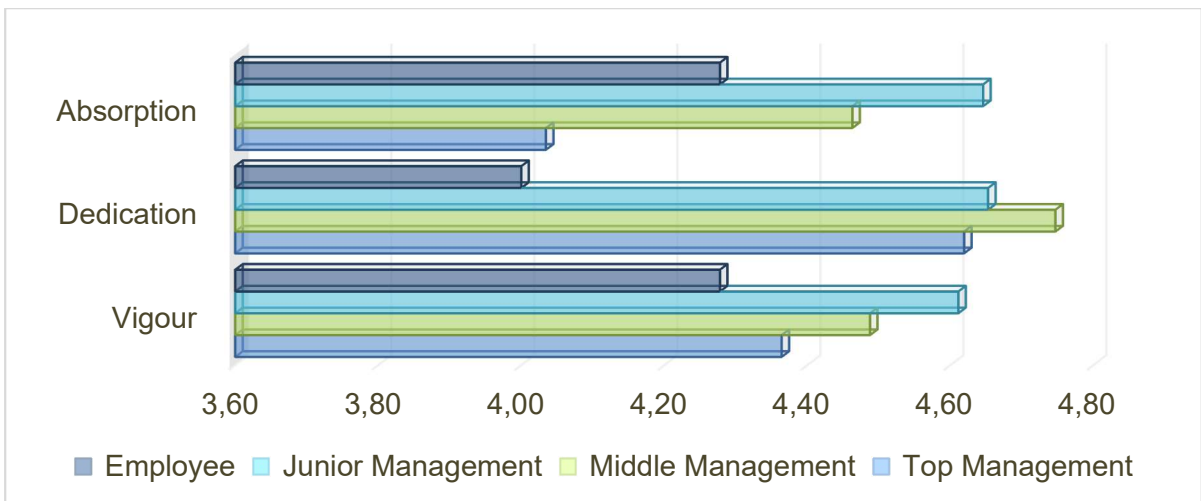


Figure 4.8: Engagement levels per employment category

As indicated by Figure 4.8, the difference in mean scores per employment category is clearly visible. Although the difference is clearly visible, the level of engagement remains the same across all employment groups. Working-class employees have slightly lower levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption compared to middle management, who have slightly higher levels. This illustrates the important role management plays in the engagement levels of employees. Beck and Harter (2015)

found that managers account for 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores across business units and therefore the engagement levels of managers are always likely to be higher than those of the employees. Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) found that professional groups such as managers and executives score higher than working-class employees. This may be attributed to the fact that management jobs are much more challenging and resourceful than blue-collar jobs.

