THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION CLIMATE ON JOB RESOURCES TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the subject

COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

in the

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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February 2019

DECLARATION

I, Annerie Reyneke, student number 15274298, hereby declare that the thesis entitled *The influence of communication climate on job resources to influence employee engagement* is my own unaided work both in content and execution. All the resources I used in this study are cited and referred to in the reference list by means of a comprehensive referencing system. Apart from the normal guidance from my study leaders, I have received no assistance, except as stated in the acknowledgements. I declare that the content of this thesis has never been used before for any qualification at any tertiary institution.

Annerie Reyneke Date 31 August 2018

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Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

> "And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." – Romans 5:2-5

It is due to this hope that I have been able to endure one of the hardest things that I have ever done. This work is a testament to my Lord Jesus Christ. He has remained faithful, not by removing my suffering and the rocks in my path, but by staying true to His promise of never leaving me. Sometimes it may not have felt that way, but He was with me all along. May this work honour His name and point to his glory.

To my husband, Niel Geyer, who has been a blessing and a rock in my life. Thank you for not wavering in your support, love and commitment. You have made our lives possible these last two years. I want to thank one of the strongest, most hard working, and inspiring people I know. What an humble honour that I may share my life with you. Ek is baie life vir jou.

To my father, Johan Reyneke. Thank you for the wonderful relationship that we share as father and daughter. You have been my cheerleader and coach. Thank you for taking this journey with me, for helping me think about these concepts, for challenging my assumptions, for holding my hand when I fell down, and for celebrating the milestones. We are birds of the same feather you and I, and I hope to spend many more breakfasts learning from you.

To my mother, Leona Reyneke. No one else in this world can worry more about her child than my mamma. Thank you for allowing me to fall apart and hide on your couch. Thank you for crying with me during the hard times, and for shouting at the top of your lungs on the phone every time I received good feedback. I cherish our relationship. Thank you for staying strong when I could not.

To my supervisor Dr Estelle de Beer. Thank you for your guidance and direction. You have often challenged me and you have helped me become a better academic. I am glad that this iteration of our working relationship is done, but I look forward to working with you again in future.

To Dr Marthi Pohl. Despite feeling out of my depth on a regular basis, you have helped me to conquer the numbers. As a statistician, the numbers do not just talk to you, but you also have a rare gift amongst numbers-people – you are able to translate these often obscene processes to laymen like myself. You are a master teacher.

To my editor Esmé Harris. Thank you for using your wonderful editing skills to improve my performance. You are not on an advanced level, you are truly a ninja.

To my family – Hanru, Leila, Ma Mariki and Pa Kobus. Thank you for your patience and kindness during trying times. Each of you have supported me in your own way – through an encouraging word, a long hug or by just asking me about my work. I am richly blessed to have family members that are also my friends.

To my friends (in no particular order) Delsarie, Heleen and Lize-Marié. Any one of us may just hold the world record for longest voice note. Your friendships mean the absolute world to me. Thank you Lize-Marié for always challenging me and brainstorming endless ideas. You have always made me feel like I could go on. Della and Helena, even when my faith faltered, you kept praying on my behalf – thank you to the end of eternity.

To my Pearson family. It is an honour to work with you. When one of our colleagues retired she said that she had hope for the future when looking at us – a bunch of young academics changing the world as we go. Thank you to the Communications Department team for 'pulling the string' when I had to let it go and for your support. Thank you also to both my previous and current bosses for believing in me and for giving me time and support to complete my research.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrected and living Son of God

ABSTRACT

The role of a positive communication climate to increase employee engagement levels has not been sufficiently researched, with only a limited number of studies showing the direct relationship between communication climate and employee engagement. Despite the fact that communication is widely accepted as a key driver for increased levels of engagement, few studies have been conducted to understand this relationship. For communication to have a central place in the structure, extensiveness and scope of organisations, communication climate must play a much more encompassing role in employee engagement than has previously been suggested. This study thus proposes that communication climate influences the effectiveness of certain job resources (autonomy, performance feedback, and opportunities for learning and development), which, in turn, influences levels of employee engagement. Focus is placed not only on the perspective of management but also on that of non-managers.

Quantitative survey research was conducted to determine the influence of communication climate on the studied job resources leading to increased employee engagement. Stratified random sampling was performed in four short-term insurance organisations in South Africa. Data were gathered from management and non-management using a self-administered, internet-based questionnaire. Data were analysed through factor analysis and structural equation modeling.

