INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN ACHIEVING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITHIN A SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late parents, Jerome Vela and Mamie Beatrice Mbhele who instilled in us the importance of education, something they never had.

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To God be the glory for granting me the strength and the wisdom, I reach this stage by His grace.

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ABSTRACT

Internal communication has evolved into an element that is crucial for organisational success in the sense that it underpins organisational effectiveness. Internal communication has become a precursor for organisational existence. This growing importance has led to internal communication becoming a pressing issue for organisations as they strive to achieve employee engagement and organisational effectiveness (Welch & Jackson, 2007; Welch, 2012; Welch, 2013). Employee engagement has become a concern for leaders in public, private and voluntary organisations. The concept of employee engagement generally refers to the extent to an individual employee is psychologically present in a particular organisational role (Saks, 2006:601). Internal communication provides an avenue through which elements of employee engagement takes place within an organisation. Furthermore, internal communication affects the ability of strategic managers to engage employees (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Literature points to a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, listing internal communication as one of the key drivers of employee engagement. Research has presented convincing evidence for links between effective internal communication and employee engagement (Welch, 2008:489). To validate these links, this study investigated the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement using a case study design within a South African government department. There is dearth in literature on the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, particularly in relation to public sector organisations. Public sector organisations are undergoing a transformation in their style of management which led to governmental institutions increasingly being conducted like businesses where managers play a central role and client services aspect is gaining attention (Tampere, n.d.)

Previous research conducted on communication have focused on communication being the predictor of job satisfaction and improved employee morale. This study calls for a stakeholder approach in the implementation of internal communication for the achievement of employee engagement. The study moves from a premise that if

employees perceive information they receive as being of quality and reliable, communication to be two-way, experience positive communication climate, perceive leadership communication to be supportive, and organisational culture to be participative, they will feel more engaged while conducting their organisational roles. These employees will demonstrate vigour, dedication and absorption at work.

Data collection was done through a survey among a sample of 300 sample of employees within the selected Department. The measuring instrument was divided into seven section wherein employees had to indicate their experience with constructs of internal communication as well as employee engagement. The instrument items were based on the hypotheses formulated in line with the study objectives.

In line with the literature that identifies internal communication as one of the key drivers of employee engagement, the findings of this study support these assertions. The study found that internal communication indeed contributes to the achievement of employee engagement, since correlations were found between the constructs of internal communication and employee engagement.

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXTUALISATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The introduction of a democratic government in the Republic of South Africa came with vast changes and transformation on many fronts in the country. This transformation has been characterised by how government departments manage and co-ordinate the delivery of services to the citizens of the Republic. In their service delivery endeavour, government departments have to oblige with the rights of the citizens as enshrined in the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Citizens have become more active in raising issues challenging their rights, which has brought about a change in the expectations and needs of the citizens from the government of the day.

Tampere (n.d.) studied internal communication in several public sector organisations and concluded that these organisations were undergoing a transformation in their style of management. The author further concluded that government institutions were increasingly being managed like businesses where managers play a central role and that the service aspect has become crucial. From this perspective, his study indicated that the public sector has started to pay attention to internal communication as crucial for organisational effectiveness.

This study investigates the role of internal communication in achieving employee engagement within a South African government department, specifically the National Department of Health (NDOH). The Republic of South Africa as a constitutional democratic state has undergone various transformations including the acknowledgement that communication is central to all the service delivery efforts of government. This transformation resulted in the compilation of the Communicators Handbook for government communicators. This recognition of the importance of communication has

resulted in government departments and institutions paying particular attention to communication.

Upon the recognition of the importance of communication in government, a Communication Task Team (Comtask) was established in 1996 to conduct research on government communication. The findings of the Comtask indicated that although government had made great strides in communicating with the public, there was a need to complement public communication with improved internal communication to inform and mobilise public servants (Government Communicators Handbook, 2014:79).

From the inception of communication in organisations, the focus was on achieving the bottom line, therefore communication activities were geared more towards the consumers and or clients in order to encourage and promote sales. Over the years, internal communication has been gaining attention as a critical organisational function. Ruck and Welch (2012:294) assert that internal communication is a prerequisite for organisational success. The study of communication in organisations has therefore shifted towards integration of external and internal communication (Welch & Jackson, 2007:180).

Research conducted in the field of communication points to the importance of the organisation's publics and stakeholders, in this case, employees. The latter are regarded as both resources and critical stakeholders.

Yates (2006:71) links effective internal communication with business performance, stating that effectiveness of internal communication enhances bottom-line results. In the context of a government department, this could imply that in order to improve service delivery, internal communication should be effective. In congruence with this view, Welch and Jackson (2007:177) maintain that effective internal communication is crucial for successful organisations. Internal communication affects the ability of strategic managers to engage employees and achieve objectives. Young and Post (in Dolphin, 2005:171) concluded that internal communication has become "a new top management priority". This study investigates the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement within a South African government department.

The importance of communication in the context of an organisation has been emphasised by various authors (Neher, 1997; Barker & Angelopulo, 2006; Coetzee, 2008; Wilkins, 2010). In emphasising the importance of communication, Barker and Angelopulo (2006:3) describe it as the glue that holds organisations together. The field of communication has evolved over the years from externally focused communication activities towards an internal stakeholder focus. Various authors refer to organisational communication as employee communication, internal communication, intra-organisational communication, internal relations, and internal public relations (Argenti, 199:694; Dolphin, 2005:172; Jefkins, 1988:287; Smidts, Pruyn & Van Riel, 2001:1051; Verčič, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2012:225; Welch & Jackson, 2007:178; Wright, 1995:182). For the purpose of this study, the term internal communication is adopted to refer to communication taking place within an organisation.

Internal communication is broadly defined as a series of strategies used in organisations to communicate with each other. This definition of internal communication supports Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier's (2002:480) view that internal communication is a catalyst for organisations to achieve their goals and objectives, as it enables them to effectively develop structure and culture. Employee engagement on the other hand is defined as a state where individual employees are emotionally connected to others and are cognitively vigilant while conducting their job tasks. Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002:269) refer to employee engagement as the clarity of expectations, feelings of contribution to the organisation, sense of belonging, and opportunities to progress and grow. These are required for engagement to occur within the workplace.

According to Mersham and Skinner (in Soha 2010:32), communication within an organisation (internal communication) has a crucial role to play as it permeates all activities; represents an important work tool through which individuals can understand their organisational role; and coordinates and facilitates organisational sub-units. Welch and Jackson (2007:177) assert that internal communication affects the ability of strategic managers to engage employees and achieve objectives. According to McLeod and Clarke (in Welch, 2011:328), employee engagement has become a cause for concern for leaders in private, public and voluntary sector organisations.

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement within a South African government department, that is, the National Department of Health (NDOH). According to Jenaro, Flores, Orgaz and Cruz (2010:866), lack of communication and management skills have been found to be predictors of burnout, which is the opposite of engagement. This study investigates the internal communication and employee engagement concepts in order to understand if a causal relationship exists.

1.2   BACKGROUND

Like any other government department, the NDOH has a mandate to fulfil: that of providing health care to the citizens of the Republic of South Africa. Although there is one Minister of Health, the provincial and local spheres of government are accountable to other executive authorities for their day to day operations, but the ultimate accountability for health related matters lies with the Cabinet Minister of Health. This study only focuses on the national sphere of government, that is, the NDOH, therefore provincial departments of health were not included in the study.

Authors in the field of employee engagement have listed communication among the factors that influence and impact on employee engagement (Mazzei, 2014; Welch, 2008; 2011).

The NDOH employs a total of 2 041 public servants who are located in different buildings. Employees who are working in laboratories are located in three provinces, namely: Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. Other employees are stationed at Port Health services at the border posts of South Africa. Laboratory and Port Health employees form part of the national department in terms of reporting and accountability. In such an instance, internal communication and employee engagement tend to be a challenge due to physical proximity. This proximity is a challenge for management as it hampers processes of internal communication activities such as face-to-face and constant engagement between employees and management. Information therefore tends to be transmitted in written format. According to Lubbe & Puth (1994:272-275), internal communication, which they refer to as employee communication should

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encourage frequent, honest, open, job related, two-way communication among managers and subordinates facilitated by an accommodative internal environment.

Employees at the NDOH have varying literacy levels ranging from total illiteracy to expert levels of literacy. Those employees that are illiterate do not have access to information communication technologies and some can only read and write in their indigenous languages. In the recent years, internal communication alone has become insufficient to address organisational relationships, which resulted in the conceptualisation of employee engagement. In organisations with a large staff complement there are varying needs and expectations; and therefore employee engagement becomes a critical tool to drive employees towards commitment to the organisation.

In the context of the NDOH, laboratory and Port Health employees receive information and messages via electronic communication channels such as electronic mail, intranet and the internet. This kind of formal communication is not sufficient to build relationships and steer employees towards commitment to the Department. Given the proximity and literacy differences, employee engagement is therefore a critical tool for management.

Given the fact that government's concern is not profit making but rather provision of services to the citizens, the important question to consider is whether employees are regarded as important stakeholders who should be communicated to and with. In service provision, attitudes of employees are of utmost importance. From this perspective, success in a government department is measured through the implementation of an annual performance plan which is tabled and approved in Parliament; as well as through the perceptions held by citizens about the services of the Department. The perceptions held by the citizens about a particular department are mainly based on how they are received by employees of the department at service delivery points. In turn, the attitude of employees can be assumed to be influenced by whether they are committed to the organisation or not, and whether they feel the sense of belonging to the organisation they work for.

The sense of belonging that employees should feel can mainly be achieved through effective internal communication and constant engagement between managers and employees. According to Tampere (n.d.), the importance of internal communication cuts

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across private and public sectors. Tampere (n.d.) asserts that public sector organisations are undergoing a transformation in their management style, and that the client service aspect is also becoming more important.

This study focuses on internal communication within the South African National Department of Health and therefore the literature review included the implementation of internal communication as dictated by government through the Government Communicators Handbook. Section 13 of the Government Communicators Handbook (2014) outlines the importance of and benefits of internal communication within government institutions.

According to the Government Communicators Handbook (2014:79), well-structured and managed internal communication units should be in place to lead the development and implementation of internal communication strategies. Each institution's strategy should be aligned to the National Communication Strategy Framework of Government (Government Communicators Handbook, 2014:79).

One of the recommendations from the Communication Task Team Report of 1996 was the establishment of a Government Communication Information System (GCIS) to align, integrate and direct the communication efforts of government. The GCIS, through the Government Communicators Handbook however, does not prescribe the structure and positioning of the internal communication components within the various government departments. Departments are left to structure and position internal communication as best suited for their operational requirements.

1.2.1 Positioning of internal communication within NDOH

According to Welch and Jackson (2007:181), internal communication is seen as one of the seven facets of organisational communication and is positioned within strategic public relations, which is an element of corporate communication.

The Government Communicators Handbook (2014:79-89), however, fails to place internal communication within departments' organisational structures or hierarchal levels,

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instead, it outlines the responsibilities of such units. Government departments are left to decide on the positioning of internal communication as they deem fit, to serve their operational requirements.

Smith (2005: 51) states that there are two divisions within which the function of internal communication can be located, that is, the public relations division or human resources division. According to the NDOH's organogram, as approved by the Department of Public Service and Administration in 2012, internal communication is placed under the support programme named Corporate Services. Corporate Services in the NDOH consist of various function, amongst others, Human Resource Administration and Communication. The Internal Communication division within the NDOH is structured as follows:

Figure 1: NDOH internal communication structure
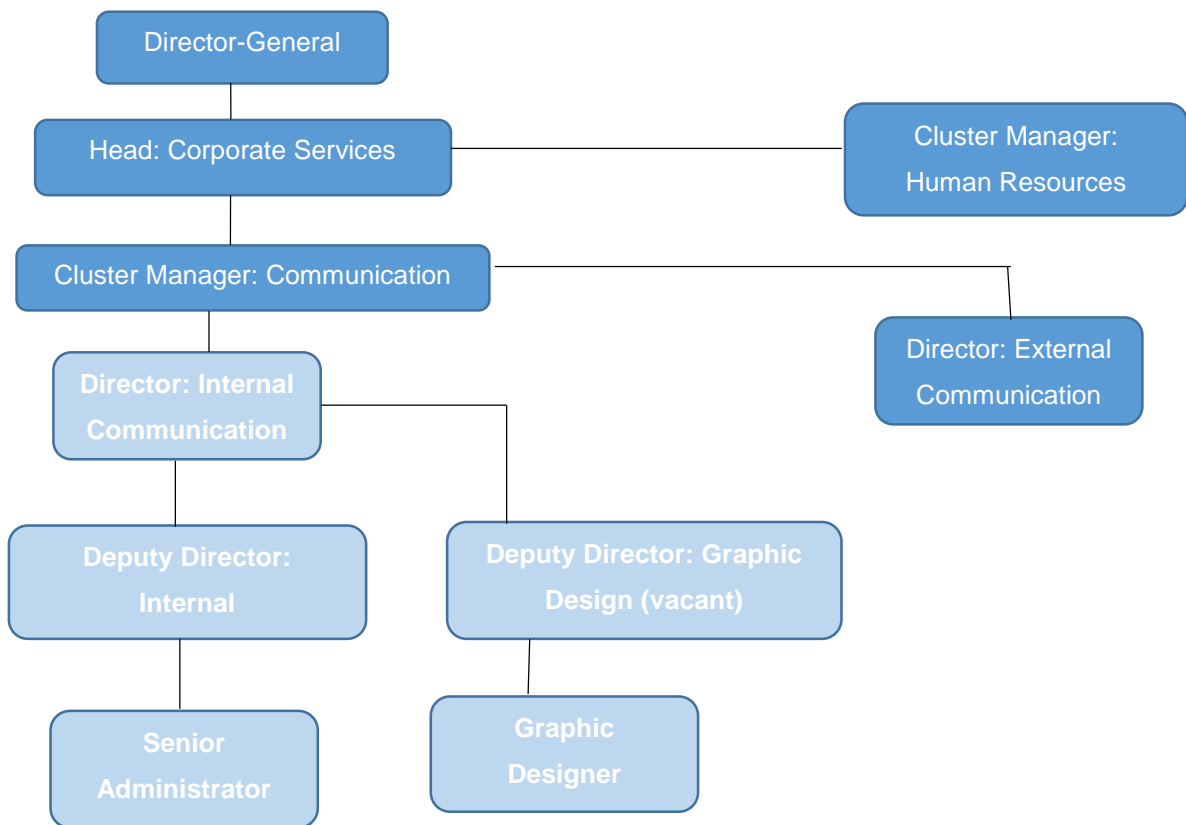
Source: Based upon the working model received by the Organisational Development Unit

1.2.2 Roles and responsibilities of internal communication

Smith (2008:56) proposes an ideal structure for internal communication and recommends that the function should be a key responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer (in this case the Director-General) who then delegates it to a specific senior manager for the day-to-day operations. The NDOH's internal communication strategy and policy distribute the responsibilities of internal communication among identified role players. Each role player carries with it its own responsibilities and accountabilities. The allocation of roles and responsibilities takes an integrated and stakeholder approach that promotes a culture of consultation. The internal communication strategy furthermore identifies the following role-players:

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities of internal communication

Communication activity	Responsible person
Champions department's internal communication; communication of departmental strategic information relating to strategic objectives, direction, performance as well as special programmes.	Director-General
Communication of operational issues such as building functionality, security, information communication technology, etc.	Head: Corporate Services
Give strategic direction to Directorate: Internal Communication. Approve internal communication plans, events, and messages.	Cluster Manager: Communication
Identification of internal communication gaps.	Directorate: Internal Communication
Development and implementation of communication plans.	Directorate: Internal Communication
Formulation and packaging of information and messages.	Directorate: Internal Communication
Receiving and channelling feedback from employees.	Directorate: Internal Communication
Communicating management decisions to staff.	Line Managers
Providing feedback and communicating staff issues.	Employees

Source: NDOH Internal Communication Strategy

1.2.3 Channels of communication within NDOH

The NDOH internal communication strategy lists the following channels utilised for internal communication (Department of Health Internal Communication Strategy- not approved):

Formal channels

- **Electronic newsletter** – used to share information and key departmental messages to employees. It is used to promote key upcoming events, news reports on events that have taken place and other relevant staff news. It is distributed weekly via email.
- **E-mail** – a central email system to disseminate urgent and administrative messages. It is also used for announcements of events, decisions and new additions to the intranet.
- **Electronic screen savers** – a series of screen saver slides (which are updated on a monthly basis) carrying the department's logo, vision, mission and information on health awareness days and events.
- **Print media** –electronic screensavers are printed and placed on notice boards that are strategically located for access by those who do not have access to email.
- **Face-to-face** – formal meetings are convened monthly at Executive and Cluster levels to share information and management decisions.
- **Intranet** – used to share documents such as policies, guidelines, statutory documents, templates and forms as well other relevant news.

Informal channels:

- **Grapevine channels** – employees and management share information with their peers and subordinates informally.

Feedback channels

- The above channels are mainly used to communicate messages and information from management to employees. There is a need for the establishment of formal channels for employee feedback that will accommodate issues of anonymity and confidentiality.

1.3   RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

Organisations are formed by individuals or groups of people who come together to work to achieve common strategic goals or purposes. The individuals or groups making up an organisation interact with the environment in which they operate to ensure the achievement of goals. Within the field of communication, scholars have differentiated between internal and external communication.   This study focused on internal communication; specifically the role it plays in helping strategic managers achieve employee engagement within the NDOH.

A study analysing strategic organisational communications in the public sector in the United States of America by Wilkins (2010:15) asserts that one of the challenges faced by public sector organisations is the lack of understanding of the impact of connecting with stakeholders and gaining buy-in to the goals of the organisation. The author further states that communication sent by leadership to employees is often not accompanied by a feedback mechanism. This implies lack of two-way communication between the organisation and its employees and results in employees not understanding the organisations they work for. They therefore feel no sense of belonging and commitment to the organisation (Wilkins, 2010:15).

The backdrop of this study is a decision taken by the Republic of South Africa's Cabinet in 2006 that government should strengthen internal communication to ensure that public servants are kept abreast of what government is doing to deliver services to the broader public.

Seltzer, Gardner, Bichard, and Callison (2012:128) state that employees are a key stakeholder group that requires the attention of organisational management. Welch and Jackson (2007:183) also call for the identification of employees as a stakeholder group that is considered to be important in an organisation. Furthermore, Welch and Jackson (2007:183) criticise internal communication writers who tend to regard employees as a single entity. For example, the differing levels of literacy among the employees in the NDOH requires specific attention in order to ensure that every employee receives and understands information disseminated by the leadership. For employees who are unable to communicate in a business language, efforts should be made by managers or

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supervisors to simplify messages. Where employees are regarded as a stakeholder group, the building and maintaining of relationships between management and employees should be a top priority.

Omilion-Hodges and Baker (2014:1) state that employees are positioned to serve as either ambassadors of the organisation or as liabilities depending on the way they speak about the organisation to those within and as well as outside their workplace. According to these authors, the role of internal communication in an organisation is pivotal as it influences the way employees talk about the organisation with one another and with those outside the organisation. Internal communication therefore becomes a channel or tool through which employees are engaged.

This study proposes a stakeholder approach in the implementation of internal communication for achievement of employee engagement. The stakeholder approach dictates that employees should be identified as important stakeholders with a say or stake in the organisation. According to the Communicators Handbook (2014:79) government regards its employees as ambassadors who should be able to reflect the vision of government. This study investigated how internal communication contributes to the achievement of employee engagement within the NDOH.

The study proposes a stakeholder approach to internal communication and investigates the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement.

1.4   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

1.4.1 Primary research objective

To determine the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement.

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1.4.2 Secondary research objectives

1. To investigate the relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
2. To investigate the relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
3. To investigate the relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.
4. To investigate the relationship between quality and reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.
5. To investigate the relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.
6. To investigate the relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.
7. To establish if the levels of employee engagement differ across age groups, 'years of experience' groups, job levels groups, and gender groups.

1.4.3 Hypotheses

The aim of the study is to establish if internal communication plays a role in the achievement of employee engagement. Furthermore, the study investigated whether levels of employee engagement differ across demographic groups. Literature (which is discussed in detail in Chapters 3 and 4) reveal that from past research studies, internal communication has been mainly focused on the role of internal communication as a predictor of job satisfaction and employee attitudes. This study attempts to provide insight into the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement within a South African government department.

The belief of this study is that internal communication has an impact on the levels of employee engagement given the previous research evidence proving that internal communication affects satisfaction and morale among the employees. The hypotheses that were formulated were linked to the theory and research objectives.

Table 2: Research questions, objectives and hypotheses

Research objectives	Hypotheses
1. To investigate the relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.	**H1:** There is a relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement. **H0:** There is no relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
2. To investigate the relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.	**H2:** There is a relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement. **H0:** There is no relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
3. To investigate the relationship between supportive communication climate the levels of employee engagement.	**H3:** There is a relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement. **H0:** There is no relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.
4. To investigate the relationship between quality and reliability of information received and the levels of employee engagement.	**H4:** There is a relationship between quality of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement. **H0:** There is no relationship between quality of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement. **H5:** There is a relationship between reliability of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement. **H0:** There is no relationship between reliability of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement.
5. To investigate the relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement	**H6:** There is a relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement. **H0:** There is no relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.
6. To investigate the relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.	**H7:** There is a relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement. **H0:** There is no relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

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Research objectives	Hypotheses
7. To establish if the levels of employee engagement differ across age, 'years of experience', job level and gender groups.	**H8:** There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across age groups. **H0:** There is no difference in the levels of employee engagement across age groups. **H9:** There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the 'years of experience' groups. **H0:** There is no difference in the levels of employee engagement across the 'years of experience' groups. **H10:** There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the job level groups. **H0:** There is no difference in the levels of employee engagement across the job level groups. **H11:** There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the gender groups. **H0:** There is no difference in the levels of employee engagement across the gender groups.

1.5   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Tampere (n.d.) argues that the work of government institutions is increasingly being conducted like work in businesses. As such, the government of the Republic of South Africa commissioned a task team (Comtask) in 2006 to look into the entire government communication environment.   The brief to the Comtask focused on the existing communication policy and communication structures among government institutions at national, provincial and local spheres.

One of the findings from the task team was that: government lacked central coordination in messaging and adequate planning of information campaigns; as well as the fact that communication priority reflects low in the budgets of government institutions which results in a low status of communicators (Communications Report, 2000:21). These findings compelled government to change the manner in which communication is managed within its institutions. As a result, the GCIS was established to coordinate and plan government communication campaigns.   Upon its establishment, the GCIS developed a Communicators Handbook to guide the implementation of communication within

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government. Chapter 13 of the Government Communicators Handbook (2014) focuses on internal communication.

Internal communication is said to be the catalyst for organisational excellence and effectiveness. According to Wilkins (2010:15), public sector across the United States are faced with communication challenges. The author states that the main challenge lies in organisations not understating the impact of strategic organisational communication. Strategic organisational communication promote connection between organisation and its stakeholders in order to obtain their buy-in to the organisational mission. Furthermore, the author emphasises the lack a feedback tool for employees to provide their inputs. From this perspective, an internal communication survey was conducted in 2014 within the NDOH to evaluate satisfaction with the internal communication environment. Questionnaires were distributed via electronic mail to all employees. Only 128 questionnaires were received from a total of 1 789 employees, rendering a poor response rate. This study will provide basis to pursue further studies on internal communication within the South African public service context.

Government is often faced with service delivery protests and is inundated with complaints of poor service. Whilst it is critical for government to address the protests, it is equally important to ensure that its employees, who provide the services, are engaged and equipped with the necessary resources to handle the public. One way that employees can contribute to better service delivery is through internal communication and engagement. Engaged employees understand the vision of the organisation; are informed; and feel a sense of belonging and commitment towards the achievement of strategic goals. Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter and Taris (2008:187) state that engaged employees have higher levels of energy and identify strongly with their work.

The Government Communicators Handbook (2014:79) states that government employees are the ambassadors of government and should be able to reflect the vision of government through their work. The Government Communicators Handbook further calls for mechanisms to be put in place to ensure that employees are informed of important messages that are being communicated to external stakeholders. These assertions demonstrate the important role of internal communication in engaging employees. The Government Communicators Handbook (2014:79) also emphasises the

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importance of feedback from employees to management. Against this background, the study investigates the role of internal communication in achieving employee engagement.

The results of the study are envisaged to help management strengthen internal communication and engagement of employees in response to a directive by the Cabinet in 2006. It is envisaged that the results will support or refute the assumptions made about the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. Academically, the study is envisaged to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of internal communication, with specific reference to the South African National Department of Health. Given the limited scope of the study, it could be used as a pilot study pointing to further research within the public service.

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The figure below presents the summary of the research methodology of the study.

Figure 2: Philosophical considerations
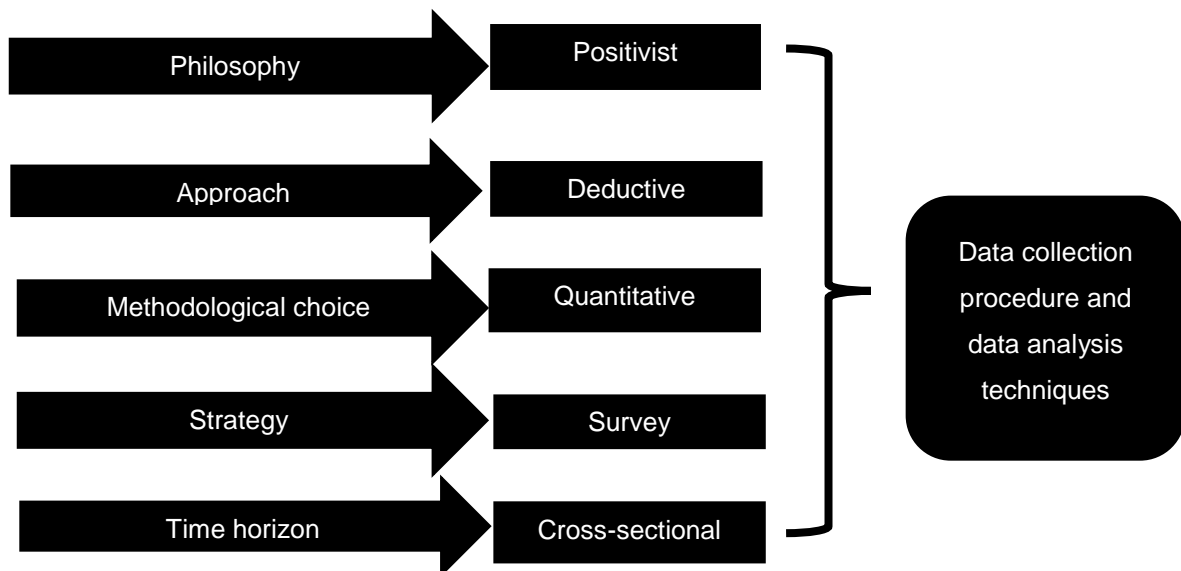
Source: Adapted from Saunders *et al.* (2012)

The study is explanatory in nature and adopts a quantitative research methodology. In order to quantify the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire targeting

employees from employment levels 6 to 15 within the NDOH. Given the differing literacy levels at the NDOH, employees at levels 1 to 5 were excluded from the study. The data collection instrument (attached as Appendix B) consisted of a combination of different scales, previously validated to measure the impact of internal communication on employee engagement.

Once the accessible population of the study was defined, a random sample of 300 respondents was drawn. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, a small pilot study was conducted with respondents conveniently selected by the researcher. The aim of the pilot study was to test if the data to be collected will indeed enable the investigative questions to be answered. Saunders *et al.* (2012:451) state that the purpose of a pilot test is to refine the questionnaire in order to ensure that respondents have no difficulty in answering the questions.

The results will be analysed using a variety of SPSS version 23 statistical analysis techniques such as: Pearson's correlation coefficients analysis, one-way and two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha coefficient analysis, t-tests as well as parametric and non-parametric techniques.

1.7   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first step was to obtain approval from the Director-General of the NDOH to conduct the research study in the Department.

Coldwell and Herbst (in Mamdoo, 2012:72) put forward that it is unethical for a researcher to be biased in any way. Bias is defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:208) as: "…any influence, condition, or set of conditions that singly or together distort the data."

Mamdoo (2011:72) caution that unethical behaviour could have severe implications on the findings. According to these authors, ethics is made up of norms or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about a researcher's behaviour and relationships with others. Saunders *et al.* (2012:226) similarly define ethics as the standards of behaviour

that guide a researcher's conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of a research study.

For the purpose of this study, the participants in the research as well as the researcher are identified as potential sources of bias. The fact that the researcher is employed within the department where research was conducted could lead to the researcher having pre-conceived assumptions that may influence the findings. In an effort to minimise the level of bias, the questionnaire was developed using pre-existing scales. Careful attention was also paid to the wording of the questions to make them clearly understandable.

The issues of anonymity and confidentiality have been highlighted by various authors as critical in ensuring that a research study is ethical. Participants need to be protected from any possible harm or victimisation as a result of their participation in a research study. For this purpose, a letter of consent was attached to each questionnaire distributed (Appendix A). Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:72) maintain that informed consent has been seen as the main determinant of the ethicality of a research study. The aim of the consent letter was to explain the purpose of the research; confirm the anonymity of the participants, and assure participants that information will be handled confidentially. The consent letter was also used to obtain confirmation from participants that they participated willingly and that they could withdraw their participation at any stage of the research. The letter also indicated that the intention of the study was purely academic and that the results could only be obtained in writing from the University by the relevant authority in the Department.

In order to promote participation, anonymity and confidentiality, questionnaires were distributed in hard copy and a central return box was placed at a neutral place accessible to all participants. In the questionnaires, respondents were not required to identify themselves in order to ensure anonymity, but to append a signature as confirmation of willingness to participate.

1.8   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study investigated the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement within the NDOH. As indicated above, there are three spheres in which government operates (national, provincial, local). This study focused only in the National Department of Health located in Pretoria, South Africa. The study excluded provincial and local government departments and institutions. This implies that the findings of the study cannot be generalised beyond the context of the NDOH. The study was further limited to employees at job levels 6 to 15 due to the varying levels of literacy among employees. Due to the physical accessibility, employees who are based outside of the Pretoria Head Office (that is the laboratories and Port Health services) were excluded from the study. Another limitation of the study was in terms of methodology.

The study investigates the role of internal communication in achieving employee engagement and measured the level of engagement among individual employees within the NDOH.

1.9   OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The Table below outlines the overview of the study:

Table 3: Demarcation of chapters

CHAPTER	CONTENT
Chapter 1 Contextualisation and background	This Chapter presents the context of the problem investigated in the study and outlines the research objectives of the study.
Chapter 2 Internal communication	This Chapter began with the theoretical framework of the study and expounded on literature reviewed in relation to internal communication. Definitions, models and the categorisation of internal communication were discussed. Elements influencing internal communication, such as organisational culture and leadership communication, were also discussed.

Chapter 3 Employee engagement	This Chapter presents literature reviewed in relation to employee engagement. The evolution and definitions of the concept of employee engagement are presented; and the Chapter expounded on the various drivers of engagement as well as the impact of leadership on employee engagement.
Chapter 4 Research methodology	The Chapter dealt with the research methodology followed in the study and the reason for adoption of an explanatory survey design to investigate the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. The Chapter details the data collection tool and process involved.
Chapter 5 Presentation and interpretation of the results	In this Chapter, evidence obtained through data collection is presented and interpreted in order to support or reject the hypotheses based on evidence. The results are analysed paying particular attention to the correlation between the two concepts investigated.
Chapter 6 Discussion of the results, conclusions and recommendations	In this Chapter, the results presented in Chapter 5 are discussed in relation to the research objectives. Hypotheses are either supported or rejected based on the evidence. Based on evidence presented in Chapter 5, conclusions and recommendations are made about the study.

CHAPTER 2

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Chapter is to present the literature reviewed on the concept of internal communication in relation to the objectives of the study. The study seeks to investigate the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement within the National Department of Health (NDOH). Maenetja (2009:21) highlights the importance of the literature review when stating that a literature review assists researchers to focus on the topic, clarify the issue, place the research in context and in so doing lay the foundation for a good research outcome.

In this Chapter, literature reviewed in relation to the concept of internal communication is presented, while Chapter 3 presents literature reviewed in relation to the concept of employee engagement. In reviewing literature on internal communication, other contributing organisational factors such as organisational culture, communication climate, public relations models of communication and leadership communication were also considered. Literature reviewed expounds on internal communication as a field of study, looking at its definition(s), models of internal communication and public relations, dimensions of internal communication as well as its categorisation.

This Chapter begins with the outline of the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical base of the study is founded on three theories, namely; stakeholder theory, relationship management theory and social exchange theory.

Various books, unpublished theses and journal articles were consulted in reviewing relevant literature. Further, several online databases were accessed through the University of Pretoria and University of South Africa libraries; South African government websites were also consulted. Finally, keyword searches were used to find relevant articles. Keywords included: internal communication, communication climate, internal public relations, leadership communication and organisational culture.

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2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Miles and Huberman (in Steyn, 2000:11), it is expedient for a research study to have a conceptual framework which identifies concepts and constructs; giving constructs descriptive names and providing clarity about their interrelatedness. Steyn (2000:11) states that the purpose of a conceptual framework is to explain the main dimension being studied and specifies who and what will or will not be included in the study and further assumes some relationships. This section presents the theoretical framework of the study.

Table 4: Theoretical framework

General aim	To investigate how internal communication contributes to the achievement of employee engagement within a South African government department	
Worldview	Stakeholder approach	
Grand theory	Systems theory	
Theoretical disciplines	**Communication Science**	**Business Management**
Sub-fields within theoretical disciplines	Management Communication Public relations Corporate communication	Human resource management
Theories	Stakeholder theory Relationship management theory	Social exchange theory
Individual models from specific theoretical disciplines	Public relations models Transactional communication model	Human relations view
Concepts	Internal communication	Employee engagement
Constructs	Communication climate Quality and reliability of information Two-way asymmetrical communication Two-way symmetrical communication Leadership communication	Organisational culture Vigour Dedication Absorption

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2.2.1 General aim

The general aim of this study is to investigate how internal communication contributes to the achievement of employee engagement within a South African government department.

2.2.2 Worldview

According to Risse (in Hume, 2010:12) a worldview is a lens through which a researcher looks at the world and thus influences any interpretations made. The worldview of the study is based on the meta-theoretical assumption presented above. In this study, internal communication is defined as the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within organisations (Welch & Jackson, 2007:183). The study takes a stakeholder approach to internal communication and employee engagement.

The stakeholder approach emphasises the importance of the identification of stakeholders and their sub-groups (Welch & Jackson, 2007:183). In the case of internal communication, employees should be identified and treated as important stakeholders who are made up of different sub-groups. Seltzer, Gardner, Bichard, and Callison (2011:128) state that employees are a key stakeholder group for any organisation. From this perspective, L'Etang (in Welch & Jackson, 2007:183) criticises the propensity of internal communication practitioners and writers who regard employees as a single entity.

The stakeholder approach to internal communication calls for a particular attention to internal stakeholder needs and expectations at different levels, which Welch and Jackson (2007:184) identify as: "…all employees, strategic management, day-to-day management, work teams and project teams". Traditionally, government departments were more concerned with communicating government's plan-of-action to the public, as well as achievement of set goals. A stakeholder approach to internal communication demands that management should also recognise and consider the interests and the needs of employees. Organisations need to become more responsive to the needs of

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their employees as well as to their own needs. Smith (1991) furthermore asserts that communication has become more than just information sharing – it has become a more dialogical process between management and employees.

The new era of management practices requires of managers to engage employees more often in an attempt to build mutually beneficial relationships. The stakeholder approach places both manager and employee at the centre in an effort to build mutually beneficial relationships, and calls for strategic management of communication. Strategically managed communication implies that communication activities are aligned to the organisational strategy; and that it is purposeful, planned and is part of strategic management in an organisation (Steyn, 2007:139).

2.2.3 Grand theory

Hume (2010:17) defines grand theory as a comprehensive theory that applies to an entire phenomenon. Although research has not produced a specific grand theory for internal communication, there are theories that can be used to explain communication in an organisation. This study takes a systems theory approach that advocates interrelatedness and interaction. As such, employees, as internal stakeholders, form part of the whole system (organisation) and therefore need to be communicated with and be engaged for organisational efficiency.

2.2.3.1   Systems theory

Cutlip, Center, Broom and du Plessis (in de Beer & Rensburg, 2011:210) define a system as: "…a set of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal states... ". Barker and Angelopulo (2006:118) furthermore describe a system as any set of interrelated elements that form a unified or complex whole. Therefore, it is appropriate to take a systems view when dealing with relationships in organisations. Neher (1997:105) argues that when taking a systems view of an organisation, it is important to consider the overall patterns of interrelationships and interlocking behaviours covering all members and units.

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Coetzee (2008:29) asserts that the systems theory is connected to public relations since they both focus on organisational relationships. According to Gregory (in Coetzee, 2008:29), systems theory is traditionally used to explain and underpin the practice of public relations and communication management in organisations. This study investigates the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement. As a system, an organisation is in consistent interaction with its internal and external environment (Barker & Angelopulo, 2006:118). This study focuses on the internal environment and argues that in order for an organisation to achieve employee engagement, it ought to function as one system made up of interrelated parts.

According to Neher (1997:105), a systems theory is characterised by two aspects, namely: interrelatedness and interaction. For members of an organisation (a system) to co-exist, they must interact and therefore become interrelated.

