

**THE IMPACT OF JOB AND ORGANISATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS ON
ENGAGEMENT AT WORK IN A PETRO-CHEMICAL COMPANY**

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SUMMARY

Topic: The impact of job and organisational characteristics on engagement

Key Terms: Job characteristics, organisational characteristics, engagement, vigour, dedication, absorption.

In today's tough economic environment, companies are forced to work more efficiently and effectively with the resources they have at their disposal. At the same time companies are struggling to attract and retain good people with the necessary attributes and skills in order for them to remain competitive. The challenge today is not just retaining talented people, but fully engaging them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work lives. Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace. Further, employee engagement can be a deciding factor in organisational success. Not only does engagement have the potential to significantly affect employee retention, productivity and loyalty, it is also a key link to customer satisfaction, company reputation and overall stakeholder value.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether job and organisational characteristics have an impact on work engagement. Weak correlation was found between the four aspects of Job and organisational characteristics namely: the Position the company holds in the industry, Own and company objectives, Environmental factors and Commitment or social responsibility position the company takes and the three aspects of Engagement namely Vigour, Dedication and practically significant correlation coefficients of large effect between Vigour on the one hand and Dedication and Absorption on the other hand. Practically significant correlation coefficients of large effect between Dedication on the one hand and Absorption on the other hand. Practically significant correlation coefficients of medium effect between Absorption on the one hand and Own and company objectives was found.

After controlling for work engagement at baseline, only four of the dimensions tested between Job and organisational characteristics and Engagement were statistically

significant. No positive association could be found between Job and organisational characteristics and Work Engagement. The findings are noteworthy in that all the aspects of Job and organisational characteristics do not lead to Engagement thus no evidence was found that Job and organisational characteristics could stimulate Work Engagement.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with the relationship between job and organisational characteristics and engagement of employees in a company's Group Strategic Sourcing department in the petro-chemical industry.

This chapter provides the background and problem statement of this study. The research objectives and the significance of the study are also presented. Finally, the research method is explained, limitations of the study are highlighted and the division of chapters are provided.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY (MOTIVATION)

In today's tough economic environment, companies are forced to work more efficiently and effectively with the resources they have at their disposal. At the same time companies are struggling to attract and retain good people with the necessary attributes and skills in order for them to remain competitive. Companies face an ongoing dilemma in having to invest in the workforce and in the need to cut and control costs, a balancing act that is difficult to manage (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006).

The challenge today is not just retaining talented people, but fully engaging them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work lives (Kaye and Jordan-Evans, 2003). Recently, employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace. Further, employee engagement can be a deciding factor in organisational success. Not only does engagement have the potential to significantly affect employee retention, productivity and loyalty, it is also a key link to customer satisfaction, company reputation and overall stakeholder value. Thus, to gain a competitive edge, organisations are turning to HR to set the agenda for employee engagement and commitment. Although there are different views of work engagement, most scholars

(Bakker, & Demerouti, 2008; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; and Jackson, Rothmann, & Van De Vijver, 2006) agree that engaged employees have high levels of energy and identify strongly with their work. Research on engagement has investigated how engagement differs from related concepts (e.g., workaholism and organisational commitment), and has focused on the most important aspects of work engagement. According to Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2003), engagement is a unique concept that is best predicted by job and organisational characteristics (e.g., autonomy, supervisory coaching, and performance feedback) and personal resources (e.g., optimism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Organisations ranging in size, industry, and geographical location have reported talent shortages. This problem is as a result of increased demand for talent in supply-constrained labour markets, and manifests itself in companies, in a number of challenges: a shortage of highly qualified graduates, pending retirements, an aging workforce, and a lack of experienced talent. These supply problems, coupled with a rising demand for labour, create two additional issues which companies are faced with, namely high turnover and wage inflation (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006)

These problems combine and threaten to disrupt plant operations and require companies to seek new methods to attract and retain the talent they need for success. The loss of valuable employees equates to a significant financial loss to the company. Financial losses are related to:

- Resignation of an employee equates to between six months and two years' salary (pay and benefits) depending on: the level of the employee, depth of intellectual property, corporate memory and the extent of customer interaction and profitability.
- Apart from re-staffing, which includes time spent sourcing suitable candidates, recruitment costs, time and cost of training, it also results in loss of talent, productivity, quality, morale and customer satisfaction.
- New employees achieve only 60% output in the first three months of employment. It is generally at least six months before the employee starts to

add value, i.e. where he/she knows the business, the clients and his/her way around systems and methods of working (www.humareources.about.com).

High levels of engagement in domestic and global firms promote the retention of talent, foster customer loyalty and improve organisational performance and stakeholder value. A complex concept, engagement is influenced by many factors ranging from workplace culture, organisational communication and managerial styles to trust and respect, leadership and company reputation. For today's different generations, access to training and career opportunities, work/life balance and empowerment to make decisions are important. To foster a culture of engagement, a company needs to design measure and evaluate proactive workplace policies and practices that help attract and retain talent with skills and competencies necessary for growth and sustainability (Lockwood, 2007). *The purpose of this study is to determine whether job and organisational characteristics have an impact on work engagement.*

Much has been written about the "new employment relationship" and how it is characterized by diminished feelings of employee loyalty, trust, and commitment (Tsui and Wu, 2005). It is interesting, then, to observe that the new employment relationship coexists in time with a business practice termed employee engagement, which is often touted as a source of competitive advantage (Wellins, Bernthal & Phelps, 2007.). The discrepancy between the new employment relationship and the desired business outcome of achieving competitive edge through human capital presents significant challenges to those who are charged with retaining key employees and engaging the workforce. These challenges are compounded by a growing job market in which employees increasingly reevaluate their company's Employment Value Proposition (EVP), the value or benefit an employee perceives by serving as a member of the organisation and determine for themselves the extent to which this "value" is competitive. Employees who perceive their own organisations' EVP to be less competitive than the EVP of other organisations are likely to disengage from their own either by reducing their contributions or by leaving their organisations altogether (Corporate Leadership Council, 2006). In either case, the outcome has implications for a company's bottom-line.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Employee engagement describes employees' emotional and intellectual commitment to their organisation and its success. Engaged employees experience a compelling purpose and meaning in their work and give of their discrete effort to advance the organisation's objectives. *The primary objective of the study is to determine the relationship between job and organisational characteristics and engagement.*

The secondary objectives of the study are to:

- determine the impact of job and organisational characteristics on vigour
- determine the impact of job and organisational characteristics on dedication
- determine the impact of job and organisational characteristics on absorption

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope covers two aspects namely the field of the study and the geographical demarcation of the study to specify the boundaries of this study.

1.5.1 Field of the Study

The study falls in the field of industrial psychology (www.Dictionary.com, 2010) defined as the application of psychological principles and techniques to business and industrial problems, as in the selection of personnel or development of training programs. The American Heritage dictionary (2010) defines it as an applied psychology that addresses varied business problems, including employee job satisfaction and performance. Industrial psychology has historically subsumed two broad areas of study, as evident by its name, although this distinction is largely artificial and many topics cut across both areas. It has roots in social psychology; organisational psychologists examine the role of the work environment in performance and other outcomes including job satisfaction and health. Some common practice areas for Industrial psychologists include: Job performance, job analysis, work motivation, job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, organisational citizenship, and retaliation), work/life balance, human

factors and decision making, organisational culture/climate, organisational surveys, job design, technology in the workplace and group/team performance.

Work engagement and job and organisational characteristics are topics covered in the subject: Organisational Behaviour. A solid understanding and appreciation of how people behave in organisations and what causes them to behave the way they do is the first step in managing organisational behaviour effectively. When managers appreciate the forces that shape organisational behaviour, they can use new tools and techniques to enhance individual and organisational performance. The study of organisational behaviour provides guidelines that both managers and workers can use to understand and appreciate the many forces that affect behaviour, and to make correct decisions about how to motivate and coordinate people and other resources to achieve organisational goals (Schultz, Bagraim, Potgieter, Viedge and Werner, 2003).

1.5.2 Geographical Demarcation

The study will be conducted within the boundaries of a department within a company's Group Strategic Sourcing function, a specialised function within the supply chain. This department was established in 1999 in South Africa in the provinces of Mpumalanga, Free State and Gauteng in Secunda, Sasolburg and Johannesburg respectively.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research method consists of a literature and an empirical study.

1.6.1 Literature/theoretical study

The literature study will focus on previous research on the work engagement, staff retention, job and organisational characteristics and work engagement. Work engagement will be conceptualize from relevant recent literature followed by a discussion on the use of job and organisational characteristics as employee value

proposition to increase engagement in the organisation where the research will be conducted.