The results indicate that communication climate may have an influence on job resources to improve employee engagement. This was the case for both managers and non-managers. Therefore, if communication climate is improved, it may positively impact on employees' perceptions of certain job resources, which may increase their engagement levels. Furthermore, there was a difference between the perceptions that management and non-management have towards the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement. In conclusion, managers should be cognisant of the fact that their perceptions are different from those of their subordinates, and if they wish to improve their subordinates' engagement levels, they must acknowledge and understand these differences.

KEY WORDS

Absorption, antecedents, autonomy, communication climate, dedication, dialogue, drivers, employee engagement, incongruence, job resources, opportunities for learning and development, performance feedback, quality and accuracy of downward communication, reliability of information, subordinate, superior, superior openness and candour, superior–subordinate communication, upward communication, vigour.

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CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

As far back as 1938, Chester Barnard (as cited by Dennis, 1974:1) said: "…in an exhaustive theory of organisations, communication would occupy a central place, because the structure, extensiveness, and scope of organizations are almost entirely determined by communication technique".

Although it is evident today that, from a systems perspective, many different factors influence the effectiveness of an organisation, communication remains key, yet it is often an undervalued and neglected component in any given organisation. In the contemporary business world, the role of the communication practitioner is one reserved for public relations activities focused on external audiences, often neglecting the important internal audience, namely the employees.

Communication in its basic sense can be defined as the exchange of information between participants (Burger, 2015:25). This exchange inside an organisation is often a top-down transmission of information that superiors perceive to be important in helping their subordinates reach their work goals. Theorists and practitioners alike have, however, challenged the status quo over the past few decades and have worked towards a more symmetrical dialogue between participants in a communication event. This notion is not a new one and, for many years, communication researchers have advocated the need for participative communication strategies in organisations.

This study, therefore, aimed to add a voice to the existing chorus by exploring the concept of a positive communication climate, advocating that a communication climate can only be positive when there is dialogue and a good relationship between employees and their direct managers. Furthermore, the need for a positive communication climate is expounded to show its value when working towards increased levels of employee engagement.

The role of a positive communication climate to increase engagement levels has not been sufficiently researched, with only a limited number of studies showing the direct relationship between communication climate and employee engagement. Referring back to Chester Barnard, for communication to have a central place in the structure, extensiveness and scope of organisations, it is argued that a positive communication climate, specifically, plays a much more encompassing role in employee engagement than has previously been suggested.

This Chapter provides a brief introduction to the concepts of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. Thereafter, the research problem, primary and secondary objectives and hypotheses are discussed. This Chapter also provides an overview of the methodology and limitations to the study.

1.2. BACKGROUND

A small number of studies (Roberts, 2013; Hayase, 2011) have been conducted to establish the relationship between a positive communication climate in an organisation and increased levels of employee engagement. It is important to define this relationship, as management in organisations may learn valuable insights into why employees are poorly engaged and how to improve this engagement, ultimately benefiting the entire organisation.

Effectively engaging employees is a complicated process that requires multi-level collaboration between senior leadership, line-managers and supporting and/or operational departments (D'Aprix, 2011:267). Organisations should understand the reasons for poor employee engagement, with the aim of implementing collaborative strategies to combat it in an organisation. Communication professionals, in collaboration with human resources departments, can play a vital role in understanding the reasons for poor engagement, or even disengagement, and subsequently finding and implementing solutions.

1.2.1. Communication climate

A key factor contributing to an effective organisation, one that drives the financial bottom-line and also considers non-economic human factors, is the organisation's ability to practise effective organisational communication, with the aim of improving relationships with its stakeholders. Consideration of the human factor means aligning the communication practices of the organisation in order to develop strong, long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with all stakeholders, including employees (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier, 2002:548; Grunig & White, 1992:31).

Organisational communication can be loosely defined as the exchange of information on a formal and informal basis between superiors and subordinates to control and direct the activities inside an organisation (Deetz, 2001:4). Thus, the focus here is on a climate of participation that revolves around the relationships between people in the organisation (Angelopulo & Thomson, 2013:6-7; Eisenberg, 2009:700-701). Grunig (1992:6) agrees, reiterating the importance of communication between, amongst others, superiors and their subordinates in an organisation.

Dennis (1974:29) expanded on and popularised the phrase "communication climate". Building on the work of his colleague, Redding (1972), he conducted research to refine the method of measuring communication climate within organisations to understand the effectiveness thereof. Communication climate can be defined as employees' perception of the quality of their relationships within the organisation, the effectiveness of communication between both employees and managers and the ability of employees to influence and be involved in business processes (Dennis, 1974:29).