2.2.4 Theories

For the purposes of this study, specific theories have been identified from the disciplines of communication science and business management, that can assist in understanding the links between communication management (concept: internal communication) and human resource management (concept: employee engagement). The sub-fields of management communication, public relations and corporate communication were also considered as part of the theoretical framework for the study. The study is furthermore underpinned by three theories that will be discussed below, namely: stakeholder theory, relationship management theory, and social exchange theory.

2.2.4.1 Stakeholder theory

As indicated earlier, the worldview of the proposed study is a stakeholder approach to internal communication and employee engagement. De Beer and Rensburg (2011:212) define a stakeholder as: "… any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives …". Seltzer *et al.* (2012:128) furthermore identify employees as key stakeholders in any organisation. De Beer and Rensburg

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(2011:212) also argue that stakeholders are entitled to some rights and interests because they are central to the existence of an organisation. As internal stakeholder in an organisation, employees' rights and expectations deserve respect. The stakeholder approach emphasises the importance of the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and the identified stakeholders. Accordingly, this study moves from a stakeholder approach toward effective internal communication and employee engagement. In terms of stakeholder theory, it is believed that the establishment and maintenance of beneficial relationships between the organisation and its employees will be achieved through internal communication.

2.2.4.2   Relationship management theory

Relationship management theory originates from the general principles of public relations which highlight management of relationships as the core task of public relations (Barker & Angelopulo, 2006:202). De Beer & Rensburg (2011:217) state that the foundation of relationship management theory focuses on managing organisation-public relationships to generate benefits for organisations and publics alike. Dozier (in de Beer & Rensburg, 2011:217) asserts that the effectiveness and ability of an organisation to achieve its strategic goals is affected by the relationship it has with key stakeholders, in this case, employees.

2.2.4.3   Social exchange theory

Cropanzano, Preher, and Chen (2002:327) state that in terms of social exchange theory, organisations are forums for transactions. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005:874) put forward that social exchange theory is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms that enable understanding of the workplace behaviour. Theorists in the field of social exchange agree that it involves a series of interactions that are interdependent and generate obligations for interacting parties.

The proposed study takes a stakeholder approach to internal communication and employee engagement and therefore both employer and employee (stakeholder) engage in interactions to negotiate meaning and understanding. According to Cropanzano and

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Mitchell (2005:875) these interactions have a potential to generate high-quality relationships which is the purpose of employee engagement.

2.2.5 Models

According to Steinberg (1995:22), one way of understanding a phenomenon to be studied is through models that describe and explain the phenomenon. Given its stakeholder approach, this study aligns itself to a transactional view to internal communication. A transactional model of communication is linked to relationship management theory and emboldens two-way communication. The transactional model views communication as a process that involves more than just the transmission of messages, but also involves a negotiation of meaning between the negotiating parties. Therefore, the transactional model views communication as more than the exchange of information, and introduces the human relation-building aspect.

Furthermore, the study considers the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical practices of public relations. Although there are many other public relations models that can be practised individually or in combination, this study focuses on the achievement of employee engagement through two-way communication. According to the human relations view, there ought to be an ideal relationship between management and employees. The human relations view furthermore considers employees as having the necessary skills and knowledge that provide direct benefits to the organisation. In their Excellent Study, Dozier *et al.* (1995:48) put forward that the two-way communication models of public relations would function better in combination and proposed a new way of organising the two-way practices, which is the new mixed-method model. This study proposes the new mixed-method model which combines both two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication practice.

2.2.6 Concepts

Comadena (in Hume, 2010:22) defines concepts as objects or ideas that have something in common. On the other hand, Metts (in Hume, 2010:22) states that concepts are those intangible objects whose definitions allow researchers to investigate a particular

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phenomenon. This study investigates the role of internal communication in achieving employee engagement and therefore the focus is on two concepts, that is, internal communication and employee engagement.

2.2.6.1 Internal communication

Internal communication is the central concept of the study, viewed as an independent variable that has an impact on the achievement of employee engagement. There have been numerous definitions of internal communication presented by writers in the field. The concept of internal communication has been synonymously equated to organisational communication, employee communication, intra-organisational communication, internal relations, and internal public relations (Antonis, 2005; Argenti, 1996; Dolphin, 2005; Jefkins, 1988; Verčič *et al.*, 2012; Smidts *et al.*, 2001; Welch, 2013; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Wright, 1995;). According to Forssberg and Malm (2001:23) scholars in the field of internal communication define it in terms of its perceived functions, goals and expectations, as well as the context (that is, the roles internal communication is expected to fulfil).

2.2.6.2 Employee engagement

Employee engagement is concerned with employee perspectives, needs and expectations that affect organisational effectiveness. It is a new concept in the field of human resource management and has been recognised as a critical concern for leaders and management in organisations (Welch, 2011:328). Similar to internal communication, literature reveals various definitions of employee engagement.

This study adopts Albrecht's (2010) definition of employee engagement. Building on the work of Kahn, Albrecht (2010:4) defines employee engagement as a positive work-related psychological state characterised by a genuine willingness to contribute to organisational success.

2.2.7 Constructs

Hume (2010:25) states that constructs are the elements that make up concepts that are easier to measure within a research study. The constructs of internal communication and employee engagement identified for this study, are reflected in Figure 3 below. Constructs will be discussed in the rest of the literature review.

Figure 3: Concepts and constructs underlying the study
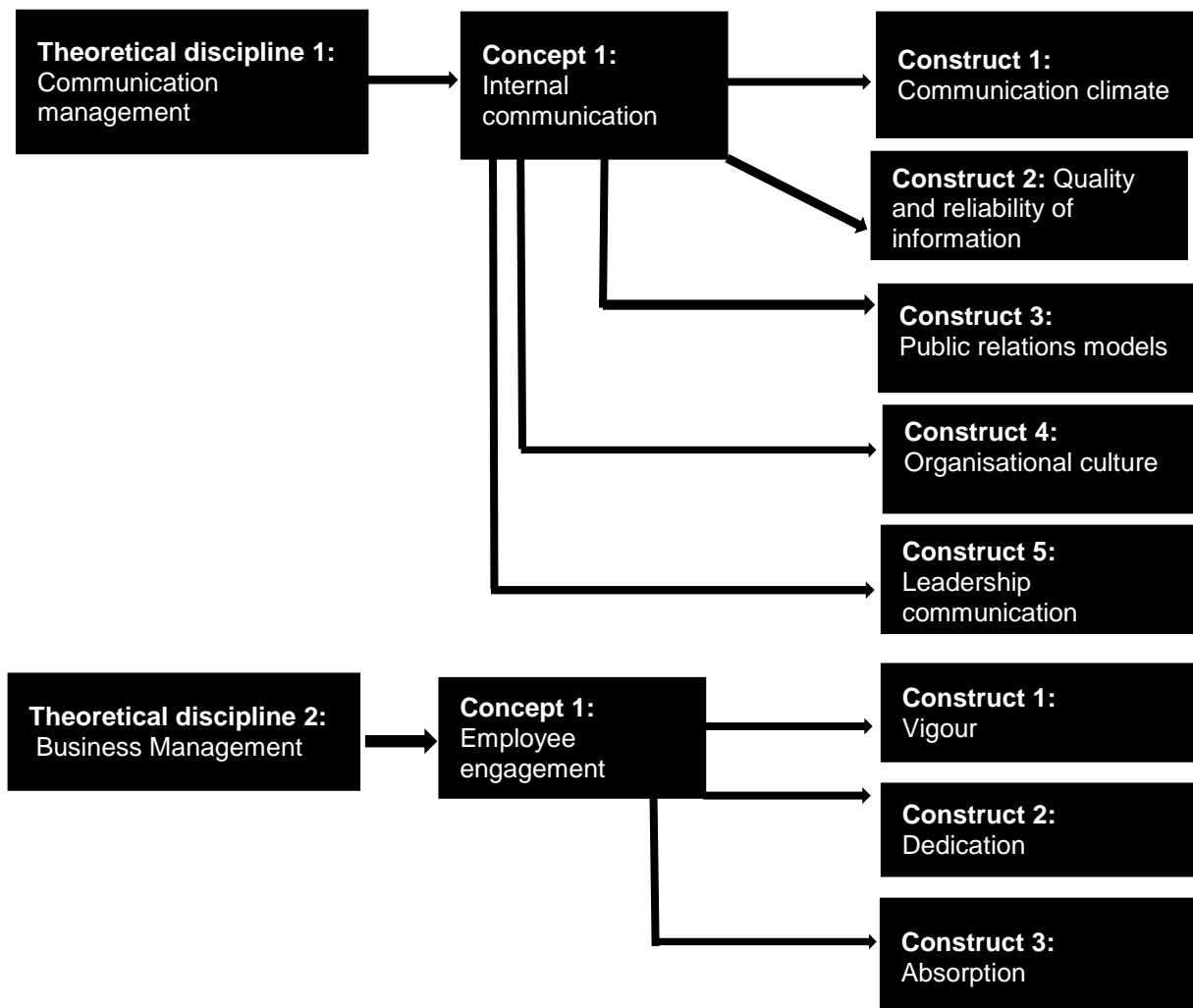
Source: Own conceptualisation

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2.2.8 Definition of terms

2.2.8.1 Internal communication

This study adopts Welch and Jackson's (2007:184) definition of internal communication. They define internal communication as the communication between an organisation's strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation; a sense of belonging to it; awareness of its changing environment; and an understanding of its evolving aims.

According to this definition, internal communication is the strategic management of interactions and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within an organisation. This definition already touches on the constructs of employee engagement, such as promotion of commitment to the organisation, and a sense of belonging.

2.2.8.2 Communication climate

Dennis (in Guzley, 1992) defines communication climate as the subjectively experienced quality of the internal environment of an organisation. It embraces a general cluster of inferred predispositions identifiable through reports of members' perceptions of messages and message-related events occurring in the organisation.

Communication climate is different from organisational climate in the sense that it includes only communicative phenomena, such as judgement concerning such things as receptivity of management to employees, or accuracy of information being disseminated. O'Connell (in Guzley, 1992) states that communication climate is made up of five factors responsible for perceptions. The factors are: superior-subordinate communication, quality of information, reliability of information, superior openness, and opportunities for upward communication.

2.2.8.3 Quality and reliability of information

Among others, quality and reliability of information are listed as the dimensions of communication climate, which employees use to arrive at a certain perception about the

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organisation's communication climate. Karanges (2014:38) define quality of information as individual employee perception of the value of information they receive. Quality of communication refers to the extent to which information is perceived to be timely, accurate, adequate and complete; and therefore considered valuable.

Reliability of information on the other hand, is likened to accuracy (Dennis, 1974). Reliability of information refers to the trustworthiness of the sender and channel used. From the recipient's view it is understood as the perception of the sender of information. The sender that constantly transmits accurate information to employee will be perceived as trustworthy and therefore can be relied on.

2.2.8.4   Public relations models

Public Relations is concerned with building and maintaining beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders. As stated above, Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, and Lyra (1995:168-170) conceptualised four models of public relations which can be practiced individually or in combination. For the purpose of this study only two models are discussed and tested, that is: *two-way asymmetrical; and two-way symmetrical*.

The two-way asymmetrical model uses research to identify the information required by the publics. Practitioners of this model use formative research to identify messages most likely to produce the support of the publics without changing the behaviour of the organisation. Two-way symmetrical on the other hand, is characterised by effects that benefit both the organisation and the publics, relying on negotiation techniques for the benefit of both parties. These models are discussed in detail in section 2.8 of this Chapter.

2.2.8.5   Leadership communication

Generally, leaders are defined as: "…individuals who guide, direct, motivate, or inspire others" (Mmope, 2010:3). Other authors have defined leadership as being concerned with task-oriented and relational-oriented behaviours. Roos and Northouse (in Naidoo, 2005:21) refer to leadership as that relationship which exists between an individual and a group sharing a common goal or interest. Leadership communication encompasses

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managerial communication skills. Madlock (in Mmope, 2010:49) states that leaders must possess good communication skills that will enable them to create the understanding and the trust necessary to encourage other to follow a leader.

In their move toward providing an integrated definition of leadership, Winston and Patterson (2006) define a leader as "… one or more people who select, equip, train, and influence one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organization's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted, coordinated effort to achieve the organizational mission and objectives...".

For the purpose of this study, leadership refers to those managers and supervisors who instruct, direct, influence and command others' attention and persuade them to work towards the vision of the organisation.

2.2.8.6   Employee engagement

Writers in the field of human resource management have not agreed on one definition of employee engagement. Various authors have attempted to provide a comprehensive definition. Kahn (1990:700), who is considered one of the first authors to conceptualise employee engagement, identified three psychological conditions that are necessary for engagement: meaningfulness, safety and availability (physical, cognitive, and emotional).

Employee engagement is understood to refer to a mechanism through which a two-way relationship between employer and employee is developed and nurtured; and is symbolised by cognitive, emotional and physical involvement of an individual employee in role performance. Employee engagement is achieved when employees have a positive attitude about the organisation they work for, understand and align themselves with its values, and exert extra efforts towards the achievement of organisational objectives. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:295) furthermore define employee engagement as: "… a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption…".

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2.2.8.7 Organisational culture

The concept of organisational culture originates as far back as 1948 when ways of thinking and behaving became important in organisations in order to influence employee behaviour and thinking (Angelopulo & Barker, 2006:85). Meek (in Angelopulo & Barker, 2006:85) argue that a culture is something an organisation or group is. In other words, culture is representative of the behaviour and thinking of the organisation. There are various elements shared among a community or organisations that make up culture, such as language, forms of dress, heroes, myths and rituals (Neher, 1997:129). Sadri and Lees (2001:853) argue that although culture is an intangible concept, it plays a meaningful role in organisations and therefore affects employees and organisational operations.

Martins and Terblanche (2003:65) state that organisational culture: "… forms an integral part of the general functioning of an organisation...". Organisations are made up of different individuals with diverse cultures, backgrounds, and personalities. They contend that organisational culture offers a shared system of meaning, which forms the basis of communication and mutual understanding within an organisation.

2.2.8.8 Vigour

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004: 295) define vigour as willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience which is demonstrated while working.

2.2.8.9 Dedication

Dedication is defined as characterised by strong involvement while working which leads to psychological identification with one's work that goes a step beyond the usual level of identification (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295). Engaged employees are dedicated to their work, and derive satisfaction about their job tasks, and feel inspired and proud of their work.

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2.2.8.10 Absorption

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:295), absorption refers to immersion, concentration, engrossment and pre-occupation with something or an event. According to these authors, absorption is characterised by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, to an extent that time passes quickly and one finds it difficult to detach oneself from work.

2.3   INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

2.3.1 Evolution of internal communication

Internal communication has become a critical and independent field of study and a function within public relations and corporate communication (Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2015). According to Verčič, Verčič and Sriramesh (2012:223), internal communication is listed among the fastest growing specialisations in public relations and communication management. Verčič *et al.* (2012:223) state that the growth of interest in internal communication has resulted in a series of studies aimed at understanding and analysing the field and advocating it as an independent domain.

The origin of internal communication from the public relations field has led earlier scholars such as Seitel (1989) and Cutlip, Centre, and Broom (2006) to view employees as internal stakeholders and to refer to internal communication as internal public relations and internal relations respectively.   From a public relations perspective, internal communication focuses on the relationship between the organisation and its internal publics; that is, employees.   Internal communication represents a shift from a management perspective to consider an employee perspective. According to Verčič *et al.* (2012:226), there has been an increase in the research published that address internal communication within the fields of human relations, organisational psychology, management, and internal marketing.

The concept of internal communication has been considered an important and challenging area which strengthens the connection between an organisation and its stakeholders, in particular employees, as it bridges the gap between management and

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employees. Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier (2002) argue that one way to achieve the connection between managers and employees is through effective internal communication which becomes a catalyst for organisations to reach their goals and objectives, as effective internal communication enables them to effectively develop structure and culture.

Internal communication is listed among the 60 factors affecting organisational effectiveness (Welch, 2008:489). Kitchen and Daly (in Welch, 2008:489) furthermore highlight the importance of internal communication, stating that it is not only an important variable in the achievement of organisational effectiveness, but it is also a precursor for organisational existence.

2.3.2 Defining internal communication

Important to note in the literature are alternative terms used to refer to internal communication. Internal communication has been synonymously equated to organisational communication, employee communication, intra-organisational communication, internal relations, and internal public relations (Antonis, 2005; Argenti, 1996; Dolphin, 2005; Jefkins, 1988; Smidts, Pruyn & Van Riel, 2001; Verčič *et al.*, 2012; Welch, 2013; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Wright, 1995). For the purpose of this study, the term internal communication will be used to refer to communication taking place between leaders and employees within an organisation.

According to Hayase (2009:15) the approach to internal communication has had to adjust and adapt to the numerous changes taking place in the workplace. From the literature, it is evident that there are numerous definitions provided by different authors in the field of internal communication. According to Forssberg and Malm (2001:23), scholars in the field of internal communication further define it in terms of its perceived functions; goals and expectations, as well as its context; that is, the roles internal communication is expected to fulfil.

Welch and Jackson (2007:179) proclaim that various authors have in their work cited the definition of internal communication as: "… the communication transactions between

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individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities…".

Broadly, internal communication refers to a process in which employees are provided with information about their individual roles, as well as the overall objectives and goals of the organisation (Verčič *et al.*, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007). Hayase (2009:2) takes an operational view when defining internal communication as the exchange of information, both formal and informal, between management and employees within the organisation. Larsson (in Forssberg & Malm, 2001:23) defines internal communication as patterns of meaning and human interaction that occur within the boundaries of an organisation.

A summary of various definitions for internal communication offered by different authors are provided in the Table below:

Table 5: Summary of internal communication definitions

Author(s) and Year	Definition
Frank and Brownell (1989: 5-6)	"The communications transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialisation that are intended to design and redesign organisations, to implement designs, and to co-ordinate day-to-day activities".
Erlien (2003)	"The flow of information and exchange of ideas and viewpoints between managers and employees, and communication between individuals and groups on different levels and in different units or parts of the organization".
Kalla (2005: 304)	"All formal and informal communication taking place internally at all levels of an organisation".
Welch and Jackson (2007: 186)	"A process between an organisation's strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organisation, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims".
Blundel and Ippolito (2008: 11)	"Communication which takes place within the boundaries of an organisation in the form of one-way, inter-personal, and non-verbal exchange"

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Author(s) and Year	Definition
Carriere and Bourque (2009: 31)	"The full spectrum of communication activities, both formal and informal, undertaken by an organisation's members for the purpose of disseminating information to one or more audiences within the organisation".
Bovee and Thill (2010: 7)	"The exchange of information and ideas within an organisation".
Mazzei (2010: 221)	"The communication flow among people within the boundaries of an organisation".
Cornelissen (2011: 258)	"All methods (internal newsletter, intranet) used by a firm to communicate with its employees".

Source: Karanges (2014:33)

The Table above does not exhaust all the definitions of internal communication, but gives a summary of some of the definitions. Based on definitions in the Table, the following elements are identified as important in defining internal communication:

    (i)   it is done formally and informally;

    (ii)   it is a transactional process between participants;

    (iii)   it occurs within the boundaries of an organisation; and

    (iv)   it is concerned with the exchange of information and ideas.

In defining internal communication, Welch and Jackson (2007:178) emphasise that it is a process which involves participants, that is, management and employees. On the other hand, Bovee and Thill (in Karanges, 2014:34) put emphasis on the exchange of information and ideas. Accordingly, internal communication takes different directions in order to ensure that both parties are able to participate in the information exchange process.

Welch and Jackson (2007:179) disagree with Frank and Brownell's general definition that has been adopted by various authors - instead they emphasise that internal communication should be viewed as part of integrated corporate communication. Defending the divergence, Welch and Jackson (2007:180) assert that internal communication should be defined as part of integrated corporate communication and not only as being transactional. In their view, internal communication differs from organisational communication; the former takes a stakeholder approach, while the latter takes a transactional approach.

According to Mersham and Skinner (in Landman & Angelopulo, 2006:77) internal communication creates and maintains the internal environment of an organisation. These authors argue that internal communication covers both formal and informal structures, modes of communication; all forms of communication such as small group, management and/or leadership; mass internal communication, as well as interpersonal communication.

As indicated earlier, internal communication can be broadly defined as a process where information and ideas are crafted and exchanged among members of an organisation at different levels, in an effort to maintain mutually beneficial relationships. This definition firstly emphasises the crafting and exchanging of information and ideas. This implies that information should be planned, intentional and should allow for a two-way transactional process. Secondly, the definition includes relationship management between the members of an organisation across levels. The importance of relationship maintenance furthermore implies that employees are regarded as vital stakeholders that the organisation must communicate to and with. In line with their definition of internal communication, Welch and Jackson (2007:183-184) take a stakeholder approach to define internal communication and differentiate between five stakeholder groups that must be identified, namely; all employees, strategic management (dominant coalition), day-to-day management, work teams, and project teams.

The identification of employees as vital stakeholders links to Welch and Jackson's (2007) stakeholder approach to internal communication. It is argued that the importance of effective internal communication is evident from the literature wherein it has been linked to job satisfaction, improved productivity, increased levels of innovation, and higher quality of services and products (Clampitt & Downs, 1993).

Various authors take it further and state that internal communication is: "*the lifeblood of an organisation*" or "*soul of an organisation*" or "*the glue that binds together various components of an organisation*" (Barker & Angelopulo, 2006; Bartlett & Goshal, 1989; Katz, 1978). Although empirical evidence is lacking, some scholars researching internal communication have linked it to a successful organisation, as it provides the strategic manager with an opportunity to engage employees (Welch & Jackson, 2007:177). It is also linked to positive organisational and employee outcomes, such as employee

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engagement (Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, & Lings, 2015). In congruence, this study's assertion is that internal communication is the oil that keeps the engine of an organisation going. In congruence with the above authors, internal communication creates and maintains the internal environment of an organisation.

As indicated earlier, defining internal communication is challenging given the different roles that it is expected to play in organisations. Contexts such as communication climate, organisational culture, functions, goals and expectations of the dominant coalition usually influence the definition of internal communication adopted by a particular organisation. Internal communication in this study is investigated in relation to its impact on employee engagement and is influenced by Welch and Jackson's (2007) stakeholder approach of internal communication using a transactional communication model. Some authors argue that employee engagement goes further than information sharing, that is, to include internal communication, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

2.3.3 The role of internal communication

Internal communication affects the ability of organisations to engage with employees and is a fundamental process for organisations (Welch & Jackson, 2007:177). Forman and Argenti (in Welch & Jackson, 2007:178) argue that although internal communication is important for practice, there are considerable gaps in its theory, hence a call for research on its mandate, scope and focus. Poor internal communication has been stated as a major concern for organisations.

As indicated earlier, internal communication enables engagement between an organisation and its employees (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Welch (2011:338) maintains that internal communication has been identified as an underlying factor associated with employee engagement. De Araujo, Simanski and de Quevedo (2012:47) maintain that communication should produce integration and a true spirit of teamwork within organisations. Karanges (2014:31) further states that the internal communication function serves to strengthen the connection between an organisation and its internal stakeholders, that is, its employees.

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According to Verčič *et al.* (2012:224), internal communication plays five different roles, namely: a communicator, an educator, a change agent, a communication consultant when providing guidance and advice, as well as an organisational strategist. Erikson (in Forssberg & Malm, 2001:27) argues that an internal communication manager plays a role in communicating *work*; communicating *news*; communicating *control*; communicating *change*; and communicating *culture*.

Welch and Jackson (2007:186) furthermore identify internal corporate communication as a dimension of internal communication which aims to promote a positive sense of belonging in employees; to develop awareness of environmental change among employees; to contribute to internal relationship building within organisations; and to promote and develop the understanding of an organisation's mission and objectives.

2.4 MODELS OF COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Prior to undertaking a research study, it is important for the researcher to understand the nature of the phenomenon, in this case, internal communication. Steinberg (1995:20-21) states that one way of achieving understanding of a phenomenon is through models. In this case, models describe and explain the communication process.

2.4.1 A transactional model of communication

Steinberg (1995:23-34) discusses several models of communication such as: the classical view of communication; the twentieth-century views of communication; Laswell's view of communication; Shannon and Weaver's view of communication; Schramm's view of communication; and a transactional model of communication.

Given its stakeholder approach, this study adopts a transactional view to internal communication, which links to relationship management theory and emboldens two-way communication.

Figure 4: A transactional model of communication
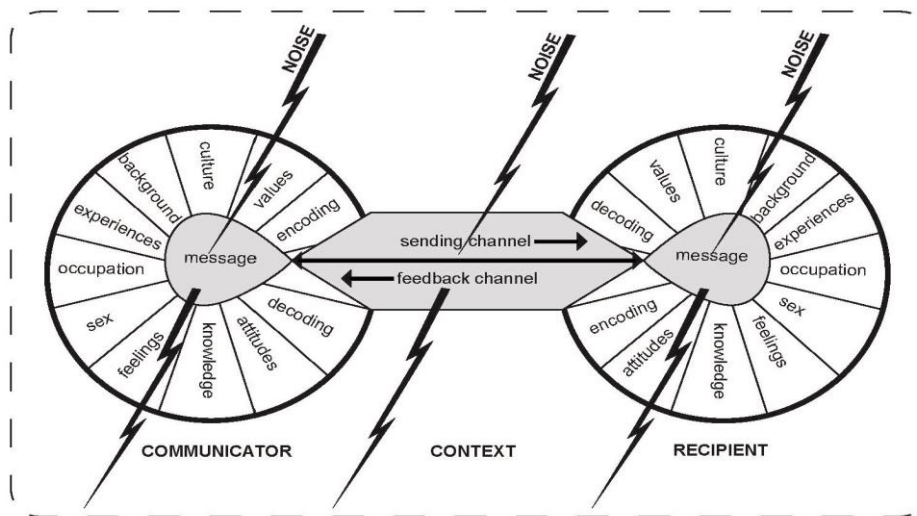
(Adapted from Steinberg, 1995)

The transactional model was developed to improve on the earlier models and therefore builds on the elements from the previous models. According to the transactional model, communication involves more than the transmission of messages or interaction between two people. The communication process becomes a transaction during which the meaning of a message is negotiated (Steinberg, 1995:33). According to Pham (2014:7) many scholars view communication as more than a process of merely sending and receiving messages, which is the main weakness of the simple transmission model.

Although firstly proposed by Barnlund (1970), the transactional model of communication has been refined by several theorists as it is considered an advanced communication model. The transactional model differs from previous models as it emphasises the importance of the relationship between two participants who are simultaneously involved in the negotiation of meaning (Steinberg, 1995:34). The model identifies two participants as the communicator and recipient who engage in the process of negotiating meaning which is affected by the contextual elements reflected in the diagram. Steinberg (1995:35) asserts that the message is encoded and interpreted based on contextual elements such as culture, values, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, feeling and occupation.

The transactional model further views communication as a continuous process which is affected by the noise which occurs at various levels in the process. Key in the

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transactional model is the emphasis on the roles of participants as well as the role of the context within which communication takes place (Steinberg, 1995:35). Another theory which forms the basis of the study is the social exchange theory which emphasises constant engagement between participants in creating social realities. According to this model, the aim of communication is more than exchanging information – it also places emphasis on human relation-building. The purpose of communication in terms of this model is not only to exchange information, but also to build human relationships, form intercultural alliances, shape self-concepts, and engage with other people in dialogues in order to generate social communities (Steinberg, 1995:34).

Another distinctive element of the transactional model is its emphasis on the simultaneous roles of the sender and receiver in the process of communication. During the communication process, the roles of sender and receiver interchange with each participant sending and receiving messages. The transactional model of communication supports the stakeholder, relationship, and social exchange theories which form the basis for this study.

2.4.2 Public relations models

In its origin, public relations (PR) came into being to link organisations with their customers/consumer/clients. This study proposes a stakeholder approach to internal communication and therefore advocates for internal public relations. According to the human relations view, it is argued that there ought to be an ideal relationship between management and employees. The effectiveness of an organisation is grounded in and bound by this relationship as experienced by employees as part of their work life. The new direction of internal public relations is grounded in the recognition that human potential and a desire to leave one's mark are essential to the success of an organisation. In this human relations view, employees are seen as having the necessary skills and knowledge that provide direct benefits to the organisation. In conducting their work, employees enter into relationships with each other and with management and therefore the maintenance and nurturing of these relationships is beneficial to both the employees and the organisation (Kennan & Hazelton, 2005:315).

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McCown (in Seltzer *et al.,* 2012:128) contends that employees are a key stakeholder group for any organisation, yet internal public relations is underdeveloped. Internal public relations refers to managing relationships between the dominant coalition (leadership) and employees. This study proposes a stakeholder approach to internal communication which implies that employees should be treated as critical stakeholders that the organisation should communicate with, and build and maintain beneficial relationships with. The Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) defines public relations as: "… the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders, aligned and coordinated with other communication to contribute to the corporate brand…", (www.prisa.co.za).

This definition of public relations emphasises the fact that PR is done through communication, and specifies internal and external stakeholders as being equally important. Grunig (1992) puts forward that excellent public relations practice improves employee morale, increases job satisfaction, and allows organisations to build long-term relationships of trust and credibility with strategic employee publics. The assumption of this study is that internal public relations will improve the levels of employee engagement within the NDOH.

Barker and Angelopulo (2006:199) furthermore state that there are a variety of approaches and theories within the public relations field. In their endeavour to understand public relations, Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang and Lyra (1995:163) conceptualised four models of public relations which can be practiced individually or in combination. These models are *press agentry/publicity; public information; two-way asymmetrical; and two-way symmetrical*.

The press agentry/publicity model is defined as propagandist public relations that seeks the attention of the media in any possible way. The public information model on the other hand, uses the media to push information through to the publics. Practitioners using this model do not disseminate negative information voluntarily. Both the press agentry and public information models are characterised by one-way communication as they give information about the organisation to the public but do not seek information from the publics. (Grunig *et al.,* 1995:169)

The next two models are considered sophisticated as they use research and other methods of two-way communication. These models are two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. The two-way asymmetrical model uses research to identify the information required by the publics. Practitioners of this model use formative research to identify messages most likely to produce the support of the publics without changing the behaviour of the organisation. Two-way symmetrical communication on the other hand, is characterised by effects that benefit both the organisation and the publics. Practitioners using two-way symmetrical communication use bargaining, negotiating and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviours of both the organisation and its publics (Grunig *et al.,* 1995:169).

In this study, the focus is on employees as a critical stakeholder group and from this perspective, only the last two models are considered relevant. Grunig *et al.* (1995:30) suggest that communication practitioners must have the knowledge of advanced practices that treat communication as a two-way process.

2.4.2.1   Two-way asymmetrical model

Contrary to press agentry and public information models which do not seek information from the public, in the two-way asymmetrical model, organisations listen to their stakeholders but use the information obtained to tailor their communication strategies to allay concerns of stakeholders but do not attempt to change their own behaviour. Information obtained is used to ensure that communication activities are seen to be responding to the needs of the publics.

According to Roper (2005:69), governments and politicians usually employ asymmetrical communication models in their campaigns. The intention of two-way asymmetrical communication is to persuade or manipulate publics. According to Dozier *et al.* (1995:46) practitioners of two-way asymmetrical communication view their role as to persuade a public, get the publics to behave as desired by the organisation, manipulate publics, and using attitude theory in campaigns. Contrary to the two-way symmetrical communication model that advocates for full participation of all parties, two-way asymmetrical communication prioritises the needs of the organisation rather than those of employees.

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Information from employees is usually obtained through surveys and opinion polls. This type of communication is assumed to have a negative impact on the level of employee engagement.

> **H 1:** There is a relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
>
> **H0:** There is no relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

2.4.2.2   Two-way symmetrical model

Two-way symmetrical communication uses bargaining, negotiating, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both the organisation and its publics, in this case, the employees. This model allows both parties in a relationship to contribute and benefit from the relationship. The intention of two-way symmetrical communication is to reach a win-win situation between the organisation and its stakeholders (in this case employees). Communication practitioners using two-way symmetrical communication also understand their role in negotiating with an activist public; using theories of conflict resolution in dealing with public; helping management to understand the opinion of particular publics, as well as determining how publics react to the organisation (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:46). In the two-way symmetrical model, communication flows in both directions and decisions are arrived at through negotiation. The assumption of this study is that employees who feel that they matter to the organisation they work for will be more engaged and therefore have a sense of belonging to the organisation.

> **H2:** There is a relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
>
> **H0:** There is no relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

2.4.2.3   A mixed-motive model of symmetry as two-way practices

In the Excellence Study, Dozier *et al.* (1995:48) found that although knowledge of two-way symmetrical communication practices is important; the knowledge of two-way asymmetrical practices also plays a role in helping an organisation achieve communication excellence. These authors further proposed a rethinking of symmetry and asymmetry as parts of a "mixed-motive" game where both parties pursue their own interests, but both parties also realise that the game's outcome must be satisfactory to both parties. In this context, the outcome is the relationship between parties, hence the rethinking is proposed.

Based on the background provided above, the Excellent Study proposes that the two-way models of public relations would function better in combination. A new way of organising the two-way practices as conceptualised by Dozier *et al.* (1995:48) is presented in the figure below.

Figure 5: A new model of two-way practices
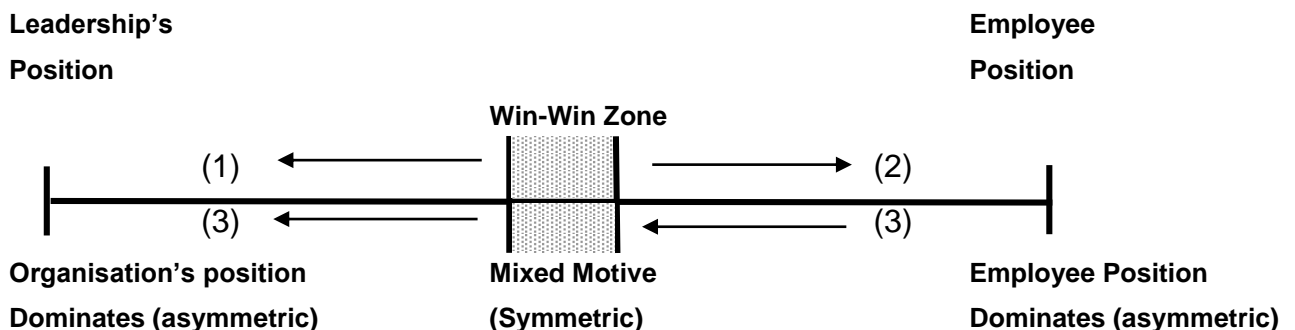
Source: Adapted from Dozier *et al.* (1995)

In the Figure 5 above, Arrow (1) represents a pure asymmetrical model. In this model communication is used to dominate the public wherein leadership's position dominates. Arrow (2) demonstrates a pure cooperation model wherein communication is used to persuade the leadership to yield towards the public's position. Lastly, Arrow (3) demonstrates a two-way model wherein communication is used to move public, leadership, or both to an acceptable "win-win" zone.

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This study puts forward that in order for internal communication to play a role in the achievement of employee engagement, leadership and practitioners of communication within the NDOH should consider adopting a two-way model as depicted by Arrow (3) in the diagram above. The 'win-win' zone is reached through negotiation and engagement between the publics (employees) and the dominant coalition (leadership).

2.5 CATEGORISATION OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication is categorised as formal and informal, and flows in different directions within an organisation. Communication within an organisation can flow from top (leadership) to bottom (employees) and can be categorised in different ways. Information shared can be categorised as formal (which is usually written) or informal (through verbal transmission or using informal channels such as the 'grapevine'). Information transmitted can take different directions from leadership to employees (downward); from employees to leadership (upward); lateral (between co-workers, usually at the same level); and diagonal (between employees at different levels).

2.5.1 Formal and informal communication

According to Strid, Ludlow, and Panton (in Forssberg & Malm 2001:29), internal communication is popularly categorised into formal and informal. The former refers to communication initiated by management whereas the latter exists in organisations without specific initiation (Forssberg & Malm, 2001:29). Steinberg (1995:9) asserts that whether communication is formal or informal is largely dependent on the situation(s) people find themselves in. Formal communication is categorised into upward and downward communication.

Formal communication originates from management in the form of policies, procedures, and work instructions, which are cascaded through the organisational hierarchy. Informal communication on the other hand refers to communication that takes place between members of the organisation, regardless of the employment level. It is stated that informal communication develops through common interests among members of the organisation.

The 'grapevine' has been identified as the most powerful form of informal communication (Forssberg & Malm, 2001; & Steinberg, 1995).

2.5.2 Directions of communication flows

Schermerhorn, Osborn, Uhl-Bien, and Hunt (2011) identify four flows of communication, namely: *upward, downward, lateral and diagonal* directions. On the other hand, Adey and Andrew (in Mmope, 2010:36) add the diagonal flow of communication.

Downward communication refers to communication that is cascaded from the top level of management down to various line and or functional structures. Downward communication is formal in nature and is used to:

- provide information about the policies, strategy, vision, mission, and procedures of the organisation;
- issue instructions;
- provide performance appraisals to subordinates; and
- explain the relationship of a specific task to the overall objectives of the organisation (Adey & Andrew, 1990:85).

Hitt, Miller, & Colella (in Pham, 2014:15) state that over and above providing work information, downward communication is frequently used to inform those at lower levels about changes within the organisation. According to Pham (2014:16), sharing such information helps not only to reduce the spread of rumours and inaccuracies concerning higher-level intentions, but also creates a sense of security and better involvement among receivers.

Upward communication flows from lower (employees) to higher levels (supervisor and management) in the organisation (Pham, 2014:15). Adey and Andrew (in Mmope, 2010:35) state that upward communication mainly allows senior management of an organisation to know and understand what is happening at lower levels of structure. These authors also identify forms of upward communication, which includes: letters and memoranda, surveys, suggestion box systems, departmental meetings, formal grievance procedures, staff meetings, etc.