1.6.2 Empirical study

Data will be collected using a survey with a cross-sectional design which is used to examine groups of subjects in various stages of development simultaneously, while the survey describes a technique of data collection in which questionnaires are used to gather data about an identified population (Burns & Grove, 1993). Information collected is used to describe the population at that time. This design can also be used to assess interrelationships among variables within a population. According to Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1997), this design is best suited to address the descriptive and predictive functions associated with correlational design, whereby relationships between variables are examined. The *study population* consist of the Group Strategic Sourcing (GSS) team which comprises 450 employees consisting of nine groups managing various in-bound and out-bound supply chain portfolios. In this study, the researcher made use of *Judgment sampling* which is a common non-probability technique (Walonick, 1993) because the category of people used had the information that is sought, the researcher selected the sample based on judgment. This is usually an extension of convenience sampling.

1.6.3 Measuring instruments

A *biographical questionnaire* is used to gather information about the demographic characteristics. Aspects that were included were employee gender, age and race.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES) (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002) is used to measure the levels of work engagement of the participants. The UWES includes three dimensions, namely Vigour, Dedication and Absorption. The questionnaire consists of 17 questions and includes questions like "I am bursting with energy every day in my work"; "Time flies when I am at work" and "My job inspires me". The items of the questionnaire are scored on a frequency-rating scale, varying from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). The alpha coefficients for the three sub-scales varied between 0,68 and 0,91. Alpha coefficients between 0,78

and 0,89 were obtained for the three sub-scales. Storm (2002) obtained the following alpha coefficients for the UWES in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Service: Vigour: 0,78; Dedication: 0,89; and Absorption: 0,78.

The *Job Characteristics Inventory (JCI)* has been developed for the purpose of this study to measure value propositions for employees. The JCI consists of 38 items. Various demands and resources in the organisation were identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). The dimensions of the JCI include Industry *attractiveness*, *alignment* of company & own objectives, *external* factors, as well as social *responsibility*. The internal consistency and construct validity of the scale will be determined for the purposes of this study.

1.6.4 Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was carried out by means of the SPSS programme. Because a non-probability sample was used in this research, effect sizes (rather than inferential statistics) were used. Cronbach alpha coefficients were determined to indicate the internal consistency of the measuring instruments. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (engagement dimensions) that is predicted by the independent variables (job and organisational characteristics). The effect size in the case of multiple regressions is given by the following formula (Steyn, 1999): $f^2 = R^2 / 1 - R^2$. A cut-off point of 0,35 (large effect, Steyn, 1999) was set for the practical significance of f^2 .

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The use of a cross-sectional design in the present research constitutes a limitation. At best, these relationships could only be analysed and described, not established. Therefore, the establishment of relationships in the present study serves only to set up certain patterns consistent with previous theoretical research regarding the chronological relationships of the different variables being studied.

Another limitation of the present research could be the sample size. Although questionnaires were e-mailed to 450 employees with a request to either return it by e-mail or by hard-copy, a full response is not expected. This might have a significant limitation in terms of the generalisation of the finding to the total study population.

1.8 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The rest of the mini-dissertation will be discussed as follows:

- **Chapter two** *conceptualizes* job and organisational characteristics and work engagement *from the literature*
- **Chapter three** reports the *research method* that will be employed to achieve the goals of the research project. Aspects that will be covered include research design, measuring instruments that will be used to gather data and then data analyses techniques will be discussed.
- **Chapter four** focuses on *the results of the study*. The results will then be discussed by focussing on the implications of the findings for managers.
- **Chapter five** discusses *the conclusion* reached resulting from the study as well as any *recommendations* that can be made to management and recommendations for future studies.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter one provides the background and motivation including the problem statement, primary and secondary objectives, scope, research methodology utilised, limitations and layout of the study. Chapter two covers the literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“The challenge today is not just retaining talented people, but fully engaging them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work lives” according to Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2003). Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today’s competitive marketplace. Further, employee engagement can be a deciding factor in organisational success. Not only does engagement have the potential to significantly affect employee retention, productivity and loyalty, it is also a key link to customer satisfaction, company reputation and overall stakeholder value. Thus, to gain a competitive edge, organisations are turning to HR to set the agenda for employee engagement. In this chapter the author will highlight previous studies concerning work engagement and organisational and job characteristics.

2.2 WORK ENGAGEMENT: DEFINITION, DIMENSIONS AND ANTECEDENTS

Engaged employees show higher levels of energy and identification towards their work, which in turn has a positive impact on job performance and financial turnover of an Organisation (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). For purposes of this research, work engagement is defined as a ‘positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related wellbeing’ characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001; 2003).

Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work and the persistence even in the face of difficulties. Those who score high on vigour usually have much energy, zest and stamina when working, while those who score low on vigour have less energy, zest and stamina as far as their work is concerned. *Dedication* is characterised by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. Those who score high on dedication strongly identify with their work because it is experienced

as meaningful, inspiring, and challenging. Besides, they usually feel enthusiastic and proud about their work. Those who score low do not identify with their work because they do not experience it to be meaningful, inspiring, or challenging; moreover, they feel neither enthusiastic nor proud about their work. Finally, *absorption* is characterised by being totally and happily immersed in one's work, to the extent that it is difficult to detach oneself from it. Those who score high on absorption feel that they usually are happily engrossed in their work, they feel immersed by their work and have difficulties detaching from it because it carries them away. As a consequence, everything else around is forgotten and time seems to fly. Those who score low on absorption do not feel engrossed or immersed in their work, neither do they have difficulties detaching from it, nor do they forget everything around them, including time.

Previous research has consistently showed that work engagement is mainly driven by *job resources*, particularly in the midst of elevated job demands (Bakker *et al.*, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2005; Fourie, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2007; Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that either reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or are functional in achieving work goals and stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Resources may be located at organisational level (i.e. salary and career opportunities), interpersonal relations (i.e. supervisor and co-worker support), the Organisation of work (i.e. role clarity) and task level (i.e. task significance and autonomy) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Applied within the South African context, job resources such as organisational support, growth opportunities and career advancement (Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2006; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006) were positively related to work engagement.

The number one factor that influences employee engagement is the manager-employee relationship. The manager creates the connection between the employee and the Organisation, and as a result, the manager-employee relationship is often the "deal breaker" in relation to retention. A recent study shows that employees who trust their managers appear to have more pride in the Organisation and are more likely to feel they are applying their individual talents for their own success and that

of the Organisation. However, the findings show only 56% of employees feels their manager have good knowledge of what they do and promotes the use of their unique talents (BlessingWhite, 2006). Managers who demonstrate the following characteristics promote employee engagement: 1) show strong commitment to diversity; 2) take responsibility for successes and failures; 3) demonstrate honesty and integrity; 4) help find solutions to problems; 5) respect and care for employees as individuals; 6) set realistic performance expectations; 7) demonstrate passion for success; and 8) defend direct reports (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004).

In addition, HR practices can make the difference between effective engagement and valuable human capital joining the competition. For example, a study about the impact of HR practices and organisational engagement on the profitability of business units found a close relationship between HR practices, operating expenses and company performance. In addition, employees were found to be more engaged to the Organisation when managed with progressive HR practices. At a large food-service corporation with operations in the United States and Canada, the study results were put to practical use when the senior HR executive used the data in presentations to demonstrate the kind of performance the company might see as a result of developing and implementing proven HR practices (Wright, Gardner & Moynihan, 2003).

2.2.1 Trends in Employee Engagement

Today, society and business are witnessing unprecedented change in an increasingly global marketplace, with many companies competing for talent. As organisations move forward into a boundary-less environment, the ability to attract, engage, develop and retain talent will become increasingly important. In view of these changes, a number of trends are likely to have a significant impact on employee engagement. The Society for Human Resource Management 's (SHRM) Special Expertise Panels 2006 Trends Report, identified in a few which are listed below (see Table 1). For example, the increased demand for work/life balance and the changing relationship between employers and employees are driving the need for HR professionals and their organisations to truly understand what employees need and want and then determine how to meet those needs while at the same time

developing and leveraging workplace talents at all levels as proposed by the SHRM Management (2006).

Table 1: *Top Trends Lead to Focus on Employee Engagement*

Top Trends Lead to Focus on Employee Engagement
Employee-employer relationship evolving/changing to partnerships.
Increase demand for work/life balance.
HR's greater role in promoting the link between employee performance and its impact on business goals.
Increasing focus on selective retention for keeping mission-critical talent.
Work intensification as employers increase productivity with fewer employees and resources.
Acquiring and keeping key talent re-emerging as top issues of concern.
Decline in traditional communication methods and increase in cyber communication.
Needs, wants and behaviours of the talent pool driving changes in attraction, selection and retention practices.

Adapted from Society for Human Resource Management. (2006). SHRM Special Expertise Panels 2006 trends report. Alexandria, V.

Work/life balance is increasingly important for engagement and affects retention. As emphasized in a recent study on generations and gender by the Families and Work Institute, Generations X and Y have different workplace expectations than do the baby boomers and mature workers (Families and Work Institute, 2004). By being aware of the unique needs of diverse groups, as well as by recognizing individual differences within these groups, HR can better understand the challenges of increased diversity in the Organisation's workforce and work toward designing and implementing workplace policies and practices to engage diverse employee groups.