Communication climate relies on five specific constructs as developed by Redding (1973:139-422) and later refined by Dennis (1974:105). These constructs include superior–subordinate communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, superior openness and candour, opportunities for upward communication, and reliability of information. Superior–subordinate communication refers to the concept of supportive relationships; thus, how supportive superiors or peers are perceived to be in a subordinate's work life (Dennis, 1974:105). Likert (as quoted by Dennis, 1974:32) defined supportiveness in the following manner:

> "The leadership and other processes of the organisation must be such as to ensure a maximum probability that in all interactions and in all relationships within the organisation, each member, in the light of his/her background, values, desires, and expectations, will view the experience as supportive and one which builds and maintains his/her sense of personal worth and importance."

The second construct, quality and accuracy of downward communication, and refers to the perceived quality and accuracy of downward communication. The next construct, superior openness and candour, refers to a superior's perception of communication relationships with subordinates, with specific emphasis on perceived openness, candour and empathy. Redding (1973:335) stated that openness must be viewed from two perspectives: openness in message sending and openness in message receiving. In other words, how open a superior or subordinate is in both providing information (telling) and receiving information (listening).

The fourth construct, opportunities for upward communication, focuses on subordinates' perceptions of opportunities for upward communication and the perceived degree of influence of that communication (Dennis, 1974:105). This dimension is related to the concept of participative decision-making, implying a climate that moves away from a linear transmission of information to one that is more dialogical or reciprocal, interactive and two-way in nature (Dennis, 1974:33). Finally, the construct of reliability of information refers to superiors' perception of the reliability of information received from their subordinates and the reliability of information shared between colleagues or co-workers. Thus, using Dennis' communication climate survey, an organisation can measure the perceived effectiveness of its communication to help develop satisfied and engaged employees.

1.2.2. Employee engagement and job resources

Employee engagement, can be defined as how positive employees feel, think and behave towards the organisation that they work for. Engaged employees show higher levels of commitment and discretionary effort and find their work more meaningful, which leads to increased performance and ultimately a positive outcome for the organisation (Albrecht, 2010:4; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008:209; Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008:188; Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:2; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014:108; Saks, 2006:601; Seijts & Crim, 2006:1; Welch, 2011:328).

Employees who are engaged typically present characteristics such as vigour, dedication and absorption. Firstly, vigour involves an employee demonstrating mental resilience, high levels of energy, commitment to putting effort into their work and a willingness to persevere in the face of difficulties. Secondly, when employees feel that they are significant to the organisation, they become more dedicated. Dedication refers to employees' enthusiasm, inspiration, pride in their work and their willingness to accept challenges. Lastly, an absorbed employee fully concentrates on and is happily engrossed in their work – a sign that they enjoy their work. When work is enjoyed, time passes by quickly and employees find it easy to focus their attention on the job at hand (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008:210; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295).

It is, however, insufficient to simply understand the behaviour of an engaged employee. In the study of engagement, the factors that drive engagement have received the most attention. Literature shows that there are many drivers of employee engagement as well as factors that cause an organisation to effectively connect with its employees and look after their well-being. In this relatively new field of study, researchers have yet to agree on a single set of drivers that lead to employee engagement. Widely accepted as the father of modern engagement research, Khan (1990:705) initially identified three drivers of employee engagement – also referred to as psychological conditions – which impact levels of engagement. These include meaningfulness, safety and availability. An organisation that provides a meaningful work environment is one where employees have jobs that are challenging to them, where they can apply a variety of skills, where their creativity is facilitated, where interaction with others promote dignity, self-appreciation and value, and where they experience a certain level of autonomy. Safety refers to a work environment that is secure, predictable and clear in terms of behavioural consequences. The third driver, availability, means that employees believe themselves to have the psychological, physical and emotional ability to do their work well.

More recently, Aon and Hewitt (2014:11) developed a model of work engagement, proposing six main drivers of employee engagement and 22, what they call, “organisational antecedents”. These main drivers are leadership, performance, the work, the basics, company practices and the brand. Some of the antecedents include senior leadership, career opportunities, job safety and security, communication, collaboration and corporate responsibility.

Bakker and Demerouti (2008:218), however, identified two overarching drivers of engagement, namely personal and job resources. Personal resources can be defined as an employee’s ability to control and impact his/her environment. Employees who are highly engaged have high performance goals, high levels of self-motivation, positive self-esteem, high self-efficacy and a strong internal locus of control (Bakker, 2011:266). Personal resources are, therefore, intrinsic to a person and what they bring to the work environment.