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Smith (2005:98) argues that more attention is now being paid to how communication is channelled up in an organisation. Schermerhorn *et al.* (in Pham, 2014:8) assert that due to employees filtering information that goes up, higher-level managers in the organisation are often left in the dark about what really happens at lower-levels. Hitt *et al.* (in Pham, 2014:16) argue that the functioning of upward communication in an organisation is dependent on whether higher-level managers are interested in receiving negative feedback or not. These authors further raise the issue of trust by arguing that if employees at lower levels do not trust their supervisors or fear reprisals, upward communication may not occur. Larger organisations often find it difficult to manage upward communication due to formalised and more complex relationships.

Lateral communication refers to communication between two employees on the same hierarchical level or employment level (Mmope, 2012:35-36). Lateral communication is also referred to as horizontal communication indicating flow of messages among employees at the same hierarchical level. According to Steinberg (1995:161) lateral communication takes the form of work-related messages or provide for social interaction among employees. Schermerhorn *et al.* (in Pham, 2014:16) state that lateral communication promotes collaborative environments in the workplace.

According to Steinberg (1995:161-162), lateral communication includes communication among members of the same work group, members of work groups at the same level; managers at the same level; or among any horizontally equivalent employees.

Diagonal communication is identified by Adey and Andrew (in Mmope, 2010:36) as communication between employees who are not on the same hierarchical level. According to these authors, this form of communication is mostly common with projects where people from different levels of authority from different departments have expertise needed for the success of a specific project. Adey and Andrew (in Mmope, 2010) furthermore, highlight the fact that in diagonal communication, those in higher positions have to liaise and work with those in lower hierarchical positions and at times have to submit to the expert knowledge of those junior to them.

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2.5.3 Channels of internal communication

Organisations make use of various channels or mediums to communicate with its internal stakeholders. The preference for a specific channel over another mainly depends on the content to be communicated and the target audience. Channels can be categorised into formal and informal.

2.5.3.1 Formal and informal channels

Schermerhorn *et al.* (in Pham, 2014:20) assert that organisations are designed according to organising principles that follow a particular hierarchical structure specifying job descriptions, as well as formal reporting relationships. According to Mmope (2010:41), communication channels are a vital component of the communication process as they provide a medium through which information and messages are conveyed. Traditionally, information in organisations is commonly passed through the formal reporting lines, especially work-related information. Pham (2014:22) argues that certain information in organisations is also passed along fluidly, through various informal channels. Research conducted by earlier authors indicate that the different channels have differing capacities to effectively convey information and messages (Mmope, 2010:41).

Formal communication channels in organisations are recognised as superior to others and are used to communicate organisational policies, procedures, and other official announcements (Pham, 2014:20). Formal channels of communication also refer to the official channels through which information and messages are conveyed - these can be written or oral.

Informal communication channels on the other hand, follow no hierarchical structure. It refers to conversations among employees (Steinberg, 1995:159). Informal exchange of information and messages usually takes place among employees at their leisure time and follows no structure. Kaul (in Pham, 2014:20) argues that informal communication channels satisfy employees' social interaction needs. Steinberg (1995:162) argues that information exchanged informally can be work-related or concern social and personal matters. The 'grapevine', which is also known as a social network of friendships and acquaintances, has been identified as the universal informal communication channel

(Pham, 2014:21), which is used to spread rumours as well as convey important information and news.

2.5.3.2 Written and oral communication

Communication can be categorised into written and oral; which both involve the use of words. **Written communication** involves the use of words which are written and requires the recipient to read the words to make sense of it. Written communication also makes use of diagrams and graphics accompanied by words to convey a message. Written communication includes memos, letters, electronic mail, fax transmissions, organisational publications, and any other device that is transmitted via written words or symbols. (Steinberg, 1995:8)

Oral communication on the other hand, refers to messages that are transmitted aloud or verbally. A conversation with a friend, colleague, and supervisor constitute oral communication (Steinberg, 1995:7). Oral communication provides rapid feedback and allows for immediate correction of interpretation. Oral communication also includes instructions and or information that is verbally transmitted, which makes it prone to distortion depending on the number of hierarchical levels the message goes through (Mmope, 2010:45).

2.6 DIMENSIONS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

As alluded to earlier, internal communication has been conceptualised as multi-dimensional. Johlke and Duhan (2000:156-157) identified four dimensions of internal communication, namely: communication frequency; communication mode; communication content; and communication direction. Earlier authors stated that these dimensions have been tested in the context of supervisor and sales manager communication and argue that internal communication should be defined using these dimensions. An additional dimension of communication information quality has also been identified as an important part of internal communication. Information quality is defined as the extent to which an individual perceives information received from a sender as being valuable, Maltz (in Karanges, 2014:38). Information quality is concerned with the

perception that employees have about whether or not information received from managers is useful. This study argues that for internal communication to influence levels of employee engagement in organisations, employees have to regard information communicated as valuable.

A study conducted by Maltz (in Karanges, 2014:35) among marketing managers revealed perceived information quality to be an outcome of communication frequency and communication mode. Although information quality has been identified as an element of internal communication, Johlke and Duhan (2000) and Maltz (in Karanges, 2014:38) argue that it has only been positioned as a mediator and an outcome variable and never as a dimension of internal communication.

2.6.1 Communication frequency

Generally frequency refers to the rate of occurrence, which are incidences. According to Farace, Monge, and Russell (in Karanges, 2014:36) communication frequency refers to the amount of contact between an organisation and its employees. Keller (1994) moves from an assumption that a greater amount of communication occurrences is beneficial within the work environment. On the other hand, Ganster and Schaubroeck (in Karanges, 2014:36) caution that an excess of communication can lead to employees feeling overwhelmed and experiencing communication overload. Cognisant of the caution, this study moves from an assumption that greater communication frequency positively encourages employee engagement within an organisation.

Maltz (in Karanges, 2014:37) also contends that organisations either communicate with employees too frequently or not frequently enough, leading to information overload and or misunderstandings. Based on this discussion, it is evident that organisations should strive for a balance in their communication incidences.

2.6.2 Communication mode

The channels or media used to convey information and messages during the communication process are referred to as modes of communication. Steinberg (1995:9)

differentiates between formal and informal modes of communication. Maltz (2000) furthermore asserts that there are four modes of communication commonly cited within the literature, namely: electronic, written, face-to-face, and telephone. Smith (2005: 73-83) extends the list of modes to include broadcast and audio-visual, internet driven and corporate events. In his list of communication modes, Pham (2014: 21-28) includes social media, websites and intranets.

Formal modes of communication follow organisational hierarchical levels, and are impersonal in nature. These modes are used to convey official business information in order to help achieve organisational objectives. Examples of formal modes of communication include organisational publications, electronic mail, newsletters, memoranda, reports and organisational meetings. Informal communication modes on the other hand do not follow any structure and are more personal in nature. They are designed to help with the achievement of individual objectives. Informal modes of communication can be the 'grapevine', text messages or hand written notes (Karanges, 2014:37).

2.6.3 Communication content

Fisher, Maltz and Jaworshi (in Karanges, 2014:37) define communication content as the type of influence strategy used by organisations and supervisors to guide employees' actions. Johlke and Duhan (2000) differentiate between directive and in-directive influence strategies that are used by a sender to communicate with a receiver (Karanges, 2014:37).

According to these authors, directive influence strategies are used by supervisors to provide employees with specific directions and instructions. According to (Mohr, Fisher and Nevin, in Karanges, 2014:38), directive influence strategies explicitly communicate instructions that should be followed by employees in conducting their job. In-directive influence strategies are more flexible in nature. These authors assert that in-directive strategies allow and encourage employees to be part of decision making processes.

2.6.4 Communication direction

Communication within an organisation can take a two-way (bi-directional) or one-way (uni-directional) approach. Uni-directional communication takes place when organisations and supervisors provide employees with information and do not encourage them to respond or give feedback. Bi-directional communication on the other hand happens when organisations and supervisors provide information to employees and encourage them to respond with feedback (Karanges, 2014: 38). Bi-directional communication is considered more effective due to its nature of allowing employees to send their inputs to supervisors (Cornelissen, 2011). The communication model adopted by this study (a transactional model) supports bi-directional communication in order to achieve employee engagement in organisations.

2.7 COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

Communication climate refers to an employee's general response to the communication environment at organisational and personal levels. Satisfaction with a communication climate includes the extent to which communication in the organisation motivates and stimulates workers to meet organisational goals, and the extent to which attitudes toward communication are perceived to be basically healthy. It is against this background that communication climate was considered as a contributor towards internal communication management.

Dennis (in Guzley, 1992) defines communication climate as subjectively experienced quality of the internal environment of an organisation. According to Dennis (in Guzley, 1992) there are five factors responsible for communication climate, namely: superior-subordinate communication, quality of information, superior openness, opportunities for upward communication and reliability of information. In their study on organisational identification, Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong and Joustra (2006:173) found that communication climate has the strongest link with employee identification or organisational commitment. In this study communication climate is evaluated as a variable to establish if it contributes to higher levels of employee engagement. Engaged employees are usually committed to the organisation.

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Communication climate is distinct, yet closely related to the concept of communication satisfaction. Downs and Hazen (1977:66) list communication climate as one of the elements of communication satisfaction. Communication satisfaction is defined by Downs and Hazen (1977) as a general feeling which an employee has toward his or her total communication environment.

2.7.1 Types of communication climates

According to Ireland, Van Auken and Lewis (1978:5) there are two types of communication climates found in organisation, namely: defensive and supportive. Gibb (in Ireland *et al.*, 1978:5) distinguishes between the two climates by stating that supportive communication climate facilitates efficient and effective message transmissions, while a defensive climate hinders the successful transmissions of messages. A supportive communication climate can be likened to a positive communication climate wherein employees perceive the communication environment as supportive and are satisfied with it. In a supportive communication climate, employees are encouraged to be innovative in solving problems and feel a sense of belonging as organisational members. On the other hand, a defensive communication climate is likened to a negative climate, wherein employees unduly criticise or are not satisfied with the communication environment.

A supportive communication climate is said to be characterised by an open exchange of information, accessibility of co-workers, cooperative interactions and an overall culture of knowledge sharing (van der Hooff & de Ridder, 2004:120).

Redding (in Bartels *et al.*, 2006:177) asserts that communication climate is crucial when creating effective organisations. Goldhaber (in Bartels *et al.*, 2006:177) defines communication climate as: "…the perception of employees with regard to the quality of mutual relations and communication in the organisation…".

Based on the background above, this study hypothesised that satisfaction with the internal communication environment (communication climate) will positively influence the levels of employee engagement.

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H3: There is a relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.

H0: There is no relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.

2.8   QUALITY AND RELIABILITY OF INFORMATION

Communication climate has also been explored as a multi-dimensional construct (Bartels *et al.*, 2006:177), of which the quality and reliability of information is listed as a dimension. One of the dimensions of internal communication listed above is communication content. Content refers to the actual messages or information transmitted by the sender to the recipients.

Based on the work of Johlke and Duhan (2011), Karanges (2014:38) defines information quality as recipient's perception of the value of the information they receive. Quality of communication refers to the extent to which information is perceived to be timely, accurate, adequate and complete. Timely communication refers to whether the information received is current and needed by the receiver. For example, information about the organisation that has already been published in the media becomes irrelevant and late to employees who may have already learnt about it in the media. Furthermore, quality communication furthermore plays a central role towards the achievement of organisational effectiveness, employee performance and motivation.

Maltz (in Karanges, 2014:36) agrees that quality communication is critical to achieving organisational effectiveness, employee performance and motivation. Authors such as Harber, Ashkanasy and Callan (in Karanges, 2014:39) argue that scholars of organisational communication should consider the overall communication environment within the organisation while other authors believe that the communication environment within the employee's primary work group is most relevant.

Reliability of information on the other hand refers to the trustworthiness of the sender and channel used. From the recipient's view reliability of information is understood as how to perceive the sender of the information. If the recipient views the sender and or the

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channel as lacking credibility, it follows that the information received is regarded as not reliable. Reliable information is information that is deemed by the recipient as true and factual. Hayase (2009:11) states that the reliability of information is the perception that employees have about the information they receive, which is the actual messages and the transparency of their workplace.

Where employees feel that the information received from management is not reliable, they may tend to rely on information received from co-workers to keep themselves updated. This study moves from the assumption that information that is perceived as reliable and of quality, positively influences employee engagement in the workplace.

H4: There is a relationship between quality of information and the levels of employee engagement.

H0: There is no relationship between quality of information and the levels of employee engagement.

H5: There is a relationship between reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.

H0: There is no relationship between reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.

2.9   ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The concept of organisational culture originates as far back as 1948 when ways of thinking and behaving became important in organisations in order to influence employee behaviour and thinking (Angelopulo & Barker, 2006:85). Meek (in Angelopulo & Barker 2006:85) argues that a culture is something an organisation or group is. In other words, culture is representative of the behaviour and thinking of the organisation. There are various elements shared among a community or organisation that make up culture such as language, forms of dress, heroes, myths and rituals (Neher, 1997:133-135). As stated above, Sadri and Lees (2001) argue that although culture is an intangible concept, it plays

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a meaningful role in organisations and therefore affects employee behaviour and organisational operations.

According to Sadri and Lees (2001:853) some sets of norms emerge as dominant and therefore guide the way in which work is accomplished within organisations. Those dominant sets of norms give rise to organisational culture. Organisational culture is also referred to as corporate culture. In this study, the term organisational culture is preferred. Martins and Terblanche (2003:65) state that organisational culture: "… forms an integral part of the general functioning of an organisation…". Organisations are made up of different individuals with diverse cultures, backgrounds, and personalities. They contend that organisational culture offers a shared system of meaning, which forms the basis of communication and mutual understanding within an organisation.

2.9.1 Definition of culture

The literature reviewed implies that internal communication as well as employee engagement play critical roles in the success or failure of the organisation. According to Sadri and Lees (2001:853) the same is true for organisational culture.

The latter has been defined in different ways, based on factors such as the environment in which an organisation operates, geographic location of the organisation; events that have occurred during the history of the organisation; personalities of its employees; and patterns of interactions.

Organisational culture is referred to as common experiences among members of a group that are formed over time and therefore become the property of that particular group. Culture represents the *accumulated learning of a group* that describes ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving the world that have made the group successful. Organisational culture is driven by the learned, shared and tacit assumptions on which people base their daily behaviours (Schein, 1999:13-24).

Sherriton and Stern (1996:27) identify four aspects that define organisational culture as depicted in the Figure 6 below:

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Figure 6: Aspects defining organisational culture
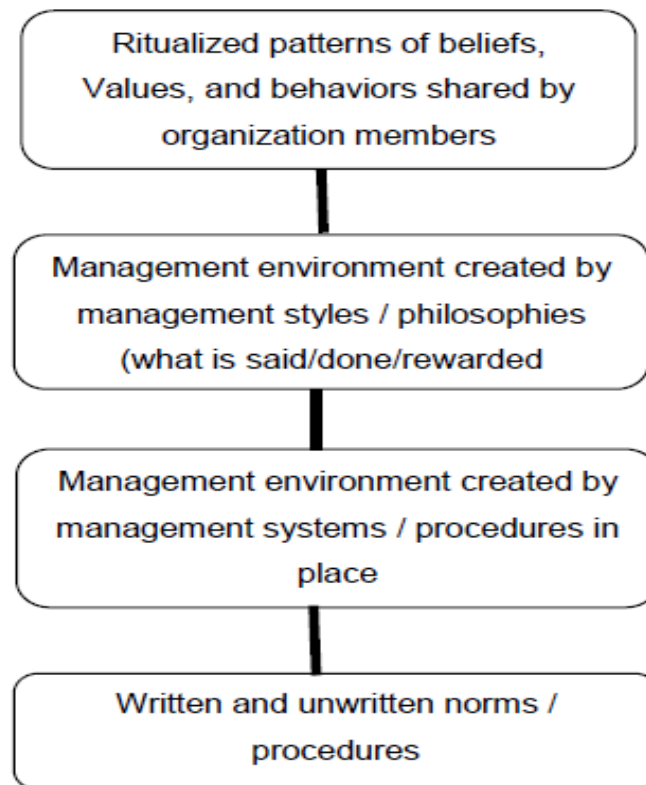
Source: Sherriton & Stern (1996)

Sherriton and Stern (1996:27) consolidate all organisational aspects that form a culture. More significantly, this definition includes the aspect of management environments which are critical in the formation of organisational culture. Management styles, philosophies and systems dictate how internal communication is implemented and the levels at which employees are engaged. For the purpose of this study, organisational culture is defined as a wide-ranging notion of a set of beliefs, values, and behaviours created by management styles, philosophies, systems and procedures put in place within an organisation. These procedures and systems can be written or unwritten rules and norms that guide how organisational members conduct themselves.

2.9.2 Types of cultures in organisations

Culture, according to Grunig *et al.* (2002:482) is regarded as the glue that holds excellent organisations together and keep mediocre organisations mediocre. Grunig *et al.*

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(2002:482) distinguish between two types of culture, namely: authoritarian and participative.

An authoritarian culture is characterised by centralised decision making wherein decisions are made by the head of the organisation with a selected few high-level managers. In authoritarian cultures, employees believe that senior management is only interested in them as workers, not as whole people. Employees in authoritarian organisation express fear of their supervisors and other members of top management. Authoritarian cultures are generally closed and resistant to ideas from the outside organisation (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:482-483).

A participative culture on the other hand, is characterised by teamwork. Various departments within an organisation work together towards the same goals and objectives of the organisation. Contrary to authoritarian culture, in a participative culture workers believe that management values them as whole people, not just as employees. Participative cultures are open to ideas from both the external and internal environment (Grunig *et al.*, 2002:482).

Table 6 below provides a comparative analysis of the two organisational culture types:

Table 6: Key characteristics of each culture

Authoritarian culture	Participative culture
Supports specialisation (individual responsibility)	Encourages collective responsibility
Caters for individual decision making by high-level managers	Promotes collective decision-making arrived at through engagement
Lacks genuine concern for workers	Upholds holistic concern for employees
Adopts an authoritarian style of management	Adopts a participative style of management
Operates as a closed system that is resistant to ideas and changes emanating from the external environment	Operates as an open system that is influenced by both internal and external environments
Takes a dominant approach to relationships with its publics	Takes a cooperative and engagement approach to its relationships with its publics

Source (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002)

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This study adopts Schein's (1992) definition of organisational culture which views culture as a collection of shared beliefs about how an organisation can successfully respond and/or adapt to changing demands in the external environment, as well as beliefs about how to maintain processes that ensure the maintenance of functional relationships within organisations. Organisational culture dictates how the organisation functions and therefore has an impact on how internal communication is implemented. The relationship is hypothesised as follows:

H6: There is a relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.

H0: There is no relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.

2.10 LEADERSHIP AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Leadership has been identified as a crucial mechanism which mediates between people who differ in the way they think and interpret the environment and the way they feel and communicate with each other (Vallaster & Chernatony, 2005:182). Researchers in the field have presented differing definitions of leadership. According to Barrett (in Mmompe, 2010:3) leadership refers to men or women who may not necessarily be Chief Executive Officers who influence others, command others' attention, persuade others to follow them or pursue defined goals. In this study, leadership is inclusive of senior management, managers and supervisors.

The expanding body of knowledge on organisational leadership has led organisations to recognise leadership as not simply a rational or technical activity, but that it also involves the management of people and the development of a sense of community within organisations (Block, 2003; Brown 1992; & Conger, 1993).

Rost (in Block, 2003:318) defines leadership as: "… an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes…". According to Ayub, Manaf, and Hamzah (2014:502), as time and people progress, the

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definition of leadership also changes to adjust with the latest trends in human relationships.

From the discussion above, one can conclude that communication skills are a prerequisite for leadership. Leaders should possess certain communication skills in order to successfully command their followers' attention. Based on the literature, it is also evident that leadership plays a crucial role in the success or failure of internal communication within organisations. Leaders utilise the tools and channels of communication to influence, inspire, motivate and direct followers.

Ayub, *et al.* (2014:502) put forward that leadership is about setting goals and aligning people with the desired direction. They state that future leaders should be able to ensure that the subordinates are treated as members of organisations and that leaders should consistently provide sound leadership in order to guide employee motivation and performance.

The roles of communication in the workplace include controlling what goes on between the employer and employee; motivating the workforce to balance the needs and goals of the organisation, as well as contributing to a better decision-making process (Ayub *et al.,* 2014:503). These authors proclaim that leaders must communicate, and therefore it has become a requirement for any leader to possess the necessary skills to do so.

The effect of leadership on internal communication is evident from the literature. Kennan and Hazleton (2005:315) view the role of leadership as that of cultivating and developing human resources to its full potential in order to maximise benefits for the organisation. This introduces the concept of leadership communication, which is about building relationships between the organisation and its employees. It is in the art of communication that leaders can successfully motivate, influence and inspire followers. Kuye (in Naidoo, 2005: 25) views leadership as an interpersonal influence which is directed through communication towards goal attainment in an organisation. Gibb (in Ayub *et al.* 2014:504) further argues that leaders who can communicate provide a supportive climate which leads to subordinate satisfaction and accuracy in communication.

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2.10.1 Leadership communication

The focus of this study is on communication between leadership, which is represented by managers (supervisors), and employees and therefore the study is rooted in management communication. This study links management communication beyond the normal business information exchange with the concept of employee engagement.

According to Mmope (2010:49), the leadership communication concept encompasses managerial communication and management communication skills. Barrett (in Mmope, 2010:49) mentions that the findings from various studies on how much time managers spend on various activities show that communication occupies 70 to 90 percent of the managers' time every day. These findings highlight the importance of communication skills for managers. Effective leadership depends on effective communication and it is through effective communication that leaders are able to guide, direct, motivate and inspire their subordinates.

For the purpose of this study, Barrett's (2008) leadership communication framework as depicted by Mmope (2010:50) is adopted to depict the importance of leadership communication in organisations. Although this study focuses on internal communication and employee engagement, the three layers of the framework are useful in understanding the importance of leadership communication in achieving employee engagement.

Figure 7: The leadership communication framework
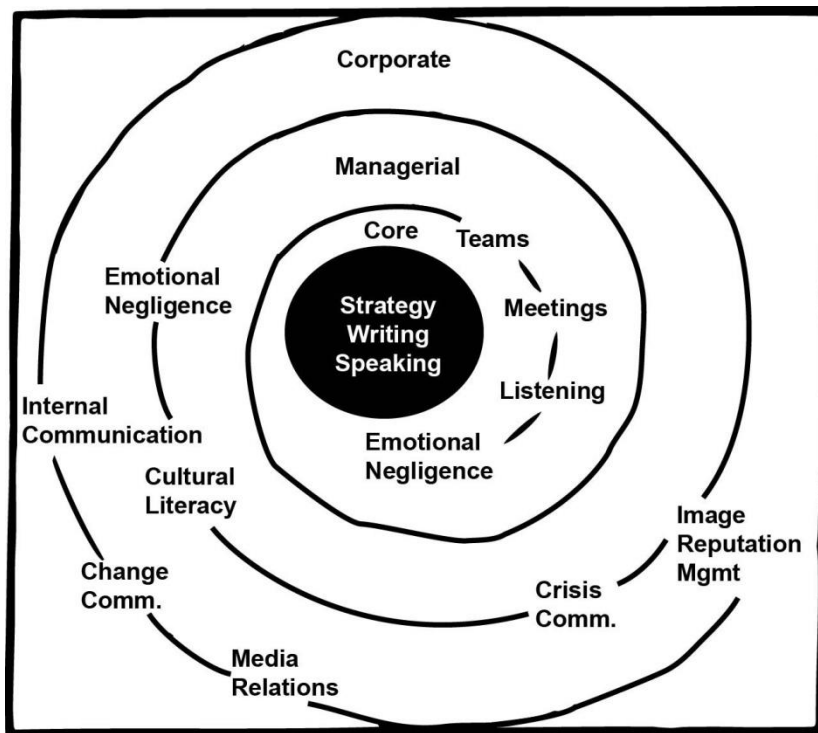
Source: Barrett (in Mmope, 2010)

2.10.2 Participative leadership style

Leaders play an important role in structuring the work environment and providing information and feedback to employees (Somech, 2005:779). Literature indicates that researchers have examined the links between leadership styles and performance (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000:766). Findings of leadership studies demonstrate that the relationship between leadership styles and performance is mediated by the nature of the organisational culture.   Literature reflects that participative leadership has an overwhelming advantage over the contrasting style of directive leadership in organisations and team effectiveness (Somech, 2003; 2005; 2006). On the other hand, Yukl (1999:35) proposes differences based on large number of studies that have been conducted to test the proposition that participative leadership is more effective than other leadership styles such as autocratic and directive styles. The author puts forward that the results were weak and inconsistent.

The aim of this study is to examine the contribution of the communication style of leaders in the achievement of employee engagement. The scope of leadership in this study is

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limited to the participative leadership style. Participative leadership is defined as: "… joint decision making or at least shared influence in decision making by a supervisor and his or her employees…". In defining participative leadership, other authors highlight the benefits of participative leadership to include increase in the quality of the decisions, contribution to the quality of work, increase in the motivation of employees as well as satisfaction (Somech, 2005:778).

Participative leaders are expected to lead by encouraging team members to discover new opportunities and challenges and to learn to cope through sharing knowledge (Druskut & Weeler (in Somech, 2005:780). The relationship is thus hypothesised as follows:

H7: There is a relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H0: There is no relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

2.11 CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Effective internal communication has been considered critical to the achievement of organisational success (Kalla, 2005; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Welch 2012; Yates, 2006). Although these authors agree on the importance of effective internal communication in an organisation, there have been numerous opinions regarding what constitutes effective internal communication (Forssberg & Malm, 2001:26). For internal communication to be considered effective, Katz (in Forssberg & Malm, 2001:26) argues that the following factors have an influence:

- number of people reached by the message;
- the receivers' relationship with each other;
- the type of channel used;
- the type of message sent; and
- whether or not the receiver needs to respond to the message.

Erikson (in Forssberg & Malm, 2001:26) proposes a different set of criteria that determines whether or not internal communication is effective. Internal communication

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must, for example, be concrete in order for the receiver to understand the information. As indicated by the transactional model of communication, the coding process is affected by elements such as culture, background, language and frame of reference, therefore concrete communication minimises the level of misinterpretation.

Secondly, for internal communication to be effective, it must be concentrated and coordinated. For communication to convey a message, it has to focus on the most important aspects of the information and should be coordinated. Coordination according to Erikson (in Forssberg & Malm, 2001:26) means that managers need to be able to communicate a message to co-workers in an identical manner. Thirdly, effective internal communication must be consequent and continuously transmitted over time. Continuous communication enhances trustworthiness of information. Lastly, information transmitted must strive to create contacts leading to a dialogue.

Although creation of dialogue is important, Erikson (in Forssberg & Malm, 2001:27) argues that it is dependent on the type of information being conveyed. The author uses an example that, when facts are transmitted, it is less important to create a dialogue, unless communication takes place between co-workers about operational matters that must be resolved.

2.12   CONCLUSION

This Chapter expounded on the concept of internal communication and its impact on organisational effectiveness and success. The theories that form the basis of the study were discussed in detail in the theoretical framework (stakeholder theory, social exchange theory and relationship management theory).

The stakeholder approach emphasises the importance of the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and identified stakeholders. As an internal stakeholder in an organisation, employees' rights and expectations deserve respect and consideration. The stakeholder approach furthermore calls for internal communication that takes into consideration the needs and expectations of both the organisation and its employees.

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Relationship management theory on the other hand focuses on managing organisation-public relationships to generate benefits for organisations and publics alike. The effectiveness and ability of an organisation to achieve its strategic goals is also affected by relationships with key stakeholders, in this case, employees. From this perspective, two-way symmetrical communication, which this study aligns with, allows for the creation of mutually beneficial relationships, which give employees an opportunity to participate in the communication process.

Social exchange theory is said to be one of the most influential conceptual paradigms that enables understanding of workplace behaviour. From this perspective, leadership in the organisation utilises internal communication to influence the behaviour of employees. This theory supports a series of interactions between the organisation and employees in order to negotiate meaning and understanding. Internal communication is also a key tool in ensuring continued and successful interactions which lead to common meaning and understanding.

Critical factors influencing the internal communication environment within organisations such as organisational culture, organisational structure, and leadership were discussed as part of the literature review to demonstrate their impact. This Chapter reviewed the different leadership styles that promote or hinder a positive internal communication climate.

Culture in an organisation provides context for internal communication activities, as it dictates how the organisation operates. The channels used by internal communication and the manner in which messages and information are conveyed within an organisation are also dictated by organisational culture to some extent.

Organisational structure allows the leadership of the organisation to exercise control over what information is conveyed, to whom, and when. Depending on the type of structure, certain controls are put in place to facilitate information dissemination. In the literature reviewed, it is evident that the structure determines the flow of internal communication within an organisation.

Leadership in organisations is furthermore considered as a mediator between the organisation and its employees. Leaders are the conduit through which certain information and messages are conveyed. The literature reviewed argues that leaders should possess communication skills, as they are a crucial part of the communication process.

The factors influencing internal communication determine the extent of internal communication's effectiveness or lack thereof. These factors in turn determine the level of impact that internal communication has on employee engagement.

CHAPTER 3

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

3.1   INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a broad concept that involves human resource management. According to Markos & Sridevi (2010:89), employee engagement is built on the foundation of earlier concepts, such as job satisfaction, employee commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Lewis, Thomas and Bradley (2012:25) furthermore state that employee engagement has received great attention in management and human resource management publications in the recent years. What distinguishes employee engagement from other related concepts is its emphasis on the two-way relationship between employer and employee (Markos & Sridevi, 2010:90). Employee engagement places attention on employees and their needs and expectations, which is in line with the stakeholder approach proposed by this study. One way this two-way relationship can be achieved is through effective internal communication.

According to Welch (2011:328), the concept of employee engagement has become a matter of concern for leaders and managers in organisations globally; and has been recognised as a critical element influencing and affecting the organisation's effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness.   Anitha (2013:310) puts forward that employee engagement gained the attention of managers, consultants and policy makers during the period 1990 to 2005; and later academics expressed interest in the concept only from 2006.

Although employee engagement has become a popular term in organisations, there has been concerns that it may simply be a new label repackaged into an old construct such as organisational commitment (Welch, 2011:336). Employee engagement has been likened to organisational citizenship behaviour, role expansion, pro-active behaviour, demonstration of personal initiative (Saks, 2008), job involvement (Lawler & Hall, 1970), and commitment to the organisation (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982).   Schmidt (in Itam

& Singh, 2012:56) views employee engagement as a modernised version of job satisfaction which is part of employee retention. Harter (in Itam & Singh, 2012:56) sees employee engagement as an element of a broader category of ideas known as "well-being at work" which embraces emotional and cognitive elements. Employee engagement is based on these varying views from which Saks (2008:40) argues that it represents "old wine in a new bottle". Anitha (2014:320) state that employee engagement has been linked to concepts such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational citizenship behaviour.

Traditionally, organisations have relied on financial measure to evaluate their performance, but Luthans and Peterson (2001:376) argue that human-oriented measures such as employee attitudes, traits, and perception have become important prognosticators of employee behaviour and performance. According to Little and Little (2006:111), previous studies have shown a statistical relationship between employee engagement and productivity, profitability, employee retention, safety, and customer satisfaction.

In order to understand the contribution of internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement, this Chapter presents literature reviewed in relation to employee engagement. Literature presented in this Chapter expounds on the evolution of employee engagement; the definition(s) of the concept, the model of engagement, the dimensions, strategies, as well as the drivers of employee engagement. This Chapter further looks at factors that mediate internal communication and employee engagement. The Chapter concludes with a discussion on the contribution of leadership and organisational culture in the achievement of employee engagement.

3.2   THE CONCEPT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

As indicated above, there has been a concern about whether or not the term employee engagement is just a new name for existing constructs such as organisational commitment, organisational citizen behaviour and job involvement (Karanges, 2014; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Bedarkar and Pandita (2014:107) argue that although the concept of employee engagement continues to attract the attention of scholars, critical

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academic literature on the subject is still scant. They state that since employee engagement studies are undertaken under different contexts, this has resulted in the absence of a universal and unanimous definition and measurement of the concept.

Literature on employee engagement reveals that the emotional well-being of employees is as critical as the skills, experience and competence required for a successful organisation. (2010:60) states that employee engagement has been found to be an essential management intervention to ensure a connection between the organisation and its employees. As such, the achievement of employee engagement leads to emotionally and mentally committed employees who exert extra effort for the achievement of organisational goals.

In Chapter 2, internal communication was discussed in terms of how it has evolved to propose two-way communication strategies and feedback between the organisation and its employees. While internal communication originated from a communication perspective; employee engagement has its focus on employee needs and expectations in organisations. Mmope (2010:61) asserts that increasingly organisations are exploring the concept of employee engagement to ensure that employees reach the state of being emotionally and intellectually connected to the organisation they work for.

3.2.1 Evolution of employee engagement

Employee engagement is becoming more recognised in social research yet there is paucity with regard to its theoretical underpinning. In congruence, Albrecht (2010), Saks (2006), Shuck and Wollard (2011) and Welch (2011) assert that academic research is lacking on employee engagement has led to differing understandings of the concept. Literature revealed alternative terms that are used interchangeably to refer to employee engagement. The terms include: personal engagement (Kahn, 1990); work engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004); and job engagement (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). This study adopts the term employee engagement, which refers to the positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment in employees.

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Literature on employee engagement resulted in the identification of various stages in the evolution of the concept of employee engagement. (Welch, 2011:329-335). The author conceptualised these stages as: "… a series of waves, namely; *pre-wave, wave 1, wave 2 and wave 3"*. These series of waves give insight into how the concept of employee engagement has evolved over the years. Within each wave, various authors express their understanding of the definition of the concept of employee engagement.

Pre-wave stage from 1966 to 1990 was characterised by an emphasis on a general need for employees to engage with their work and organisations. During this stage Katz and Kahn (in Welch, 2011:329) identified various behaviours that are needed to achieve organisational effectiveness.

The second stage, known as **wave 1**, occurred between 1990 and 1999 which attracted the interest of both practitioners and academics. During this stage, Kahn (1990:694) introduced personal engagement and defined it as the harnessing of organisational members' selves to their work roles. He identified three psychological conditions of engagement, namely: meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Psychological meaningfulness refers to a feeling that an employee will gain something. Psychological safety is a feeling that there would be no negative consequences to personal image or status. Lastly, psychological availability refers to a feeling that one has the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage in the situation (Kahn, 1990: 703-714).

During **wave 2**, practitioners and academics started publishing work on employee engagement, linking it to high business performance (Welch, 2011:332-333). Wave 2 was characterised by an increased interest from both practitioners and academics. It is during this wave that the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) was developed to measure employee perceptions of work characteristics. Employee engagement in this wave was defined as a combination of cognitive and emotional antecedent variables in the workplace. During this wave, employee engagement was also defined as a range of work elements which together, can be called employee engagement. Further work in this wave supported Kahn's (1990) viewpoint that the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability are positively related to engagement (Welch, 2011:333).

During **wave 3**, which occurred between 2006 and 2010, academics' interest increased tremendously and resulted in the publication of two handbooks on employee engagement. Authors in this wave, such as Saks (2006), concurred with Kahn's (1990) viewpoint that employee engagement is made up of three elements, namely: cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement. In his work, Saks (2006:608) takes the concept of employee engagement further by differentiating between job engagement and organisational engagement, which are embodied by the employee engagement concept.

The attention afforded to employee engagement during this wave resulted in different authors publishing books, and practitioners conducting studies summarising employee engagement as a psychological state of being passionate for work (Luthans & Peterson, 2001; May, Gilson & Harter, 2004; Truss, Soane, Edward, Wisdom, Kroll & Burnett, 2006). Their work supported Kahn's (1990) view that employee engagement consists of three dimensions: emotional, cognitive, and physical engagement. According to the authors, emotional engagement is concerned with being emotionally involved with one's work; while cognitive engagement is concerned with intellectual or mental focus while at work; and physical engagement focuses on the willingness to go the extra mile for the organisation (Welch, 2011:334).

3.2.2 Defining employee engagement

Given the extensive evolution of the concept of employee engagement presented above, it is not surprising that various authors present different definitions of employee engagement. As mentioned above, Markos and Sridevi (2010:90) argue that since its introduction, there has not been a solitary definition of employee engagement among authors in the field of human resource management. To validate their argument, they cite different definitions offered by three well-known research organisations in the field of human resources:

> *Employee engagement is defined by Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003) as employees' willingness and ability to help their organisation succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis (Markos & Sridevi, 2010:90).*

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Gallup organisation on the other hand, defined employee engagement as the involvement with and enthusiasm for work. Gallup likens employee engagement to a positive employees' emotional attachment and employees' commitment to the organisation they work for (Maros & Sridevi, 2010:90).

The Institute of Employment Studies in defining employee engagement emphasised the importance of two-way relationship between the organisation and employee pointing out that both parties have roles to play (Markos & Sridevi, 2010:91).

Gruman and Saks (2011:125) refer to the absence of a universal definition of employee engagement as a 'controversy'. Macey and Schneider (in Gruman & Saks, 2011:125) on the other hand note the various definitions of the concept, but focus on highlighting the common elements in the numerous definitions. These authors argue that the various definitions all confirm that employee engagement is desirable; has an organisational purpose; and has both psychological and behavioural facets.

Table 7 below provides a summary of the various definitions offered by different authors and researchers in an attempt to come up with a universal definition for the employee engagement concept.