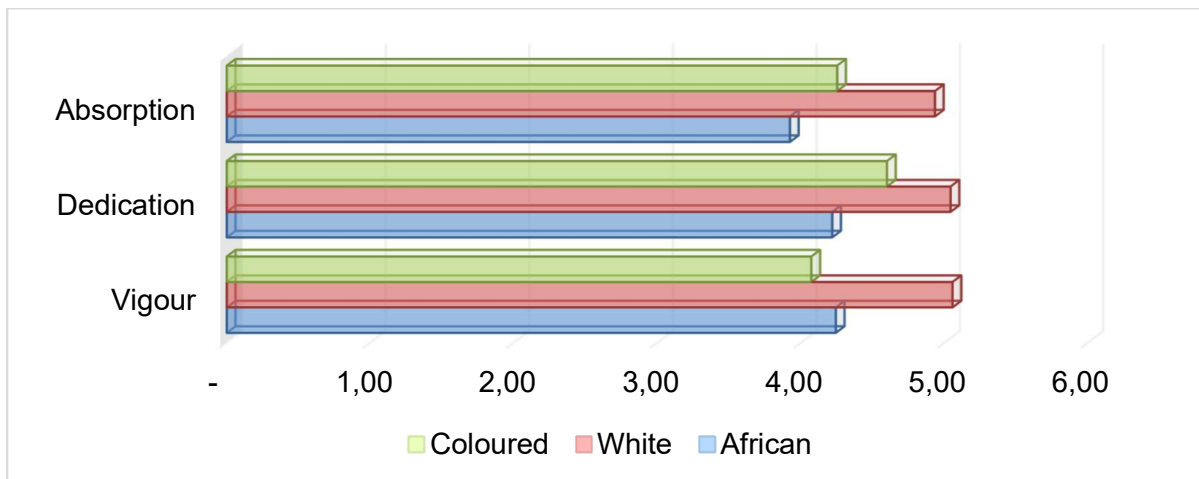


Figure 4.9: Engagement levels per culture group

As indicated by Figure 4.9, the white culture group displayed slightly higher levels of vigour, dedication, and absorption in comparison to the African and coloured culture groups, who scored more or less the same. The black ethnic group showed lower dedication, absorption, and vigour compared to whites.

The overall engagement level of the organisation is indicated by Figure 4.10. The respondents scored average on all three dimensions of engagement, as well as on the total engagement score.

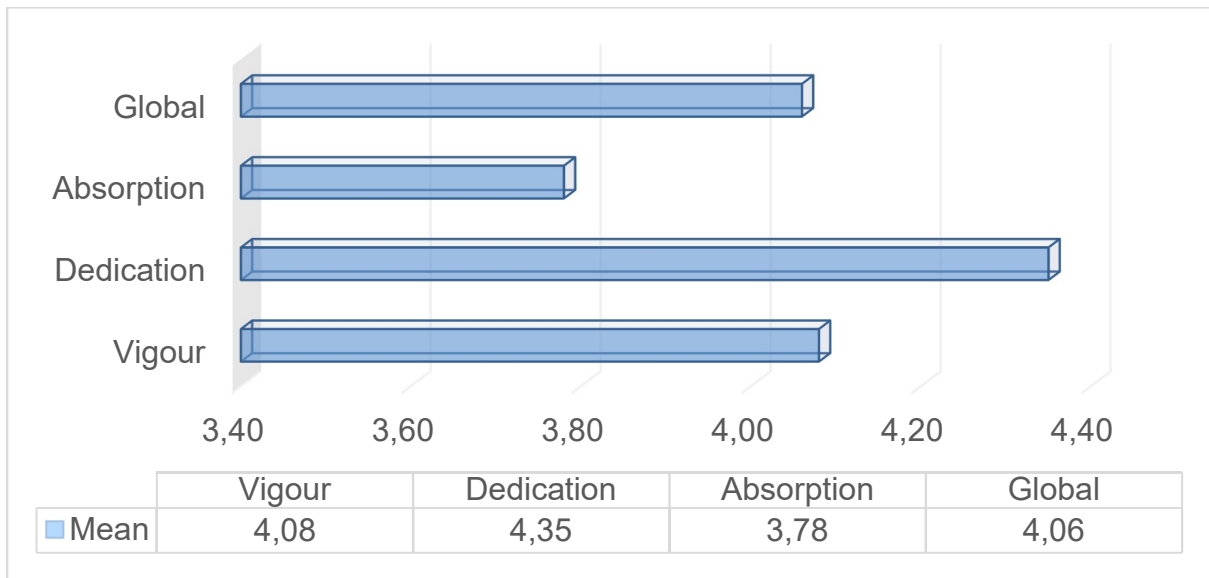


Figure 4.10: Mean for each subscale as well as the total mean

When the scores are compared to the norm scores in Table 4.10, it can be concluded that:

1. vigour levels are average (3.21 – 4.80);
2. dedication levels are average (3.01 – 4.90);
3. absorption levels are average (2.76 – 4.40); and
4. the level of engagement of the workforce is average (3.07 – 4.66).

It can thus be stated that Sparta Foods’ workforce is engaged. This indicates that the workforce has a positive attitude, but they are not entirely action orientated. Engaged employees are neither actively disengaged nor actively engaged. They are positive about what is happening in the organisation, but they are reluctant to get involved. They feel threatened when too exposed and are comfortable to watch from the sidelines (Page, 2008).

4.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the findings of the research conducted at Sparta Foods in Welkom. The overall results indicate that the majority of the respondents are engaged. They are neither actively engaged nor disengaged. The research also indicated that the management levels are more engaged than the working-class level of employment in the organisation.