2.2.2 Levels and Types of Employee Engagement

Engaged employees work harder, are more loyal and are more likely to go the 'extra mile' for the corporation. There are different levels of engagement (see Figure 1), and understanding the *types of engagement* provides perspective into employee behaviours that can either positively or negatively affect organisational success. Employee engagement can be considered as *cognitive, emotional and behavioural*.

Cognitive engagement refers to employees' beliefs about the company, its leaders and workplace culture. The emotional aspect is how employees feel about the company, the leaders and their colleagues. The behavioural factor is the value-added component reflected in the amount of effort employees put into their work (e.g., brainpower, extra time and energy). (Gallup Management Journal, 2006)

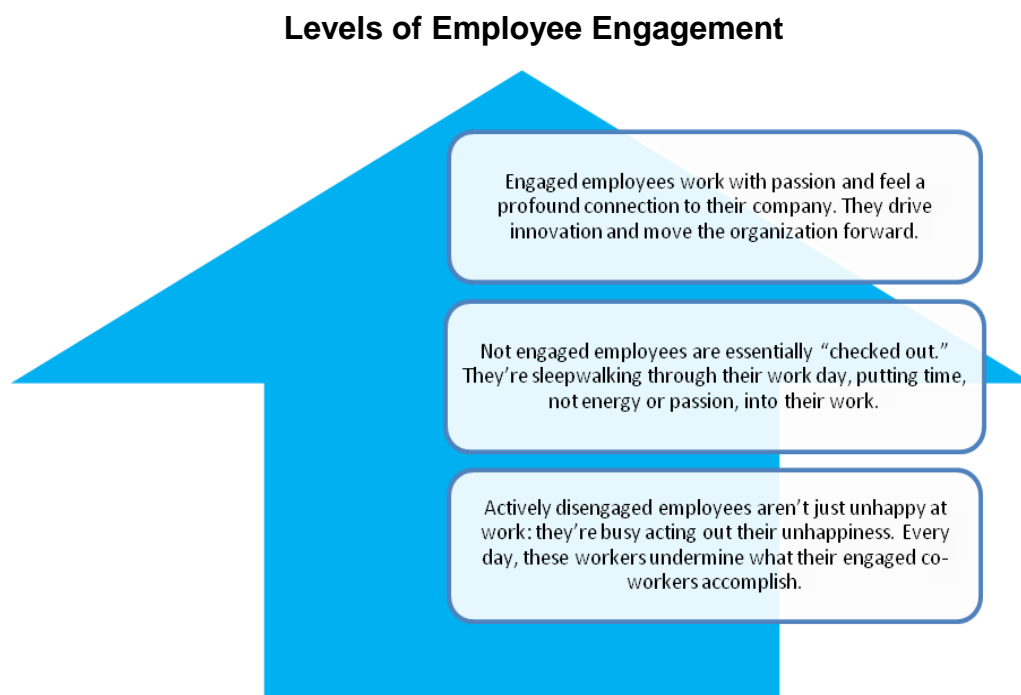


Figure 1: Levels of Employee Engagement

Employees who are highly involved in their work processes, such as conceiving, designing and implementing workplace and process changes, are more engaged. The link between high-involvement work practices and positive beliefs and attitudes, as associated with employee engagement and generating behaviours leading to enhanced performance, is an important driver for business success. A recent study found that companies utilizing high-performance work systems had significantly higher labour productivity than their competitors. When employees have the power to make decisions related to their performance, can access information about company costs and revenues, and have the necessary knowledge, training and development to do their jobs, and are rewarded for their efforts, they are more productive (Konrad, 2006).

2.2.3 Relationships between Engagement and Work Related Outcomes

Employee engagement can be measured in dollars and can yield significant savings. For example, at the beverage company of MolsonCoors, it was found that engaged employees were five times less likely than non-engaged employees to have a safety incident and seven times less likely to have a lost-time safety incident. In fact, the average cost of a safety incident for an engaged employee was \$63, compared with an average of \$392 for a non-engaged employee. Consequently, through strengthening employee engagement, the company saved \$1,721,760 in safety costs. In addition, savings were found in sales performance teams through engagement. For example, low-engagement teams were seen falling behind engaged teams, with a difference in performance-related costs of low-versus high-engagement teams totalling \$2,104,823 (Vance, 2006)

Employee health is a critical factor in employee engagement. Conditions that support health and psychological well-being are open communication, respect, trust, teamwork and positive work relationships. The Gallup Organisation, a leader in employee engagement research, found that employee physical health and psychological well-being affect the quality and quantity of work. For example, 62% of engaged employees feel their work positively affects their physical health. Yet that number drops to 39% among non-engaged employees and to 22% among employees who are actively disengaged. In addition, 54% of disengaged employees say their work has a negative effect on their health and 51% see a negative effect on their well-being. The implication for HR and managers is that engaged employees are more likely to view the Organisation and job as a healthy environment and therefore more likely to support the Organisation (Crabtree, 2005).

Research also shows that customer loyalty is closely related to employee engagement. In a recent empirical study (Salanova, M., Agut, S.& Peiro J.M., 2005), the relationship between the availability of organisational resources (i.e., training technology, autonomy) and employee engagement in work units was found to have a positive effect on employee performance and customer loyalty. When employees feel more engaged in their work, the climate is better for service and the customer

receives better-quality service, thus promoting customer loyalty (Salanova, Agut & Peiro, 2005).

2.2.4 Promoting Engagement

To promote engagement, advancement and retention of the upcoming generation of global leaders, global executives recommended: improve career development and performance management systems for both genders, create an inclusive work environment and address work/life needs. In view of this study, global HR professionals will want to thoughtfully consider how to structure the work environment to foster the growth of employee commitment and increase levels of engagement for future global leaders (see Figure 2).

Actions Recommended to Promote Engagement, Advancement and retention of the Next Generation Leaders

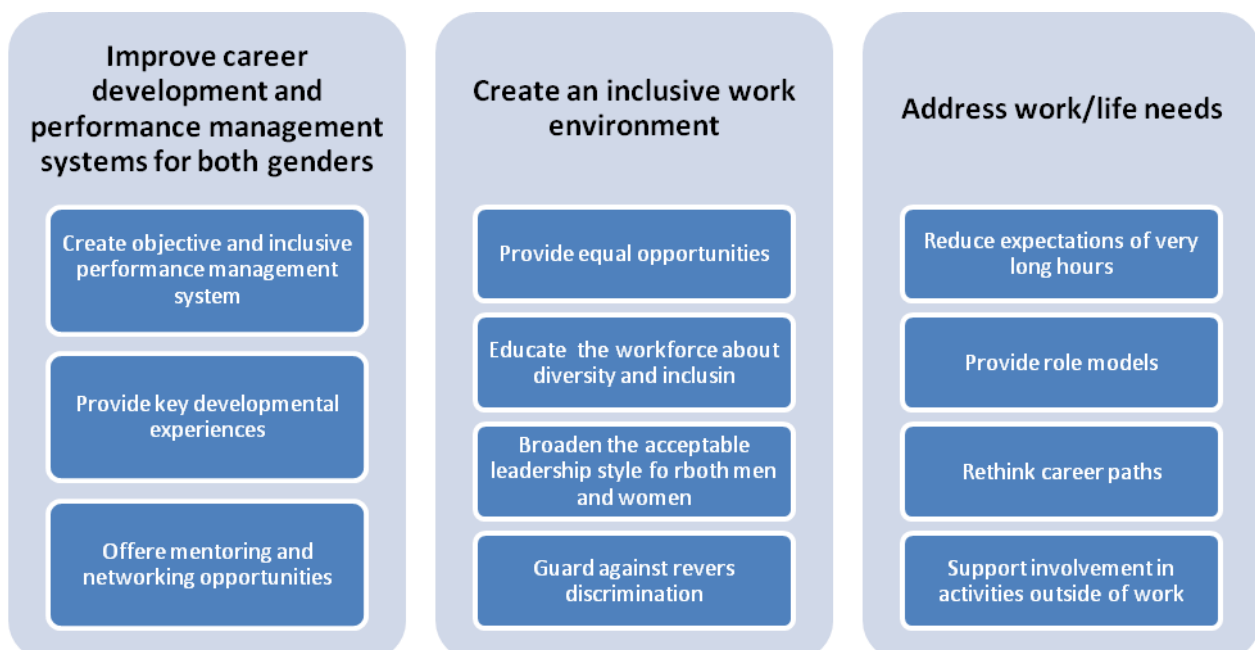


Figure 2: Actions Recommended to Promote Engagement, Advancement and Retention of the Next Generation Leaders.