Table 7: Summary of definitions of employee engagement

Author(s)	Engagement concepts	Definition
Katz & Kahn (1996:388)	Engage in general	"… engage in occasional innovative and cooperative behavior beyond the requirements of the role but in the service of organizational objectives…".
Kahn (1990:694; 1992)	Personal engagement	"… the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance…". Identified three psychological conditions that are necessary for engagement: meaningfulness, safety and availability.
Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001:416)	Job engagement	"… engagement is characterized by energy, involvement and efficacy…"

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Author(s)	Engagement concepts	Definition
Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:295)	Job engagement	"… a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigor, dedication, and absorption…"
Hewitt Associates LLC (2004:2)	Employee engagement	"… the state in which individuals are emotionally and intellectually committed to the organization or group, as measured by three primary behaviours: Say – the employee consistently speaks positively about the organisation to co-workers and refers potential employees and customers; Stay – the employee has an intense desire to be a member of the organisation, despite opportunities elsewhere; and Strive – the employee exerts extra effort and exhibits behaviours that contribute to business success…".
Robinson *et al.* 2004:ix)	Employee engagement	"… a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee…".
Macey and Schneider (2008:23-24)	Employee engagement	"… a complex nomological network encompassing trait, state, and behavioural constructs, as well as the work and organizational conditions that might facilitate state and behavioural engagement…".
Schaufeli and Bakker (2010:22)	Work engagement	"… work engagement is the psychological state that accompanies the behavioural investment of personal energy…".
Albrecht (2010:5)	Employee engagement	"… employee engagement is a positive work-related psychological state characterised by a genuine willingness to contribute to organizational success…".

Source: Welch (2011)

It is evident from the summary provided above that various terms are used to refer to employee engagement, such as: positive attitude, willingness, commitment,

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psychological state, energy, and involvement. The definitions presented in the Table above use various terms in a quest to reach a common definition of employee engagement. The terms include: engagement in general, personal engagement, employee engagement, organisation engagement; work engagement, and job engagement. For the purpose of this study the focus is on three levels of engagement, namely: personal (individual) engagement, work engagement, as well as employee engagement.

Kahn (in Shuck & Wollard, 2010: 96), who is considered as one of the first authors to conceptualise employee engagement, defined employee engagement as: "… the simultaneous employment of and expression of a person's *'preferred self'* in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performance". Kahn (1990:700) identified three psychological conditions necessary for engagement during role performance, namely: physical, cognitive, and emotional (in Welch, 2011:332).

Maslach, Schmidt, and Hayes (in Shuck & Wollard, 2010:96) furthermore define employee engagement as a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment in employees that is characterised by high levels of activation and pleasure. This definition emphasises the positive state that employee engagement brings about during role performance. According to this definition, engaged employees show high level activeness and display joy in performing their duties.

In defining employee engagement, Robinson *et al.* (in Welch, 2011:333) define it as: "… a positive employee attitude towards the organisation and its values, involving awareness of business context and work to improve job and organisational effectiveness…". These authors emphasise the point that employee engagement is a two-way relationship between employer and employee. In an attempt to understand employee engagement, Devi (2009:3) supports this definition, stating that organisations should strive to develop and nurture engagement through the use of a two-way relationships approach. In congruence, Andrew and Sofian (2012:499) assert that employee engagement is crucial for any organisation, as engaged employees contribute to the bottom line of an organisation. In the context of this study (public sector), the assumption is that engaged

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employees would contribute to improved service delivery, and would be committed to the department as the employer.

In line with Kahn's (1990) model, which identifies the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability, Luthans and Peterson; and May, Gilson and Harter (in Welch, 2011:334), summarise employee engagement as a psychological state characterised by a 'passion for work'. In his contribution towards the Handbook of Employee Engagement, Kahn states that employee engagement is a complex and dynamic matter which is subject to fluctuation (Albrecht, 2010:22). His contribution further suggests that employee engagement should be a concern for communication scholars and practitioners stating that employee engagement may be affected by management interventions such as internal communication (Welch, 2011:335).

From the literature reviewed, employee engagement is understood to refer to a mechanism through which a two-way relationship between employer and employee is developed and nurtured. It is symbolised by the cognitive, emotional and physical involvement of the individual employee during role performance. Employee engagement is furthermore achieved when employees have a positive attitude about the organisation they work for, understand and align themselves with its values, and exert extra effort towards the achievement of organisational objectives. This study aligns itself with Welch's (2011:335) definition of employee engagement as cognitive, emotional and physical role performance characterised by absorption, dedication and vigour which is dependent on the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability.

Previous authors such as Newman, Harrison, Wefald and Downey (in Grunman & Saks, 2011:126) state that there has been substantial overlap and redundancy between engagement and other constructs, such as job satisfaction. This has brought about criticism toward the research around the concept of employee engagement. Masson, Royal, Agnew and Fine (in Grunman & Saks, 2011:126) criticise the research around employee engagement for not coming up with a consistent definition and measurement.

Various authors have defined employee engagement as an attitude, a psychological state, a motivational state or a personality trait. This study also aligns itself with Macey and Schneider's (2008:23-24) definition of employee engagement, which sees employee

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engagement as a multifaceted network covering trait, states and behavioural constructs. According to these authors, employee engagement is: "… a complex nomological network encompassing trait, state, and behavioural constructs as well as the work and organizational conditions that might facilitate state and behavioural engagement…" (Welch, 2011:335).

Macey and Schneider's (2008) definition encompasses all the elements used by various authors to define employee engagement. Importantly, this definition recognises organisational conditions that affect employee engagement.

3.3   ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Kahn (1990:69) states that people occupy roles at work wherein they use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively and emotionally, in performing their work roles. Engagement in the workplace takes place at different levels. These levels of engagement are identified by Simpson (2009:1018) as *personal engagement*, *work engagement,* and *organisational engagement*.

3.3.1   Personal engagement

Personal engagement is the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviours that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active, full role performances (Kahn, 1990:700). In introducing personal engagement, Kahn (1990) argues that people use varying degrees of their selves to be physically, cognitively, and emotionally present during role performance. The author asserts that employee engagement differs from other employee role constructs such as job involvement and commitment to organisations or intrinsic motivation. Kahn's argument for conceptualising personal engagement was based on the realisation that the previous concepts, such as job involvement, organisational commitment, and intrinsic motivation exist at a distance from the day-to-day process of experiencing and behaving within particular work situations (in Luthans & Peterson, 2001:377).

Personal engagement is defined as those "behaviours by which people bring in or leave out their personal selves during work role performances" (Kahn, 1990:694). Employees who are personally engaged cognitively and emotionally are not only more satisfied but they are also more productive (Luthans & Peterson, 2001:378). Engagement at a personal level is demonstrated by expressing oneself physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances (Simpson, 2009:1018). As mentioned above, Kahn (1990) states that there are three psychological conditions by which people are personally engaged or disengaged in the workplace, namely; meaningfulness, safety, and availability. The author argues that these individual conditions predict personal engagement. Employees who are personally engaged keep their selves within a role, without sacrificing one for the other. People choose their behaviours during role performances.

Meaningfulness refers to a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments for self-given in their work; while safety refers to the ability to show one's self without fear of negative consequences to one's self-image or status at work; and availability refers to the sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources needed for investing oneself in the role performance (Simpson, 2009:1018-1019). Gruman and Saks (2011:126) state that employees who find meaningfulness at work are those that feel worthwhile, valuable, and that they matter.

Safety on the other hand is concerned with whether employees feel safe enough to bring in oneself without fear of victimisation or damage. It is associated with reliable and predictable social environments. Availability is associated with the physical, emotional, and psychological resources that employees bring to role performance. Kahn (1990) further states that when an individual finds meaning, feels safe, and has the necessary external and internal resources in their work role, personal engagement will result and the individual is said to be "fully present" in role performance.

3.3.2 Work engagement

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:295) conceptualised the concept of job (work) engagement and defined it as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by

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vigour, dedication, and absorption. This state of engagement, according to these authors, refers to: "… a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual or behaviour."

Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. It includes willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication on the other hand refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Lastly, absorption is characterised by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching oneself from work.

Work engagement is influenced by more than bringing in oneself to role performance. Kahn (1990:704-707) identified task characteristics, roles and work interactions as some of the factors that impact on work engagement. Whether an employee feels that his or her job is sufficiently challenging or not, whether they have autonomy, and given space to be creative, influence their work engagement. How employees see their roles in terms of providing attractive identities or how the roles fit with a preferred self-image, as well as the status and influence of the roles, influence the level of engagement. Work interactions refer to those interpersonal interactions that yield promotion of dignity and give an individual a sense of belonging.

Studies conducted around work engagement concluded that certain organisational factors were found to significantly predict work engagement (Simpson, 2009:1020).

3.3.3 Organisational engagement

Engagement at an organisational level refers to the extent to which workers are committed to and support the organisation in the achievement of strategic goals. As indicated in Chapter 1, organisational commitment is characterised by a psychological state that demonstrates employee's relationship with the organisation, which has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership with the organisation (Welch, 2011:337). Employees who are engaged at an organisational level are loyal and

dedicated to the organisation they work for and tend to stay longer in the employment of said organisation.

Macey and Schneider (2008:8) define commitment as a psychological state of attachment or a binding force between an individual and the organisation. Employees engaged at organisational level feel a sense of belonging, personal meaning and of 'being part of the family'.

Organisational engagement further refers to the level of employee commitment and loyalty to their organisation (Saks, 2006:601). Employees who are engaged at organisational level demonstrate a high level of commitment and express their intention to remain in the organisation. According to Saks (2006:602), organisational commitment refers to a person's attitude and attachment toward their organisation. Organisational engagement takes place when employees are satisfied with their work environment and conditions. Employees who perceive their organisation and direct supervisor to care and support them, tend to be committed and attached to the organisation (Saks, 2006:605).

3.4   MODEL OF ENGAGEMENT

In an attempt to resolve the issues of a consistent definition and measurement of employee engagement, some authors have conceptualised a model to help understand and measure employee engagement (Albrecht, 2010; Andrew & Sofian, 2012).

The employee engagement conceptual model presented in Figure 8 below, which is adapted from Andrew and Sofian (2012: 501) and Albrecht (2010:33), is adopted for this study. The model was adapted to the research phenomena at hand, as well as the context of the study. The model depicts factors that drive employee engagement; employee engagement behaviours, as well as the outcomes of employee engagement for both organisation and individual employees.

Figure 8: Model of engagement

Factors driving engagement	State of engagement	Engagement-driven behaviours	Organisational outcomes
Internal communication Leadership style Organisational culture	Personal engagement Work engagement Organisational engagement	Commitment Extra-role Advocacy Ambassadorship	Committed employees Improved service delivery Improved staff morale

Personal dispositions
Personality/Traits
Motivation

Personal outcomes
Job satisfaction
Career progression

Source: Adapted from Albrecht (2010) and Andrew & Sofian (2012)

3.4.1 Factors driving engagement

Identification of factors that lead to or drive engagement in the workplace has been the concern of many researchers. Authors have identified various factors influencing employee engagement. These include but are not limited to: workplace attributes (Towers Perrin Talent report, 2003); leadership, job satisfaction, relationships at work, total reward, recognition, communication and co-operation (Institute of Employment Studies, 2005); communication with opportunity for feedback (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2006); as well as organisational culture and organisational commitment (Bhatla, 2011).

Devi (2009:3) argues that employee engagement is driven by certain elements in both the job role and organisation, such as corporate cultures, pleasant working conditions, considerate treatment of employees, growth opportunities, and skills enhancement. Welch (2008:489) states that there are many factors that lead to employee engagement, and internal communication is one of them. The focus of this study is on how internal communication drives or influences the achievement of employee engagement. In

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discussing the influence of internal communication, the model includes certain workplace elements such as leadership style and organisational culture. Fleck and Inceoglu (in Albrecht, 2010:33) state that the work environment is expected to play a critical role in determining the employees' state of engagement. In congruence, Hochschild (in Kahn, 1999:694) assert that it is organisational contexts that enhance or undermine people's motivation and sense of meaning at work.

According to Fleck and Inceouglu (in Albrecht, 2010:40), employee engagement is driven by how an employee perceives his or her job role fit, as well as how the employee perceives his or her personal fit with the organisation.

In line with the topic of the study, Fleck and Inceoglu (in Albrecht, 2010:34) identify effective communication as one of the environmental characteristics that drives engagement in the workplace. In congruence to Devi's (2009:3) view of pleasant working conditions contributing to employee engagement, Fleck and Inceoglu (in Albrecht, 2010:34) highlight a supportive environment and work setting as part of job-level features that contribute to employee engagement. Robinson *et al.* (in Mamdoo, 2012:45) highlight among others; communication, training and development, as well as importance and a feeling of fair treatment as key factors influencing employee engagement. Furthermore, Welch (2011:336) contends that internal corporate communication represents one of the organisational conditions that facilitates engagement in the workplace.

There are many factors identified by Robinson *et al.* (2004) and other authors as those that must exist in an organisation for employee engagement to be achieved. Although the study investigates the role of internal communication in achieving employee engagement; organisational culture and leadership styles are also considered as workplace contextual elements contributing to employee engagement.

3.4.2 State of engagement

The state of engagement refers to the extent to which employees are engaged and is demonstrated by positive behaviours such as vigour, dedication and absorption. In an attempt to explain the state of engagement, Fleck and Inceouglu (in :35, 2010) adopt

Kahn's (1990) view which stipulates that in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Fleck and Inceouglu (in Albrecht, 2010:34) affirm that when employees are engaged, they apply energy and enthusiasm and become absorbed when conducting their work. Similarly, Devi (2009:3) states that engaged employees put in discretionary effort, and extra-role into their work and ultimately play an advocacy role for the organisation they work for.

Fleck and Inceouglu (in Albrecht, 2010:35), assert that during the state of engagement, employees act out engagement-driven behaviours during role performance. Devi (2009:3) defines engaged employees as those that are willing and able to contribute to company success. An engaged employee is likely to exert a lot of effort when conducting his or her core work and approach their work with willingness and effort aimed at investing in their work (:33, 2010). Harley, Lee and Robinson (in Hayase, 2009:6) state that engaged employees are motivated, self-improving and productive, while understanding and aligning themselves with their organisational culture and business strategy.

According to Devi (2009:3), engaged employees are willing to perform beyond the requirement of their job in the form of extra time, brain power or energy. Lastly, Fleck and Inceoglu (in Albrecht, 2010:39) assert that engaged employees stretch beyond activities within the organisation. These employees go to an extent of being ambassadors who positively advocate for the organisation when interacting with external people. Such employees promote the organisation as a trustworthy potential business partner or potential employer.

Based on the above discussion, this study argues that, for employees to reach this state of engagement, internal communication can be considered as an influencing factor in the achievement of employee engagement. Internal communication alone is not the panacea for the achievement of employee engagement. A positive communication climate coupled with participative leadership style, as well as a participative organisation culture also provide an enabling environment for employee engagement to be achieved.

3.4.3 Outcomes of engagement

Employee engagement has been linked to increased employee productivity, and greater employee performance in organisations (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; and Welch, 2008). Based on research conducted by other scholars, Karanges (2014) provides a summary of engagement outcomes and includes job enrichment, job satisfaction and commitment; organisational effectiveness; as well as positive organisational performance. From a perspective of these outcomes, employee engagement has benefits for both the organisation and individual employee.

3.4.4 Organisational outcomes

Markos and Sridevi (2010:92) argue that organisations should invest in employee engagement, as it: "… is interwoven significantly with important business outcomes...". These authors further state that studies have found positive relationships between employee engagement and organisational performance outcomes such as: employee retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty and safety. In congruence, Fleck and Inceoglu (in Albrecht, 2010:33) confirm profit, low staff turnover, and customer satisfaction as some of the organisational outcomes from engagement.

Another outcome associated with employee engagement is organisational commitment. According to Allen and Meyer (in Albrecht, 2010: 38) organisational commitment refers to a psychological state that characterises the employee's relationship with the organisation and has implications for an employee's decision to continue or discontinue his or her services with the organisation.

In the context of this study, which is the public sector, the envisaged organisational engagement outcomes are organisational commitment, improved service delivery, and improved staff morale. Engaged employees, as indicated earlier, demonstrate loyalty towards the organisation and strive to support the achievement of its strategic goals. Sias (2005:375) states that informed employees are fully committed to a particular job, intellectually and emotionally, by employing discretionary effort. Employees who provide extra effort to role performance often demonstrate personal traits such as a positive

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attitude towards the job, belief in and identification with the organisation (Harley, Lee & Robinson, 2005:24).

Although the organisation being studied is a government institution (not-profit making), employee engagement still remains crucial for management and it contributes to customer satisfaction, which in turn reduces service delivery protests. This according to Mthethwa (2012:107), are the main challenges facing public service organisations.

3.4.5   Personal outcomes

According to Fleck and Inceouglu's (in Albrecht, 2010:33) model, personal engagement outcomes include job satisfaction and career progression. Job satisfaction is defined by Locke and Henne (in Little & Little, 2006:115) as a pleasurable state resulting from the appraisal of one's job. Fleck and Inceouglu (in Albrecht, 2010:33) also argue that when employees are frequently engaged, they display positive behaviours that are likely to lead to a high level of job satisfaction and affective well-being. This, they argue, leads to more rapid career progression.

The engagement model claims that all the other elements of engagement are likely to be influenced by personal dispositions such as personality and motivation. According to Fleck and Inceouglu (in Albrecht, 2010:40) there is evidence in research that personal disposition constructs play a key role in understanding behavioural and affective outcomes such as effort, contextual performance, job satisfaction and well-being.

3.5   WHAT DRIVES EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

One of the key questions that organisations are constantly faced with, is identifying what drives engagement in the workplace. The globalisation and the transformations taking place in the workplace have led organisations to be more concerned about their competitiveness for survival in the market. Anitha (2013:310) states that there are various factors that facilitate conditions of employee engagement in general.

3.5.1 Drivers of employee engagement

According to Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter (2011:5), modern-day organisations require employees who are psychologically connected to their work; who are willing and able to invest themselves fully in the performance of their roles; and who are proactive and committed to high quality performance standards. These authors assert that this has led to an increase in scientific studies on engagement. Bakker *et al.* (2011:6) put forward that research studies have consistently identified job resources and personal resources as facilitators of engagement in the workplace.

Bakker and Demerouti (in Bakker *et* al., 2011:6) state that job resources include job demands; being functional in achieving work goals; or stimulating personal growth. Job resources could represent the support from colleagues and or the supervisor; self-sufficiency; and skills variety. Authors such as van den Broeck, Vansteenkitse, de Witte and Lens (in Bakker *et al.,* 2011:6) believe that job resources play a critical motivational role as they fulfil basic human needs. Skills variety fosters learning which increases job competence, while social support satisfies the need for self-sufficiency and the need to belong. They argue for work environments that provide resources and, foster willingness to dedicate one's efforts and abilities to the work task. A supportive supervisor for example, increases the likelihood of being successful in achieving one's work role (Bakker *et al.*, 2011:13-14).

According to Bakker *et al.* (2011:6), several studies on the motivational role of job resources showed a positive relationship between job resources and work engagement. In congruence to this assertion, Devi (2009:3-4) states that workplace conditions drive engagement or disengagement in the workplace.

From this perspective, personal resources, also known as psychological capital, can predict work engagement. Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (in Bakker *et al.*, 2011:7) define psychological capital as an individual's state of development. This state of development is characterised by self-efficacy, optimism, perseverance and hope, as well as resilience. Employees demonstrate psychological capital by having confidence to put in the necessary effort to succeed, making a positive attribution, persevering, and making the

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necessary changes towards the future, as well as having the resilience to always bounce back when challenges are encountered.

In a study conducted in 2007, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, and Schaufeli examined self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism as elements that predict engagement in the workplace. The findings of the study indicated that engaged employees are highly confident; believe they are able to meet demands they face; and believe that they will generally experience good outcomes in life. Bakker *et al,* (2011:6) further state that: "…job resources and personal resources are instrumental for the achievement of work-related goals and they satisfy basic psychological needs". These authors believe that work environments that are rich in resources foster engagement.

3.5.2 Determinants of employee engagement

Anitha's (2014) work on what determines employee engagement, reveals various factors that contribute to employee engagement. Although this study focuses on the contribution of internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement, Anitha's (2014) summary of its determinants provide a fuller picture of the concept of employee engagement. Anitha (2014:310-313) identified and tested seven factors that were found to be valid determinants of employee engagement:

- Work environment
- Leadership
- Team and co-worker relationship
- Training and career development
- Compensation or remuneration
- Organisational polies, procedures, structures and systems
- Workplace well-being

These factors are discussed below:

Work environment refers to the various aspects of organisational context. According to Anitha (2014:311), work environment was found to be one of the significant determinants of the level of engagement among employees. Providing a supportive work environment

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and displaying concern for employees results in employees having a sense of worth and belonging. In a supportive work environment, employees' concerns and needs are taken into consideration, and employees are encouraged to voice their opinions and are encouraged to develop new skills.

Leadership in an organisation serves to mediate between the organisation and its employees. Anitha (201:311) found leadership to be the second most fundamental factor that informs employee engagement. The author puts forward that employee engagement takes place when leaders inspire employees.   When employees are inspired, they experience work as important and meaningful, which results in higher levels of engagement. In measuring the impact of leadership, Anitha (2014:311) utilised indicators of effective leadership and perceived supervisor support.   In this study, leadership is considered in terms of leadership styles and leadership communication towards the achievement of employee engagement.

Team and co-worker relationship emphasises the interpersonal harmony aspect of employee engagement. In line with Kahn's (1990) view, supportive and trusting interpersonal relations and a supportive team, promote employee engagement. Kahn (in Anitha, 2014:311) found that supportive environments allow employees to experiment and come up with innovative solutions.

Training and career development improve service accuracy, which in turn results in improved service performance and employee engagement (Anitha, 2014:312).   Anitha (2014) argues that training and development builds confidence in employees and motivates them to be more engaged in their role performance.

Compensation or remuneration is an imperative determinant of employee engagement (Anitha, 2014:312). According to the author, compensation involves both financial and non-financial rewards that motivate employees to achieve more. In congruence, Saks and Rothman (2006) found that recognition and rewards are significant antecedents of employee engagement.

Anitha's (2014:312) study also found that **organisational policies, procedures, structures and systems** determine the extent to which employees are engaged in an

organisation. This author aligns with the argument that organisation's flexible work-life policies have a notable positive impact on employee engagement.

According to the studies conducted by Gallup, **workplace wellbeing** is a holistic measure that enhances employee engagement. It defines wellbeing as 'all the things that are important to how we think about and experience our lives'. Senior management that is interested in the wellbeing of employees, stand a better chance of enhancing employee engagement.

The factors discussed above have been found to determine the levels of employee engagement. In addition to these factors, this study focuses on internal communication as a determinant of employee engagement. As discussed in Chapter 2, various studies have identified internal communication as a contributing factor to the achievement of employee engagement.

3.6   STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

According to Bakker *et al.* (2011) organisations are increasingly becoming interested in how to develop engagement in employees. Schaufeli and Salanova (in Bakker *et al.*, 2011:20) classify engagement interventions in terms of organisational, job, and individual levels. The concept of employee engagement has been said to contribute to organisational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness; resulting in it gaining more attention from academics and human resource practitioners (Welch, 2011:328). Based on this statement, it can be assumed, that since employee engagement is important to organisational effectiveness, leadership in organisations should be concerned about how to enhance employee engagement for better organisational outcomes.

Schaufeli and Salanova (in Albrecht, 2010:407) address the issue of interventions that organisations should put in place to enhance employee engagement. They identify five organisational engagement interventions, namely; (a) assessing and evaluating employees; (b) designing and changing workplaces; (c) enhancing transformational leadership; (d) work training; and (e) career management (Albrecht, 2010:407).

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Markos and Sridevi (2010:93-94) extend the employee engagement strategies list to ten. According to these authors, employee engagement should start on day one of employment. They cite orientation programs as critical points at which new recruits should be given general information about the organisational mission, vision, policies, as well as job-specific information. These authors state that employee engagement requires leadership commitment that should establish a clear mission, vision and values. They argue that unless leadership is committed, employee engagement will never move beyond just a 'human resource thing'. Bakker *et al.* (2011:13-14) assert that for employee engagement to work, it requires senior leadership that acknowledges engagement as a core value. These authors state that leaders have a critical role to play in fostering engagement among employees.

Important to this study, Markos and Sridevi (2010:93) list two-way communication as one of the strategies through which organisations can enhance employee engagement. They argue that employees should not be treated as sets of pots into which ideas are poured without giving them a chance to have a say on matters that concern their job and well-being. In congruence, Lockwood (2007:5) states that clear, consistent and honest communication is an important management tool for the achievement of employee engagement in organisations.

In addition to two-way communication, Markos and Sridevi (2010:93) urge organisations to put in place a strong feedback system wherein employees are given feedback about their performance. They maintain that systems such as performance management review hold both managers and employees accountable for their level of engagement. Employees should be given an opportunity to provide management with feedback on how they feel about their jobs. During performance reviews, managers should work out both **financial and non-**financial incentives for employees who show more engagement in their job. These incentives include more pay, recognition and praise. As a way of reward and recognition, Markos and Sridevi (2010:94) urge organisations to focus on top-performing employees in order to reduce staff turnover.

Satisfactory opportunities for development and advancement is, according Markos and Sridevi (2010:93), another strategy for achieving employee engagement. They state that employees should be given more job autonomy to improve their engagement. These

authors further state that coupled with advancement, employees should be given appropriate training to help them update their knowledge and skills. According to Bakker *et al.* (2011:21), programmes aimed at increasing employee engagement should focus on building personal resources through the provision of training, coaching and development support. Appropriate training in turn increases their confidence, leading to employees working with minimal supervision.

For employees to be more engaged in their jobs, Markos and Sridevi (2010:93) assert that they should be provided with the relevant resources and equipment they need to do their jobs. These resources include physical, material, financial and information resources in order to do their job. Lastly, Markos and Sridevi (2010:94) assert that organisations should strive to build a distinctive corporate culture which promotes alignment of goals and values of managers across all work sections. According to these authors, organisations should build a culture of mutual respect for both managers and employees. A culture that promotes participation of both management and employees in decision making processes.

In this study, the focus is on internal communication as a strategy or intervention for achieving employee engagement within the NDOH. The study also includes factors that affect both internal communication and employee engagement, such as organisational culture and leadership, which are seen as contributing strategies for the achievement of employee engagement.

3.7   LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT ENGAGEMENT

Organisations are constantly look for ways to keep their employees engaged and therefore spend resources to improve employee engagement. From the literature, it is evident that leadership is one of the key antecedents of employee engagement, although research lags behind with regard to the role of leadership in employee engagement (Xu & Cooper-Thomas, 2011:4). These authors argue that leadership provides a supportive, trusting environment that allows employees to fully invest their energies into their role performances.

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In Chapter 2, the term leadership is defined as a crucial mechanism which mediates between people who differ in the way they think and interpret the environment and how they feel and communicate with each other (Vallaster & Chernatony, 2005:182). According to Mamdoo (2012:50), effective leadership is needed to encourage creativity and innovation by motivating employees in an organisation. Xu and Cooper-Thomas (2011:7) argue that leadership behaviour has clear links with the concept of employee engagement. They argue that behaviour leading to trust in the leadership, support provided by leaders, and a blame-free environment created by leadership, are components of psychological safety which enable employee engagement.

Various authors have proposed different leadership styles that contribute to the achievement of employee engagement. Schaufeli and Salanova (in Albrecht, 2010) identify a transformational leadership style; Chen (2010) proposed a transformational or transactional leadership and leader member exchange (LMX) model; while Somech (2005) supports a participative leadership style. This study adopts a participative leadership style, cognisant of Yukl's (1999:35) assertion that: "…participative leadership must be combined with other types of leadership behaviour to be effective and the appropriate mix of behaviours will depend on the situation".

According to Mamdoo (2012:28): "…effective leadership is needed to encourage creativity and innovation by motivating employees in an organisation." The author states that leadership in organisations plays a critical role in empowering employees by giving them a chance to solve problems and put forward their own suggestions. Huang, Iun, Liu and Gong (2009:122) state that participative leaders demonstrate confidence in as well as concern and respect for their subordinates and thereby foster higher levels of engagement and trust between the leader and subordinates.

Although research on the impact of leadership style on employee engagement is scant, this study proposes a participative leadership style as an intervention that will influence the day-to-day level of employee engagement within the NDOH. A participative leadership style which is defined as joint decision making, considers employees as members of the organisation instead of workers (Somech, 2005:778). Therefore organisations should strive to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships these members of the

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organisation. This is in line with the stakeholder theory, relationship management theory, as well as social exchange theory, which form the basis of this study.

In summary, this study aims to investigate the influence of internal communication in achieving employee engagement. Communication is one of the core skills required from leaders in organisations as they mediate between the organisation and its employees. It is therefore relevant to consider the types of leadership models and style that contribute to higher levels of engagement. Participative leadership is adopted in this study as a critical leadership style contributing to the achievement of employee engagement. According to House (in Mthethwa, 2012:109) the majority of leadership approaches share common perspectives that leaders articulate a vision, foster the acceptance of group goals; provide individualised support; and change the basic values, beliefs and attitudes of followers so that they are willing to perform beyond the minimum levels specified by the organisation.

3.8   DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employees who are engaged at work have a positive, fulfilling and work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. Engaged employees demonstrate high levels of energy, a sense of significance and are deeply engrossed in their work. Engagement is not a transient and specific state, but rather a persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour Schaufeli *et al.* (2002:73-75). These three states of mind are also known as dimensions of employee engagement and were used to measure the level of employee engagement within the NDOH.

3.8.1 Vigour

Vigour is characterised by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. It includes the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295). Engaged employees are energetic and involve themselves mentally in performing their work roles. They view their work roles as investments for themselves and the organisation and they demonstrate willingness to

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exert extra effort in job performance. Vigour includes employee's willingness to persevere during difficult times in performing their job tasks. These employees go beyond the call of duty and perform extra roles that promote the effective functioning of the organisation (Bakker *et al.*, 2011:5).

This study measures employee engagement through these three dimensions. What is important is to determine whether internal communication, through the constructs discussed in Chapter 2, influences the levels of employee engagement within the NDOH. Six items were included in the instrument to measure the dimension of vigour among employees at the NDOH. The assumption of this study is that employees who demonstrate high levels of energy are engaged.

3.8.2 Dedication

Dedication is the second dimension of employee engagement that refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295). Engaged employees are dedicated to their work, and derive satisfaction with self as they conduct their job tasks. These employees are enthusiastic about their job tasks and feel inspired and proud of their work. Dedicated employees find their jobs challenging and stimulating and therefore conduct their job tasks with enthusiasm. Schaufeli *et al.* (2002:74) state that dedication is characterised by strong involvement, which leads to psychological identification with one's work that goes a step further than the usual level of identification.

In order to measure the level of dedication among employees at the NDOH, five items were included in the instrument to establish the level of engagement. The items aimed to determine whether employees find their jobs challenging; whether employees are inspired by their work; whether they are enthusiastic and proud of the work they do, as well as whether they find purpose and meaning in the work they do.

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3.8.3 Absorption

Absorption is characterised by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching oneself from work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295). In their qualitative study on employee engagement, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:295) found that engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work. Absorption refers to immersion, concentration, engrossment and pre-occupation with something or an event. Schaufeli *et al.,* (2002:73) assert that engaged employees are fully immersed with their work. These employees are so preoccupied with their work that to them, time passes quickly without them noticing. They are so engrossed that they find it difficult to detach themselves from work.

Schaufeli *et al.* (2002:75) likens absorption to what is called 'flow'. Flow is an optimal experience characterised by focused attention, a clear mind, mind and body unison, effortless in time, and intrinsic enjoyment. This implies that employees who demonstrate absorption, lose themselves (self-consciousness) as they get totally and happily immersed in their work.

To measure absorption, five items were included in the measuring instrument. The items sought to determine whether employees are so engrossed in their work that they forget everything else around them while conducting their job tasks; and whether they find that time passes quickly while they are involved in their job tasks. Employees had to indicate the extent to which they are immersed in their work and whether they are happy when they are deeply engrossed in their work.

3.9   INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

According to Hayase (2009:9) there are many variables that contribute to employee engagement within an organisation. Kahn (1990:694), states that there are different circumstances within a workplace in which individuals either express and/or withdraw their personal selves physically, cognitively, and emotionally. From this perspective,

internal communication has been identified as one of the contributing factors in the achievement of employee engagement in organisations (Hayase, 2009; Welch, 2011).

Kahn (in Welch, 2011:335) suggests that engagement can be affected by management interventions, such as internal communication, within an organisation. According to Welch (2012:246) internal communication contributes to positive internal relationships by enabling communication between senior managers and employees. Various studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between internal communication and levels of engagement in organisations (Kahn, 1990; Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Macey & Scheider, 2010; and Xu & Thomas, 2011).

3.9.1 Internal communication and employee engagement model

Figure 9: Conceptual model
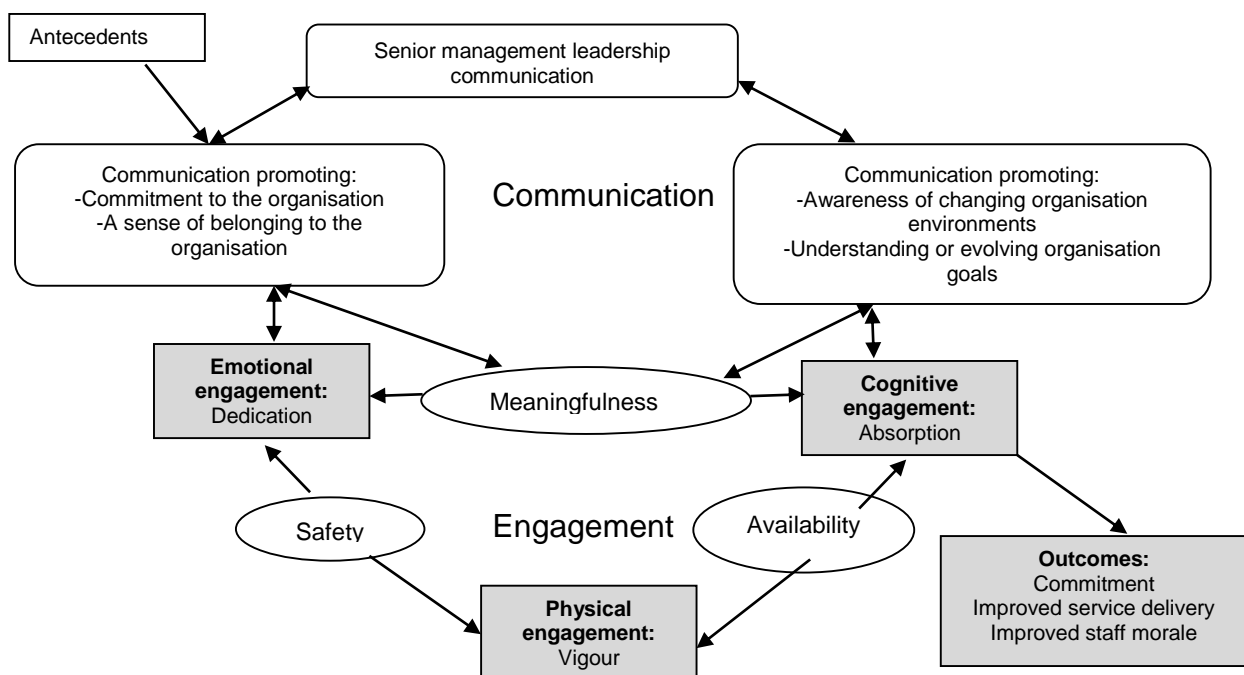
Source: Adapted from Welch, 2011

Welch (2011:340) developed a conceptual model to explain how communication contributes to the achievement of employee engagement. In the model, engagement is represented by its three construct components, viz.: emotional, cognitive and physical dimensions. The model links internal communication to the three dimensions of

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engagement identified by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) and Schaufeli and Bakker (2004). These are: dedication, absorption and vigour, as well as Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions of engagement, namely: meaningfulness, safety, and availability.

The model further integrates the construct of organisational commitment as an antecedent of engagement and positions the elements of leadership communication from senior managers in relation to employee engagement (Welch, 2011:340). It depicts the importance of communication behaviour and leadership communication in promoting awareness among employees and understanding organisational goals.

Internal communication has been identified as one of the underlying factors associated with employee engagement (Welch, 2008:489). Leadership, on the other hand, has been identified as an antecedent of organisational engagement, and organisational effectiveness as a consequence of engagement, Pugh and Dietz (in Welch, 2011:338). Leaders in organisations are the mediators between the organisation and its stakeholders - in this case, its employees. Based on this responsibility of leadership, communication abilities of leaders have been recognised as an important driver of engagement in organisations (Welch, 2011:430).

MacLeod and Clarke (in Welch, 2011:328) state that communication influences employee engagement which in turn enhances performance. They are specific in stating that good quality internal communication enhances engagement. Other authors also identify effective internal communication as an important driver of employee engagement (Kalla, 2005; Ruck & Welch, 2012; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Welch, 2012; Yates, 2006). As a result, poor communication is identified as a barrier to employee engagement (Welch, 2011:338). The association of internal communication and employee engagement has long been the topic of interest and has led to some organisations treating the concept of engagement as part of an internal communication strategy, Sparrow and Balain (in Welch, 2011:338).