The next chapter addresses how these levels can be improved and what the specific strategy is that Sparta Foods can implement to actively work towards a more engaged workforce.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSED STRATEGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this study was to develop an employee engagement strategy for Sparta Foods. In order to achieve this objective, the following secondary objectives were undertaken:

- 1) To conceptualise the construct of employee engagement.
- 2) To determine the current levels of employee engagement in Sparta Foods.
- 3) To determine how the employee engagement levels of Sparta Foods' workforce can be enhanced.

The results obtained from the quantitative data were analysed in Chapter 4. This chapter presents the results that address the primary and secondary objectives of the study. This chapter will also recommend a strategy to address the findings of the study, as well as describing the problems encountered and the limitations of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The researcher embarked on this study to assist the management of Sparta Foods to determine the current levels of employee engagement within the organisation and to develop an employee engagement strategy to address these levels. The organisation experiences high employee turnover levels, which results in the loss of time, money, managerial hours, and effort contributed towards the development and training of individuals. If employees could be actively engaged, it could prevent the loss of skills, as well as the loss of skills to competitors. The primary and secondary objectives of the study will be repeated in this section. The main findings related to each objective will be briefly reiterated.

The first secondary objective was to conceptualise the concept of 'employee engagement'. The researcher established that employee engagement refers to the relationship employees have with their work, as well as their relationship with their organisation. Although the various definitions of engagement differ, all include the line of thought that engagement is concerned with the emotional commitment of

employees towards their organisation, taking into account their discretionary effort on behalf of their employer. This study adopted the definition that engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Furthermore, four levels of engagement could be distinguished. The characteristics and behavioural patterns linked to each level of engagement were discussed.

The researcher found, based on the definition adopted, that three dimensions of engagement could be identified, namely:

- 1) Vigour, which referred to high levels of energy and mental resilience at work and the willingness of employees to invest in their work activities and persist in difficult circumstances;
- 2) Dedication, which is characterised by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, and inspiration in relation to one's work. This is the degree to which employees psychologically relate to their jobs; and
- 3) Absorption, which refers to the feeling of being focused on one's work and finding detaching oneself from work activities difficult. It entails a pleasant state in which employees are totally immersed in their work and forget about everything else.

The models of engagement of Kahn (1990), Rana et al. (2014), Schaufeli (2013), Fleck and Inceoglu (in Albrecht, 2010), Macey and Schneider (2008), and Kock and McNamara (2010) were discussed. A summary was presented on the state of engagement of each model, as well as the antecedents/drivers of each model.

The researcher also discussed the models for measuring engagement. The popularity of the concept has given rise to numerous studies by academics and practitioners who all promote their own measuring instruments. The UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002), the EEI (Nienaber & Martins, 2016), Imandin's theoretical model to measure employee engagement (Imandin, 2015), and the BeQ model (Nienaber & Martins, 2016) were discussed. For this study, the UWES (Schaufeli et al., 2002) was used as the measuring instrument as it is currently the most widely used and validated instrument. This instrument assesses vigour, dedication, and absorption, which are the dimensions of engagement this study was built on.

The second secondary objective was to determine the current levels of employee engagement within Sparta Foods. Measured by the UWES, it was determined that the organisation scored an overall mean of 4.06, which indicates that the employees are just engaged, when referring to the four levels of engagement stated by Page (2008). This indicated room for improvement, as the optimal benefits for the organisation will only be achieved by an actively engaged workforce.

The third secondary objective was to determine how the employee engagement levels of Sparta Foods can be improved. This was achieved by the development of the employee engagement strategy, as illustrated by Figure 5.3. This strategy also addresses the primary objective of this study, which was to develop an employee engagement strategy for Sparta Foods.

5.3 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

To develop an employee engagement strategy, the drivers of engagement as identified by Dajani (2015) were used as the basis. If management can understand what drives the actions of employees, it could be translated into productivity and loyalty towards the organisation. The UWES questionnaire was also analysed per individual question to identify specific areas of development. If the reasons behind these lower score areas can be determined, suitable solutions can be identified and incorporated into the strategy. The scores, as well as the questions associated with high negative scores, are indicated in Table 5.1. The questions marked with red are the questions that scored more than 30% negative responses.