Job resources, on the other hand, are resources that enable an employee to effectively do his/her work. More specifically, they are physical, social and organisational aspects of an employee’s job that reduce certain job demands and stresses. Furthermore, these resources assist an employee in achieving his/her goals and help to stimulate personal growth, thus improving an employee’s personal resources. Job resources are identified on four levels, namely organisational, interpersonal, organisation of work and task levels. At an organisational level, job resources include salary, career opportunities and job security. At the interpersonal level, it includes superior and co-worker support and team climate. Job resources at the organisation of work level involve opportunities for learning and development and participation in decision-making, and at the task level, it includes skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and performance feedback (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312; Bakker *et al.*, 2008:191).

The job demands–resource scale was developed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007:312) to measure the influence of job demands and particularly job resources on employee engagement. Many studies have proved a relationship between job resources and employee engagement, including in the South African context

(Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001:508; Rothmann, Mostert & Strydom, 2006:83).

For the purpose of this study, only three job resources were used. They include employee autonomy, opportunities for learning and development and performance feedback. There are two reasons for selecting to measure these three particular constructs. Firstly, a number of studies have supported the respective positive relationships between autonomy, performance feedback, opportunities for learning and development and employee engagement (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001:417; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Bakker & Van Rhenen, 2009:908; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015:56). Secondly, the motivational process is driven by job resources, including proper autonomy, performance feedback, and opportunities for learning and development, which play an instrumental role in an employee's growth and ability to achieve his/her work goals (Gruman & Saks, 2011:126; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:895). Future research would be able to measure the relationship between the rest of the identified job resources and employee engagement.

In conclusion, research has shown a strong correlation between communication climate and employee engagement (Hayase, 2009:61; Roberts, 2013:42). These findings are further supported by Aon and Hewitt's (2014) study that listed communication as a drivers of employee engagement. The current study, however, did not merely seek to identify the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement or to simply confirm that communication climate is a driver of employee engagement. Rather, it aimed to show that communication climate plays a much more encompassing role in employee engagement than has previously been suggested. It was proposed that communication climate influences the effectiveness of certain job resources (autonomy, opportunities for learning and development and performance feedback), which, in turn, influence levels of employee engagement. Focus is placed not only on the perspective of management but also on that of non-managers. Considering this background information, the research problem was identified.

1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

One of the major movements in organisations is to improve engagement amongst their knowledge workers. As previously discussed, there are a number of drivers that can improve employee engagement. A positive communication climate has historically been identified as one of these drivers, or job resources, as conceptualised in this study.

Khoury (2005:18) reminds the reader that creating and maintaining relationships are of the utmost importance to engage “the minds of knowledge workers”. These relationships, especially those between superiors and their subordinates (or manager and non-managers), form the basis from which employees can create, innovate and solve problems. Such relationships should be governed by a positive communication climate, i.e. the perceptions and attitudes towards the effectiveness of communication activities, especially within the superior–subordinate dyad. Note is taken that often the perceptions held by managers can be very different than those held by non-managers, and this could influence the levels of engagement within organisations.

Good relationships, especially between a manager and his/her employee, governed by a positive communication climate, are so important for improving engagement, this study proposed that communication climate cannot be viewed as just another item in a list of job resources to improve employee engagement. Rather, it was proposed that communication climate plays a much more encompassing role, whereby it influences and underpins job resources, which then leads to improved employee engagement.

In light of the literature review, the following research objectives and hypotheses were developed to address the problem statement:

1.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

This section provides the primary and secondary research objectives.

1.4.1. Primary research objective

The primary research objective was to determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement.

1.4.2. Secondary research objectives

The secondary research objectives were as follows:

I. To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.

II. To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.

1.4.3. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Autonomy is related to vigour.

H_o: Autonomy is not related to vigour.

H2: Autonomy is related to dedication.

H_o: Autonomy is not related to dedication.

H3: Autonomy is related to absorption.

H_o: Autonomy is not related to absorption

H4: Performance feedback is related to vigour.

H_o: Performance feedback is not related to vigour.

H5: Performance feedback is related to dedication.

H_o: Performance feedback is not related to dedication.

H6: Performance feedback is related to absorption.

H_o: Performance feedback is not related to absorption.

H7: Opportunities for learning and development is related to vigour.

H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to vigour.

H8: Opportunities for learning and development is related to dedication.

H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to dedication.

H9: Opportunities for learning and development is related to absorption.

H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to absorption.