Bakker *et al.* (2011) assert that internal communication provides the context in which engagement takes place, while Hayase (2009:9) states that internal communication serves as an avenue through which the variables that contribute to employee engagement can be disseminated, supported and communicated. In associating internal

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communication with employee engagement, Bindl and Parker (in Welch, 2011:339) assert that internal communication has the potential to effectively convey the values of the organisation to all employees, and involve them with the goals of the organisation. They argue that a well-designed internal communication programme is an important factor for employee engagement.

3.10   ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Organisational culture is defined as the common experiences among members of a group that are formed over time and therefore become the property of that particular group. It represents the *"accumulated learning of a group"* that describes the ways of thinking, feeling, and perceiving the world that have made groups successful. Organisational culture is furthermore driven by the learned, shared and tacit assumptions upon which people base their behaviours (Schein, 1999:13-24).

As stated in Chapter 2, Sadri and Lees (2001:853) argue that although culture is an intangible concept, it plays a meaningful role in organisations, affecting employees and organisational operations. In congruence, Neher (1997:131) states that organisational culture provides unwritten guidelines for operational processes and actions for a particular group or organisation.

For the purpose of this study, two types of cultures were considered in Chapter 2, namely: authoritarian and participative cultures. The former is known to be a barrier in achieving employee engagement, while the latter promotes participation of employees through engagement. Given the dynamic environments in which organisations operate, they require cultures that promote innovation, which is a consequence of employee engagement (Mamdoo, 2012:28).

Liu, Wei and Zhang (in Mamdoo, 2012:55) argue that organisational culture reflects an organisation's beliefs as well as the values of its leaders, and the people in the organisation. It also shapes people's behaviour, which in turn affects performance. Organisational cultures according to Mamdoo (2012:54), require employees to be mobilised to exhibit certain behaviours that support the strategy, which can be achieved

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through engagement. For the purpose of this study, the focus is limited to the two types of cultures, that is: authoritarian and participative cultures. Cropley (in Mamdoo, 2012:57) states that an organisation's culture defines boundaries, a sense of identity, and assists in achieving commitment in shaping and guiding the attitude and behaviour of employees. This study proposes that a participative culture will promote employee engagement within the NDOH.

3.11   DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the drivers of employee engagement discussed above, this study investigates whether there is a statistical difference in the engagement levels among different groups, i.e. age, gender, years of experience in the NDOH, and hierarchical job levels. James, Mckechnie and Swanberg (2010) state that employers are constantly wanting to know what will engage employees, keep them energised, productive on the job and committed to the organisation. They furthermore state that the employees on the other hand want to know what the organisation will do for them in terms of organisational rewards and favourable job conditions.

Every organisation employs people with diverse age, gender, and race. These employees are employed individually into different levels available in the organisational structure, and are employed as and when they are needed resulting in them having varied number of years serving the organisation. The survey conducted in this study included information on demographic of the respondents, namely; age, gender, number of years of experience in the Department, race, and job level.

Literature indicates that individual or situational factors may relate to employee engagement, and age was revealed as the one factors that have been studied. Avery, McKay and Wilson (2007:1542) examined the interplay between employee's age and engagement. Their study concluded that age diversity enhances the likelihood of encountering greater age dissimilarity with one's co-workers. This dissimilarity has been linked to organisational outcomes such as intent to stay and commitment to the organisation. Avery *et.al.* (2007:1542) furthermore assert that demographic similarity or dissimilarity may have an impact on individual or group engagement.

In defining employee engagement, Kahn (1990, 1992) suggested that employees vary along a continuum with regard to the extent to which they feel able to express themselves in their work role. It can therefore be argued that there are varying levels of engagement between employees of differing age groups, years of experience in the Department, and job levels. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide detailed literature on the impact of gender, and race on employee engagement. In order to determine the impact of demographics categories may have on employee engagement within the NDOH, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H8: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across age groups.

H0: There is no difference in the levels of engagement across age groups.

H9: There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the 'years of experience' groups.

H0: There is no difference in the levels of employee engagement across the 'years of experience' groups.

H10: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the job level groups of employees.

H0: There is no difference in the levels of engagement across the job level groups of employees.

H11: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the gender groups.

H0: There is no difference in the levels of engagement across the gender groups.

3.12   CONCLUSION

This Chapter presented literature reviewed in relation to the employee engagement concept. Literature on employee engagement demonstrated challenges around the lack of a universal definition of the concept. Given the evidence from the literature, this study

proposes that internal communication is a contributing factor in the achievement of employee engagement.

The Chapter furthermore emphasises what was established in Chapter 2, that internal communication is an essential factor that binds the purpose of the organisation to its employees, who perform specific tasks towards the achievement of organisational strategic goals. The conceptual model of internal communication and employee engagement developed by Welch (2011:340) provides a better understanding of the relationship and link between the two concepts. Literature further revealed the importance of certain organisational elements for employee engagement, such as leadership and organisational culture. While organisational culture provides the context in which employee engagement takes place, leadership is the mediator between the organisation and its employees. The arguments of this study are supported by Duck (in Karanges, 2014:53) who states that in fact, internal communication is a fundamental element of all exchange relationships in organisations.

From this perspective, Mmope (2010:47) puts forward that consistent, coordinated and coherent communication contributes toward achieving communication effectiveness. Effective communication and sound relationships with employees are of significant importance to ensure that employees are involved, committed, focused, passionate, as well as enthusiastic about the organisation and strive to contribute to its success. Theoretically it is evident that employee engagement is a major driver of organisational performance and effectiveness, and that effective communication is an essential driver of employee engagement (Anitha, 2014; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; & Pandita, 2014; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014).

It is the assumption of this study that internal communication is a tool used by management to foster employee engagement. Both internal communication and employee engagement concepts are to an extent, influenced and impacted on by similar factors such organisational culture; communication climate; leadership styles as well as leadership communication. In addition, demographic characteristics of employees within the NDOH were taken into consideration.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Chapter is to outline the empirical research process followed in the study, that is, the methodology. Methodology focuses on the research process and the kind of tools and procedures employed in a research study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:75). Collins Dictionary (in Ehlers, 2002:195) defines methodology as the system of methods and principles used in a particular discipline. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:75), methodology focuses on the individual steps in the research process and the most objective procedures to be employed in a research study.

This Chapter presents a plan on how the research study was conducted and discusses the research design, measuring instrument (questionnaire), the sampling strategy, data collection process, as well as the data analysis techniques used in the study. The Chapter also includes a discussion on validity and reliability of the measuring instrument, as well as ethical aspects taken into consideration during the research study.

Saunders *et al.* (2012:129) state that a methodological approach selected for a particular study is dependent on the research question that is to be answered by the study and therefore no method is better than the other.   Accordingly, the choice of research design and method for this study was based on the research problem and research objectives.

This Chapter provides insight into the practical process and methods employed in collecting data for the empirical part of the study. The Chapter begins with a philosophical consideration and rationale for the methodology followed in the study.

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4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RATIONALE

4.2.1 Re-statement of research problem

In recent years, internal communication alone has become insufficient to address organisational relationships which resulted in the conceptualisation of employee engagement. In organisations with large staff complements there are varying needs and expectations; therefore employee engagement becomes a critical tool to drive employees towards commitment to the organisation. The NDOH has a large staff compliment coupled with proximity challenges in terms of staff location. In such settings, the key question becomes: Are employees regarded as important stakeholders who should be communicated to and with, and engaged?

This study proposes a stakeholder approach in the implementation of internal communication for the achievement of employee engagement. The stakeholder approach dictates that employees should be identified as important stakeholders that have a say or stake in the organisation. The study furthermore argues for a stakeholder approach in the implementation of internal communication for the achievement of employee engagement. The stakeholder approach dictates that employees should be identified as important stakeholders with a say or stake in the organisation. According to the Government Communicators Handbook (2014:79), government regards its employees as ambassadors who should be able to reflect the vision of government. The study investigated how internal communication contributes to the achievement of employee engagement within the NDOH.

Against the above background, the study proposes a stakeholder approach to internal communication and investigates the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement.

4.2.1.1 Primary research objective

Du Plooy (2009:50) differentiates between two main goals of a research study, namely: basic and applied. A goal of research is said to be basic when it investigates and develops theories to explain a particular communication phenomenon, while research

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with an applied goal can be undertaken to, for example, explain cause-and-effect relationships. It follows then that this study has an applied research goal, as it aims to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. Internal communication has been listed as one of the factors that determine and influence the achievement of employee engagement within organisations.

The main research objective of the study is to determine the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement.

4.2.1.2   Secondary research objectives

Babbie and Mouton (2001:79) identity three common and useful purposes of research as exploration, description and explanation. The objectives of the study are explanatory in nature as it aims to explain the causal relationship between two variables, that is: internal communication and employee engagement. The study aims to determine the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement in the South African public service context. Previous research studies have listed internal communication as one of the factors that affect the level of engagement in organisations. The secondary objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
2. To investigate the relationship between of two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
3. To investigate the relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.
4. To investigate the relationship between quality and reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.
5. To investigate the relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.
6. To investigate the relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.
7. To establish if the levels of employee engagement differ across age groups, 'years of experience' groups, job level groups, and gender groups.

4.2.1.3   Hypotheses

In order to establish whether there is a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement; and whether there are statistical differences in the levels of employee engagement across the demographic groups, hypotheses were formulated. Using the deductive reasoning, relational hypotheses were formulated and directly linked to the research objectives. These relational hypotheses sought to confirm or support the theory that postulates the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement constructs. Guided by the primary research objective of the study, the hypotheses predicted a relationship between variables from internal communication and employee engagement.

H1: There is a relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H2: There is a relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H3: There is a relationship between supportive communication climate plays and the levels of employee engagement.

H4: There is a relationship between quality of information and levels of the employee engagement.

H5: There is a relationship between reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.

H6: There is a relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.

H7: There is a relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

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H8: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across age groups.

H9: There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the 'years of experience' groups.

H10: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the job level groups.

H11: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the gender groups.

4.2.2 Philosophical approach

The philosophical consideration which is informed by the above research objectives is presented below:

Figure 2: Philosophical considerations
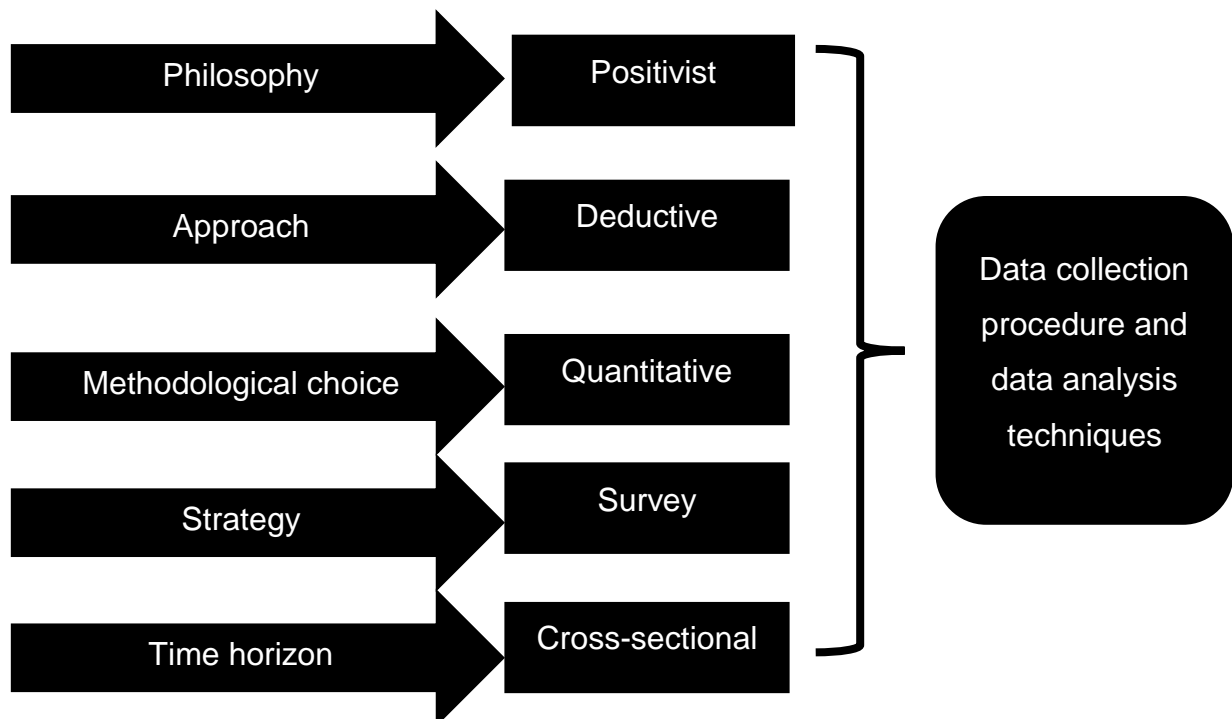
Source: Adapted from Saunders, *et al.* (2012)

In order to develop the knowledge and the nature of the knowledge, Saunders *et al.* (2012:129) state that it is important to stipulate the research philosophy followed in a

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study. They distinguish between two major ways of thinking in relation to research philosophy, namely: ontology and epistemology. According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter (2006:6) ontology specifies the nature of reality that is to be studied, while epistemology specifies the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be known. The study adopts a positivist philosophy and takes an ontological stance that the phenomenon under investigation consists of a stable and unchanging external reality; with an objective, detached observer, epistemological stance. The aim of the study is to provide an accurate explanation of the relationship between two variables, that is, internal communication and employee engagement within the NDOH.

Saunders *et al.* (2012:145-147) differentiate between three approaches that a research study can adopt, viz. deductive, inductive and abductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning involves the development of a theory that is then tested through a series of hypotheses; an inductive approach to research emphasises the collection of data to explore a phenomenon and generate theory. Data collected is used to explore a phenomenon through identification of themes and patterns to create a conceptual framework. Abduction on the other hand, begins with the observation of a surprising fact and then works out a plausible theory of how this could have occurred.

Accordingly, the study adopts a deductive reasoning approach to understand if indeed there is a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. This is done through testing of a series of hypotheses outlined above and in Chapters 2 and 3. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:7) state that positivist research studies follow a deductive approach.

The next level in the research process indicated in Figure 2 above is the selection of the methodology employed in collecting data. Given the explanatory goal of the research study, the quantitative methodology was found to be more suitable. The aim of the study is to test the hypothesised relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. The quantitative method of research uses numerical data to explain the phenomenon being studied. Quantitative research is generally associated with the positivist research philosophy and deductive approach, where highly structured data collection techniques are used. Accordingly, a questionnaire was used to collect data which was used to test the theory.

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Leedy and Ormrod (2005:96) pose five questions to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research approaches:

Table 8: **Distinguishing characteristics of quantitative and qualitative approaches**

Questions	Quantitative	Qualitative
What is the purpose of the research?	• To explain and predict • To confirm and validate • To test theory	• To describe and explain • To explore and interpret • To build theory
What is the nature of the research?	• Focused • Known variables • Established guidelines • Pre-determined methods • Detached view	• Holistic and based on unknown variables • Flexible guidelines • Context bound • Involves personal view
What are the data like, and how are they collected?	• Uses numerical data • Data is collected from a large representative sample • Uses standardised instruments	• Uses textual and or image based data • Data is collected from a small representative sample • Instrument is semi-structured or non-standardised observation and interviews
How are they analysed to determine their meaning?	• Data collected is analysed statistically • Emphasis is on objectivity • Uses deductive reasoning	• Search for themes and categories from the data collected • Acknowledgement that analysis is subjective and potentially biased • Uses inductive reasoning
How are the findings communicated?	• Numerically • Statistical aggregated data • Formal voice in a scientific style	• Words • Narrative, and verbatim individual quotes • Personal voice, literary style

Source: Adapted from Leedy and Ormrod (2005)

4.2.3 Quantitative approach

According to Mamdoo (2012:62), quantitative methods involve collecting data through questionnaire surveys which can be used to provide numerical data for precise research. The author suggests that quantitative research is a collection of data from a large number of individuals, which is intended to generalise results to a broader population. This therefore implies that quantitative research is used to explain, describe, infer and resolve problems using numbers.   According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:49), a quantitative

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method is used to measure the properties of the phenomenon, such as attitudes of individuals towards a certain topic.

Due to the fact that the study aims to obtain the perceptions of individual participants, the quantitative method was found to be more suitable. The use of a structured questionnaire was based on its advantages, such as the fact that questionnaires promote anonymity; existing scales can be used in designing a study data collection tool; as well as the fact that the questionnaire made data collection quick and easy. The questionnaire was designed to determine if internal communication plays a role in the achievement of employee engagement and therefore items in the questionnaire were based on the concept of internal communication and dimensions of employee engagement. The questionnaire also included a section on demographic information, wherein respondents were asked to state their age, gender, race, years of experience in the Department, and job level.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:72) research design illustrates the process of planning a scientific inquiry; that is, designing a strategy for finding out something. Similarly, Saunders *et al.* (2012:159) define research design as a plan or framework that provides detail on how the research will be conducted. According to Kumar (2005:84), the research design is a plan, structure and strategy of the investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions. Mouton (1996:107) defines a research design as: "…a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem." Accordingly, the research design includes objectives of the study; sources from which data is to be collected; and how it will be collected and analysed.

Bryman (2012:46) differentiates between a research design and a research method, stating that the former is a framework that guides data collection and analysis, while the latter simply refers to a technique used to collect data. There are many different research designs commonly used by social researchers, viz.: experimental, cross-sectional (also known as survey design), longitudinal, case study, and comparative. For the purpose of

this study, a cross-sectional survey design was adopted to collect data within one particular organisation, the NDOH.

Babbie and Mouton (2001:49) identify three broad methodological paradigms that have been dominant in social research, which is: quantitative, qualitative, and participatory paradigms. The quantitative method of research uses numerical data to explain the phenomenon being studied; and has been associated with the positivist research philosophy and deductive reasoning approach, where highly structured data collection techniques are used. The qualitative method on the other hand, has been associated with interpretivist research, which adopts an inductive reasoning approach. Given the study's explanatory objective nature, quantitative methodology was found most suitable for this study.

4.3.1 Survey research design

As stated above, the choice of a research design is dependent on the research problem that is to be addressed by the study. Babbie and Mouton (2001:232) state that survey research designs are mainly used in studies where individual people are the units of analysis. Saunders *et al.* (2012:176) on the other hand state that surveys are usually associated with the deductive approach. Surveys are mainly used to answer questions such as 'what', 'who' and 'where'. Babbie (2001:232) defines the survey research design as the administration of questionnaires to a sample of respondents selected from the population with the purpose of providing a quantitative and generalisable description of aspects of the study population.

This study investigates the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement. Surveys use questionnaires to collect standardised data which can be quantitatively analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Saunders *et al.,* 2012:177). For the purpose of this study, data were collected from individual employees that formed a sample through a self-administered questionnaire, which consisted of pre-existing and pre-validated measurement scales. The study has an explanatory goal, whereby it aims to explain the patterns related to the phenomena in question and to identify possible relationships shaping the phenomena.

As stated above, survey research designs are said to be suitable when research objectives aim to obtain the attitudes, beliefs, opinions and behaviours of a large number of research participants. This study aimed to determine the impact of internal communication in achieving employee engagement, and therefore investigated if there is a direct or indirect relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. It is against this background that the survey research design was found to be more suitable for the study. The NDOH has 2 041 positions in its organisational structure. Some employees are located across provinces, regions and Head Office while a number of positions remain vacant. The majority of employees are located at the Head Office in Pretoria. A survey research design was used to ensure that more people were reached to participate in the study.

4.3.2 Sampling strategy

Sampling is a rigorous process of selecting the respondents from the target population to form a sample (Du Plooy, 2009:109). According to Coldwell and Herbst (in Mamdoo, 2012:67), a sample provides a finite part of a statistical population, whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole. Mamdoo (2012:67) maintains that the researcher is required to draw up a sample that is representative of the entire target population. Representativity of the sample improves the generalisability of the findings within the target population and also improves the level of integrity and value of the study.

Zikmund (in Karanges, 2014:66) outlines certain steps that are involved in the sampling process, that is, defining population, stating the sample frame and determining the sample size (units of analysis).

4.3.2.1 Population

According to Coldwell and Herbst (in Mamdoo, 2012:67), the population of a research study refers to a group of individual persons, items or objects from which samples are drawn to measure the phenomena being studied. Accordingly, the population of the study was all employees of the NDOH - those employed permanently and on fixed

contracts. The total population of the study was 2 041 employees. From the total population certain groups were excluded from the study: 301 employees at job levels 1-5; 305 employees stationed at Port Health; 89 employees working in laboratories, as well as 24 employees serving internships. This exclusion yielded a total of 1 322 employees as part of the accessible population from which the sample was drawn. The accessible population included management and employees appointed at job levels 6 - 15.

Important to note is the fact that the literacy levels vary greatly among employees, therefore those employed at job levels 1 to 5 were excluded from the study to accommodate the data collection method used in the study, which is a self-administered questionnaire.   The other groups that are not located at Head Office were excluded due to inaccessibility to the researcher.

4.3.2.2   Sample frame and size

Babbie and Mouton (2001:174) define a sampling frame as *"simply a list of the study population"*.   Zikmund (in Karanges, 2014:66) furthermore maintains that a sampling frame is commonly referred to as the list of representative individuals within the target population from which a sample is drawn. The employee list obtained from the Human Resources division at NDOH was utilised as sampling frame from which a sample of 300 units of analysis were selected to participate in the study. The units of analysis of the study consisted of both employees and managers of the NDOH.

Saunders *et al.* (2012:265) assert that the size of the sample is governed by the confidence needed from the data; the margin of error that can be tolerated by the researcher; the types of analyses to be undertaken; and the size of the total population from which a sample is drawn. Saunders *et al.* (2012:266) provide a table with a minimum guide for sample sizes at 95% confidence level. In that table, the authors state that for the population of 1000, a sample of 278 is suitable while for the population of 2000, a sample of 322 is sufficient for generalisability of the results; therefore a sample of 300 was considered sufficient for the study for an accessible population of 1 322.

4.3.2.3   Sampling technique

Saunders *et al.* (2012:261) maintain that there are two broad categories of sampling techniques, namely; probability and non-probability. The former refers to a situation where the chance or probability of each case being selected from the population is known and equal for all cases, while the latter refers to a situation where the chance of each case being selected into a sample is not known. The study adopted the probability sampling method, also known as representative sampling. Within the probability sampling method, Saunders *et al.* (2012:275) lists four methods that a researcher can use to select a sample. This study opted for systematic random sampling, which involves selecting a sample at regular intervals from the sampling frame. To ensure representativity at all levels, the sampling frame was alphabetically sorted according to surnames. Each case in the sampling frame was allocated a unique number starting from 0 to 1322. The sampling fraction, which is the proportion of the total population of ¼ was then determined. Between the first four cases, case number four was randomly selected as the first case and thereafter every forth case was selected into the sample to arrive at a total of 300.

4.3.3 Measuring instrument

The main objective of the study was to determine the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement within the NDOH. In order to establish whether internal communication practices influence the individual level of engagement among employees, the specific objectives are re-stated:

1. To investigate the relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
2. To investigate the relationship between of two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.
3. To investigate the relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.
4. To investigate the relationship between quality and reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.

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5. To investigate the relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.

6. To investigate the relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

7. To establish if the levels of employee engagement differ across age groups, 'years of experience' groups, job level groups, and gender groups.

Five constructs were used to measure internal communication, namely: communication climate, quality and reliability of information, internal public relations using the two-way models of public relations, organisational culture, and leadership communication. The three dimensions of employee engagement - vigour, dedication, and absorption - were used to establish the existence of the suggested relationship. The last questions of the instrument sought to obtain demographic characteristics of the participants. The purpose of demographic information assists a researcher in understanding the profiles of the participants as well as make possible conclusions.

The instrument was drawn up following the literature review on the selected constructs of both internal communication and employee engagement. Cooper and Schindler (in Mamdoo, 2012:71) put forward that in order to compare individual's scores with the distribution score, the Likert scale is recommended. A five-point Likert scale was used, which ranged from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The instrument was drawn using the following previously tested scales, namely: (Dennis' Communication Climate Survey, 1979; Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002; Management Practices Survey from (Kim & Yukl, 1996); and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale from (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The items included in the instrument were re-worded to align them to the context of the study.

The items represented in the questionnaire (Appendix B) were as follows:

Communication climate

1	My supervisor makes me feel free to talk to him or her.
2	My supervisor is a really competent, expert manager.
3	My supervisor encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job.
4	My supervisor makes me feel that the things I tell him/her are really important.

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5	My supervisor is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view.
6	My supervisor has my best interest in mind when he/she talks to his/her boss.
7	My supervisor listens to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me.
8	My supervisor is frank and candid.
9	I feel free to tell my supervisor that I disagree with him/her.
10	I can communicate 'bad news' to my supervisor without fear of retaliation on his/her part.

Quality and reliability of information received

1	I think people in this department say what they mean and mean what they say.
2	People in this department are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.
3	In this department people freely exchange information and opinions.
4	I am always informed about how well the departmental goals and objectives are being met.
5	Executive management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need.
6	I receive information from the sources that I prefer (e.g. my supervisor, unit meetings, co-workers, newsletters).
7	I am satisfied with explanations I get from executive management about why things are done as they are.
8	My job requirements are specified in clear language.
9	I think that information I receive from management is reliable.
10	I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is reliable.

Practice of excellent communication

1	The purpose of communication in the department is to develop mutual understanding between management of the organisation and employees.
2	Surveys are conducted to find out how leadership and employees understand each other.
3	The purpose of communication in the department is to change attitudes and behaviour of both leadership and employees.
4	The purpose of communication in the department is to help leadership to be responsive to the problems of other employees.
5	Most communication between leadership and employees in the department can be said to be two-way communication.
6	In the department, research on effectiveness of communication in changing attitudes is regularly conducted.
7	Attitude surveys are conducted regularly to make policy related decisions.
8	The goal of communication in the department is to persuade employees to behave as the department wants them to behave.
9	Communication in the department is mainly in written format.
10	Communication in the department is mainly one-way from leadership to employees.

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| 11 | I seldom get feedback when I communicate to the leadership. |

Organisational culture

1	The department celebrates its success with employees.
2	Participative culture of the department promotes innovation among employees.
3	Senior leaders in the department care deeply about employees.
4	Senior leaders in the department believe in sharing of power and responsibility with lower-level employees.
5	The department is usually willing to negotiate with employees for mutual understanding.
6	As an employee, I feel I have personal influence on decisions and policies of the department.
7	My opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect my job.
8	Most employees in the department share a common vision and strive towards its achievement.
9	Most decisions in this department are made after thorough discussion between all people who will be affected in a major way.

Leadership communication

1	My supervisor encourages and supports me when I have a difficult or stressful task.
2	My supervisor backs me up and supports me in difficult situations.
3	I receive credit for helpful ideas and suggestions.
4	Leadership consults with me to get my suggestions before making a decision that affects me.
5	I am provided with opportunities to develop my skills.
6	My supervisor expresses confidence in my ability to carry out a difficult task.

Employee engagement

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

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15	It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
16	I am immersed in my work.
17	I feel happy when I am working intensely.

Demographic characteristics

1	What is your age?
2	Please indicate your gender.
3	What is the number of years that you have been employed in the Department of Health?
4	Please indicate your race group?
5	What is your current job level?

4.3.4 Data collection (instrumentation)

As indicated above, data were collected through the use of a self-administered questionnaire. Saunders *et al.* (2012:416) define a questionnaire as a general term used that includes all methods of data collection where each participant is asked to answer the same sets of questions in a predetermined order. Coldwell and Herbst (in Mamdoo, 2012:69-70) state the following advantages and disadvantages of using a questionnaire to collect data:

Table 9: **Advantages and disadvantages of questionnaires**

Advantages	Disadvantages
A questionnaire assures the respondents of anonymity.	Respondents may misinterpret the questions which will lead to inaccurate results.
It is an easy and quick method of collecting data.	Not all questionnaires distributed will be completed and returned.
There are many sample questionnaires that exist that a researcher can refer to when drawing up his or her own questionnaire.	A sampling expert may be needed to conduct the survey.

A questionnaire is a document with a list of questions that are put to respondents, and which are designed to obtain specific information about a phenomenon (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:265). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:258), self-administered questionnaires are only appropriate when the population under study is adequately literate. For the purpose of this study, staff members employed at levels 1-5 were excluded from the study to ensure that respondents were able to read and understand

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the questions. A self-administered questionnaire was developed and distributed in hard copy by hand to the study sample and collected through a return box placed in a central place in the building. This was done to ensure confidentiality and anonymity as part of the ethical considerations for the study.

The identified constructs were discussed and defined in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 and in Chapter 4 they were presented in the questionnaire items. The measuring instrument of the study was developed using a combination of pre-existing scales obtained from the literature. Questionnaire items were slightly adjusted to match the context of the study. The measuring instrument was then divided into seven sections, including demographic information.

The items were posed in statement format requiring the respondent to rate their level of agreement or disagreement using a five-point Likert-style rating scale. Respondents were required to indicate if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, agreed, or strongly agreed on a scale of 1-5; with one being strongly disagree and five being strongly agree.

In order to ensure that the instrument collected precise data required to answer the primary and secondary objectives, existing scales were used to develop the measurement instrument used in the study. Questionnaire sections 1 to 5 sought to determine the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, specifically focusing on communication constructs such as: communication climate; quality and reliability of information received; organisational culture; practice of excellent communication; and leadership communication. Questionnaire section 6 measured the level of engagement among employees in the Department using the three constructs of employee engagement. Lastly, questionnaire section 7 sought to obtain demographic information of the respondents, particularly: age, gender, number of years of experience, race, and job level.

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4.3.5 Pre-testing the questionnaire

Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted on a group of ten respondents who were conveniently selected by the researcher based on access and availability. This was done to test if the data to be collected will enable the investigative questions to be answered. Saunders *et al.* (2012:451) state that the purpose of a pilot test is to refine the questionnaire in order to ensure that respondents have no difficulty in answering the questions. Comments received from the pilot test were used to amend the instrument for better understanding by the participants.

4.3.6 Distribution of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed to each respondent with a letter of consent (Appendix A) and the letter of permission from the Department. The letter of consent identified the researcher and provided the contact details of both the researcher and the supervisor; stated the purpose of research; assured each respondent of anonymity and confidentiality of their responses; and clarified that respondents were participating voluntary and could withdraw their participation at any time during the study. A collection box was placed in a central area (library) in the building marked "Return box". During the distribution, respondents were requested to sign the consent letter and return it with the completed questionnaire. Respondents were also made aware of the location of the return box.

4.3.7 Data analysis

According to Coldwell and Herbst (in Mamdoo, 2012:71), data analysis is important in a study, as it produces meaning from the raw data collected through a measuring instrument. Quantitative data in a raw format conveys little meaning to people, therefore needs to be processed into useful information (Saunders, et al., 2012:472). Data analysis includes the reduction of manageable proportions from a wealth of data collected. Various techniques are used to analyse data collected.

In this study, all statistical analyses have been performed using the *IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)* version 23. Descriptive statistics such as

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frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to analyse demographical data. The Cronbach alpha's coefficient value was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument, while factor analysis was used to reduce a large number of related variables to a more manageable number.

The Pearson's correlation coefficient test was undertaken to test the relational hypotheses, while statistical difference hypotheses were tested using parametric and non-parametric techniques - specifically, the independent–samples, t-test and one-way between groups analysis of variance (ANOVA). T-tests are used when there are only two groups while ANOVA techniques are used when you have two or more groups. Independent-sample techniques are used between groups where participants in each group are different; and one-way ANOVA techniques, as well as parametric and non-parametric techniques are used when there is only one independent group (Pallant, 2010:204).

4.4   RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Saunders *et al.* (2012:428) state that the internal validity and reliability of the data collected and the response rate achieved are dependent on the design of the questions, the structure of the questionnaire and the rigour of the pilot testing. Foddy (in Saunders *et al.,* 2012:429) emphasises that the questions making up the questionnaire must be understood by the respondent in the way intended by the researcher. Leedy and Ormrod (2010:28) state that the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument influence the extent to which something can be learned about the phenomena being studied; the probability that statistical significance can be obtained; as well as the extent to which meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the data.

Validity and reliability reflect the degree of instrument error (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:29). This is particularly true when measuring insubstantial characteristics which are measured indirectly and therefore subject the instrument to a variety of bias factors.

The identified constructs were discussed and defined in detail in Chapters 2 and 3 and in Chapter 4 they were presented in the questionnaire items. The measuring instrument of

the study was developed using a combination of pre-existing scales obtained from the literature. Questionnaire items were slightly adjusted to match the context of the study. The measuring instrument was then divided into seven sections, including demographic information.

4.4.1 Reliability

According to Hair, Black, Barbin, Anderson and Tathm (in Karanges, 2014:77), reliability and validity are crucial and reduce the measurement error to ensure that the results are a true representation. Reliability refers to the consistency with which a measuring instrument yields a certain result when the entity being measured has not changed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:28). Saunders *et al.* (2012:430) maintain that reliability is concerned with the robustness of the questionnaire. They state that reliability refers to the extent to which the instrument produces consistent findings of different types and under different conditions.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010:28) posit that instruments designed to measure psychological characteristics (insubstantial phenomena) tend to be less reliable than those designed to measure physical characteristics (substantial phenomena). Kumar (2005:156) maintains that a consistent instrument produces consistent and stable results, which allow the researcher to make precise and predictable findings.

In the case of this study, factors such as change of leadership may affect the participants' responses to the questionnaires. Another issue that could possibly affect the reliability of the instrument is the understanding and interpretation of the questions. In order to minimise misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the questions, a pilot study was conducted to ascertain the level of understanding of respondents. Feedback obtained from the pilot study was used to improve the reliability of the questionnaire. Employees in job levels 1 to 5 were excluded from the study due to their lower literacy level which could have resulted in a high level of misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the questions.

There are various statistical methods that can be used to ensure reliability of a measurement. Pallant (2007:95) highlights determining the internal consistency of the scale as the main concern for a researcher. Internal consistency refers to consistency among the variables in a summated scale. The most commonly used measure of scale reliability is Cronbach's alpha coefficient which assesses the consistency of the entire scale.

The acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha is the value of .7. Any scale that obtains a lower Cronbach's alpha value is considered unreliable (Field, 2009:675). Field (2009:678) further states that in a reliable scale, all items should correlate with the total. According to Du Plooy (1996:96), the reliability coefficient ranges from no reliability (0) to perfect reliability (1).

4.4.2 Validity

The extent to which an instrument measures what the researcher intends to measure is referred to as validity (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010:28). Saunders *et al.* (2012:429-430) differentiate between four types of validity assessments, namely: measurement or internal validity, content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which the questionnaire measures what is intended by the study. Content validity refers to the extent to which the items making up the questionnaire provide adequate coverage of the investigative questions. Criterion-related validity refers to the ability of the questions to make accurate predictions. Lastly, construct validity is concerned with the extent to which the measuring instrument really measures the specific theoretical construct that is being measured.

Furthermore, Coldwell and Herbst (in Mamdoo, 2012:75) categorise validity into internal and external. Internal validity is concerned with the extent to which the design of the study and data obtained are helpful in drawing precise conclusions about relationships. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement. Questions in the instrument were designed based on the research objectives and hypotheses to enable the researcher to draw conclusions about the two concepts. A potential threat to internal validity for this study was identified

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as possible perceptions the researcher could have on the topic of the study. The researcher used the evidence obtained to draw conclusions about the findings. External validity on the other hand, is concerned with the extent to which the conclusions from the research can be generalised in the context of other organisations. Given the fact that the study focused on one government department, the external validity of the study is limited. The findings of the study can only be generalised to the total population of the study, that is, within the National Department of Health.

For the purpose of this study, factor analysis, a statistical method for data reduction was used to establish construct validity. Mouton and Marais (in de Beer, 2001:225) state that factor analysis is useful in establishing whether the constructs or factors identified by the researcher, measure what they are supposed to measure. When a reliability is a prerequisite for validity – (meaning that when a measuring instrument is said to be valid) that implies that the measurement is reliable (de Beer, 2001:226). According to de Beer (2001:226), "… in establishing construct validity, the measuring instrument must be related to the theoretical framework as discussed in the literature study to ensure that the measurement logically links with other concepts in the framework...". In establishing construct validity, the study ensured that:

- variables measured were defined in Chapter 1, 2 and 3;
- hypotheses were formulated in conjunction with the literature and the objectives of the study; and
- hypotheses were statistically tested.

4.4.3 Factor analysis

Diamantopoulos and Schlegemilch (in de Beer, 2001: 226) define factor analysis as: "a method in which groups of (linear) related variables are identified with the aim of reducing many variables to a more manageable number of variables to discover multiple underlying dimensions of commonality between variables (the variance) in the data set." Pallant (2007:179) states that the term 'factor analysis' encompasses a variety of different but related techniques termed principal component analysis (PCA) and factor analysis (FA). For the purpose of this study, the term principal factor analysis is used to refer to PCA as the chosen technique.

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de Beer (2001: 226) reiterates Grunig's (1990) assertion that a single factor solution means that all items were sufficiently intercorrelated to form a single group measuring a single construct, while multiple factors mean that several dimensions of the construct are involved in the item set.

The different types of rotations that can be done after the initial extraction of factors, includes orthogonal rotation such as Equimax and Varimax with the restriction that the factors are uncorrelated. Promax rotation allows the factor to be correlated to each other.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) technique was used to measure the sampling adequacy; and Bartletts' test of sphericity was generated to determine the appropriateness of factor analysis. According to Pallant (2007:181), the KMO index ranges from 0 to 1, with .6 as the suggested minimum value for a good factor analysis. Pallant (2007:181) states that for the factor analysis to be considered appropriate, the Bartlett's test should be significant at ($p <. 05$).