Table 5.1: Individual scores of the UWES questionnaire

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always	Question
10%	4%	21%	12%	27%	26%	1 At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
9%	9%	8%	9%	17%	48%	2 I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
12%	6%	15%	14%	18%	36%	3 Time flies when I'm working.
9%	6%	15%	9%	28%	32%	4 At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
9%	7%	7%	9%	23%	45%	5 I am enthusiastic about my job.
14%	9%	14%	12%	20%	30%	6 When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
12%	5%	9%	13%	16%	45%	7 My job inspires me.
11%	8%	13%	12%	23%	33%	8 When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
9%	8%	14%	10%	26%	33%	9 I feel happy when I am working intensely.
8%	6%	9%	5%	12%	60%	10 I am proud on the work that I do.
11%	7%	15%	12%	23%	33%	11 I am immersed in my work.
14%	5%	13%	11%	22%	35%	12 I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
8%	7%	14%	10%	18%	43%	13 To me, my job is challenging.
14%	8%	15%	13%	21%	29%	14 I get carried away when I'm working.
10%	9%	10%	13%	23%	35%	15 At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
12%	9%	21%	14%	23%	21%	16 It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
6%	6%	9%	5%	21%	54%	17 At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

As can be seen from the question scores in Table 5.1, the high negative scores were all related to the vigour and absorption levels of engagement. Questions 1, 4, 8, and 12 related to vigour, and Questions 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, and 16 related to absorption.

The results for vigour indicated that some of the employees did not have a positive feeling of physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive liveliness that arise in response to their evaluation of the work they do. This indicates that the employees do not feel personally fulfilled by the work they do and it does not excite or invigorate them. Employees are thus unwilling to go the extra mile for the organisation and easily get tired when doing their jobs. The respondents do not feel like going to work in the morning and do not have high levels of energy and mental resilience.

The absorption results indicate non-commitment and a lack of involvement by employees in their jobs. They are not immersed in their jobs and for a large percentage, their job is only a means to an end. Employees who are not committed are not inclined to put much effort into their work and have no interest in the organisation or a desire to stay there. This may be caused by not providing opportunities for job advancement and not giving recognition to high performers.

Page (2008) suggests that internal customer satisfaction is just as important as external customer satisfaction. In order to retain customers and maintain profitable

growth, an organisation needs a large number of advocates. This concept is illustrated in Figure 5.1.