2.3 WORK ENGAGEMENT, ORGANISATIONAL/JOB CHARACTERISTICS

2.3.1 Introduction

Engagement is also strongly influenced by job characteristics, such as a reputation for integrity, good internal communication and an innovation culture (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004). Staff of the Corporate Executive Board (CEB) concur that employee disengagement continues to be a critical issue across a wide variety of organisations as they work through the economic downturn. One out of four employees was disengaged at the end of the first half in 2009 according to a survey of over 61,000 employees by the Corporate Leadership Council. One of the main causes of this disengagement is directly linked to the massive change employees have experienced when it comes to their Employee Value Proposition (EVP) or the value that employees gain by working for a particular Organisation, 82% of employees indicated that their EVP has trended downwards quite dramatically in the past six months due to reasons such as layoffs, organisational restructurings, and shifts in managers.

The reality is that the anticipation of future organisational change is more detrimental to EVP than the change they have already gone through. After a downsizing, most employees expect the other shoe to drop, 66% of employees who have gone through one organisational change expect another one to occur within the next six months. Employees who have experienced a significant organisational change but don't expect any more changes demonstrate roughly the same performance levels as those employees who haven't experienced any changes according to a new study from the CEB. Further, employees who have experienced change but don't expect more changes are 20% less likely to leave. In contrast, employees who expect future changes have performance levels that fall by more than 15% compared to their peers and are more than 30% more likely to leave. Further, based on CEB's research results, more often than not, the approaches being leveraged for "survivor syndrome" seem to miss the mark. In response these changes, many organisations have taken steps to re-engage their employees with their existing "survivor syndrome". As organisations experience change, they also face addressing questions about ensuing rounds of changes.

2.3.2 Talent Retention and the Company where the study was conducted

One of the biggest ongoing business risks the company faces is the scarcity of talent. Losing valuable people results in a significant cost to the business and the company needs to ensure that they retain top talent. During these challenging financial and economic times, the company has seen that people tend to hold on to their jobs and that staff turnover has temporarily decreased. However, this is a short-term focus, and the company cannot assume that this trend will continue once the economy has stabilised. Moreover, even when people don't leave the Organisation, it is no guarantee that they are engaged. There is now, more than ever before, an even bigger need to ensure that people are engaged, and that they remain engaged when times have improved and employees have "choices" again. Retention is an outcome of employee engagement and the company needs to find new ways to engage (and retain) their most valuable talent and to help them remain motivated and resilient during this critical time. Their skills are essential in pulling the company through these tough times and to assist the company in ensuring their long-term sustainability (Naude, 2010).

2.3.3 The Company's Attraction and Retention and EVP Frameworks

The company where the research was conducted has developed an EVP framework (figure 3) as well as an attraction and retention framework (figure 4) to illustrate the integration of the various elements and processes of people management in order to facilitate the attraction and retention of talent within the business. These frameworks also indicate the role of a clearly defined EVP in meeting the attraction and retention objectives. In the company the EVP is viewed as:

- Part of People Strategy – it outlines our commitment to their employees and forms the basis for their talent management strategies
- Framework for analyses – it provides an opportunity to measure the effectiveness of their talent management process, through the use of entry, stay and exit evaluations
- Programme of action – the EVP identifies gaps in the company's talent management processes and provides an opportunity to develop strategies to address the gaps by empowering line managers



Figure 3. The Company's Employee Value Proposition (EVP) Framework

2.3.4 The EVP dimensions and categories

The driving factors of the company's EVP can be grouped into four dimensions:

- *Position in Industry* – the standing the company has in industry, investment in technology, the physical environment, work ethic and interaction amongst team members and colleagues as well as the company's management style, the level of support they give to their teams
- *Own & Company alignment* - opportunities for development, work and home-life balance, work culture alignment, job security afforded
- *Environmental Factors* – location, safety, growth in Organisation, package offered
- *Social Responsibility* – diversity, ethics, product ,reputation, promotional opportunities including remuneration, medical aid, pension fund, bonuses

2.3.5 The link between the EVP and the attraction and retention framework

The talent management processes support and enable the drivers, i.e. how the company implements the processes will determine the quality of their EVP in the eyes of their employees. The company currently offers many programmes and interventions in return for “performance at the workplace”. Some of these include: Wellness days, secondment and rotation opportunities, more flexible remuneration strategies and flexibility in working hours and/or place of work (The Company HR, 2009). Some of these aspects are related to the Organisation and the different businesses that comprise the company Organisation, while other aspects are related to the individual employee and their line manager.

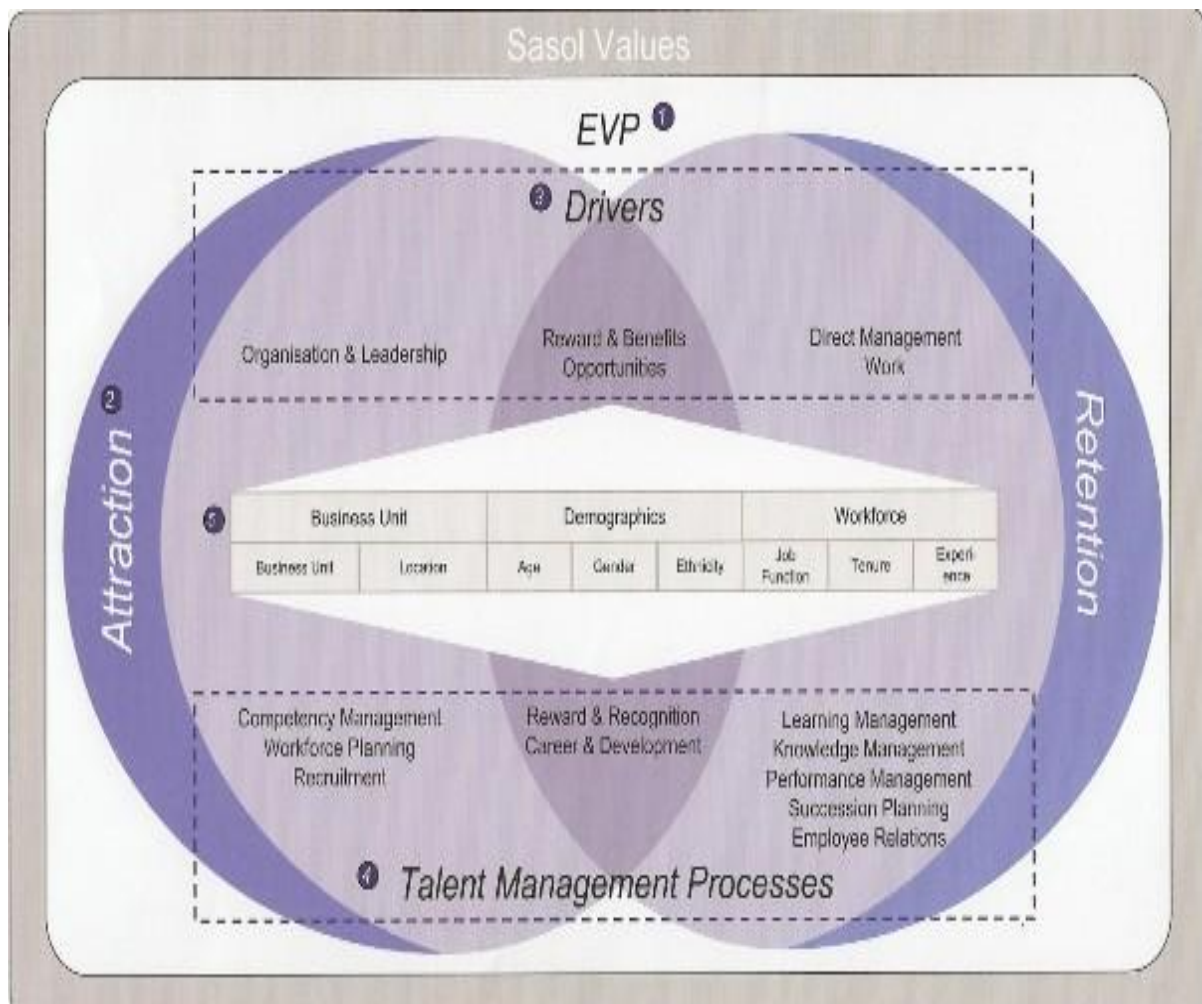


Figure 4. The Company’s Attraction and Retention Framework

The relevance of these organisational aspects vary with the particular circumstances of each individual employee, for example, the opportunities and circumstances of doing advanced patent/legal research in the company are very different from the opportunities of doing management accounting for an operational business unit. Although there are many options available to employees and line managers to enhance the perceived quality of the EVP, these are not always well known and often not directly linked to the EVP in the minds of the people. The company's approach to attracting and retaining talent aims to establish and re-affirm this link and thereby enhance employees' satisfaction with their employment experience at the company (Naude, 2010).

2.3.6 Interpretation and application of the EVP dimensions

Conceptual and operational definitions are what attract key talent, along with corresponding advice on how to retain it, vary significantly in academia, consultant literature and the press. Many questions arise as to what constitutes the value proposition. Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is a term used to denote the balance of the rewards and benefits that are received by employees in return for their performance at the workplace:

Minchington (2006) defines an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) as a set of associations and offerings provided by an Organisation in return for the skills, capabilities and experiences an employee brings to the Organisation. The EVP is an employee-centered approach that is aligned to existing, integrated workforce planning strategies because it has been informed by existing employees and the external target audience. An EVP must be unique, relevant and compelling if it is to act as a key driver of talent attraction, engagement and retention.