4.5   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first step of ethical considerations was to obtain approval from the Director-General of the NDOH to conduct the research study within the Department. A letter of permission to conduct the study was obtained and is attached as Appendix A.

Mamadoo (2012:72) put forward that it is unethical for a researcher to be biased in any way. Bias is defined by Leedy and Ormrod (2005:208) as: "…any influence, condition, or set of conditions that singly or together distort the data." For the purpose of this study, the participants and the researcher herself were identified as potential sources of bias. The fact that the researcher is employed within the Department where the research study was conducted could lead to the researcher having pre-conceived assumptions that may have influenced the research. In an effort to minimise the level of bias, the questionnaire was developed using pre-existing scales - careful attention was paid to the wording of the items for clear understanding by respondents. A few words were re-worded to ensure they relate to the context of the study.

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The issues of anonymity and confidentiality have been highlighted by various authors as being critical in ensuring that a research study is ethical. Participants need to be protected from any possible harm or victimisation as a result of their participation in the study. A letter of consent was attached to each questionnaire distributed, where participants would consent by appending a signature (Appendix A). Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:72) maintain that informed consent has been seen as the main determinant of the ethicality of a research study. The aim of the consent letter was to explain the purpose of the research, assure participants of their anonymity, and assure them that information will be handled confidentially. The consent letter was also used to obtain confirmation from participants that they participated willingly and that their participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw their participation at any stage of the research. The consent letter also indicated that the intention of the study was purely for academic purposes and that the results could only be obtained in writing from the University.

In order to promote participation, anonymity and confidentiality, questionnaires were distributed in hard copy and a central return box was placed in a neutral place accessible to all participants. The questionnaires did not require respondents to identify themselves in order to ensure anonymity (Appendix B).

Cooper and Schindler (in Mamadoo, 2012:74) caution that unethical behaviour could have severe implications on the findings. According to these authors, ethics is made up of norms or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about our behaviour and our relationships with others. Saunders *et al.* (2012:226) similarly define ethics as the standards of behaviour that guide a researcher's conduct in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of a research study.

4.6   RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Collis and Hussy (in Mamdoo, 2012:17-18) differentiate between limitation and delimitation. A limitation is described as a potential weakness of the study, while delimitation refers to the scope of the research study.

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As indicated in Chapter 1, this study consist of a single case limited to the National Department of Health and therefore excludes the provincial departments of health. Given the varying literacy levels among employees in the Department, the study was further limited to personnel employed at levels 6 up to 16 during the sampling process. The main objective of the study was limited to determining if internal communication impacts on employee engagement in the Department; therefore the study was limited to constructs of internal communication as well as the dimensions of employee engagement.

The findings of the study are based on the NDOH environment, and can only be generalised within the context of the NDOH and no other government department.

4.7   CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Chapter was to detail the steps followed during the research study. In this study the quantitative research approach in the form of a survey design was adopted. This Chapter defined the population of the study; outlined the sampling techniques; and detailed how the instrument was developed, pre-tested and distributed. Issues of reliability and validity, as well as ethical considerations were also stated in this Chapter.   The study was conducted over a limited period of time, utilising a self-administered questionnaire to collect data.   In the next Chapter, the results of the study are presented in various display formats and are interpreted.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Chapter is to present the results of the research study conducted within the National Department of Health under the topic: *Internal communication in achieving employee engagement within a South African Government Department*. The study was conducted through a survey, utilising a self-administered questionnaire which was distributed among the sampled employees at specific job levels. The study investigated the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement within the National Department of Health.

Hypotheses formulated in Chapter 2 were tested through Pearson's correlation coefficient in order to confirm or reject the association between internal communication (constructs: communication climate, quality and reliability of information, public relations models, organisational culture, and leadership communication) and employee engagement (constructs: vigour, dedication, and absorption). Hypotheses on statistical difference stated in Chapter 3 were tested through parametric and non-parametric techniques.

The results are presented in various formats such as narratives, tables, graphs and bar charts in order to ensure that they are organised, visible and comprehensive.

5.2   DATA PREPARATION

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed out of which 216 were returned, which yielded a response rate of 72%. Data were collected within one month. Prior to data analysis, data preparation included capturing data onto an Ms Excel spreadsheet, which was exported to SPSS where a data file was created and the various statistical techniques

were used for analyses. During the exportation process, individual questionnaire items were allocated unique codes for processing in the SPSS programme.

5.3   SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

As stated in Chapter 4, the population of the study was NDOH employees employed at job levels 6 to 16. It was noted during the data capturing that participants in the job level group 5 (i.e. Executive Management) did not participate in the study even though they had received the questionnaire. The results therefore do not include job level group 5. The demographic information included in the questionnaire were: age, gender, race, job level and number of years of experience.

5.3.1   Demographic profile

Table 10: Summary of the demographic profile of the respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
Age	20-35	55	25.5	25.5
	36-45	90	41.7	67.1
	46-55	54	25.0	92.1
	56-65	17	7.6	100.0
Gender	Male	89	41.2	41.2
	Female	127	58.8	100.0
Race	Missing values	1	.5	.5
	Asian	8	3.7	4.2
	Black	160	74.1	78.2
	Coloured	15	6.9	85.2
	White	32	14.8	100.0
Job level	Level 6-8	94	43.5	43.5
	Level 9-10	54	25.0	68.5
	Level 11-12	38	17.6	86.1
	Level 13-14	30	13.9	100.0
Number of years employed	Missing values	3	1.4	1.4
	1-5	62	28.7	30.1
	6-10	69	31.9	62.0

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Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority (n=90) of the participants are between 36 and 45 years old followed by those between 20 and 35 years old (n=55) and those between 46 and 55 years (n=54).

Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of participants (58.8%) were females and 41.2% were males.

The majority (60.6%) of the respondents had been employed in the Department for a period between 1 to 10 years. Three participants (1.4%) did not indicate the number of years they had been employed in the Department.

The majority (74.1%) of the respondents were Black and the group with the least representation (3.7%) was the Indian group. One participant (.5%) did not indicate the race group.

The last variable of Section 7 of the questionnaire sought to establish the hierarchical composition of the sample, i.e. job level. In this variable, respondents were requested to indicate the job level at which they were employed.

Descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of the participants were employed at Administration level (Group 1) with 94 responses, rendering a total of 43.5% while Group 4 (senior management) accounted for only 30 responses, yielding only 13.9%. From the descriptive statistics, it is important to note that no responses were received from the Executive Management, although they received the questionnaires. It is concluded that participants employed at lower levels participated more than those employed at higher levels.

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5.4 EVALUATION OF MEASUREMENT

5.4.1 Construct validation

Factor analysis was conducted in order to establish the underlying structure of the items that made up the individual scales used in the measuring instrument. For the purpose of this study the principal axis factoring method was used as extraction methods and the Promax with Kaiser Normalisation was used as rotation method. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was conducted for each construct to measure the sampling adequacy Bartletts' test of sphericity was also used for analysis. According to Pallant (2007:182), the KMO index ranges from 0 to 1, with .6 as the suggested minimum value for a good factor analysis. Pallant (2007:181) states that for the factor analysis to be considered appropriate, the Bartlett's test should be significant at ($p <. $ 05). In order to determine factors to be extracted, Pallant (2007) proposes the Kaiser's criterion, which focuses on factors that have an eigenvalue of 1 or more. The results from the factor analyses conducted are presented below.

i. Section 1: Communication climate

In Chapter 2, communication climate was identified as an internal communication construct that contributes to the achievement of employee engagement. Communication climate was defined as an employee's general response to the communication environment at organisational and personal levels. Various items were stated as contributors towards communication climate, such as: superior-subordinate communication; superior openness, and opportunities for upward communication. In order to ascertain the contribution of communication climate, 10 items were used in section 1 of the instrument which focused on superior-subordinate communication, superior openness as well as opportunities for upward communication.

In order to determine the central tendency and spread of the items, the mean and standard deviation were calculated.

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Table 11: Descriptive statistics for communication climate

	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
1.1	My supervisor makes me feel free to talk to him or her.	3.676	1.0054	216
1.2	My supervisor is a really competent, expert manager.	3.625	.9416	216
1.3	My supervisor encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job.	3.449	1.0375	216
1.4	My supervisor makes me feel that the things I tell him/her are really important.	3.398	.9971	216
1.5	My supervisor is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view.	3.028	1.1078	216
1.6	My supervisor has my best interest in mind when she talks to his/her boss.	3.106	1.1300	216
1.7	My supervisor listens to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me.	3.384	1.0368	216
1.8	My supervisor is frank and candid.	3.259	1.0772	216
1.9	I feel free to tell my supervisor that I disagree with him/her.	3.014	1.1309	216
1.10	I can communicate 'bad news' to my supervisor without fear of retaliation on his/her part.	2.838	1.1560	216

The statistics revealed that the communication climate variables achieved a KMO value of .937 and Bartlett's test was statistically significant (p = .000) which indicates the appropriateness of the factor analysis.

Figure 10: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		**.937**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1555.128
	Df	45
	Sig.	.000

Only one factor was favourably extracted (communication climate) which recorded a total eigenvalue of above 1, yielding a percentage variance explained of 64.45%.   In terms of the factor matrix, the results show that all the variables could be grouped under one question since only one factor was retained.

Figure 11: Factor loadings

	Factor 1
1.1	.813
1.2	.797
1.3	.733
1.4	.781
1.5	.872
1.6	.800

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1.7	.836
1.8	.701
1.9	.733
1.10	.705

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring

As indicated in Chapter 2, communication climate refers to the subjectively experienced quality of the internal environment of an organisation. Communication climate is a multi-dimensional construct made up of five factors that are responsible for perceptions. The factors are: superior-subordinate communication, quality of information, reliability of information, superior openness, and opportunities for upward communication. The factor analysis conducted yielded one factor which confirms that all the items in the scale can be grouped under one question.

ii. Section 2: Quality and reliability of information

Quality and reliability of information received by employees was identified in Chapter 2 as a construct of internal communication that potentially contributes to the achievement of employee engagement. Information quality was defined as an individual employee perception of the value of the information they receive, while reliability of information was defined as the recipient's perception of the trustworthiness of the sender and channel used.

In order to determine the central tendency and spread of the items, the mean and standard deviation were calculated.

Table 12: Descriptive statistics for quality and reliability of information

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
2.1	I think people in this department say what they mean and mean what they say.	2.591	.9858	215
2.2	People in this department are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.	2.563	.9592	215
2.3	In this department people freely exchange information and opinions.	2.628	.9625	215
2.4	I am always informed about how well the departmental goals and objectives are being met.	2.665	1.1956	215
2.5	Executive management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need.	2.637	1.0040	215

2.6	I receive information from the sources that I prefer (e.g. my supervisor, unit meetings, co-workers, newsletters).	3.265	.8857	215
2.7	I am satisfied with explanations I get from executive management about why things are done as they are.	2.633	1.0046	215
2.8	My job requirements are specified in clear language.	3.642	.8577	215
2.9	I think that information I receive from management is reliable.	3.205	.9247	215
2.10	I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is reliable.	3.470	.7474	215

The KMO value was .874 which verified the sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test was statistically significant (p = 0.000), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate.

Figure 12: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.874
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1058.528
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

Two components had eigenvalues above Kaiser's criterion of 1, yielding a total of 63.44% variance explained. The final factor loadings are shown below:

Figure 13: Factor loadings

	Factor	
	1	2
2.1	.745	
2.2	.876	
2.3	.701	
2.4	.778	
2.5	.836	
2.6		.454
2.7	.694	
2.8		.700
2.9		.477
2.10		.653

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Section 2 of the instrument measure the quality and reliability of the information which is listed as a dimension of communication climate that contribute to the perception. In this study the two factors were measured independent of communication climate. Quality of information was defined in Chapter 2 as individual employee perception of the value of information they receive in terms of how timeous, accurate, adequate and complete the

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information is. Reliability of information was defined as the trustworthiness of the sender and channel used. This refers to how trustworthy the sender of information is perceived to be.

iii.   Section 3: Public relations models

Three models of public relations were identified in Chapter 2 as internal communication constructs that contribute to the achievement of employee engagement. The models identified were: two-way asymmetrical, two-way symmetrical, and the new mixed-method model. The new mixed two-way communication model advocates for a combined practice of two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. Only two models i.e. two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication were included in the study.

In order to determine the central tendency and spread of the items, the mean and standard deviation were calculated.

Table 13: **Descriptive statistics for public relations**

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
3.1	The purpose of communication in the department is to develop mutual understanding between management of the organisation and employees.	3.356	.9919	216
3.2	Surveys are conducted to find out how leadership and employees understand each other.	2.472	1.1036	216
3.3	The purpose of communication in the department is to change attitudes and behaviour of both leadership and employees.	3.056	1.0146	216
3.4	The purpose of communication in the department is to help leadership to be responsive to the problems of other employees.	2.870	1.0834	216
3.5	Most communication between leadership and employees in the department can be said to be two-way communication.	2.634	1.1125	216
3.6	In the department, research on effectiveness of communication in changing attitudes is regularly conducted.	2.144	1.0220	216
3.7	Attitude surveys are conducted regularly to make policy related decisions.	2.116	.9743	216
3.8	The goal of communication in the department is to persuade employees to behave as the department wants them to behave.	3.579	1.1627	216
3.9	Communication in the department is mainly in written format.	3.644	.9240	216

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| 3.10 | Communication in the department is mainly one-way from leadership to employees. | 3.667 | 1.0070 | 216 |
| 3.11 | I seldom get feedback when I communicate to the leadership | 3.384 | 1.0413 | 216 |

The KMO value was .794 which verified the sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test was statistically significant (p = 0.000), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate.

Figure 14: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.794
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	1085.424
df	55
Sig.	.000

Three components had eigenvalues above Kaiser's criterion of 1, yielding a total of 68.5% variance explained. The final factor loadings are shown below:

Figure 15: Factor loadings

	Factor		
	1	2	3
3.1	.600		.440
3.2	.695		
3.3	.736		
3.4	.810		.329
3.5	.821		
3.6	.689		-.373
3.7	.727	.304	-.587
3.8		.513	
3.9		.656	
3.10	-.326	.660	
3.11		.565	

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.[a]

In Chapter 2, the three public relations models, namely: two-way asymmetrical, two-way symmetrical, and the new mixed-method model. For the purpose of this study, only two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication were measured using an existing scale. The factor analysis yielded three factors. Contrary to the literature discussed in Chapter 2, the third factor addressed the issues of research and whether

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research is conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of communication. For the purpose of this study, the third factor is named: communication research.

iv.   Section 4: Organisational culture

Organisational culture was identified as an internal communication construct that contributes to the achievement of employee engagement. Two types of organisational cultures were defined and discussed in Chapter 2, namely: authoritarian and participative cultures. In order to determine the central tendency and spread of the items, the mean and standard deviation were calculated.

Table 14: Descriptive statistics for organisational culture

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
4.1	The department celebrates its success with employees.	2.468	1.0472	216
4.2	Participative culture of the department promotes innovation among employees.	2.588	1.0704	216
4.3	Senior leaders in the department care deeply about employees.	2.116	1.1083	216
4.4	Senior leaders in the department believe in sharing of power and responsibility with lower-level employees.	2.125	1.0107	216
4.5	The department is usually willing to negotiate with employees for mutual understanding.	2.384	.8973	216
4.6	As an employee, I feel I have personal influence on decisions and policies of the department.	2.634	1.0118	216
4.7	My opinions make a difference in the day-today decisions that affect my job.	2.968	1.0843	216
4.8	Most employees in the department share a common vision and strive towards its achievement.	2.764	1.0138	216
4.9	Most decisions in this department are made after thorough discussion between all people who will be affected in a major way	2.269	.9987	216

The KMO value was .872 which verified the sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test was statistically significant (p = 0.000), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate.

Figure 16: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.872
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1056.724
	df	36
	Sig.	.000

Two components had eigenvalues above Kaiser's criterion of 1, yielding a total of 67.5% variance explained. The final factor loadings are shown below:

Figure 17: Factor loadings

	Factor	
	1	2
4.1	.686	-.317
4.2	.698	-.351
4.3	.818	
4.4	.811	
4.5	.650	
4.6	.702	.457
4.7	.560	.424
4.8	.642	
4.9	.778	

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.[a]

In Chapter 2 of this study, two types of organisational cultures (participative and authoritarian) were identified and discussed but the study focused on only one culture type, i.e. participative culture. From factor analysis, two factors as valid scales to measure organisational culture, i.e. organisational culture – 1 and organisational culture -2. The first factor focused on how employees perceived participative culture at an organisational level, while the second factor focused on employee perceptions on organisational culture at an individual level.

v.   Section 5: Leadership communication

In Chapter 2, leadership communication was identified as a critical internal communication construct that potentially contributes to the achievement of employee engagement. The discussion was limited to the participative leadership style which served as the basis for the items in Section 5 of the measuring instrument.

In order to determine the central tendency and spread of the items, the mean and standard deviation were calculated.

Table 15: Descriptive statistics for leadership communication

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
5.1	My supervisor encourages and supports me when I have a difficult or stressful task.	3.333	.9977	216
5.2	My supervisor backs me up and supports me in difficult situations.	3.250	1.0576	216
5.3	I receive credit for helpful ideas and suggestions.	3.259	.9965	216
5.4	Leadership consults with me to get my suggestions before making a decision that affects me	2.606	1.0511	216
5.5	I am provided with opportunities to develop my skills	3.394	1.0013	216
5.6	My supervisor expresses confidence in my ability to carry out a difficult task	3.412	.9056	216

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.[a]

The KMO value was .876 which verified the sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test was statistically significant ($p = 0.000$), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate.

Figure 18: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.862
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	854.358
	df	15
	Sig.	.000

Only one factor was favourably extracted (communication climate) which recorded a total eigenvalue of above 1, yielding 66.9% variance explained. Final factor loadings are presented below:

Figure 19: Factor loadings

	Factor 1
5.1	.883
5.2	.868
5.3	.754
5.4	.510
5.5	.757
5.6	.862

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Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.[a]

Generally, leaders are individuals who guide, direct, motivate, or inspire others. In Chapter 2, leadership was defined as one or more people who select, equip, train, and influence one or more follower(s) who have diverse gifts, abilities, and skills and focuses the follower(s) to the organisation's mission and objectives causing the follower(s) to willingly and enthusiastically expend spiritual, emotional, and physical energy in a concerted, coordinated effort to achieve the organisational mission and objectives.

vi.   Section 6: Employee engagement

Employee engagement was discussed in Chapter 3 as part of the literature review, where three dimensions were identified as constructs of employee engagement. The items under Section 6 of the measuring instrument were based on the three dimensions – 6.1 to 6.6 (vigour), 6.7 to 6.11 (dedication), and 6.12 to 6.17 (absorption).

In order to determine the central tendency and spread of the items, the mean and standard deviation were calculated.

Table 16: Descriptive statistics for employee engagement

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
6.1	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	3.447	1.0073	215
6.2	At work I feel bursting with energy.	3.000	1.0457	215
6.3	At work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	3.693	.8747	215
6.4	I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	3.656	.9236	215
6.5	In doing my job, I am very resilient mentally.	3.507	.8694	215
6.6	In doing my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	3.470	.9006	215
6.7	To me, my job is challenging.	3.470	1.0357	215
6.8	My job inspires me.	3.488	.9947	215
6.9	I am enthusiastic about my job	3.530	.9657	215
6.10	I am proud of the job that I do.	3.702	.8672	215
6.11	I find work I do full of meaning and purpose.	3.735	.9370	215
6.12	When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	3.009	1.0322	215
6.13	Time flies when I am working.	3.595	.9166	215
6.14	I get carried away when I am working.	3.098	1.0343	215
6.15	It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	2.879	1.0386	215
6.16	I am immersed in my work.	3.181	.8258	215

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6.17	I feel happy when I am working intensely	3.358	.8845	215

The KMO value was .902 which verified the sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test was statistically significant (p = 0.000), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate.

Figure 20: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.902
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2341.891
	df	136
	Sig.	.000

Three components had eigenvalues above Kaiser's criterion of 1, yielding a total of 65.62% variance explained. The final factor loadings are shown below:

Figure 21: Factor loadings

	Factor		
	1	2	3
6.1	.511	.525	
6.2	.692		
6.3	.548	.381	.331
6.4	.607	.341	
6.5	.607		
6.6	.658		
6.7	.692		
6.8	.786		-.441
6.9	.786		-.439
6.10	.735		-.324
6.11	.757		
6.12	.611	-.364	
6.13	.702		
6.14	.650	-.330	
6.15	.663	-.403	
6.16	.668		
6.17	.744		

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.[a]

Three constructs of employee engagement were identified and discussed in Chapter 3. Factor analysis retained three factors, namely: vigour, dedication, and absorption. Vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working; and demonstrate willingness to exert extra effort. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge.

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Absorption refers to being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching oneself from work.

5.4.2 Reliability analysis

From the factor analyses, five constructs were identified in total to measure internal communication, that is: communication climate; quality and reliability of information received by employees; public relations models; organisational culture and leadership communication. Three constructs were identified to measure employee engagement, namely; vigour, dedication, and absorption.

There are many different aspects to reliability - Pallant (2007:95) highlights determining the internal consistency of the scale as the main issue. The internal consistency of a scale means that the measure consistently reflects the construct that being measured.

The most commonly used measure of scale reliability is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha is the value of .7. Any scale that obtains a lower Cronbach's alpha value is considered unreliable (Field, 2009:675). Field (2009:678) further states that in a reliable scale, all items should correlate with the total. The correlation value of all items should be above 0.3. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient achieved by the scales are presented below:

i.   Section 1: Communication climate

The communication scale achieved Cronbach's alpha value of .937 which indicates excellent scale reliability, with a total number of 10 items.

Table 17: Item-Total statistics for communication climate

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V1	1.1 My supervisor makes me feel free to talk to him or her.	29.102	59.338	.779	.929
V2	1.2 My supervisor is a really competent, expert manager.	29.153	60.344	.765	.930

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V3	1.3 My supervisor encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job.	29.329	60.045	.702	.933
V4	1.4 My supervisor makes me feel that the things I tell him/her are really important.	29.380	59.781	.755	.931
V5	1.5 My supervisor is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view.	29.750	57.072	.843	.926
V6	1.6 My supervisor has my best interest in mind when he/she talks to his/her boss.	29.671	57.868	.772	.930
V7	1.7 My supervisor listens to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me.	29.394	58.537	.807	.928
V8	1.8 My supervisor is frank and candid.	29.519	59.953	.678	.934
V9	1.9 I feel free to tell my supervisor that I disagree with him/her.	29.764	58.814	.710	.933
V10	1.10 I can communicate 'bad news' to my supervisor without fear of retaliation on his/her part.	29.940	58.894	.687	.934

Pallant (2007:98) states that if the corrected item-total correlation matrix produces positive values, it is an indication that the items are measuring the same underlying characteristic. Based on the values indicated under the corrected item-total correlation column in Table 17 above, it is evident that the items correlated with the total Cronbach's alpha value of .937.

ii.   Section 2: Quality and reliability of information

From the factor analysis results, two factors were retained and therefore two sub-scales were identified. One sub-scale measured the quality of information, while the other measured the reliability of information. The results of the two sub-scales are presented and discussed individually below.

Table 18: Item-Total statistics for quality of information

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V11	2.1 I think people in this department say what they mean and mean what they say.	13.126	17.699	.665	.876
V12	2.2 People in this department are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.	13.153	17.560	.710	.870
V13	2.3 In this department people freely exchange information and opinions.	13.088	17.660	.692	.872
V14	2.4 I am always informed about how well the departmental goals and objectives are being met.	13.051	15.768	.736	.867

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	Variables				
V15	2.5 Executive management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need.	13.079	17.176	.721	.867
V16	2.7 I am satisfied with explanations I get from executive management about why things are done as they are.	13.084	17.142	.725	.867

The first sub-scale indicated in Table 18 above was made up of six items (variable 11 to 16) and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .889, which is a good indication of a scale's reliability. Notable from the table above is that all variables achieved individual alpha values below the overall scale's alpha value, which indicates a good correlation among the scale items. Factor analysis factor loading indicated that item 2.6 loaded only on the second factor and therefore it is reported below on the second sub-scale.

Table 19: Item-Total statistics for reliability of information

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V17	2.6 I receive information from the sources that I prefer (e.g. my supervisor, unit meetings, co-workers, newsletters).	10.319	3.893	.538	.675
V18	2.8 My job requirements are specified in clear language.	9.940	3.861	.582	.649
V19	2.9 I think that information I receive from management is reliable.	10.380	3.585	.605	.633
V20	2.10 I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is reliable.	10.111	4.685	.405	.743

Although this sub-scale only had four variables, it still obtained an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .738, which according to Pallant (2007:95) is considered acceptable indication of reliability. From factor analysis, variables18 to 20 loaded on both factors but were higher on the second factor, while variable17 only loaded on the second factor.

iii.   Section 3: Public relations (excellent practice of communication)

From factor analysis, three factors were retained for public relations model, therefore three sub-scales were identified and they are presented hereunder individually. The three subscales measured the two-way symmetrical model and the two-way asymmetrical model. The third factor is called communication research, for the purposes of this study.

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Table 20: Item-Total statistics for two-way symmetrical communication

Variables		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V21	3.1 The purpose of communication in the department is to develop mutual understanding between management of the organisation and employees.	11.032	13.120	.618	.860
V22	3.2 Surveys are conducted to find out how leadership and employees understand each other.	11.917	12.579	.607	.864
V23	3.3 The purpose of communication in the department is to change attitudes and behaviour of both leadership and employees.	11.333	12.288	.735	.833
V24	3.4 The purpose of communication in the department is to help leadership to be responsive to the problems of other employees.	11.519	11.544	.792	.817
V25	3.5 Most communication between leadership and employees in the department can be said to be two-way communication.	11.755	11.749	.729	.833

The first sub-scale indicated in the table above was made up of five variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .870, which indicates a good reliability of the scale. Notable from the table above is that all variables achieved individual alpha values below the overall scale's alpha value, which indicates good correlation among the scale items.

The second sub-scale; which for the purpose of this study is named communication research, only had two variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .877 which indicates good reliability. The variables obtained positive scores, which indicates a good correlation.

Table 21: Item-Total statistics for communication research

Variables		Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V26	3.6 In the department, research on effectiveness of communication in changing attitudes is regularly conducted.	2.116	.949	.782	.
V27	3.7 Attitude surveys are conducted regularly to make policy related decisions.	2.144	1.044	.782	.

The third sub-scale indicated in Table 22 below was made up of four variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .711, which is an acceptable indicator that the scale can be considered reliable.

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Table 22: Item-Total statistics for two-way asymmetrical communication

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V28	3.8 The goal of communication in the department is to persuade employees to behave as the department wants them to behave.	10.694	5.506	.432	.696
V29	3.9 Communication in the department is mainly in written format.	10.630	5.899	.548	.623
V30	3.10 Communication in the department is mainly one-way from leadership to employees.	10.606	5.523	.565	.607
V31	3.11 I seldom get feedback when I communicate to the leadership	10.889	5.802	.464	.668

Notable from the Table above is that all items achieved individual alpha values that are below the overall scale's alpha value, which indicates a good correlation among the scale items.

iv.   Section 4: Organisational culture

From the factor analysis results, two factors were retained and therefore two sub-scales were identified for organisational culture and are presented hereunder individually.

Table 23: Item-Total statistics for organisational culture-1

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V32	4.1 The department celebrates its success with employees.	6.829	7.854	.707	.852
V33	4.2 Participative culture of the department promotes innovation among employees	6.708	7.649	.727	.844
V34	4.3 Senior leaders in the department care deeply about employees.	7.181	7.200	.786	.820
V35	4.4 Senior leaders in the department believe in sharing of power and responsibility with lower-level employees.	7.171	7.994	.715	.849

The first sub-scale indicated in the table above was made up of four variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .876 which indicates a good reliability of the scale. Notable from the Table above, is that all variables achieved individual alpha values below the overall scale's alpha value, which is an indication of a good correlation among the scale items.

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Table 24: Item-Total statistics for organisational culture-2

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V36	4.5 The department is usually willing to negotiate with employees for mutual understanding.	10.634	10.735	.586	.809
V37	4.6 As an employee, I feel I have personal influence on decisions and policies of the department.	10.384	9.512	.713	.772
V38	4.7 My opinions make a difference in the day-today decisions that affect my job.	10.051	9.807	.589	.809
V39	4.8 Most employees in the department share a common vision and strive towards its achievement.	10.255	10.191	.582	.810
V40	4.9 Most decisions in this department are made after thorough discussion between all people who will be affected in a major way.	10.750	9.742	.681	.781

The second sub-scale indicated in Table 24 above was made up of five variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .830 which indicates a good reliability of the scale. Notable from the Table above is that all items achieved individual alpha values below the overall scale's alpha value, which is an indication of a good correlation among the scale items.

v.   Section 5: Participative leadership communication

From the factor analysis results, only one factor was retained for participative leadership communication, which resulted in one scale. The leadership scale was made up of six variables and achieved a Cronbach's alpha value of .896 which indicates excellent scale reliability.

Table 25: Item-Total statistics for participative leadership communication

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V41	5.1 My supervisor encourages and supports me when I have a difficult or stressful task.	15.921	16.240	.814	.862
V42	5.2 My supervisor backs me up and supports me in difficult situations.	16.005	15.902	.801	.864
V43	5.3 I receive credit for helpful ideas and suggestions.	15.995	16.907	.718	.877
V44	5.4 Leadership consults with me to get my suggestions before making a decision that affects me.	16.648	18.266	.491	.913
V45	5.5 I am provided with opportunities to develop my skills.	15.861	16.911	.713	.878

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	V46	5.6 My supervisor expresses confidence in my ability to carry out a difficult task.	15.843	16.933	.809	.865

vi.   Section 6: Employee engagement

The factor analysis results for employee engagement retained three factors and therefore, three sub-scales were identified. They are presented hereunder individually.

Table 26: Item-Total statistics for vigour

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V47	6.1 When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	17.310	12.699	.601	.829
V48	6.2 At work I feel bursting with energy.	17.755	12.019	.679	.813
V49	6.3 At work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	17.069	13.144	.642	.821
V50	6.4 I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	17.102	12.817	.659	.817
V51	6.5 In doing my job, I am very resilient mentally.	17.250	13.453	.599	.829
V52	6.6 In doing my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	17.287	13.229	.609	.827

The first sub-scale (vigour) indicated in Table 26 above was made up of six variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .848 which indicates a good reliability of the scale. Notable from the Table above is that all items achieved individual alpha values below the overall scale's alpha value, which is an indication of a good correlation among the scale items.

Table 27: Item-Total statistics for dedication

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V53	6.7 To me, my job is challenging.	14.456	11.240	.651	.912
V54	6.8 My job inspires me.	14.437	10.490	.831	.871

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	Variables				
V55	6.9 I am enthusiastic about my job.	14.395	10.633	.837	.870
V56	6.10 I am proud of the job that I do.	14.223	11.567	.766	.887
V57	6.11 I find work I do full of meaning and purpose.	14.191	11.202	.758	.887

The second sub-scale indicated in Table 27 above, was made up of five variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .907 which indicates excellent reliability of the scale. Furthermore, all the items obtained positive scores, which also indicates a good correlation among the scale items.

Table 28: Item-Total statistics for absorption

	Variables	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha if Item Deleted
V58	6.12 When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	16.097	14.181	.683	.858
V59	6.13 Time flies when I am working.	15.509	14.977	.669	.860
V60	6.14 I get carried away when I am working.	16.009	14.149	.686	.858
V61	6.15 It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	16.227	13.841	.730	.850
V62	6.16 I am immersed in my work.	15.921	15.422	.689	.858
V63	6.17 I feel happy when I am working intensely.	15.745	15.167	.670	.860

The third sub-scale (absorption) indicated in Table 28 above, was made up of six variables and achieved an overall Cronbach's alpha value of .**878** which indicates a good reliability of the scale. All the items obtained positive scores, which indicates a good correlation among scale items.

5.5 HYPOTHESES TESTING

The survey was designed to explore the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement within the NDOH. Prior to conducting the survey, certain hypotheses were posed about the phenomenon.

The first seven hypotheses focused on the relationship between the identified constructs, while the other four sought to establish if there is a statistical difference with regard to employee engagement between employees of different age groups, job level groups, number of years employed and gender. The questions included in the instrument were based on internal communication constructs as identified in Chapter 2; and the employee engagement constructs identified and discussed in Chapter 3. The interest of this study is to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between internal communication constructs and the employee engagement constructs in order to ascertain if the practice of internal communication influences employee engagement.

In formulating hypotheses, alternative H(alt) and null hypotheses H(null) were stated. The first seven hypotheses postulate a relationship between internal communication and the levels of employee engagement. These hypotheses were formulated in conjunction with the research objectives stated in Chapter 1. The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: There is a relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H2: There is a relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H3: There is a relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.

H4: There is a relationship between quality of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement.

H5: There is a relationship between reliability of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement.

H6: There is a relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.

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H7: There is a relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H8: There is a difference in engagement levels across age groups of employees.

H9: There is a difference in engagement levels across the 'years of experience' groups.

H10: There is a difference in engagement levels across the job level groups.

H11: There is a difference in engagement levels across the gender groups.

5.5.1 Correlation analysis

In Chapter 4, the statistical methods used to test the hypotheses were described as the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient to test for statistically significant relationships, and the Student t-test and the Kruskal-Wallis test, used to determine statistically significant differences.

Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient

Correlation analysis was conducted to measure the strength and direction, as well as the significance of the linear relationship between the two variables. In analysing the relationship between variables, the *Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient* was calculated. Pearson's correlation coefficients ® values range between -1 to +1 (Pallant, 2010:123). The plus or minus sign in front of the *r* value indicates whether the variables are positively or negatively correlated, that is, the direction of the relationship.

A perfect correlation of 1 or -1 indicates that one variable can be determined exactly by knowing the value of the other variable. When the correlation value is closer to 1, it indicates that there is a strong positive degree of linear relationship between the two variables, while a correlation value that is 0 or very close to 0 means that there is no linear relationship between the two variables (Pallant, 2010:123).

The output of the analysis provides the Pearson's correlation coefficient represented by *r*, the associated statistical significance value, and the sample size represented by *n*. In the output, each variable is perfectly correlated with itself resulting in *r* =1. Pallant (2010:135) cautions that the significance value does not indicate the strength of the relationship between two variables, but rather the confidence on the results obtained. Furthermore, Pallant (2010:135) states that the significance, of *r* is strongly influenced by the size of the sample. The study follows Field's (2009:179) criterion of significance which is .05 (5%) and therefore any correlation at this level is marked with an asterisk.

The correlation reported below ascertains if a relationship between the individual internal communication factors and the employee engagement factors exist.

In determining the category of strength of the relationship between the variables, Cohen's (1988) guidelines are followed, that is: *r*=.10 to *r*=.29 indicates a weak relationship; *r*=.30 to.49 indicates a moderate relationship; and *r*=.50 to 1.0 indicates a strong relationship. The section below provides summarised correlation results which are presented in tables. Each composite hypothesis was broken down into its constituent parts and were stated as follows:

Hypothesis 1
There is a relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H1a(alt): There is a relationship between *two-way asymmetrical communication* and *vigour*.
H1a(null): There is no relationship between *two-way asymmetrical communication* and *vigour*.

H1b(alt): There is a relationship between *two-way asymmetrical communication* and *dedication*.
H1b(null): There is no relationship between *two-way asymmetrical communication* and *dedication*.

H1c(alt): There is a relationship between *two-way asymmetrical communication* and *absorption*.

H1c(null): There is no relationship between *two-way asymmetrical communication* and *absorption*.

The factor analysis results indicate that the two-way asymmetrical communication construct resulted in two factors named: two-way asymmetrical communication-1 and two-way asymmetrical communication-2.

The theory presented in Chapter 2 identified the two-way asymmetrical communication and two-way symmetrical communication as the public relations models to be tested. As stated above, the factor analysis for this study divided two-way asymmetrical communication into two further models, namely: 1.) deals with research and surveys on effectiveness of communication and policy decisions; and 2.) deals with the issue of how communication is used in the department, whether to engage employees or instruct them (two-way asymmetrical communication-2).

The Pearson's correlation coefficient and its associated statistical significance was used to reject or accept the null hypotheses stated above.

The results are presented in the tables below:

Table 29: Pearson's correlation coefficient for two-way asymmetrical communication

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Two-way asymmetrical communication-1	Vigour	.243**	.000	Weak and positive but statistically significant
	Dedication	.149*	.029	Weak and positive but statistically significant
	Absorption	.278**	.000	Weak and positive but statistically significant
Two-way asymmetrical communication-2	Vigour	.044	.521	Weak and positive and not statistically significant

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| | Dedication | -.078 | .253 | Weak and negative and not statistically significant |
| | Absorption | -.208** | .002 | Weak and negative and not statistically significant |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It can be concluded that two-way asymmetrical communication-1 is positive and statistically significantly correlated with the levels of employee engagement.

Two-way asymmetrical communication-2 was found to have a very weak negative relationship with vigour and dedication which were not statistically significant while the relationship with absorption was negative and weak but statistically significant. Based on these findings, the null hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c can therefore be rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is a relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H2a(alt): There is a relationship between *two-way symmetrical communication* and *vigour*.

H2a(null): There is no relationship between *two-way symmetrical communication* and *vigour*.

H2b(alt): There is a relationship between *two-way symmetrical communication* and *dedication*.

H2b(null): There is no relationship between *two-way symmetrical communication* and *dedication*.