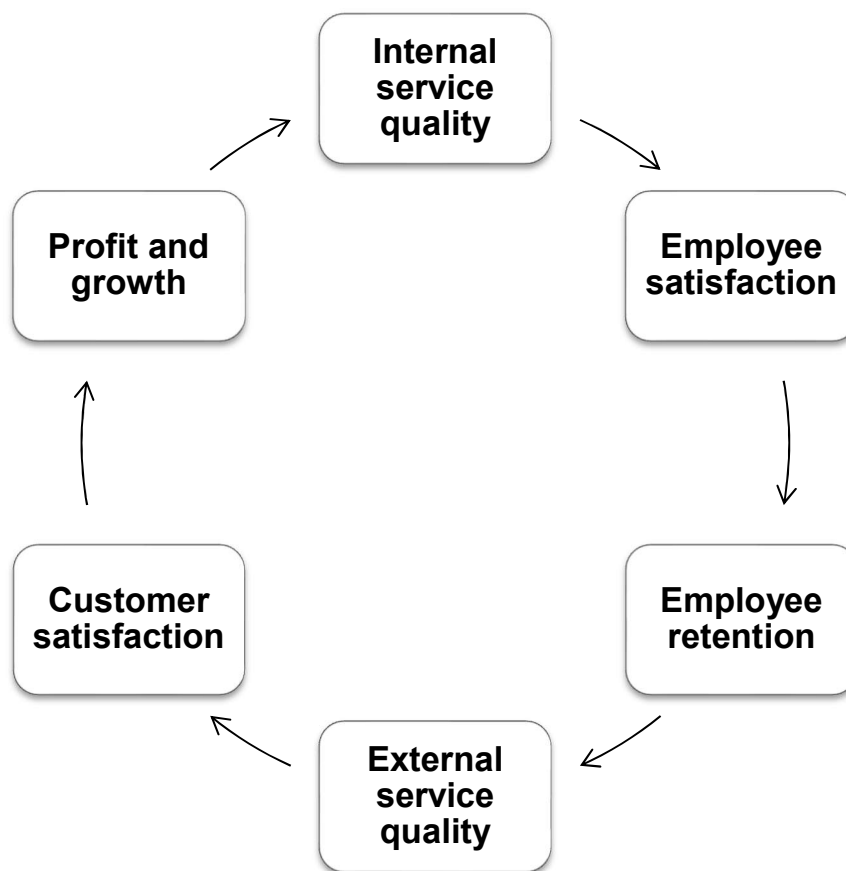


Figure 5.1: The service-profit chain

Source: Koban Page (2008, p. 16)

If employees are satisfied, it will lead to high levels of engagement, which in turn will lead to customer satisfaction. The quality of external service that customers receive is a direct reflection of the quality of service the employees provide one another. Thus, when employees do not feel valued or appreciated, it will lead to lower levels of engagement and they will be less likely to deliver excellent service (Page, 2008). This finding by Page (2008) echoes the findings of Kahn (1990), Schaufeli et al. (2002), and Nienaber and Martins (2016) that the physical component of engagement, also described as vigour, will have high levels of energy and mental resilience at work as a result. Employees who are actively engaged will thus demonstrate the willingness to invest in their work activities and persist in difficult circumstances. This also includes the employees' attitude towards the organisation, their colleagues, and the customers they serve, hence the importance of ensuring actively engaged employees.

The strategy proposed by the researcher for Sparta Foods is indicated in Figure 5.2. These elements are essential to improving employee engagement within the organisation and ensuring that the levels of employee engagement remain optimal.

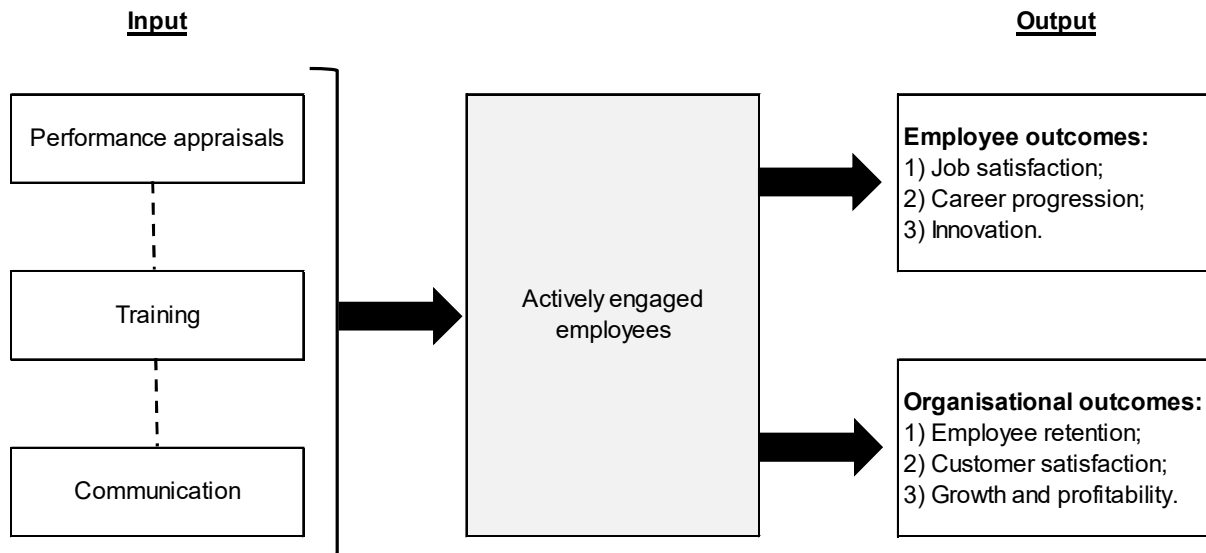


Figure 5.2: Illustration of the employee engagement strategy for Sparta Foods

Performance appraisals, continuous training, and open communication channels will lead to higher levels of engagement, which will not only have positive outcomes for the organisation but for the individuals as well, as indicated by the output section in Figure 5.2.