There are over 200 attributes that one can define, a master list was compiled by the Corporate Leadership Council and evaluated for similarity, distinctiveness, universality, and overall reliability. When looking at retention guidelines, the company must consider the following organisational aspects:

- The *overall company business model*, business strategy, medium- and long-term business and operational priorities and the nature of the different business operations in the company. The company portfolio of businesses offers a variety of opportunities to employees and constitutes a major component of the company EVP.
- The *business strategy*, medium- and long-term business and operational priorities and the nature of the business unit where the employee is now and where he / she wants to go.
- The *company values and culture*. This aspect is the most enduring aspect of employment in the company and affects every aspect of the employee's career, in particular interaction with other employees.
- *Policies and guidelines* governing our people processes.
- The employee's current line manager. The role of the line manager in enhancing the employment experience cannot be over-emphasised. The line manager is the primary connection to the Organisation for the purposes of career development. The relationship with the line manager determines whether an employee feels appreciated, recognised and motivated.
- *Career development* is further assisted by the CBP which connects the employee with his / her professional / functional community within the broader company Group, creating a vehicle / structure to facilitate career management and planning.

The company has many HR and People processes and initiatives that aim to build and contribute toward the company EVP. Below is an attempt to provide a view of the current group-wide as well the GSS initiatives:

EVP Dimension	Sub-dimensions	Group Initiatives	GSS Initiatives
Work	day-to-day activities • work processes • resources • work-life balance • work	job profiles • national induction (Secunda) • operational excellence • functional excellence • InfoNet, Livelink	Job profiling for functions • workplace orientation guide (SGS Rosebank) • wellness days • SGSS and FCD Retention Toolkit

	<p>environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safety 		
<p>Organisation and leadership</p>	<p>senior leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-workers • the company values • company reputation • diversity / inclusion 	<p>Values-Driven Leadership (VDL)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company Leadership Forum (SLF) • PIW • leadership development programmes • The company Inzalo • diversity workshops • sponsorship of Springbok rugby team, Springbok paralympic basketball team • art@work 	<p>Fostering Productive Relationships (FPR) as follow on to PIW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQ Workshops and Lunch-‘n-Learn sessions to drive capacity for Values-Driven Leadership • leadership forums e.g. Let the Leaders Talk (SGSS), coffee sessions (SGS) • networking opportunities e.g. Braai triangles (SGSS) • team facilitation
<p>Direct management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • line manager • recognition • performance management 	<p>Personal Insight Workshops (PIW)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new performance management system with Personal Development Plans (PDP) included 	<p>Fostering Productive Relationships (FPR)</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>learning and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • career development • training • promotional opportunities 	<p>talent management days</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership pipeline methodology • TalentGro • career ladders • succession management • The company leadership development framework 	<p>group approach</p>

Reward and benefits	base pay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • annual bonus • benefits • flexible working • vacation days 	flexible remuneration and total guaranteed package implementation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • market alignment of salaries • incentive scheme • The company share savings scheme • one global grading system 	group approach
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Employee engagement is a complex concept, with many issues influencing engagement levels. Consequently, there are many pathways to foster engagement, with no one ‘kit’ that fits all organisations. While each company may define employee engagement differently, ultimately, the key to effective engagement will be rooted in the flexibility of approach most appropriate for each individual company. A holistic view of employee engagement can be helpful to determine what is working and what is not. Looking at predictors offers HR a way to better understand what practices and policies in their Organisation effectively promote employee motivation, attendance, retention and productivity (Glen, 2006).

2.3.7 Conclusion

This chapter focussed on the literature relevant to this study and covered issues that relate to work engagement, job and organisational characteristics and the employee retention strategy of the company where the research was conducted. Chapter 3 will discuss the research methods employed for the empirical study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The empirical study is discussed in this chapter by describing the study population, samples, sampling techniques, research method, statistical analysis, research hypotheses and the different measuring instruments used.

3.2 STUDY POPULATION, SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND THE SAMPLE

Approximately 450 personnel are employed by a supply chain function in Sasolburg, Secunda and Rosebank. Two departments were randomly sampled from a group of five in the Strategic Sourcing environment using the *Judgment sampling* which is a common non-probability technique (Walton, 1993). The researcher selected the sample based on judgment. This is usually an extension of convenience sampling. *Convenience sampling* is used in exploratory research where the researcher is interested in getting an inexpensive approximation of the truth. As the name implies, the sample is selected because they are convenient. This non-probability method is often used during preliminary research efforts to get a gross estimate of the results, without incurring the cost or time required to select a random sample. A total of 102 questionnaires that were returned were used for analysis of the data. This represents a 22,67% response rate.

3.3 MEASURING BATTERY

A *biographical questionnaire* was developed to gather information about the demographic characteristics. This consisted of gender, race and age.

The *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES) (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002) is used to measure the levels of work engagement of the

participants. The UWES includes three dimensions, namely Vigour, Dedication and Absorption. The questionnaire consists of 17 questions and includes questions like "I am bursting with energy every day in my work"; "Time flies when I am at work" and "My job inspires me". The items of the questionnaire are scored on a frequency-rating scale, varying from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). The alpha coefficients for the three sub-scales varied between 0,68 and 0,91. Alpha coefficients between 0,78 and 0,89 were obtained for the three sub-scales. Storm (2002) obtained the following alpha coefficients for the UWES in a sample of 2 396 members of the South African Police Service: Vigour: 0,78; Dedication: 0,89; and Absorption: 0,78.

The *Job Characteristics Inventory (JCI)* has been developed for the purpose of this study to measure value propositions for employees. The JCI consists of 38 items. Various demands and resources in the organisation were identified and measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*). The dimensions of the JCI include Industry *attractiveness*, *alignment* of company & own objectives, *external* factors, as well as social *responsibility*. The internal consistency and construct validity of the scale will be determined for the purposes of this study.

3.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

What distinguishes scientific research from common sense is to approach information and knowledge in a systematic and consciously articulated way. Rules and procedures are used to build and apply theories, to design studies to test hypotheses, to collect data and use them as evidence, and to evaluate all forms of knowledge.

3.4.1 Preliminary arrangements

Before the research started, permission had to be requested from the manager of procurement and supply and his direct reports. An e-mail was sent out prior to the survey to all line managers requesting their cooperation in the completion of the questionnaire.

3.4.2 Ethical aspects

After the necessary permission was granted, an e-mail was sent to all the persons in the two departments that were going to participate in the research. The objectives and nature of the research were explained, the different constructs were explained, and put in relation to the value it held for the person and the Organisation. The questionnaires were conducted anonymously requiring the people to respond either directly by e-mail or indirectly via the two Secretaries by means of hard-copies. Timelines were indicated on the questionnaires and agreed upon. Voluntary participation was highlighted and participants were thanked for their involvement.

3.4.3 Administration of the measuring instruments

Participants were notified that they could contact the author or their direct line manager should they have any queries or questions. A contact person was identified in every business unit, which would take responsibility for the administration of the questionnaires. These contact persons got the co-operation of the respondents and helped with any queries they had. They had a week to complete and return the questionnaire.

3.4.4 Data capturing and feedback

After the completed questionnaires were handed in, the data was captured in an MS Excel spread sheet to facilitate statistical analysis. Written feedback was given to respondents that indicated that they wanted feedback. Feedback was also provided to the management of the different establishments regarding the response and attendance during the sessions.

3.5 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The statistical analysis was carried out by means of the SPSS programme. Because a non-probability sample was used in this research, effect sizes (rather than inferential statistics) were used. Cronbach alpha coefficients were determined to indicate the internal consistency of the measuring instruments. Pearson product-

moment correlation coefficients were used to specify the relationships between the variables. A cut-off point of 0,30 (medium effect, Cohen, 1988) was set for the practical significance of correlation coefficients. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (job satisfaction) that is predicted by the independent variables (sense of coherence, locus of control and self-efficacy). The effect size in the case of multiple regressions is given by the following formula (Steyn, 1999): $f^2 = R^2 / 1 - R^2$. A cut-off point of 0,35 (large effect, Steyn, 1999) was set for the practical significance of f^2 .

3.6 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following research hypotheses are formulated for the purposes of this study:

H1: Strong positive statistically and practically significant relations exist between job and organisational characteristics and work engagement dimensions.

H2: Job and organisational characteristics are a significant predictor of vigour.

H3: Job and organisational characteristics are a significant predictor of dedication.

H4: Job and organisational characteristics are significant predictors of absorption.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focussed on study population, the sampling technique, the empirical study and addressed issues related to the sample.

Chapter four will discuss the results of the study by focussing on the descriptive sampling, a description of the statistics, correlations and regressions.