H2c(alt): There is a relationship between *two-way symmetrical communication* and *absorption*.

H2c(null): There is no relationship between *two-way symmetrical communication* and *absorption*.

Table 30 : Pearson's correlation coefficient for two-way symmetrical communication

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Two-way symmetrical communication	Vigour	.405**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant
	Dedication	.407**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant
	Absorption	.539**	.000	Strong and positive but statistically significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Two-way symmetrical communication was found to have moderate positive relationships with vigour and dedication and a strong positive relationship with absorption, which was also statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypotheses for H2a, H2b, and H2 can be rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There is a relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.

H3a(alt): There is relationship between *supportive communication climate* and *vigour*.

H3a(null): There is no relationship between *supportive communication climate* and *vigour*.

H3b(alt): There is a relationship between *supportive communication climate* and *dedication*.

H3b(null): There is no relationship between *supportive communication climate* and *dedication*.

H3c(alt): There is a relationship between *supportive communication climate* and *absorption*.

H3b(null): There is no relationship between *supportive communication climate* and *absorption*.

Table 31: Pearson's correlation coefficient for communication climate

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Communication climate	Vigour	.427**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant

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| | Dedication | .399** | .000 | Moderate and positive but statistically significant |
| | Absorption | .428** | .000 | Moderate and positive but statistically significant |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Supportive communication climate was found to have moderate and positive relationships with vigour, dedication and absorption, which were also statistically significant. It can be concluded that as the perception of supportive communication climate increased, levels of employee engagement also increased. Therefore, null hypotheses H3a, H3b, and H3c can be rejected.

Hypothesis 4

There is a relationship between quality of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement.

H4a(alt): There is a relationship between *quality of information* received by employees and *vigour*.

H4a(null): There is no relationship between *quality of information* received by employees and *vigour*.

H4b(alt): There is a relationship between *quality of information* received by employees and *dedication*.

H4b(null): There is no relationship between *quality of information* received by employees and *dedication*.

H4c(alt): There is a relationship between *quality of information* received by employees and *absorption*.

H4c(null): There is no relationship between *quality of information* received by employees and *absorption*.

Table 32: Pearson's correlation coefficient for quality of information (information-1)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Quality of information	Vigour	.479**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant
	Dedication	.338**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant
	Absorption	.465**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Quality of information received by employees was found to have moderate and positive relationships with vigour, dedication and absorption which were also statistically significant. It can therefore be concluded that the more employees perceived information they receive as being of quality, the more they felt engaged at work. Therefore, null hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c can be rejected.

Hypothesis 5

There is a relationship between reliability of information received by employees and the levels of employee engagement.

H5a(alt): There is a relationship between the *reliability of information* received by employees and *vigour*.

H5a(null): There is no relationship between the *reliability of information* received by employees and *vigour*.

H5b(alt): There is a relationship between *reliability of information* received by employees and *dedication*.

H5b(null): There is no relationship between *reliability of information* received by employees and *dedication*.

H5c(alt): There is a relationship between *reliability of information* received by employees and *absorption*.

H5c(null): There is no relationship between *reliability of information* received by employees and *absorption*.

Table 33: Pearson's correlation coefficient for reliability of information (information-2)

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Reliability of information	Vigour	.571**	.000	Strong and positive but statistically significant
	Dedication	.448**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant
	Absorption	.371**	.000	Moderate and positive but statistically significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Reliability of information received by employees was found to have strong, and moderate relationships with vigour, dedication, and absorption which were also statistically significant. It can therefore be concluded that the more employees perceive information they received to be reliable, the more they felt engaged at work. Therefore null hypotheses H5a, H5b, and H5c can be rejected.

Hypothesis 6

There is a relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.

H6a(alt): There is a relationship between *participative organisational culture* and *vigour*.
H6a(null): There is no relationship between *participative organisational culture* and *vigour*.

H6b(alt): There is a relationship between *participative organisational culture* and *dedication*.
H6b(null): There is no relationship between *participative organisational culture* and *dedication*.

H6c(alt): There is a relationship between *participative organisational culture* and *absorption*.

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H6c(null): There is no relationship between *participative organisational culture* and *absorption*.

The literature presented in Chapter 3 identified two types of organisational cultures, namely; participative and authoritative. The study opted to focus only on participative organisational culture, yet the factor analysis conducted retained two factors of participative organisational culture leading to two-subscales being identified. Items 4.1 to 4.4 of the questionnaire sought to establish how employees perceived the culture at organisational level (POC1), while items 4.5 to 4.9 sough to establish how employees perceived the culture at individual level (POC2). Pearson's correlation coefficient was conducted separately for the two factors.

Table 34: Pearson's correlation coefficient for participative organisational culture-1

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Participative organisational culture-1	Vigour	.454**	.000	Moderate positive and statistically significant
	Dedication	.338**	.000	Moderate, positive and statistically significant
	Absorption	.461**	.000	Moderate, positive and statistically significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Participative organisational culture-1 was found to have moderate and positive relationships with vigour, dedication, and absorption, which were also statistically significant. It can be concluded that the more employees experienced organisational culture to be participative, the more they felt engaged at work. Therefore, null hypotheses H6a, H6b, and H6c can be rejected.

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Table 35: Pearson's correlation coefficient for participative organisational culture-2

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Participative organisational culture-2	Vigour	.472**	.000	Moderate, positive and statistically significant
	Dedication	.395**	.000	Moderate, positive and statistically significant
	Absorption	.379**	.000	Moderate, positive and statistically significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Participative organisational culture-2 was found to have moderate and positive relationships with vigour, dedication, and absorption which were also statistically significant. Therefore the null hypotheses H6a, H6b, and H6c can be rejected.

Hypothesis 7

There is a relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

H7a(alt): There is a relationship between *participative leadership communication* and *vigour*.

H7a(null): There is no relationship between *participative leadership communication* and *vigour*.

H7b(alt): There is a relationship between *participative leadership communication* and *dedication*.

H7b(null): There is no relationship between *participative leadership communication* and *dedication*.

H7c(alt): There is a relationship between *participative leadership communication* and *absorption*.

H7c(null): There is no relationship between *participative leadership communication* and *absorption*.

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Table 36: Pearson's correlation coefficient for participative leadership communication

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Strength and direction of relationship
Participative leadership communication	Vigour	.545**	.000	Strong, positive and statistically significant
	Dedication	.480**	.000	Moderate, positive and statistically significant
	Absorption	.428**	.000	Moderate, positive and statistically significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Participative leadership communication was found to have both strong, moderate, and positive relationships with vigour, dedication, and absorption respectively. These relationships were also statistically significant. It can be concluded that the more employees perceived leadership communication as being participative, the more they felt engaged at work. Therefore, null hypothesis H7a, H7b, and H7c can be rejected.

Hypothesis 8

There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across age groups of employees.

H8a(alt): There is a difference in *vigour* levels across *age groups* of employees.

H8a(null): There is no difference in *vigour* levels across *age groups* of employees.

H8b(alt): There is a difference in *dedication* levels across *age groups* of employees.

H8b(null): There is no difference in *dedication* levels across *age groups* of employees.

H8c(alt): There is a difference in *absorption* levels across *age groups* of employees.

H8c(null): There is no difference in *absorption* levels across *age groups* of employees.

Hypothesis 8 tested whether there is a statistical difference in the levels of employee engagement across the age groups of employees. The age groups were as follows:

Group 1: 20 to 35

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Group 2: 36 to 45

Group 3: 46 to 55

Group 4: 56 to 65

The Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance by rank test results are shown below:

Table 37: Analysis of variance by rank

Variable	Age group	N	Mean rank
Vigour	20 to 35	55	**113.52**
	36 to 45	90	104.21
	46 to 55	54	109.51
	56 to 65	17	111.76
	Total	**216**	
Dedication	20 to 35	55	105.85
	36 to 45	90	110.01
	46 to 55	53	105.11
	56 to 65	17	113.32
	Total	**215**	
Absorption	20 to 35	55	123.79
	36 to 45	90	104.29
	46 to 55	54	93.49
	56 to 65	17	129.00
	Total	**216**	

Table 38: Test statistics

	Total Vigour	Total Dedication	Total Absorption
Chi-Square	.845	.403	8.689
df	3	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.839	.940	034

The Kruskal-Wallis test results indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between the age groups with regard to vigour and dedication. However, a statistically significant difference exists for absorption at the 5% level of significance (p = 0.034). Furthermore, with regard to absorption, the mean ranks indicate that the age group 56 to

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65 tend to have the highest level of absorption when compared to the other age groups. Based on evidence, null hypothesis H8c can be rejected.

Hypothesis 9

There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the 'years of experience' groups.

H9a(alt): There is a difference in the levels of *vigour* across the *'years of experience'* groups.
H9a(null): There is no difference in the levels of *vigour* across the *'years of experience'* groups.

H9b(alt): There is a difference in the levels of *dedication* across the *'years of experience'* groups.
H9b(null): There is no difference in levels of *dedication* across the *'years of experience'* groups.

H9c(alt): There is a difference in the levels of *absorption* across the *'years of experience'* groups.
H9c(null): There is no difference in levels of *absorption* across the *'years of experience'* groups.

Hypothesis 9 tested whether a statistical difference in the levels of employee engagement across the number of years employed groups. The number of years employed groups were as follows:

Group 1: 1 to 5
Group 2: 6 to 10
Group 3:11 to 15
Group 4: 16 to 20
Group 5: More than 20

The Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance by rank test results are shown below:

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Table 39: Analysis of variance by rank

Variable	Years of experience	N	Mean rank
Vigour	1 to 5	62	**125.96**
	6 to 10	69	105.30
	11 to 15	39	97.73
	16 to 20	20	87.45
	More than 20	23	93.72
	Total	**213**	
Dedication	1 to 5	62	110.35
	6 to 10	69	116.78
	11 to 15	38	100.00
	16 to 20	20	100.15
	More than 20	23	81.52
	Total	**212**	
Absorption	1 to 5	62	120.94
	6 to 10	69	118.61
	11 to 15	39	76.12
	16 to 20	20	96.33
	More than 20	23	96.24
	Total	**213**	

Figure 22: Test statistics

	Total Vigour	Total Dedication	Total Absorption
Chi-Square	9.951	6.722	16.803
df	4	4	4
Asymp. Sig.	.041	.151	.002

The Kruskal-Wallis test results indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between the 'years of experience' groups with regard to vigour and absorption. However, the results further indicated that no statistically significant difference exists for dedication at the 5% level significance (p = 0.151). Furthermore, with regard to vigour and absorption, the mean ranks indicated that those employed for a period of between 1-5 years tend to have the highest levels of engagement. Therefore null hypotheses H9a and H9c can be rejected.

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Hypothesis 10

There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the job level groups.

H10a(alt): There is a difference in the *levels of vigour* across the *job level* groups.
H10a(null): There is no difference in the *levels of vigour* across the *job level* groups.

H10b(alt): There is a difference in the *levels of dedication* across the *job level* groups.
H10b(null): There is no difference in the *levels of dedication* across the *job level* groups.

H10c(alt): There is a difference in the *levels of absorption* across the *job level* groups.
H10c(null): There is no difference in the *levels of absorption* across the *job level* groups.

Hypothesis 10 tested whether there is a difference in the levels of engagement across the different job level groups. Job level groups were divided as follows:

Group 1: 6 to 8 (Administration)
Group 2: 9 to 10 (Junior Management)
Group 3: 11 to 12 (Middle Management)
Group 4: 13 to 14 (Senior Management)
Group 5: 15 to 16 (Executive Management)

The biographical data presented at the beginning of this Chapter revealed that job level Group 5 did not participate in the study and therefore was not part of the results.

Table 40: ANOVA between groups (employee engagement)

Variable	Groups used	F	Sig.
Vigour	Between Groups	1.902	.130
Dedication	Between Groups	.991	.398
Absorption	Between Groups	.857	.464

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant statistical difference between the four groups for vigour at ($p=.13$), dedication at ($p=.40$), and absorption at ($p=.46$). Therefore the null hypotheses H10a, H10b, and H10c cannot be rejected in support of the alternative hypotheses.

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However, through ANOVA, statistically significant differences across the job level groups were found in internal communication constructs, which is depicted in the table 41 below:

Table 41: ANOVA between groups (internal communication)

Variable	Groups used	F	Sig.
Communication climate		2.741	.044
Participative leadership communication		3.000	.032
Quality of information		4.703	.003
Reliability of information	Between Groups	6.687	.000
Two-way symmetrical communication		2.899	.036
Two-way asymmetrical communication-1		3.346	.020
Participative organisational culture-2		5.228	.002

With regard to communication climate a statistically significant difference was found between job levels 2 and 4 at (p=.04). For participative leadership communication a statistically significant difference at (p=.03) was found between job levels 2 and 4. With regard to quality of information, the results revealed a statistically significant difference between job levels 3 and 4, at (p=.0) as well as job levels 4 and 2. With regard to reliability of information, the findings revealed a statistically significant difference (p=.0) between all job level groups.

With regard to two-way symmetrical communication, a statistically significant difference (p=.04) was found between job levels 1 and 4 as well as 3 and 4. In two-way asymmetrical communication-2, a statistically significant difference (p=.05) was found between job levels 1 and 3. With regard to participative organisational culture-2 statistically significant difference (p=.0) was found between all job level groups. Notably, no statistically significant difference was found across job level groups for two-way asymmetrical communication-1 (communication research) and participative organisational culture-1 (at individual level). No statistically significant difference was found between job level groups in relation to the communication research (two-way asymmetrical communication-2) and participative organisational culture at organisational level (participative organisational culture-1).

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Hypothesis 11: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the gender groups.

H11a(alt): There is a difference in the *levels of vigour* across the *gender* groups.
H11a(null): There is no difference in the in the *levels of vigour* across the *gender* groups.

H11b(alt): There is a difference in the levels of dedication across the gender groups.
H11b(null): There is no difference in the levels of dedication across the gender groups.

H11c(alt): There is a difference in the *levels of absorption* across the *gender* groups.
H11c(null): There is no difference in the *levels of absorption* across the *gender* groups.

In order to compare the mean score of two independent groups t-tests were conducted on gender groups, that is, males and females to determine if there is a difference in the mean scores across all the constructs measured. Male participants were coded as 1 and female participants as 2. The gender group statistics indicated that in terms of the number of participants, 89 were males and 127 were females. The mean difference for both males and females is reported below.

Independent Samples Test for Gender

An Independent Samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores for male and female participants in all variables measured. Field (2009) states that if the Levene's test is significant at p≤.05, there is confidence that the variances are significantly different and that the assumption of equal variances has been violated. Levene's test is non-significant if p>.05 which means that the variances are almost equal and the assumption is tenable. The results of the Levene's test for equality and t-test for equality of means are presented below:

Table 42: Independent samples test for gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Communication climate	Equal variances assumed	.796	.373	1.942	214	.053
	Equal variances not assumed			1.945	190.544	.053
Leadership communication	Equal variances assumed	.102	.750	1.921	214	.056
	Equal variances not assumed			1.922	189.832	.056
Vigour	Equal variances assumed	.127	.722	1.168	214	.244
	Equal variances not assumed			1.175	193.382	.241
Dedication	Equal variances assumed	5.091	.025	.661	213	.509
	Equal variances not assumed			.640	165.879	.523
Absorption	Equal variances assumed	1.797	.181	1.250	214	.213
	Equal variances not assumed			1.230	178.361	.220
Quality of Information_1	Equal variances assumed	1.847	.176	1.876	213	.062
	Equal variances not assumed			1.850	179.893	.066
Reliability of Information_2	Equal variances assumed	.171	.680	.868	214	.386
	Equal variances not assumed			.866	187.631	.388
Two-way symmetrical communication	Equal variances assumed	.062	.803	1.299	214	.195
	Equal variances not assumed			1.305	192.671	.194
Two-way asymmetrical communication_1	Equal variances assumed	3.396	.067	1.169	214	.244
	Equal variances not assumed			1.153	179.655	.251
Two-way asymmetrical communication _2	Equal variances assumed	.553	.458	-.378	214	.706
	Equal variances not assumed			-.380	194.273	.704
Participative organisational culture_1	Equal variances assumed	1.027	.312	1.286	214	.200
	Equal variances not assumed			1.263	176.964	.208

		.102	.749	1.735	214	.084
Participative organisational culture_2	Equal variances assumed					
	Equal variances not assumed			1.725	185.533	.086

The Independent Samples Test for Gender revealed that for variable *communication climate,* the group statistics for males were *M*=3.41, standard deviation (*SD)* =.84 and *M*= 3.18, *SD*=.85 for females. The Levene's test of equality was not significant at (*p*=.37) which is greater than .05 and the two-tailed value of (*p*=.05), therefore there was no statistical significance difference, thus we can assume equal variances. The t-test indicated that a statistically significant difference exists only at 10% level of significance between the mean scores for males and females.

The output revealed that with regard to *leadership communication*, group statistics revealed a mean of *M*= 3.34, *SD*=.81 for males and *M*= 3.12, *SD*=.81 for females. The Levene's test of equality was not significant at (*p*=.75) with a two-tailed value of (*p*=.06), therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores for males and females, thus we can assume equal variances. The t-test indicated that a statistically significant difference exists only at 10% level of significance between the mean scores for males and females.

With regard to *vigour*, group statistics revealed that the mean scores for males was *M*= 3.53, *SD*=.69 and *M*= 3.41, *SD*=.72 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at (*p*=.72) with a two-tailed value of (*p*=.24), therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances.

In relation to *dedication,* group statistics revealed that the mean score was *M*= 3.63, *SD*=.91 for males and *M*= 3.55, *SD*=.75 for females. Levene's test of equality was statistically significant at *p*=.03 which means that the data violated the assumption. The two-tailed value was not statistically significant at *p*=.51, therefore there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can conclude that equal variance is not assumed.

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With regard to *absorption*, group statistics revealed that the mean scores for males was M= 3.26, SD=.79 and M= 3.13, SD=.73 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at p=.18 with a two-tailed value of p=.21, therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances.

In relation to *quality of information*, group statistics revealed that the mean score for males was M= 2.74, SD=.85 and M= 2.53, SD=.79 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at (p=.18) with a two-tailed value of (p=.06), therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores for males and females, thus we can assume equal variances. The t-test indicates that a statistically significant difference exists only at 10% level of significance between the mean scores for males and females.

With regard to *reliability of information*, group statistics revealed that the mean scores for males was M= 3.44, SD=.65 and M= 3.36, SD=.64 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at p=.68 with a two-tailed value of p=.39, therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances.

In relation to *two-way symmetrical communication*, group statistics revealed that the mean scores for males was M= 2.97, SD=.85 and M= 2.81, SD=.87 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at (p=.80) with a two-tailed value of (p=.20), therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances.

In relation to *two-way asymmetrical communication-1*, group statistics revealed that the mean scores for males was M= 2.22, SD=.99 and M= 2.06, SD=.91 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at (p=.07) with a two-tailed value of (p=.24), therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances.

The group statistics for *two-way asymmetrical communication-2* revealed that the mean scores for males was M= 3.54, SD=.74 and M= 3.58, SD=.77 for females. Levene's test

of equality was not significant at (p=.46) with a two-tailed value of (p=.71) therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances.

The group statistics for *participative organisational culture-1* revealed that the mean scores for males was *M*= 2.42, *SD*=.96 and *M*= 2.26, *SD*=.86 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at (p=.31) with a two-tailed value of (p=.20), therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances.

The group statistics for *participative organisational culture-2*, revealed that the mean scores for males was *M*= 2.71, *SD*=.79 and *M*= 2.53, *SD*=.76 for females. Levene's test of equality was not significant at (p=.75) with a two-tailed value of p=.08, therefore there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of males and females, thus we can assume equal variances. The t-test indicated that a statistically significant difference exists only at 10% level of significance between the mean scores for males and females.

With regard to Hypothesis 11, which tested the existence of a statistically significant difference in the levels of engagement across the gender group, the findings revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the levels of vigour and absorption, while statistical significance was found in the levels of dedication. Based on the findings, null hypothesis H11b can be rejected.

5.6   SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

The tables below depict a summary of the responses from participants.

Table 43: Section 1 of the measuring instrument

	Communication climate	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.1	My supervisor makes me feel free to talk to him or her.	3%	11.1%	21.8%	44.4%	20%
1.2	My supervisor is a really competent, expert manager.	.9%	11%	31%	38%	19%
1.3	My supervisor encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job.	.9%	16%	30%	38%	14%
1.4	My supervisor makes me feel that the things I tell him/her are really important.	.9%	16%	34%	35%	13%

	Communication climate	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.5	My supervisor is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view.	8%	25%	33%	24%	10%
1.6	My supervisor has my best interest in mind when she talks to his/her boss.	8%	18%	35%	28%	10%
1.7	My supervisor listens to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me.	5%	13%	35%	32%	14%
1.8	My supervisor is frank and candid.	3%	14%	37%	33%	10%
1.9	I feel free to tell my supervisor that I disagree with him/her.	7%	28%	29%	25%	10%
1.10	I can communicate 'bad news' to my supervisor without fear of retaliation on his/her part.	8 %	33%	30%	18%	10%

Section 1 of the questionnaire sought to establish the extent to which participants perceived the communication climate to be supportive. The focus of a supportive communication climate was on superior-subordinate communication, superior openness, and opportunities for upward communication. The results revealed that most participants agreed that they felt comfortable to talk to their superiors and found their superiors to be competent in doing their job. Furthermore, most participants agreed that their supervisors encouraged them to speak up, and considered the information they receive from subordinates.

Table 44: Section 2 of the measuring instrument

	Quality and reliability of information	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
2.1	I think people in this department say what they mean and mean what they say.	12%	38%	32%	14%	3%
2.2	People in this department are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.	9%	46%	25%	18%	2%
2.3	In this department people freely exchange information and opinions.	7.4%	39%	33%	17%	2%
2.4	I am always informed about how well the departmental goals and objectives are being met.	17%	31%	22%	23%	6%
2.5	Executive management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need.	8%	39%	29%	31%	1%
2.6	I receive information from the sources that I prefer (e.g. my supervisor, unit meetings, co-workers, newsletters).	2%	12%	48%	32%	7%
2.7	I am satisfied with explanations I get from executive management about why things are done as they are.	9%	40%	32%	14%	5%
2.8	My job requirements are specified in clear language.	2%	7%	26%	54%	11%
2.9	I think that information I receive from management is reliable.	4%	15%	46%	27%	8%
2.10	I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is reliable.	.9%	8%	39%	48%	5%

The Table above depicts a summary of responses in respect of how participants perceived quality and reliability of the information they received. In terms of quality of information (Items 2.1 to 2.5), most participants disagreed that the information they received was valuable. As discussed in Chapter 2, reliability of information refers to the

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trustworthiness of the sender and channel used. The majority of participants were neutral on whether they received information from preferred sources; while the majority of participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with the explanations they received from management. A total of 54% agreed that they understood their job requirements, and 48% agreed that they regarded information received from co-workers as being reliable.

Table 45: Section 3 of the measuring instrument

	Public relations models (practice of excellent communication)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Two-way symmetrical communication:					
3.1	The purpose of communication in the department is to develop mutual understanding between management of the organisation and employees.	2%	19%	30%	38%	11%
3.2	Surveys are conducted to find out how leadership and employees understand each other.	18%	40%	21%	16%	4%
3.3	The purpose of communication in the department is to change attitudes and behaviour of both leadership and employees.	5%	26%	35%	27%	7%
3.4	The purpose of communication in the department is to help leadership to be responsive to the problems of other employees.	7%	36%	26%	25%	7%
3.5	Most communication between leadership and employees in the department can be said to be two-way communication.	15%	35%	24%	21%	4%
	Two-way asymmetrical communication					
3.6	In the department, research on effectiveness of communication in changing attitudes is regularly conducted.	28%	41%	19%	8%	3%
3.7	Attitude surveys are conducted regularly to make policy related decisions.	26%	46%	17%	8%	2%
3.8	The goal of communication in the department is to persuade employees to behave as the department wants them to behave.	5%	13%	26%	31%	26%
3.9	Communication in the department is mainly in written format.	1%	9%	17%	62%	9%
3.10	Communication in the department is mainly one-way from leadership to employees.	2%	12%	19%	48%	18%
3.11	I seldom get feedback when I communicate to the leadership	5%	13%	26%	45%	9%

The Table above displays a summary of the responses for two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication models. These models originate from the public relations discipline, which promotes the establishment and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders, in this case, employees. Three public relations models were identified and discussed in Chapter 2, but the study investigated perceptions of two models.

Two-way symmetrical communication advocates for mutual understanding between the organisation and its employees. The results revealed that 38% of participants agreed that the purpose of communication at the NDOH is to develop mutual understanding;

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while 30% were neutral. A total of 40% of participants disagreed with the statement that surveys are conducted to establish the level of understanding between management and employees. A total of 35% expressed neutrality towards the purpose of communication being that of changing behaviours of both management and employees. Most participants (36%) disagreed with the purpose of communication as being to assist management to be more responsive to the needs of the employees. Most participants disagreed that the communication between management and employees is two-way.

In terms of two-way asymmetrical communication, the results revealed that most participants disagreed that research on effectiveness of communication was conducted regularly. Findings further indicate that most participants felt that policy decisions taken were not based on research. A total of 31% of participants agreed that the purpose of communication at the NDOH is to persuade employees to behave in a manner that the Departments desires. Majority of participants agreed that communication at the NDOH was mainly written and one-way from leadership to employees. Most participants (45%) agreed that they seldom received feedback when they communicate with management.

Table 46: Section 4 of the measuring instrument

	Organisational culture	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
4.1	The department celebrates its success with employees.	17%	41%	22%	17%	3%
4.2	Participative culture of the department promotes innovation among employees.	13%	40%	22%	21%	3%
4.3	Senior leaders in the department care deeply about employees.	35%	31%	18%	11%	2%
4.4	Senior leaders in the department believe in sharing of power and responsibility with lower-level employees.	29%	42%	17%	10%	2%
4.5	The department is usually willing to negotiate with employees for mutual understanding.	13%	40%	36%	8%	.9%
4.6	As an employee, I feel I have personal influence on decisions and policies of the department.	11%	39%	27%	20%	2%
4.7	My opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect my job.	8%	23%	32%	32%	4%
4.8	Most employees in the department share a common vision and strive towards its achievement.	11%	29%	37%	20%	4%
4.9	Most decisions in this department are made after thorough discussion between all people who will be affected in a major way	22%	45%	18%	13%	1%

The finding of factor analysis presented earlier in this Chapter revealed that there are two levels at which employees perceive organisational culture to be participative or not, that is, at organisational and individual levels. At organisational level most participants disagreed that the Department celebrated its success with employees. A total of 40% of

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the participants disagreed that a participative culture promotes innovation among employees. Most participants strongly disagreed that senior leadership cares deeply for employees. A total of 42% of the participants disagreed that senior leaders believe in sharing of responsibility and power with lower level employees.

Most participants disagreed that the Department is willing to negotiate with employees for mutual understanding. At an individual level most participants disagreed that they have personal influence on the decisions and policies of the Department. A total of 32% of the participants were neutral on whether their opinions make a difference in their day-to-day decisions affecting their jobs. On the other hand, a total of 32% of the participants agreed that their opinions make a difference in their day-to-day decisions affecting their jobs. Most participants disagreed that decisions at the NDOH are made after discussion with all the people who will be affected by the decisions.

Table 47: Section 5 of the measuring instrument

	Participative leadership communication	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
5.1	My supervisor encourages and supports me when I have a difficult or stressful task.	5%	16%	29%	42%	8%
5.2	My supervisor backs me up and supports me in difficult situations.	5%	17%	30%	38%	8%
5.3	I receive credit for helpful ideas and suggestions.	5%	15%	34%	38%	7%
5.4	Leadership consults with me to get my suggestions before making a decision that affects me.	11%	43%	26%	16%	5%
5.5	I am provided with opportunities to develop my skills.	6%	10%	32%	44%	9%
5.6	My supervisor expresses confidence in my ability to carry out a difficult task.	3%	11%	36%	42%	8%

According to Vallaster and Chernatony (2005:182) leadership has been identified as a crucial mechanism which mediates between people who differ in the way they think and interpret the environment and the way they feel and communicate with each other. Senior leaders therefore serve as a link between the organisation they represent and its employees. From the Table above, it is clear that most participants agreed that leadership communication is participative at the NDOH in terms of supervisor-subordinate relationships, but disagreed with the statement that leadership consults employees for suggestions before making decisions that affect employees.

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Table 48: Section 6 of the measuring instrument

	Employee engagement at work	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Vigour					
6.1	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	5%	13%	27%	44%	11%
6.2	At work I feel bursting with energy.	5%	26%	38%	23%	8%
6.3	At work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	2%	8%	22%	55%	13%
6.4	I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	2%	8%	25%	50%	14%
6.5	In doing my job, I am very resilient mentally.	1%	8%	37%	44%	10%
6.6	In doing my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	1%	7%	44%	36%	12%
	Dedication					
6.7	To me, my job is challenging.	3%	13%	32%	36%	16%
6.8	My job inspires me.	3%	13%	32%	37%	15%
6.9	I am enthusiastic about my job.	1%	12%	38%	31%	18%
6.10	I am proud of the job that I do.	.9%	5%	33%	45%	17%
6.11	I find work I do full of meaning and purpose.	.9%	7%	30%	41%	21%
	Absorption					
6.12	When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	4%	32%	30%	26%	8%
6.13	Time flies when I am working.	2%	6%	38%	38%	16%
6.14	I get carried away when I am working.	2%	23%	36%	30%	7%
6.15	It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	6%	34%	32%	20%	7%
6.16	I am immersed in my work.	.9%	18%	49%	27%	6%
6.17	I feel happy when I am working intensely.	1%	13%	43%	32%	10%

The Table above provides a summary of the employee engagement levels at the NDOH. In terms of vigour levels, a total of 44% of the participants agreed that they felt enthusiastic about going to work, but were neutral on their energy levels while at work. A total of 55% of the participants agreed that they always persevere during tough times and can continue to work for long periods, and remain mentally resilient while conducting their jobs. Most participants (44%) expressed neutrality on feeling strong and vigorous and 36% agreed that they felt strong and vigorous while doing their job.

In terms of dedication levels, most participants agreed that they found their jobs both challenging and inspiring. A total of 38% of the participants were neutral about their enthusiasm level for their jobs, while 30% agreed that they were enthusiastic about their jobs. Most of the participants agreed that they are proud of their jobs and find meaning and purpose in the work they do. A total of 32% of the participants disagreed that they were so engrossed in their work that they forget everything else. Most of the participants were equally split at 38% each between neutral and agree on the statement that time flies when they are working. On whether they get carried away while working, 36% of the participants were neutral while 30% agreed. A total of 34% of the participants disagreed that it is difficult to detach themselves from work, while 30% were neutral. Most

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participants felt neutral about being immersed in their work, while 43% were also neutral about feeling happy while working intensely.

5.7   CONCLUSION

This Chapter presented the results of the survey from the demographic data, to hypotheses testing. Before the statistical analyses were conducted, data was prepared and captured. Frequency tables were used to analyse demographic data and an Independent Samples t-test was conducted to understand the percentages achieved by demographic data.   The next step was used to evaluate the measurement through the assessment of reliability and validity of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the internal consistency of the scales. The measurement was found to be reliable. Factor analysis was conducted in order to establish the underlying structure of the items that made up the individual scales used in the measuring instrument to validate the measurement.

The study was premised on two types of hypotheses: seven of them tested the relationship between the variables measured; and four measured the statistical difference across different demographic groups. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was conducted to test the correlation (association) between the variables measured. Kruskal-Wallis by rank, and the Chi-square tests were conducted to measure if there was a statistical difference across age and number of years of experience. A Post Hoc test (Turkey HSD) using multiple comparisons was conducted to test statistical differences amongst the levels of engagement across the job level groups. In the next Chapter the results are discussed in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses.

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CHAPTER 6

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this Chapter is to discuss the results of the study conducted within the NDOH under the topic: *Internal communication in achieving employee engagement within a South African Government Department.* In this Chapter, the results (evidence obtained), as presented in Chapter 5, are discussed in relation to the research problem and research objectives.   The findings will provide an insight into the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement within the NDOH.

Two main concepts namely; internal communication and employee engagement as defined in Chapters 2 and 3, formed the basis of the study. In conducting the study, a conceptual framework (presented in Chapter 2) was followed in which theoretical disciplines, theories, models, and concepts were specified. Five internal communication constructs were selected in order to understand the phenomenon, while 3 constructs were identified for employee engagement. From the literature, it is evident that internal communication provides an environment through which employee engagement takes place.

This research study began by introducing the context of the study as well as the problem statement. In Chapter 1, specific objectives were set. Chapters 2 and 3 focussed on literature for internal communication and employee engagement respectively. The methodology followed by the study was stated and discussed in Chapter 4, and Chapter 5 presented the results of the study.

The study aimed to investigate the role played by internal communication in the achievement of higher engagement levels within the NDOH. As such, the study sought to establish if there is a correlation between the constructs of internal communication and those of employee engagement. Specific hypotheses were put forward in order to confirm or decline the correlation between the two main concepts. Demographic information such

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as gender, age, experience, and job level was used to establish if the levels of employee engagement differed across the various demographic groups. The primary and secondary research objectives of the study are re-stated below:

- **Primary research objective:**

What is the role of internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement?

- **Secondary research objectives:**

Objective 1: To investigate the relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

Objective 2: To investigate the relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.

Objective 3: To investigate the relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.

Objective 4: To investigate the relationship between quality and reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.

Objective 5: To investigate the relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.

Objective 6: To investigate the relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.

Objective 7: To establish if the levels of employee engagement differ across age groups, 'years of experience' groups, job level groups, and gender groups.

6.2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Holtz (in Hayase, 2009:15) dates back the evolution of internal communication to the 1970s when the work environment changed rapidly, forcing organisations to change the way they communicated with employees. These changes affected the workplace, and employees (Argenti, 1998:199). In the past, internal communication has been studied in relation to its

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impact on factors like job satisfaction. The concept of internal communication has been considered an important, and challenging area, which strengthens the connection between an organisation and its stakeholders, in particular employees, as it bridges the gap between management and employees. Internal communication is also listed among 60 factors affecting organisational effectiveness, according to Welch (2008). Welch and Jackson (2007:177) assert that internal communication affects the ability of organisations to engage with employees and is a fundamental process for organisations. The following constructs were selected to study the internal communication phenomenon:

- Communication climate
- Quality and reliability of information
- Public relations models of two-way communication
- Organisational culture
- Leadership communication

Continued concern for employees led to the development of employee engagement as a phenomenon with over two decades of research (Hayase, 2009:24). Employee engagement is built on the foundation of earlier concepts, such as job satisfaction, employee commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Markos & Sridevi, 2010:89). Employee engagement places attention on employees and their needs and expectations.

Literature on employee engagement reveals that the emotional well-being of employees is as critical as the skills, experience and competence required for a successful organisation. Mmope (2010:60) states that employee engagement has been found to be an essential management intervention to ensure a connection between the organisation and its employees. As such, the achievement of employee engagement leads to emotionally and mentally committed employees who exert extra effort for the achievement of organisational goals. Furthermore, communication was identified as one of the contributing factors to higher levels of engagement among employees.

Kahn (in Welch, 2011:335) suggests that employee engagement should be a concern for communication scholars and practitioners stating that employee engagement may be affected by management interventions such as internal communication. This study

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proposes a stakeholder approach to internal communication for the achievement of employee engagement.

The following constructs were selected to study the employee engagement phenomenon:
- Vigour
- Dedication
- Absorption

6.3 THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

6.3.1 Demographic information

A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed of which 216 were returned, rendering a response rate of 72%. The results of the study as presented in Chapter 5 revealed that the majority of the respondents were females at 58.8% with 127 respondents. Participation of males was 41.2% with 89 respondents. Frequency tables revealed that the majority of respondents were aged between 36 to 45 years with 90 responses while age groups 20 to 35 and 46 to 55 obtained 55 and 54 responses respectively. The majority of respondents had been employed in the Department for a period of 1 to 10 years, followed by 11 to 15 years of experience with 39 responses.

The majority of respondents were employed at job levels 6 to 12. It can be concluded that participation became lesser as the job levels went up, with highest respondents at levels 6 to 8. It was noted that job levels 15 to 16 did not participate in the study. This could be attributed to their respective rather busy daily schedules; gatekeeping by their administrative support staff, or unwillingness to participate. In terms of racial groups, the results revealed that the majority of respondents were Black, followed by White.

6.3.2 Measuring instrument (validity and reliability)

Validation of the measuring instrument was achieved through factor analysis wherein underlying structures were identified. In Section 1 of the instrument, which addressed communication climate, only one factor was retained as a valid scale to measure communication climate.

Section 2 of the instrument addressed quality and reliability of information - two factors were retained as valid scales to measure quality and reliability of information. The first addressed how employees perceived the quality and reliability of information from an organisational level, while the second factor focused on the perception at individual level. The discussion on literature identified quality and reliability as separate factors of information, which can be used to assess perception. The results revealed that both quality and reliability of information is assessed at organisational and individual levels.

Section 3 of the instrument addressed the public relations model of communication namely: two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication - three factors were retained as valid scales to measure the two-way communication models. From literature, four public relations models were identified by Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang and Lyra (in Barker & Angelopulo, 2006). This study tested two of the four models namely: the two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models as discussed in Chapter 2.