For the strategy to be implemented successfully, the organisation must obtain buy-in from all the individuals involved in this process, and the strategy and engagement levels should be evaluated continuously to ensure that the strategy aligns with the organisational goals.

5.3.1 Continuous evaluation

In order to establish the success of the implemented strategy, the engagement levels of the employees should be measured at least once a year. Former CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch (in Page, 2008, p. 22) states that “you need to take a measure of employee engagement at least once a year through anonymous surveys in which people feel completely safe to speak their minds”.

Employee engagement should not only be a one-time exercise. It should be integrated into the culture of the organisation and it should be a continuous process of learning, improvement, and action (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014).

5.3.2 Performance appraisals, training, and communication

The three input elements of the strategy can be discussed as one element since they are related and work in partnership to ensure that employees are engaged. As illustrated in Figure 5.3, these elements form a cycle and the one will have a direct influence on the other.

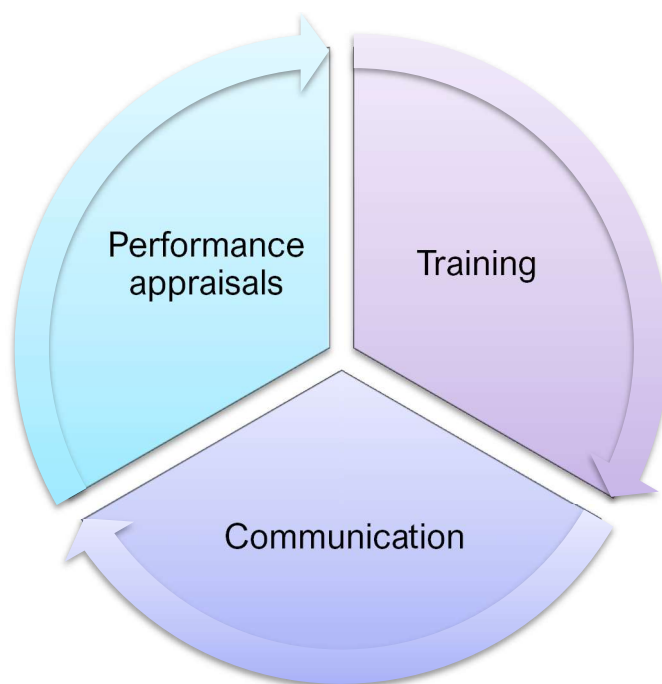


Figure 5.3: Input elements of the employee engagement strategy

Performance appraisal describes a wide variety of activities through which organisations seek to assess employees and develop their competence, enhance performance, and distribute rewards (Fletcher, 2001). Management should annually evaluate the performance of the employees with a performance appraisal system. Employees must feel that their efforts are meaningful, and the implementation of an employee reward and recognition system is probably one of the most important drivers for increased engagement (McManus & Mosca, 2015; Gose & Mohanty, 2016).

Maslach et al. (2001) also suggest that while a lack of reward and recognition can lead to burnout, appropriate recognition and rewards are very important for engagement.

The first step towards effective appraisals is for the organisation to develop a framework of competencies and traits for each job within the organisation. This framework will serve as the basis against which the individual performance of each employee is measured. This will enable management to determine the areas of strength and development for each individual.

At the beginning of each review period, the development goals for the employee should be put in writing, making use of the competencies framework. This will guide management to determine the course of training for the individual for the coming year and will help the individual to achieve these development goals set at the beginning of the review period. Wellins and Concelman (2005) note that organisations can enhance employee engagement within their workforce by creating a learning culture and creating individual development plans for every employee. Employees want to keep their jobs inventive and interesting by acquiring new knowledge and skills and by applying new approaches in their daily work life. Such a development plan will enable employees to understand how the individual objectives set for them will play an integral role in the overall goals and objectives for the organisation. This will give the employees a sense of ownership within the collective vision and will empower them to achieve the needed results. Employees will remain motivated by new goals and experiences.