CHAPTER FOUR RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 SAMPLE

There are 450 personnel employed by a supply chain function in Sasolburg, Secunda and Rosebank. Two departments were randomly sampled from a group of five in the Strategic Sourcing environment. A total of 102 questionnaires that were returned were used for analysis of the data. This represents a 22,67% response rate. The sample consisted mainly of white (79,41%) males (64,71%) aged between 30 and 59 (55,88%). The rest of the characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Characteristics of the participants*

Item	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	64,71%
	Female	35,29%
Race	Black	6,86%
	Coloured	3,92%
	Indian	9,80%
	White	79,41%
Age	20-29	5,88%
	30-39	33,33%
	40-49	36,27%
	50-59	22,55%
	>60	1,96%

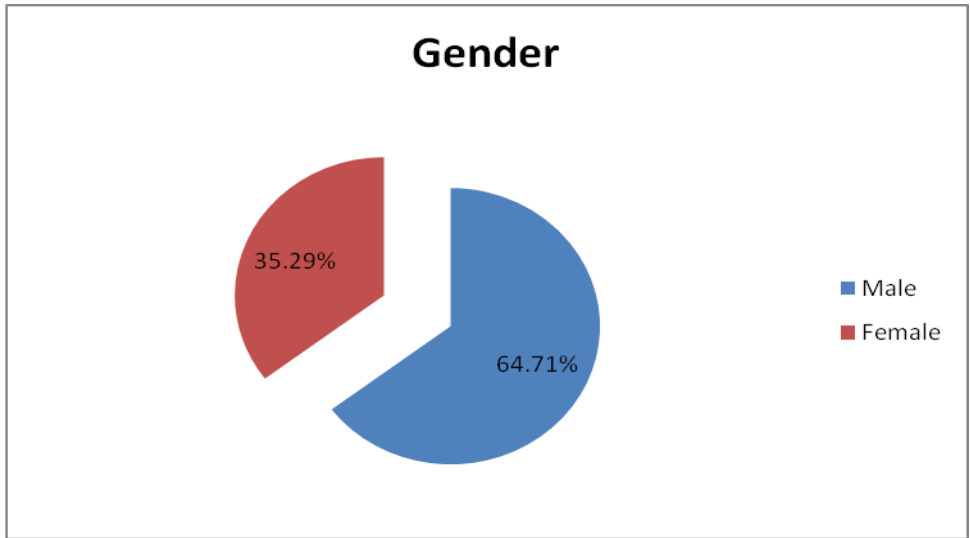


Figure 5: Characteristics of the participants - Gender

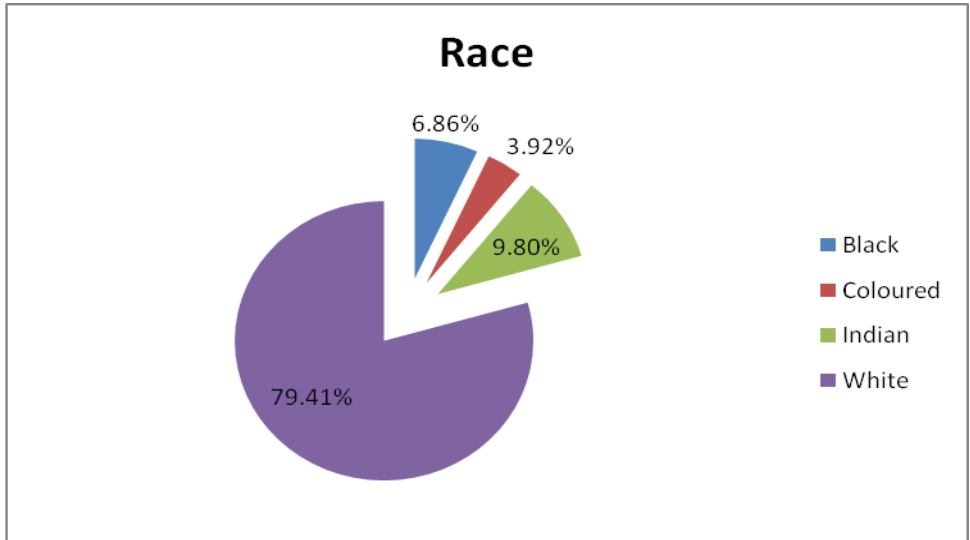


Figure 6: Characteristics of the participants - Race

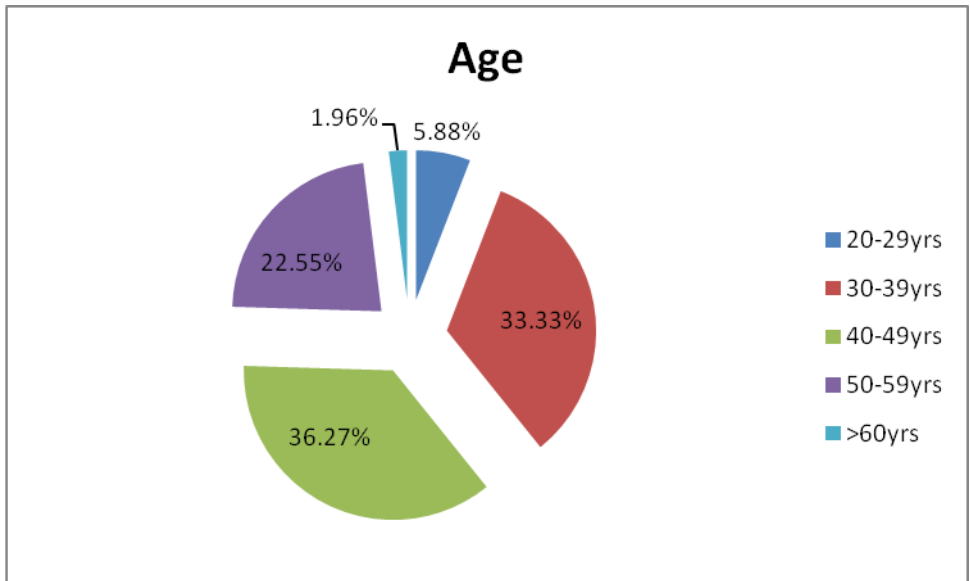


Figure 7: Characteristics of the participants – Age

4.2 RESEARCH RESULTS

4.2.1 Psychometric properties of the measures and descriptive statistics

Factor Analysis

The results obtained from exploratory and factor analysis, (using a direct Oblimin rotation where factors are related) and inspections of the scree plots indicated that the job and organisational characteristics and UWES scales used were multi-factorial. A simple principal component analysis was conducted on the UWES. Analysis of the eigenvalues (>1) and the scree plot indicated that, and in line with the literature (Cattell, 1966) three factors could be extracted which we labelled vigour, dedication and absorption. Analysis of the eigenvalues (>1) and the scree plot (Figure 8) indicated that four factors could be extracted which we labelled the position the company holds in the industry, own and company objectives, environmental factors and commitment or social responsibility position the company takes. The results of the factor analysis of the Job and Organisational Characteristics Scale appear in Table 3.

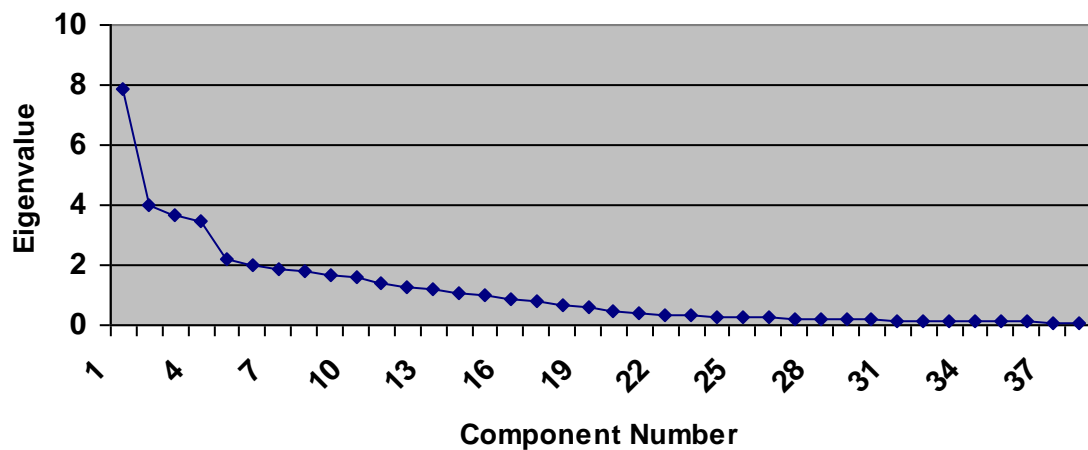


Figure 8: Scree Plot for the Factor Analysis of the Job and Organisational Characteristics Scale.