In the Excellence Study by Dozier *et al.* (1995), a third model was identified as alternative for practice, which is a mixed-method model. The results revealed a third factor which was not the mixed-method model of two-way communication. The third factor addressed the issues of: research and whether it is conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of communication; and whether policy decisions were based on research within the NDOH. Contrary to the literature presented in Chapter 2, the results indicated that the third factor validated was not a mixed-method model but rather pointed to the absence of a feedback system within the department. Evidence pointed out that research and employee surveys were not conducted regularly and that policy decisions were not based on survey results. This implies that employees would participate in surveys, but due to absence of feedback on how their opinions were factored into the decision making process, they felt their opinions were not taken into consideration during the decision-making process.

In Chapter 1 this study proposed a stakeholder approach to internal communication. In the stakeholder approach, employees have a say in policy decisions through employee surveys. Therefore, based on the evidence, it can be concluded that the absence of a strategic feedback system on research findings affects the level of engagement among employees, as they tend to feel that their opinions and ideas do not matter. This results in employees having a negative attitude about participating in surveys that are also

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seldom conducted. A stakeholder approach would promote more engagement and consultations with employees as key stakeholders of the Department. This way, decisions would be taken in consultation with employees. When research or survey results are not communicated back to employees, they tend to feel "left out" and as a result levels of engagement are likely to reduce.

Section 4 of the instrument addressed employee perceptions in relation to organisational culture. In Chapter 2 of this study, two types of organisational cultures (participative and authoritarian) were identified and discussed but the study focused on only one culture type, i.e. participative culture. Two factors were retained as valid scales to measure organisational culture, i.e. organisational culture – 1 and organisational culture -2. Similar to Section 2, the first factor focused on how employees perceived participative culture at an organisational level, while the second factor focused on employee perceptions on organisational culture at an individual level. The first factor sought to establish how employees perceived the organisational culture to be participative; while the second factor focused on how employees perceive their opinions to contribute to the achievement of organisational goals. Based on the results, it can be concluded that a majority of participants perceived organisational culture as not being participative at both individual and organisational levels.

Section 5 of the measuring instrument addressed employee perceptions of leadership communication. Factor analysis identified one factor that was retained as a valid scale to measure leadership communication. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents were either neutral or agreed that leadership communication was participative. Based on the results it can be concluded that employees perceived leadership communication as mildly participative with a percentage of respondents feeling neutral. This implies that most participants were not certain of leadership communication being totally participative. It can therefore be concluded that employee perceptions of leadership communication could be influenced by superior-subordinate relationships.

Section 6 of the instrument sought to determine the levels of engagement among employees. Three constructs were identified and discussed in Chapter 3 as dimensions of employee engagement, namely: vigour, dedication, and absorption. Factor analysis retained these three factors as valid measures for employee engagement. The results in

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terms of vigour revealed that the majority of respondents were either neutral or agreed that they felt excited and resilient while conducting their jobs. In terms of dedication, a similar trend was observed. Interestingly, in terms of absorption, the majority of respondents disagreed that when they conduct their jobs they get absorbed to an extent that they forget everything around them. Based on evidence, it can be concluded that there were no absolute high levels of engagement among employees.

6.3.3 Summary of hypotheses results

Table 49: Summary of hypotheses results

Research objectives	Hypotheses	Results
RO1: To investigate the relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.	**H1:** There is a relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.	Supported
RO2: To investigate the relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.	**H2:** There is a relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement.	Supported
RO3: To investigate the relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.	**H3:** There is a relationship between supportive communication climate and the levels of employee engagement.	Supported
RO4: To investigate the relationship between quality and reliability of information and levels of employee engagement.	**H4:** There is a relationship between quality of information and the levels of employee engagement **H5:** There is a relationship between reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.	Supported Supported
RO5: To investigate the relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.	**H6:** There is a relationship between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement.	Supported
RO6: To investigate the relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.	**H7:** There is a relationship between participative leadership communication and the levels of employee engagement.	Supported
RO7: To establish if levels of employee engagement differ across age groups, 'years of experience' groups, job level groups, and gender groups.	**H8:** There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the age groups. *H8a: There is a difference in the levels of vigour across the age groups.* *H8b: There is a difference in the levels of dedication across age groups.* *H8c: There is a difference in the levels of absorption across age groups.*	 Rejected Rejected Supported

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	H9: There is a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the 'years of experience' in the department.	
	H9a: There is a difference in levels of vigour across the groups of 'years of experience'.	Supported
	H9b: There is a difference in the levels of dedication across the groups of 'years of experience'.	Rejected
	H9c: There is a difference in the levels of absorption across the groups of 'years of experience'.	Supported
	H10: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the job level groups.	
	H10a: There is a difference in the levels of vigour across the job level groups.	Rejected
	H10b: There is a difference in the levels of dedication across the job level groups.	Rejected
	H10c: There is a difference in the levels of absorption across the job level groups	Rejected
	H11: There is a difference in the levels of engagement across the gender groups.	
	H11a: There is a difference in the levels of vigour across the gender groups.	Rejected
	H11b: There is a difference in the levels of dedication across the gender groups.	Supported
	H11c: There is a difference in the levels of absorption across the gender groups.	Rejected

6.4 DISCUSSION AND LINK TO RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the study was to determine the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement. Hypotheses were posed to predict relationships or correlations between the identified internal communication and employee engagement constructs. The study integrated the perspectives of stakeholder theory, relationship management theory and social exchange theory, as discussed in Chapter 2. The grand theory of the study was identified as the systems theory, wherein interrelation and interconnectedness is key for organisational success.

Research objective 1 - *To investigate the relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and employee engagement.* This objective was addressed by *Hypothesis 1*, which predicted a relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement. Each employee engagement construct (vigour, dedication, absorption) was measured against the two-way asymmetrical communication model.

The results confirmed a statistically significant correlation between two-way asymmetrical communication, however, the correlation was weak. This is due to the nature of two-way asymmetrical communication which is not balanced in terms of participation in the communication process. This confirms the assertions of Dozier, *et al.* (1995) that organisations that practice two-way asymmetrical communication do listen to their stakeholders, but they use the information obtained to tailor their communication strategies to allay concerns of stakeholders but do not attempt to change their own behaviour. Two instrument items on public relations models addressed the issues of research - whether it is conducted, and whether results are used as basis for policy decisions. The results revealed that most of the respondents stated that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the items that asked if surveys were conducted regularly and whether the survey results were used to influence policy decisions. It can be concluded that employee surveys are seldom conducted at the NDOH, and when conducted, the findings are disregarded during policy decision making processes. From the results, it can furthermore be concluded that employees feel that their feedback is not considered and therefore does not influence any decision making processes.

Important to note is that from the frequency statistics, most respondents agreed that they seldom get feedback from leadership and felt that communication was mainly one-way in the Department. These findings are in line with the view that practitioners of two-way asymmetrical communication view their role as to persuade a public; get the publics to behave as desired by the organisation; manipulate publics; and as using attitude theory in campaigns (Dozier, *et al.*,1995). The study found that two-way asymmetrical communication is weakly correlated to employee engagement and therefore conclude that the more the Department conducts its communication programmes in asymmetrical manner, the less the employees will feel engaged.

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Research objective 2 - *To investigate the relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and employee engagement*. This objective was addressed by *Hypothesis 2,* which predicted a relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement. The focus was on the purpose of communication in the Department and whether employees felt that the communication process was indeed two-way symmetrical in practice within the NDOH.

Pearson's correlation coefficient results confirmed a moderate to strong and positive significant relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and the levels of engagement among the respondents. Important to note is that there was a sizeable number of respondents who expressed their perception of two-way symmetrical communication as either neutral or disagreed. The results revealed no absolute indication that the practice of internal communication was indeed two-way symmetrical.

Literature presented in Chapter 2 stated that in the two-way symmetrical model, communication flows in both directions and decisions are arrived at through negotiation. A moderate to strong positive relationship between two-way communication and the levels of engagement was confirmed. Given the moderate to strong positive relationship established between two-way symmetrical communication and employee engagement, it can be concluded that if the Department engages and negotiates with its employees, more employees would feel more engaged at work.

The findings are in line with the intention of two-way symmetrical communication which is to reach a win-win situation between the organisation and its stakeholders (Dozier *et al.*, 1995:46). It is concluded that the practice of two-way symmetrical communication would positively influence the levels of employee engagement and therefore Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

Research objective 3 - *To investigate the relationship between supportive communication climate and levels of employee engagement.* In order to establish if a supportive communication climate correlates with employee engagement, *Hypothesis 3* was posed. Literature discussed in Chapter 2 identified five factors that are responsible for communication climate namely: superior-subordinate communication; quality of information; superior openness; opportunities for upward communication; and reliability of information. In this study, quality and reliability of information was measured separately

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from communication climate. The focus of the section was on superior-subordinate communication, superior openness and opportunities for upward communication.

Pearson's correlation coefficient results confirmed that supportive communication climate correlates with levels of engagement among employees. According to the findings, it can be concluded that the more employees feel free to talk to their superiors, the more they would feel vigorous, dedicated and absorbed while doing their jobs. It can be concluded that employees' perceived support of the superior yields higher levels of engagement.

Although the findings confirm a positive correlation between communication climate and the levels of engagement, it is important to note that this relationship takes place at an individual level. Most of the respondents agreed that they felt free to talk to their supervisors and agreed that they perceived their supervisors to be competent. Majority of respondents agreed that their supervisors were supportive and felt that their opinions matter. Most respondents indicated neutrality to whether supervisors were willing to tolerate arguments and if supervisors have their best interest at heart.

Interestingly, most respondents expressed neutrality towards supervisor frankness, disagreeing with the supervisor and communicating 'bad news' to their superior. An observation made in this study is that most of the respondents tended to express neutrality towards their perception of the communication climate between themselves and their supervisors. It can be concluded that the more employees feel free and open to communicate frankly with their supervisors, the more they would feel engaged at work.

Research objective 4 - *To investigate the relationship between quality and reliability of information received and the levels of employee engagement*. For this objective, two separate hypotheses (4 and 5) were posed, one for quality of information and another for reliability of information. Hypothesis 4 predicted a relationship between quality of information and the levels of employee engagement, while Hypothesis 5 predicted a relationship between reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement.

Pearson's correlation coefficient results for *Hypothesis 4* confirmed a positive and significant relationship between quality of information and the levels of employee engagement. In Chapter 2, quality of information was defined as an individual employee's perception of the value of the information he/she receives. The more value they attach to

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information, the more the information is regarded as being of quality and therefore the more they feel absorbed. According to Johlke and Duhan (2011) and Karanges (2014), quality of communication refers to the extent to which information is perceived to be timely, accurate, adequate and complete.

Factor analysis extracted two factors which were found to be reliable scales for evaluating the quality and reliability of information. The two factors identified two levels at which quality and reliability of information is evaluated, that is, organisational and individual levels. The frequency tables revealed that the majority of the respondents expressed that they did not perceive information received at the organisational level as being of quality. Importantly, more than half of the respondents felt that their job requirements were specified in clear language. The findings indicate that most respondents expressed neutrality, followed by disagreement towards the quality of information they received.

Literature presented in Chapter 2 contends that quality communication is critical for achieving organisational effectiveness, employee performance and motivation (Maltz in Karanges, 2014). It can also be concluded that the more employees feel that the information they receive is accurate, adequate, and complete and is received timeously, the more they would perceive it as quality information.

Hypothesis 5 predicted a relationship between reliability of information and levels of engagement. Pearson's correlation coefficient results for Hypothesis 5 confirmed a moderate and positive relationship which was significant between reliable information and levels of engagement. Reliability of information, as discussed in Chapter 2, refers to the trustworthiness of the sender and channel used. Reliable information is information that is deemed by the recipient as being true and factual. Information is regarded as reliable based on the perception that employees have about the information they receive, which is the actual messages and the transparency of their workplace.

Frequency tables revealed that most of the respondents expressed neutrality toward the reliability of information they receive from management. Interestingly, most respondents agreed that information received from co-workers was perceived as being more reliable. The findings are supported by literature that reliability of information is based on trustworthiness of the sender and the channel used. It can be concluded that employees in the Department put more trust in the information received through the "grapevine"

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channel as opposed to information received through formal channels. In terms of the predicted relationship, it can be concluded that the more employees perceive information to be of quality and reliable, the more they would feel engaged at work.

Research objective 5 - *To investigate the relationship between participative organisational culture and levels of employee engagement.* In Chapter 2, culture was defined as the glue that holds excellent organisations together and keep mediocre organisations mediocre. Two types of organisational cultures were identified namely; participative organisational culture and authoritative organisational culture. This study focused on participative culture.

Hypothesis 6 was posed to establish if there is a relationship between participative organisational culture and levels of employee engagement. According to the literature in Chapter 2, participative organisational culture is characterised by teamwork. In an organisation that has a participative culture, workers believe that management values them as whole people, not just as employees.

Factor analysis results identified two factors that were retained (organisational culture-1 and organisational culture-2), leading to two sub-scales for organisational culture. The results indicated that employees perceived organisational culture not to be participative at an organisational as well as individual levels. At an organisational level the results revealed that 41% of the respondents disagreed with a statement that the Department celebrates its successes with employees, while 22% expressed neutrality. At least 40% of the respondents disagreed that the organisational culture was participative in such a way that it promoted innovation among employees, while 22% of respondents indicated that they were neither in agreement or disagreement.

At least 66% of the respondents indicated that they either strongly disagreed or disagreed that senior leaders care for them. A similar trend was revealed by frequency tables on whether or not senior leaders believed in sharing of power and responsibility with lower-level employees. A total of 42% expressed their disagreement towards the sharing of power and responsibility, while 28% strongly disagreed.

The second factor identified, addressed the employee perceptions of organisational culture at an individual level. The results revealed that 40% of respondents disagreed that

the Department was willing to negotiate with employees for mutual understanding, while 36% expressed that they were neither in agreement nor disagreement. In terms of employee perceptions of whether they have personal influence on the decisions and policies of the Department, most respondents disagreed (39%), while 27% neither agreed nor disagreed. Important to note is that although most respondents disagreed that they had personal influence on decisions and policies of the Department at an individual level, 32% of the respondents agreed that their opinions made a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect their jobs, with 31% expressing neutrality.

At least 37% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that employees in the Department shared a common vision, while 29% disagreed. A total of 45% of respondents disagreed that the Department made decisions after thorough discussion between all people who will be affected by the decision.

Pearson's correlation coefficient results established that there is a positive relationship between participative organisational culture and levels of employee engagement. It can be concluded that employees did not experience organisational culture to be participative at organisational level. The results indicate that there is a gap between employees and senior leaders who represent the organisation.   The conclusion of this study is that employees at the NDOH do not perceive organisational culture to be participative at both organisational and individual levels.   As a result, the more employees perceive organisational culture to be participative, the higher the levels of engagement at work will be.

Research objective 6 - *To investigate the relationship between participative leadership communication and levels of employee engagement.* This objective was addressed by *Hypothesis 7*, which predicted a relationship between participative leadership communication and levels of employee engagement. As discussed in Chapter 2, senior leaders serve as a link between the organisation they represent, and the employees. Accordingly, leadership communication was identified as a contributing factor to employee engagement.

Vallaster and Chernatony (2005) state that leadership is a crucial mechanism which mediates between people who differ in the way they think and interpret the environment and the way they feel and communicate with each other. Literature discussed in Chapter

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2 puts forward that leaders should possess certain communication skills in order to successfully command followers' attention. Based on the literature, it is also evident that leadership plays a crucial role in the success or failure of internal communication within organisations.

According to the results, a majority of the respondents agreed that leadership communication was indeed participative within the NDOH, although they expressed clear disagreement with the statement that management consults them for opinions before decisions are made. It can be concluded that although employees at the NDOH perceived leadership communication to be participative, they still felt that they are only informed about decisions after they have been made and therefore not consulted for opinions. Given the results, this study concludes that leadership communication is not absolutely participative.

Research objective 7 - *To determine if there is a significant difference in the levels of employee engagement across age groups, 'years of experience' groups, job level groups, and gender groups.* This objective was addressed by four hypotheses formulated for each group. Demographic information was included in the measuring instrument in order to establish if the demographics of employees have an influence in the levels of engagement.

Hypothesis 8 predicted a difference in the levels of engagement across the age groups. The results revealed that most respondents were aged between 36 and 45; participants aged between 20 and 35 expressed the highest levels of vigour; while age groups 56 to 65 expressed higher levels of dedication and absorption. The results imply that younger employees are more eager to work and therefore willing to invest more effort into their work, while older employees are more dedicated and absorbed when conducting their jobs.

In line with the explanation of vigour presented in Chapter 3, it can be concluded that employees aged between 20 and 35 are more energetic and involve themselves mentally in performing their work roles. It can also be concluded that employees aged between 56 and 65 are dedicated and absorbed in their work roles, therefore these employees are enthusiastic about their job tasks and feel inspired and proud of their work, as well as immersed and engrossed in their work. Furthermore, it is the conclusion of this study that

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younger employees are more vigorous, while older employees are more settled in their jobs and display dedication towards their work.

Hypothesis 9 predicted a difference in the levels of engagement across the 'years of experience' groups. The results revealed a significant statistical difference in relation to vigour and absorption and an insignificant difference in the levels of dedication. It can be concluded that although employees in the Department were energetic, mentally resilient and engrossed while doing their jobs; they were not dedicated, therefore were not fully engaged.

Hypothesis 10 predicted a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the job level groups. Firstly, the results revealed non-participation by the Executive Management group and therefore no statistics were recorded. Furthermore, the results revealed no significant statistical difference in the levels of engagement across the job level groups, therefore it can be concluded that job levels do not impact on the levels of employee engagement.

Hypothesis 11 predicated a difference in the levels of employee engagement across the gender groups. Gender was categorised into male and female and the results revealed no significant statistical difference in the levels of vigour and absorption across the gender groups. However, a significant difference was found in the levels of dedication among males and females and as such the dedication levels differed between males and females. It can be concluded that female employees were more dedicated to their jobs than male employees.

6.5   IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Based on the evidence from the study, there are practical implications for the NDOH as an organisation, its managers and supervisors, who serve as a link between employees and the organisation and its leadership. The results provided evidence that the practice of internal communication has an impact on the achievement of employee engagement. Practical implications are presented below per construct investigated.

6.5.1 Two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication

The two public relations models identified and discussed in Chapter 2 were two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication. In a two-way asymmetrical model, organisations do listen to their stakeholders (employees) but use the information obtained to tailor their communication strategies to allay concerns of stakeholders although they do not attempt to alter employee behaviour. On the other hand, the two-way symmetrical model is characterised by communication that flows in both directions (up and down), and by decisions that are arrived at through negotiation.

A significant positive but weak relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication and the levels of employee engagement was established in Chapter 5. This implies that the practice of two-way asymmetrical communication at an individual level has a weak impact on the levels of engagement. Therefore, the more communication practice is two-way asymmetrical, the lower the levels of employee engagement will be. By its nature, two-way asymmetrical communication promotes one-sided benefits in a communication discourse. Two-way asymmetrical communication does not demonstrate concern for individual employees and therefore it lowers the engagement levels among individual employees.

A weak and insignificant positive relationship between two-way asymmetrical communication at an organisational level was also established in Chapter 5. This implies that organisations obtain information from employees through surveys but information obtained is not utilised in the decision-making process and employees do not receive feedback on how the information was utilised. This points to a lack of a strategic feedback system within the NDOH. Therefore, it is the conclusion of this study that if employee engagement levels are to be increased, management would be required to provide constant strategic feedback to employees as part of their internal communication activities.

A strong to moderate positive relationship was established in Chapter 5 between two-way symmetrical communication and levels of engagement. This significant positive relationship implies that the more internal communication practice is perceived to be two-way symmetrical, the more employees would feel engaged at work and therefore demonstrate commitment towards the organisation.

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From the findings of the study it can be concluded that although most employees agreed that the purpose of communication in the Department is to develop mutual understanding between management and employees, the internal communication practice at the NDOH is not completely two-way. Another conclusion of this study is that employees at the NDOH consider the practice of internal communication to be mainly written, at 62%, and one-way from management to employees at 48%. From the results, it can be concluded that internal communication at the NDOH is used to direct and manage the behaviour of employees rather than engaging and negotiating with them for mutually beneficial decisions. The key recommendation for management at the NDOH would be to establish a strategic feedback system and include a consultation process in its planning processes.

6.5.2 Supportive communication climate

Percentage on fairness of the supervisor, whether the supervisor listens to subordinates; and whether the supervisor has subordinates' best interest at heart, were higher or neutral. This is an indication of uncertainty towards superior-subordinate relationships. A total of 33% of participants disagreed that they could communicate 'bad news' to their supervisors; while 30% expressed neutrality. This is an indication that employees do not experience communication with their supervisors to be open and supportive. It can be concluded that the experience of a supportive communication climate differs from one employee to the other depending on the interpersonal relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate. Therefore, it can be said that employees in the NDOH do not experience the communication climate to be absolutely supportive.

The results confirmed a significantly positive relationship between a supportive communication climate and levels of employee engagement; therefore, in order for the individual employee engagement levels to increase, supervisors would have to improve their interpersonal relations with their subordinates. This is in line with the proposal of this study, which calls for a stakeholder approach to the practice of internal communication. Supervisors or management, as the link between the organisation and employees, should create an enabling communication climate for employees to feel like valued stakeholders in the organisation.

The results revealed no absolute agreement that a supportive communication climate is the order of business at the NDOH - instead a supportive communication climate is left to

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individual supervisors and their subordinates. This has implications for the practice of relationship management theory, which was identified and discussed in Chapter 2. Relationship management theory calls for the management of organisation-public relationships to generate a benefit for organisations and publics alike.

6.5.3 Quality and reliability of information

A significant positive relationship was established in Chapter 5 between quality and reliability of information and the levels of employee engagement. Therefore, the perceptions of employees on quality and reliability of information will influence the levels of engagement among employees.

Quality of information refers to the value individual employees attach to the information they receive. This means the extent to which employees value the information they receive. This value of quality could be based on timing and usefulness of the information received by employees. According to the results, most participants indicated that they did not regard the information they received as quality, while others felt neutral about the quality of information they received. A total of 39% of participants disagreed that they received quality information from executive management. It can therefore be concluded that employees do not perceive information they receive as valuable. Furthermore, it can be concluded that employees put more trust on information received from their co-workers, as opposed to information received from management.

In terms of reliability of information, the majority of participants were neutral on whether they received information from preferred sources; while a majority of participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with the explanations they received from management. In Chapter 2, reliability of information was defined as the extent to which the sender and channel used are considered trustworthy and reliable by the recipients. A total of 54% agreed that they understood their job requirements; and 48% agreed that they regarded information received from co-workers as being more reliable. Another conclusion is that although job requirements are stated clearly, employees are not satisfied with the feedback from management. A total of 40% of the participants disagreed that they received explanations from management on how things are done in the manner in which they are done.

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In order to achieve higher levels of employee engagement, the NDOH management would be required to provide employees with valuable, timeous, and accurate information. Management would have to engage employees before making decisions that affect them. This recommendation is in line with the call by this study for a stakeholder approach to internal communication practice for the achievement of employee engagement. If employees are engaged and or consulted in the decision-making process, they would consider the information received from management as being of higher quality and of being more reliable, than information received from co-workers.

6.5.4 Participative organisational culture

The findings presented in Chapter 5 revealed that most employees do not perceive organisational culture to be participative. It can therefore be concluded that most employees at the NDOH perceive organisational culture as not being participative at both organisational and individual levels. Given the positive relationship established between participative organisational culture and the levels of employee engagement, senior leadership at the NDOH would be required to provide an environment that enables an organisational culture that is more participative, in order to increase the levels of employee engagement. The findings revealed the lack of two-way symmetrical communication that will ensure that decisions are negotiated and mutually beneficial for both senior leaders and employees alike.

6.5.5 Participative leadership communication

From the findings presented in Chapter 5, it can be concluded that although supervisors encourage and support subordinates, negotiation and consultation are lacking in the decision-making processes, in particular, decisions that affect subordinates. A positive relationship between participative leadership communication and levels of engagement was established; therefore, the conclusion of the study is that the more supervisors negotiate and consult with employees, the more employees would feel engaged while conducting their jobs. Therefore, leadership at the NDOH would be required to consult and negotiate with employees more often in order to achieve employee engagement.

6.5.6 Employee engagement (vigour, dedication, and absorption)

From the findings presented in Chapter 5, it can be concluded that most participants were found to be vigorous about their work to an extent that they would persevere and continue working for long hours. Most participants agreed that they were dedicated to their work and found that their work was both challenging and inspiring. The majority of participants expressed neutrality towards absorption. Based on the results, higher levels of engagement could not be confirmed, given the issues raised above with regard to the practice of internal communication. It can therefore be concluded that the levels of engagement at the NDOH are moderate to low. For the achievement of the higher levels of engagement, the NDOH would be required to pay attention to the needs and concerns of the employees by improving their internal communication practice to be more two-way; by providing strategic feedback to employees; and by increasing negotiation and consultation.

In concluding the practical implication, the study aligns itself with Miller, Allen, Casey and Johnson's (in Hayase, 2014:136) assertion that internal communication should facilitate an employee's ability to link their values and goals to those of the organisation. The internal communication environment should provide a context that is supportive and participative for the achievement of employee engagement. Furthermore, Smidt *et al.* (2001) put forward that communication from an organisation and supervisors should be timely, adequate, accurate and relevant to allow employees to socially construct organisational identity within their minds.

6.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The two concepts investigated in the study, namely: internal communication and employee engagement have implications for future research, in particular in the public service context. The findings of this study confirms the existing literature by confirming that internal communication plays a role in the achievement of employee engagement. The study was conducted in a South African government department, wherein communication should be implemented within the prescribed protocols and guidelines. The previous research in the fields of internal communication and employee engagement have mainly focused on the business sector, more research is needed with particular focus in the public service context.

This study could be considered as a pilot study that points to further research into the public service in relation to internal communication and employee engagement disciplines. Given the limited scope of this study, the findings cannot be generalised across South African government departments. A follow-up comparative study is proposed for future research in order to gain insight into the role of internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement within the South African public service sector.

The findings of this study points to the lack of a feedback system within the Department. Over and above the two-way communication models tested in this study, the findings of the public relations models identified a factor which addressed issues of research and whether or not decisions were based on research findings. For the purpose of this study the factor was named communication research. The findings show that there is reason to further examine the two-way communication models in relation to employee engagement.

In this study, an existing scale for measuring organisational culture was used. In terms of factor analysis, the scale revealed two factors within organisational culture. The findings reveal that organisational culture is perceived to be participative at an organisational and individual level. Individual responses summary in Chapter 5 reveal higher percentages of disagreement with organisational culture being participative at both levels.

The methodology of this study was solely quantitative - future studies could be extended to include qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups. This would provide more insight into the neutral stances obtained from the quantitative method. Qualitative methods would provide a better understanding of why employees perceive internal communication in relation to organisational and individual levels in the way they do. This study focused on only five internal communication dimensions - future studies could extend the scope and dimensions of internal communication.

Although the results indicate that employees do receive communication from the Department, the lack of consultation, negotiation, and formal feedback systems hinder the achievement of employee engagement. Qualitative methods could provide insight into the expectations of the employees. Communication has been listed as one of the drivers of employee engagement - Welch (2011:340) states that communication is one

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form of an employee's psychological need which organisations need to meet, in order to develop and maintain employee engagement.

While this study calls for a stakeholder approach to internal communication practice and adopts Welch's (2011:340) integrated conceptual model of employee engagement and internal communication, future research could further explore the model in relation to the public service sector. Finally, Johlke and Duhan (in Hayase, 2014:140-141) state that service-driven organisations' service quality rely on employees who regularly interact with customer, suppliers, shareholders, etc. While this study was limited to one government department, which is service-driven, future research could further explore individual employee engagement levels and the understanding of the concept of employee engagement in a South African public service context.

6.7 SUMMARY OF THE CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the role of internal communication in achieving employee engagement within a South African government department. The main conclusion of the study is that internal communication indeed plays a crucial role in the achievement of employee engagement. This conclusion, which is based on empirical evidence, is in line with Welch's (2007:177) assertion that effective internal communication is crucial for successful organisations, as it affects the ability of strategic managers to engage employees and achieve objectives. Therefore, if the NDOH adopts a stakeholder approach in its internal communication practices, the levels of employee engagement would increase.

The results indicated that the practice of two-way symmetrical communication with a feedback system, would improve the levels of employee engagement. A supportive communication climate, as well as quality and reliability of information, were found to contribute to higher levels of employee engagement. The results further indicated that if employees perceive organisational culture to be participative, they would feel more engaged and therefore feel that they are part of the whole organisation. Furthermore, the results revealed that the more employees perceive leadership communication to be participative, the more they would feel engaged and communicate without restriction.

The following construct specific conclusions are based on the evidence presented in Chapter 5:

It is concluded that employee surveys are seldom conducted at the NDOH, and when conducted, the findings are disregarded during policy decision-making processes. The findings revealed that employees feel that their opinions and ideas are not considered when decisions are taken, and therefore they feel that they do not influence any of the decisions made. For the achievement of employee engagement, the Department would have to engage and negotiate with its employees as stakeholders.

In terms of supervisor-subordinate relationships within a supportive communication climate, it can be concluded that the more employees feel free to talk frankly to their superiors, the more they would feel vigorous, dedicated and absorbed while doing their jobs. Employees' perceived support of the superior yields higher levels of engagement.

Although more than half of the respondents felt that their job requirements were specified in clear language, most respondents expressed neutrality, followed by disagreement towards the quality of information they received. Interestingly, most respondents agreed that information received from co-workers was perceived as more reliable than information from management. It can be concluded that the more employees perceive information to be of quality and reliable; the more they would feel engaged at work.

Respondents did not regard organisational culture to be participative at organisational and individual levels. Therefore, for senior leaders to enhance levels of employee engagement, they would have to employ participative organisational culture methods of negotiating for mutual understanding and to create an interactive environment between themselves and the employees.

In terms of demographic information and its impact on employee engagement, it can be concluded that younger employees are more vigorous, while older employees are more settled in their jobs and display dedication towards their work. It can be concluded that although employees in the Department were energetic, mentally resilient and engrossed while doing their jobs, they were not dedicated, therefore were not fully engaged.

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6.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this Chapter was to summarise the insight gained in relation to the role played by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement within a South African government department. In this Chapter, the results were discussed in relation to the literature and the objectives of the study. Based on the evidence, certain conclusions were made and recommendations put forward towards the achievement of employee engagement within the NDOH.

In its call for a stakeholder approach, this study investigated a contribution made by internal communication in the achievement of employee engagement within the context of South African public service, with a focus on one particular government department. Studies on the impact of internal communication on employee engagement, although scant, have focused on profit making businesses, as opposed to public service delivery. Against this background, the conclusion of this study is that an engaged workforce is beneficial to the organisation, therefore it is critical for any organisation to engage and negotiate with internal stakeholders in the same way as they would with external stakeholders. Overall, the results indicated that improvement in internal communication practices would impact the levels of employee engagement.

The overall results confirm that internal communication plays a role in the achievement of employee engagement.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: **Permission Letter**

DIRECTOR GENERAL
HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

PRETORIA
Private Bag X828, PRETORIA, 0001, 27th Floor, Room 2710, Civitas Building, Cnr Thabo Sehume & Struben Street, PRETORIA, 0001 Tel: 012 395 8000, Fax: 012 395 8422
CAPE TOWN
P.O. Box 3875, CAPE TOWN, 8000, 6th Floor, Room 617, 103 Parliament Towers, Plain Street, CAPE TOWN, 8000 Tel: 021 461 2040, Fax: 021 461 6864

Enquiries: Ms S Mbhele
Tel: (012) 395-8384

Head of Division
University of Pretoria
Faculty of Economic and Business Sciences
Department Business Management
Division Communication Management

Good day,

PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH TO BE CONDUCTED IN THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

This letter serves to confirm that Ms Senelisiwe Mbhele, employee number 22054359 has been granted permission to conduct an academic research as part of fulfilment of her post graduate study with the university.

Kind regards,

Acting DG

MS MP MATSOSO
DIRECTOR-GENERAL: HEALTH
DATE: 2015/05/18

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Appendix B:

Consent letter

<div align="right">

**Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences**

</div>

Letter of Informed Consent

Dept. of Business Management

Internal communication in achieving employee engagement

<div align="right">

Research conducted by:

Ms S Mbhele (14382271)

Cell: 083 389 1232

</div>

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Ms SenelisiweMbhele, Masters student from the Department of Business Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the role played by internal communication in achieving employee engagement. The research aims to find out the extent to which internal communication influences the achievement of employee engagement within the National Department of Health.

Please note the following:

- This is an <u>anonymous</u> study survey as your name will not appear on the questionnaire. The answers you give will be treated as strictly <u>confidential</u> as you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 30 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact my study leader, Dr Estelle de Beer on Estelle.DeBeer@up.ac.zaif you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

_____   _____

Participant's signature   **Date**

Appendix C:

Data collection instrument

Please read each statement carefully and then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that the statement describes your communication and engagement experiences within the organisation. Mark your answer with a cross in the relevant box.

	Questions on communication climate (Dennis' Communication Climate Survey, 1979)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1.1	My supervisor makes me feel free to talk to him or her.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.2	My supervisor is a really competent, expert manager.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.3	My supervisor encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.4	My supervisor makes me feel that the things I tell him/her are really important.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.5	My supervisor is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.6	My supervisor has my best interest in mind when she talks to his/her boss.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.7	My supervisor listens to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.8	My supervisor is frank and candid.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.9	I feel free to tell my supervisor that I disagree with him/her.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1.10	I can communicate 'bad news' to my supervisor without fear of retaliation on his/her part.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

	Questions on quality and reliability of information received (Dennis' Communication Climate Survey, 1979)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
2.1	I think people in this department say what they mean and mean what they say.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.2	People in this department are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.3	In this department people freely exchange information and opinions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.4	I am always informed about how well the departmental goals and objectives are being met.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.5	Executive management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.6	I receive information from the sources that I prefer (e.g. my supervisor, unit meetings, co-workers, newsletters).	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.7	I am satisfied with explanations I get from executive management about why things are done as they are.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

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		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
2.8	My job requirements are specified in clear language.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.9	I think that information I receive from management is reliable.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2.10	I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is reliable.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

	Questions on public relations models (practice of excellent communication) (Dozier; Grunig & Grunig,1995)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Two-way symmetrical communication: *The word department in the questions refers to the National Department of Health*					
3.1	The purpose of communication in the department is to develop mutual understanding between management of the organisation and employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.2	Surveys are conducted to find out how leadership and employees understand each other.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.3	The purpose of communication in the department is to change attitudes and behaviour of both leadership and employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.4	The purpose of communication in the department is to help leadership to be responsive to the problems of other employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.5	Most communication between leadership and employees in the department can be said to be two-way communication.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Two-way asymmetrical communication					
3.6	In the department, research on effectiveness of communication in changing attitudes is regularly conducted.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.7	Attitude surveys are conducted regularly to make policy related decisions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.8	The goal of communication in the department is to persuade employees to behave as the department wants them to behave.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.9	Communication in the department is mainly in written format.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.10	Communication in the department is mainly one-way from leadership to employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3.11	I seldom get feedback when I communicate to the leadership	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

	Questions on organisational culture (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
4.1	The department celebrates its success with employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4.2	Participative culture of the department promotes innovation among employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4.3	Senior leaders in the department care deeply about employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4.4	Senior leaders in the department believe in sharing of power and responsibility with lower-level employees.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4.5	The department is usually willing to negotiate with employees for mutual understanding.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4.6	As an employee, I feel I have personal influence on decisions and policies of the department.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

4.7	My opinions make a difference in the day-today decisions that affect my job.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4.8	Most employees in the department share a common vision and strive towards its achievement.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4.9	Most decisions in this department are made after thorough discussion between all people who will be affected in a major way	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

	Questions on leadership communication Management Practices Survey (Kim & Yukl, 1996)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
5.1	My supervisor encourages and supports me when I have a difficult or stressful task.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5.2	My supervisor backs me up and supports me in difficult situations.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5.3	I receive credit for helpful ideas and suggestions.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5.4	Leadership consults with me to get my suggestions before making a decision that affects me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5.5	I am provided with opportunities to develop my skills.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5.6	My supervisor expresses confidence in my ability to carry out a difficult task.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

	Questions on employee engagement at work Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli& Bakker, 2003)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Vigour					
6.1	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.2	At work I feel bursting with energy.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.3	At work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.4	I can continue working for very long periods at a time.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.5	In doing my job, I am very resilient mentally.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.6	In doing my job, I feel strong and vigorous.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Dedication					
6.7	To me, my job is challenging.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.8	My job inspires me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.9	I am enthusiastic about my job.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.10	I am proud of the job that I do.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.11	I find work I do full of meaning and purpose.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Absorption					
6.12	When I am working, I forget everything else around me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.13	Time flies when I am working.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.14	I get carried away when I am working.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.15	It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.16	I am immersed in my work.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6.17	I feel happy when I am working intensely.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

7. Demographic information (please indicate your relevant demographic information).

7.1 What is your age?

_____

7.2 Please indicate your gender?

_____

7.3 What is the number of years that you have been employed in the Department of Health?

_____

7.4 Please indicate your race?

Asian	Black	Coloured	White
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

7.5 What is your current job level?

Administration (level 6-8)	Junior Management (level 9-10)	Middle Management (level 11-12)	Senior Management (level 13-14)	Executive Management (level 15-16)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

After completing this questionnaire, please drop it off in a box placed on the ground floor in front of the library.

Thank you.

Researcher's contact details:

Ms S Mbhele
Student number: 14382271
Email: sanelisiwembhele@gmail.com
Telephone: 012 395 8384
Mobile: 083 3891232