After the review period, management will determine whether the employees achieved their development goals and competencies of their current jobs. A discussion will take place between the employee and the HOD. Setting aside the time to discuss an employee's individual ambitions will also help organisations to identify and develop potential talent and build a strong succession pipeline. During this appraisal meeting, the results from the previous appraisal period will be used to determine the development goals for the new review period. Setting goals is critical for employees to become engaged; Mone and London (2018) found that employees who set goals in collaboration with their managers become more engaged. Regularly reviewing employee performance will help HODs to identify when employees are ready to take on more responsibility. Meaningfulness can be generated by an organisation (Kahn,

1990) by giving employees the opportunity to develop their own knowledge base and skills set. If employees learn more about their jobs, their confidence levels will increase, which will build their self-efficacy and commitment (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). If employees are provided with the individual training opportunities they require to develop their knowledge, it will promote new skills, build their confidence, and reduce their fear and job insecurities (McManus & Mosca, 2015).

The appraisal system will ensure that employees receive training and development specifically linked to their personal development and they will see that the organisation is interested in them as individuals and that their individual development is important to the organisation. If bonuses and increases are linked to these appraisals, high-performing individuals will be rewarded for their hard work and will not only receive the percentage increase of the entire organisation.

It is very important that organisations maintain meaningful, two-way dialogue between management and employees to help keep talented people within the organisation. One of the key enablers for achieving employee engagement is to ensure that employees have a voice, whereby appraisal meetings can help to fuel discussion between employees and management and empower employees to share their opinions. They will feel encouraged to influence innovation by feeding ideas upwards, and the relationship that develops from open communication within appraisal systems will help employees to feel more comfortable to approach and discuss any ideas or issues outside of these meetings as well. Open discussions on performance can help to identify problems early and provide the opportunity to explore positive solutions. Managers can determine what additional training and support could be provided to enable employees to achieve results that they will feel proud of. High-performing employees can be supported with further training to help them progress to the next level in their careers. If there are issues, they can be addressed before they escalate to the point of someone leaving the organisation. Enhancing communication will enable employees to raise any worries or concerns, or to discuss with their HOD any barriers that they feel are holding them back.

Organisations that provide clear progression opportunities are attractive to new recruits and these organisations will be likely to retain talented employees by mapping out and investing in a career path for them. The development of employees should

never stand still as they are the key asset in driving an organisation forward. Regular staff training is essential for ongoing skill development. If a quality training plan is in place, the organisation will also see the return on investment on the balance sheet (Gill, 2014).

5.4 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the various contributions this research study makes, it has several limitations. It is important to note that these limitations do not significantly undermine the results discussed in Chapter 4.

At the time of the survey, the organisation had 792 permanent employees. Due to the data-collection method used, only a possible 400 (50%) of the employees could participate in the research, of which only 233 participated. The actual participants represented almost 59% of the target population but only 29% of the permanent employees of the organisation. While this percentage was above 50%, it may not have been sufficiently representative of the total population. A larger sample size would have ensured that the results of this research study were more credible. Ideally, more employees should have participated in order for the findings to be considered conclusive. The participation levels of the different departments were also mostly under 10%. More participation from each department would have ensured that the final result was representative of all the departments within the organisation.

Although this was an anonymous questionnaire and confidentiality was guaranteed, the researcher was an employee of Sparta Foods and this factor could have led to respondents' eagerness to provide a positive picture in fear of the researcher reporting them to their immediate managers. Various individuals approached the researcher, indicating that they would complete the questionnaire but would not sign the informed consent form in fear of management making the connection between the signed consent form and the completed questionnaire.

The literacy levels of the employees also played an important role in the completion of the questionnaires, and due to lack of reading and writing skills, employees with lower literacy might not be sufficiently represented within the results.