Table 3: *Principal Component Analysis of the Job and Organisational Characteristics Scale*

	Component			
	F1	F2	F3	F4
The quality of the organisation's senior leadership	0.90	0.13	0.09	0.14
Whether the work environment is team-orientated and collaborative	0.80	0.16	0.02	0.08
The quality of the organisation's managers and leaders	0.77	0.23	0.22	0.11
The organisation's reputation for managing people	0.75	0.16	0.04	0.07
The quality of the co-workers in the organisation	0.73	0.29	0.84	0.18
Whether working with the organisation provides opportunities to socialise with other employees.	0.54	0.40	0.33	0.04
The extent to which the organisation invests in modern technology and equipment	0.49	0.44	0.31	0.27
The developmental/educational opportunities provided by the job and organisation	0.45	0.24	0.19	0.25
The level of impact the job has on business outcomes	0.41	0.16	0.06	0.22
The competitive position the organisation holds in the market	0.41	0.39	0.33	0.39
The reputation of the clients and customers served in performing the job	0.40	0.09	0.15	0.05
The organisations product or service quality reputation	0.39	0.09	0.30	0.44
The level of awareness in the marketplace for the organisations brands	0.35	0.03	0.60	0.30
The growth rate of the organisation's business	0.34	0.27	0.54	0.07
The level of stability of the organisation and the job	0.00	0.76	0.09	0.08
The amount of risk that the organisation encourages employees to take	0.00	0.68	0.08	0.01
Whether the work environment is formal or informal	0.00	0.64	0.09	0.38
The level of involvement employees have in decisions that affect their job and career	0.00	0.64	0.27	0.25
The opportunity provided by the job to work on innovative , leading edge projects	0.00	0.60	0.27	0.01
Whether the job responsibilities match your interests	0.00	0.57	0.03	0.10
The degree of respect the organisation shows employees	0.00	0.55	0.07	0.01
The future career opportunities provided by the organisation	0.00	0.51	0.02	0.58
Whether or not the organisation's reputation as an employer has been rated by a third party organisation	0.00	0.47	0.31	0.34
The extent to which the job allows you to balance your work and home life	0.00	0.43	0.02	0.05
The comprehensiveness of the organisation's health benefits	0.00	0.33	0.42	0.03
Whether or not employees are rewarded and promoted based on their achievements	0.00	0.33	0.21	0.59
The competitiveness of the job's financial compensation package	0.00	0.32	0.23	0.63
The amount of holiday time that employees earn annually	0.00	0.00	0.78	0.06
Other benefits accruing to employees yearly	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.17
The organisation's level of commitment to safety, health and environment	0.00	0.00	0.64	0.11
The comprehensiveness of the organisation's retirement benefits	0.00	0.00	0.57	-0.25
The size of the organisations workforce	0.00	0.00	0.56	0.17
The desirability of the organisation's industry to me	0.00	0.00	0.51	0.08
The organisation's commitment to ethics	0.00	0.00	0.37	0.62
The amount of business travel required by the job	0.00	0.00	0.36	0.36
The location of the jobs the organisation offers	0.00	0.00	0.32	-0.40
The organisations level of commitment to hiring a diverse workforce	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71
The organisation's level of commitment to social responsibility	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.70

F1=the position the company holds in the industry; F2=own and company objectives; F3=environmental factors and commitment; and F4=social responsibility position the company takes

Descriptive statistics of the measuring instruments

The descriptive statistics and psychometric properties of the scales used in this study are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients of the Measures*

Test and items	Mean	SD	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
1. Vigour	4.52	0.82	0.67	-0.68	-0.24	0.80
2. Dedication	4.83	0.99	0.99	-1.43	1.99	0.86
3. Absorption	4.84	0.85	0.72	-1.14	0.51	0.85
4. Position the company holds in the industry	4.54	0.47	0.22	-2.22	5.71	0.87
5. Own and company objectives	4.26	0.53	0.28	-1.78	3.44	0.78
6. Environmental Factors	4.44	0.41	0.17	-1.43	2.37	0.74
6. Commitment or social responsibility position the company takes	4.61	0.39	0.16	-1.81	3.88	0.77

Inspection of Table 4 highlights that acceptable Cronbach Alpha coefficients were obtained for all of the sub-scales of the UWES and the job and organisational characteristics compared to the guideline of $\alpha > 0.70$ (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). All of the sub-scales of the Job and Organisational Characteristics and the Dedication sub scale of the UWES showed high skewness and Kurtosis, indicating that the data were not normally distributed.

4.2.2 Relationships between variables

One of the objectives of the study was to determine the relationships between the variables used in this study. The correlation matrix of all the sub scales used in this study is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Correlation Coefficients between the Measuring Instruments*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Vigour	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Dedication	0.80**	-	-	-	-	-
3. Absorption	0.71**	0.65**	-	-	-	-
4. Position the company holds in the industry	0.06	0.03	0.15	-	-	-
5. Own and company objectives	0.02	-0.04	0.07	0.39*	-	-
6. Environmental factors	0.09	0.01	0.06	0.26	0.18	-
7. Commitment or social responsibility position the company takes	0.09	0.02	0.05	0.29	0.10	0.20

* Practically significant correlation (medium effect): $r > 0,30$ / ** Practically significant correlation (large effect): $r > 0,50$

Closer inspection of Table 5 revealed that practically significant positive correlation with a large effect between the three sub scales of the UWES namely, Vigour, Dedication and Absorption. Very weak relations were observed between Work Engagement dimensions and Job and Organisational Characteristics dimensions. However, small to medium practical significant relationships were obtained between the various job and organisational characteristics dimensions, with the own and company objectives showing the strongest relations between the job and organisational characteristics variables.

4.2.3 Regression Analysis

A series of regression analysis was done to reach another objective of the study which was to determine the impact of demographics and the job and organisational characteristics dimensions on vigour, dedication and absorption by controlling for demographics such as gender, race and age. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: *Stepwise Multiple Regression Analyses with Work Engagement Dimensions as Dependant Variables.*

Predictors	Vigour		Dedication		Absorption	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
1. Gender	0.02	-0.00	0.03	0.03	-0.07	-0.09
2. Race	-0.15	-0.15	-0.10	-0.10	-0.01	0.01
3. Age	0.18	0.17	0.21	0.21	-0.11	-0.12
4. Position the company holds in the industry		0.01		0.04		0.15
5. Own and company objectives		-0.01		-0.06		-0.01
6. Environmental factors		0.07		-0.01		0.03
7. Commitment or social responsibility position the company takes		0.06		-0.02		0.02
<i>R</i>	0.19	0.21	0.20	0.21	0.12	0.21
<i>R</i> ²	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.01	0.04
Effect size		Small		Small		Small

Inspection of Table 6 revealed that 5%, 4% and 5% of the variance of vigour, dedication and absorption respectively, were explained by demographics (gender, race and age), the position the company holds in the industry, own and company objectives, environmental factors and commitment or social responsibility position the company takes. However, in line with the weak relations between the UWES and job and organisational characteristics dimensions, obtained from the correlational analysis, none of these variables proved to be statistically significant predictors of vigour, dedication and absorption.

4.3 DISCUSSIONS

The aim of this study was to determine the psychometric properties of the scales used in this study. The results indicated that the measures proved to be reliable. Relative high mean scores were obtained for all the variables indicating that they experience high level of engagement and that they appear to have vigour, dedication and absorption. The relative low standard deviation (*SD*) and variance also indicated that most of the responses are clustered around the mean. However, most of the sub sales used in this study showed high skewness and kurtosis, meaning the values are not symmetrical having most of the values in the upper part of the distribution. A long tail and distortion to the left is caused by some extremely small values. These small values pull the mean downward so that the mean is less than the median. The distribution of the values, kurtosis, is more of a peak than a bell shape indicating more of a concentration of values in the centre.

The study was also undertaken to determine the relationship between engagement and the job and organisational characteristics dimensions. Results obtained confirmed the very strong positive relationships that exist between vigour, dedication, and absorption, obtained in other South African studies (Storm & Rothmann, 2003). Weak correlations were obtained between the engagement and job and organisational characteristics dimensions indicating that these two sets of dimensions did not relate very well with one another. In as far as job characteristics are concerned, previous studies indicate a positive relationship between job resources and work engagement (Bakker, Demerouti, de Boer & Schaufeli, 2007; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and according to the study by de Lange, De Witte and Notelaers, (2008), this relationship is at least

partially mediated by basic needs satisfaction. In contrast, Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen (2007) found in their longitudinal study only tentative support for the predictive role of job characteristics on work engagement. After controlling for work engagement at baseline, only one of the nine relationships tested between job resources and dimensions of work engagement was statistically significant.