The study was also limited to only one company within the Sparta Group of companies. It is thus recommended that further studies be conducted on other companies within the Sparta Group.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 provided the research findings to meet the primary and secondary objectives of the study. It also focused on the overall conclusions with reference to the literature study, research methodology, and the study results. An employee engagement strategy was recommended in order for the organisation to maintain and improve the current employee engagement levels. If this strategy is successfully implemented, the organisation will be able to realise a positive impact on turnover, customer satisfaction, profitability, and staff turnover, while the employees will experience higher levels of job satisfaction. It is the researcher's firm belief that the implementation of this study's strategy will positively impact the wellbeing of the organisation and all its employees.

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ANNEXURES
ANNEXURE A: INFORMATION SHEET

C.M. Botes
131 Power Road
Welkom
9459

4 July 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I am currently enrolled for a Master of Business Administration degree and part of the requirements of obtaining the degree is the completion of a research project.

The title of the research project is 'Developing an Employee Engagement Strategy for Sparta Foods'. The primary objective of the research is to determine the current employee engagement levels within the organisation, whereafter a suitable strategy will be developed to increase the current levels.

In order to complete the research project, I request that you participate by completing the following questionnaire. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Please complete the questionnaire before 18 July 2018 and return it to your HOD or place it in the box provided in your department.

Relevant ethical considerations are being observed by the researcher while conducting this study. Permission was obtained from the organisation and the data collected will be kept anonymous at all times. The information will be kept confidential and in the reporting of the findings mention will only be made to the overall findings.

Participation in this research is on a voluntary basis. Please complete the additional paper to confirm that you were aware of the voluntary participation at the end of this information letter. The researcher will not interfere in anyway with the information given on the respondents' questionnaires.

Where clarity is required, the researcher can be contacted at:

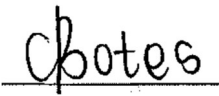
Contact no.: 057 916 7753

Email address: christineb@sparta.co.za

Your time and effort taken in filling the questionnaire are appreciated in advance.

Thank you for contributing to the success of this research.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cbotes", written over a horizontal line.

C.M. Botes

ANNEXURE B: QUESTIONNAIRE SECTION A

Section A: Biographic details

1. How long have you been with the company?

1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
More than 15 years	

2. Age:

20-30 years	
31-40 years	
41-50 years	
More than 50 years	

3. Gender:

Male	
Female	

4. Educational level:

Less than Grade 12 / Senior Certificate	
Certificate after Grade 12 / Senior Certificate	
Diploma after Grade 12 / Senior Certificate	
Degree	
Honours	
Master's	
PhD	

5. Language:

Afrikaans	
English	
Sepedi	
Sesotho	
Setswana	
Tshivenda	
IsiZulu	
IsiXhosa	
Other	

6. Department you work for:

Butchery	
Canteen	
Clinic	
Cowheels	
Deboning	
Engineering	
Health & Safety	
Hides	
Laundry	
Offal	
Refrigeration	
Rendering Plant	
Retail Pack	
Security	
Slaughter Floor	
Transport	
Warehouse	
Wholesale	

7. Level of management

Top management	
Middle management	
Junior management	
Employee	

8. Race

Asian	
African	
White	
Coloured	
Indian	

ANNEXURE C: QUESTIONNAIRE SECTION B

Section B: UWES

The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 5) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

1. _____ At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. _____ I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
3. _____ Time flies when I am working.
4. _____ At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
5. _____ I am enthusiastic about my job.
6. _____ When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
7. _____ My job inspires me.
8. _____ When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
9. _____ I feel happy when I am working intensely.
10. _____ I am proud on the work that I do.
11. _____ I am immersed in my work.
12. _____ I can continue working for very long periods at a time.
13. _____ To me, my job is challenging.
14. _____ I get carried away when I'm working.
15. _____ At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
16. _____ It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
17. _____ At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.

ANNEXURE D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, _____ (participant name), hereby confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits, and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report.

I agree to complete the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale questionnaire and have signed the informed consent agreement.

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Full name of researcher: Christine Botes

Signature of researcher: cbotes

Date: 03/07/2018