Finally we were interested in the impact of job and organisational characteristics dimensions on vigour, dedication and absorption, by controlling for gender, race and age as these may impact on the experiences of engagement levels. Results of this study indicated that much of the variances in all three dimensions of engagement were explained by gender, race and age, with very little additional variance explained when the job and organisational characteristics dimensions were added in the second step of the regression analysis. Only in the case of absorption were the additional variance explained propositionally, the same as when only demographics were used as predictors in the model. However, none of the predictors proved to be statistically significant predictors of vigour, dedication and absorption. The results confirmed the results of previous studies (Jackson, 2004) that highlighted the impact of demographics on engagement dimension level. Job and organisational characteristics dimensions seem therefore to have very little influence on vigour and dedication but they did play a role in the prediction of absorption. Previous studies (Hakanen, Schaufeli and Ahola, 2008) confirm moderate to weak correlations between the various job and organisational characteristics dimensions indicating that the relationships between these dimensions were not very strong. Previous studies indicate EVP to be a strong predictor of engagement and retention (Heger, 2007; Deloitte, 2010; SHRM, 2010) which contradicts the findings in this study

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The intention of this chapter is to present an analysis and discussion of the literature and empirical study. Conclusions are made on the identified research objectives of this study and the chapter seeks to provide answers to the research questions put forth. Limitations of the study will be pointed out and finally recommendations for future research will be made.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

5.2.1 Conclusions drawn from the literature study

Work Engagement. “The challenge today is not just retaining talented people, but fully engaging them, capturing their minds and hearts at each stage of their work lives” according to Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2003). Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today’s competitive marketplace. Engaged employees show higher levels of energy and identification towards their work, which in turn has a positive impact on job performance and financial turnover of an Organisation (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Work engagement is defined as a ‘positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related wellbeing’ characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001; 2003).

Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work and the persistence even in the face of difficulties. *Dedication* is characterised by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. *Absorption* is characterised by being totally and happily immersed in one’s work, to the extent that it is difficult to detach oneself from it.

Previous research has consistently showed that work engagement is mainly driven by *job resources*, particularly in the midst of elevated job demands (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter and Taris, 2008; Barkhuizen, 2005; Fourie, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2008; Mauno, Kinnunen & Ruokolainen, 2007; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that either reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or are functional in achieving work goals and stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Resources may be located at organisational level (i.e. salary and career opportunities), interpersonal relations (i.e. supervisor and co-worker support), the Organisation of work (i.e. role clarity) and task level (i.e. task significance and autonomy) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). Applied within the South African context, job resources such as organisational support, growth opportunities and career advancement (Jackson, Rothmann & Van de Vijver, 2006; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006) were positively related to work engagement.

Engagement and work-related outcomes.

Employee engagement can be measured in dollars and can yield significant savings. Research seems to suggest that engaged employees were five times less likely than non-engaged employees to have a safety incident and seven times less likely to have a lost-time safety incident. In addition, savings were found in sales performance teams through engagement (Vance, 2006). Research also shows that customer loyalty is closely related to employee engagement. In a recent empirical study (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005), the relationship between the availability of organisational resources (i.e., training technology, autonomy) and employee engagement in work units was found to have a positive effect on employee performance and customer loyalty. When employees feel more engaged in their work, the climate is better for service and the customer receives better-quality service, thus promoting customer loyalty (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). To promote engagement, advancement and retention of the upcoming generation of global leaders, literature recommended: improve career development and performance management systems for both genders, create an inclusive work environment and address work/life needs.

5.2.2 Conclusions drawn from the empirical study

The aim of this study was to determine the psychometric properties of the scales used in this study. The results indicated that the measures proved to be reliable. Relative high mean scores were obtained for all the variables indicating that they experience high level of engagement and that they appear to have vigour, dedication and absorption. The relative low standard deviation (*SD*) and variance also indicated that most of the responses are clustered around the mean. *The study was also undertaken to determine the relationship between engagement and the job and organisational characteristics dimensions.* Results obtained confirmed the very strong positive relationships that exist between vigour, dedication, and absorption, obtained in other South African studies (Storm & Rothmann, 2003). Weak correlations were obtained between the engagement and job and organisational characteristics dimensions indicating that these two sets of dimensions did not relate very well with one another.

Finally we were interested in the impact of job and organisational characteristics dimensions on vigour, dedication and absorption, by controlling for gender, race and age as these may impact on the experiences of engagement levels. Results of this study indicated that much of the variances in all three dimensions of engagement were explained by gender, race and age, with very little additional variance explained when the job and organisational characteristics dimensions were added in the second step of the regression analysis. Only in the case of absorption were the additional variance explained propositionally, the same as when only demographics were used as predictors in the model. However, none of the predictors proved to be statistically significant predictors of vigour, dedication and absorption.

5.3 STUDY LIMITATIONS

Sample technique is another limitation of the study as two departments were randomly sampled from a group of five in the Strategic Sourcing department using the *Judgment sampling*, a common non-probability technique. This could bias the

results due to generalisation of the results could be skewed as compared to doing the entire population. Sample size is another limitation as a total of only 102 questionnaires, that were returned, were used for analysis of the data. This represents a 22,67% response rate. Future studies could benefit in terms of a stratified random-sample design which could ensure sufficient representation of the different groups in supply chain.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Additional studies should be conducted using the standardised research tools for measuring Job and Organisational Characteristics and Engagement with a view to investigate the generalizability of the findings. The sample should be expanded to include a more representative sample of the supply chain. The impact of other factors such as the role of personality and specific work related characteristics such as supervisor support in work engagement, on its own, could yield better results and could be the focus of further study.

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ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE ON JOB CHARACTERISTICS

The following questionnaire will assist the researcher in analysing job characteristics and the extent to which these elements improve engagement in the workplace. The questionnaire is confidential, individual information will not be made known to your line managers and you are requested to provide honest answers.

The questionnaire consists of 38 questions with the initial response required on the perceived importance this element is to you and the next part how your department measures up to this.

Your participation in this survey is highly appreciated.

Please complete the following by marking your choices with an X in the appropriate box.

1. Biographical information

Gender	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race	Black	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Coloured	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>
	White	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	20 -29	<input type="checkbox"/>
	40 -49	<input type="checkbox"/>
	50 - 59	<input type="checkbox"/>
	> 60	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Please indicate your choices according to the following scale:

Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Somewhat important	Very important
1	2	3	4	5

3. Please answer the following questions as truthfully as possible, indicating how important each aspect is to you:

WORK ENVIRONMENT	
1. The amount of business travel required by the job	
2. The opportunity provided by the job to work on innovative , leading edge projects	
3. The level of impact the job has on business outcomes	
4. The location of the jobs the organisation offers	
5. Whether or not the organisation's reputation as an employer has been rated by a third party organisation	
6. The extent to which the job allows you to balance your work and home life	
7. Whether the job responsibilities match your interests	
ORGANISATION AND LEADERSHIP	
8. The organisations level of commitment to hiring a diverse workforce	
9. The level of involvement employees have in decisions that affect their job and career	
10. The organisation's level of commitment to safety, health and environment	
11. The organisation's commitment to ethics	
12. The desirability of the organisation's industry to me	
13. Whether the work environment is formal or informal	
14. The competitive position the organisation holds in the market	
15. The level of awareness in the marketplace for the organisations brands	
16. The organisations product or service quality reputation	
17. The degree of respect the organisation shows employees	
18. The amount of risk that the organisation encourages employees to take	

19. The size of the organisations workforce	
20. The organisation's level of commitment to social responsibility	
21. The extent to which the organisation invests in modern technology and equipment	
22. The reputation of the clients and customers served in performing the job	
DIRECT MANAGEMENT	
23. Whether working with the organisation provides opportunities to socialise with other employees.	
24. Whether the work environment is team-orientated and collaborative	
25. The quality of the co-workers in the organisation	
26. The quality of the organisation's managers and leaders	
27. The organisation's reputation for managing people	
28. The quality of the organisation's senior leadership	
OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH	
29. The developmental/educational opportunities provided by the job and organisation	
30. The future career opportunities provided by the organisation	
31. The growth rate of the organisation's business	
32. Whether or not employees are rewarded and promoted based on their achievements	
33. The level of stability of the organisation and the job	
REWARDS AND BENEFITS	
34. The competitiveness of the job's financial compensation package	
35. The comprehensiveness of the organisation's retirement benefits	
36. The comprehensiveness of the organisation's health benefits	
37. The amount of holiday/vacation time that employees earn annually	
38. Other benefits accruing to employees yearly	

ANNEXURE B: WORK AND WELL-BEING SURVEY

1. Biographical information

Gender Male Female
Race Black Coloured Indian White
Age 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 >60

2. The following 17 statements are about how you feel at work.

Please rate each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job.

If you have ever had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement.

If you have had had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 6) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	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'm at work	
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	

Thank you kindly for completing this survey.

ANNEXURE C: FREQUENCY TABLE OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN PERSONNEL

Gender			
	Frequency	%	Cum. %
Male	66	63.7	63.7
Female	36	36.3	100
Total	102	100	

Race			
	Frequency	%	Cum. %
Black	7	6.9	6.9
Coloured	4	3.9	10.8
Indian	10	9.8	20.6
White	81	79.4	100
Total	102	100	

Age			
	Frequency	%	Cum. %
20-29	6	5.9	5.9
30-39	34	33.3	39.2
40-49	37	36.3	75.5
50-59	23	22.5	98
>60	2	2	100
Total	102	100	