H10: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H11: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback

H12: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H13: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy

H14: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H15: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H16: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H17: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H18: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H19: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception autonomy.

H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H20: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H21: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H22: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H23: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H24: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research design was followed in this study to collect and analyse the data. The main reason for this choice was the need to understand the influence of communication climate on certain job resources (employee autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development) and their influence on employee engagement. A statistical approach was deemed most appropriate for these measurements.

A survey data collection method was used to collect data from four short-term insurance organisations in the South African financial sector. The online software tool Qualtrics (2018) was used to collect the data. The survey could be accessed through a desktop computer, laptop and/or smartphone. Each respondent received an email, with an external link, inviting them to participate in the survey. When clicked on, the link directed them to the Qualtrics site, where they could complete the survey. The link was anonymous, and it was therefore not possible to establish the identity of the respondents through Qualtrics.

A sample of 1200 management and non-management employees was taken using stratified random sampling. Of those invited to voluntarily participate in the study, 504 respondents completed the survey after giving their consent. In terms of ethical considerations, which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, the human resources directors of each organisation gave written consent for their organisations to participate. However, it was crucial to also obtain consent from individual respondents to participate.

The self-administered survey consisted of four parts, which started with a section requesting basic demographic information. The second part consisted of a 17-item Likert scale called the Utrecht work engagement scale. This scale measured the employee engagement levels (in terms of vigour, dedication and absorption) of both management and non-management employees. The third part consisted of a nine-item Likert scale called the job demand–resource scale. This scale measured the job resources (employee autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development) used by management and non-management employees. The fourth part was divided into two sections: the first measured the communication climate experience of management and the second that of non-management. This Likert scale used 44 items to test management responses and 40 items to test non-management responses. Dennis' communication climate scale was used for this purpose. Both the Utrecht work engagement and the job demand-resource scales have been tested within the South African environment (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006; Rathbone, 2006; Storm & Rothmann, 2003). Dennis' communication climate scale was also more recently used to understand the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement (Hayase, 2009; Roberts, 2013).

Data analysis was performed using the statistical programmes SSPS and AMOS. Validity and reliability testing was done through confirmatory factor analysis, followed by exploratory factor analysis. The former did not show a good fit, and the latter determined a new set of factors different from the original constructs hypothesised in the literature. Based on findings from the exploratory factor analysis, the factors were renamed, and new hypotheses were created. Structural equation modeling was then performed to determine the strength of the relationships between the constructs. The new hypotheses were accepted or rejected based these relationships. Lastly, a test for mediation was performed.

1.6. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The primary research objective of this interdisciplinary study was to determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement. One of the main contributions from this study was the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to determine the nature and strengths of the relationships between communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. The SEM results indicated that, within reason, communication could impact job resources, which then influences employee engagement. However, there was a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers.

These differences provide another important contribution in terms of the managerial implications of the results. Results indicated that, there was a distinct difference between how management and non-management perceived the concepts of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. Thus, improving the communication climate may ultimately improve the understanding and experience of job resources to improve employee engagement. A positive communication climate in the superior–subordinate dyad appears to be the key for management to ensure that they understand the needs of non-managers in terms of job resources. Only when these needs are adequately addressed can employee engagement improve. Moreover, these needs can only be understood and addressed when there is a positive communication climate between a superior and his/her subordinate.

1.7. LIMITATIONS

Firstly, as previously discussed, there are a large number of different drivers that improve employee engagement. This study focused on job resources, and only three of the many job resources mentioned in the literature were used. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that it is not only autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development that can drive employee engagement. Future research can investigate other drivers within this context.

Secondly, it is not only resources provided by the organisation that can influence employee engagement, but the literature also identifies personal resources, such as drive and intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, external forces, such as economic instability, can influence employee engagement. Lastly, as this study focused on short-term insurance organisations within the South African financial sector, generalisability to the larger financial sector is limited.

1.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consent to participate was given on two levels, firstly, from the human resources director of each of the four participating organisations, secondly, from each respondent participating. Before completing the questionnaire, a respondent had to read through a letter of consent stating the following information:

- participation was completely voluntary;
- participants could opt out at any time;
- all information would remain completely anonymous and could not be traced back to the individual;
- the gathering of information was endorsed by their organisation; and
- researcher contact details were provided

Each respondent could then click to agree or disagree to participate. Thus, both the organisation and individual respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the research.

1.9. THESIS STRUCTURE

Chapter 1 consists of a broad introduction and overview of the proposed study by providing a short introduction to the concepts of communication climate, employee engagement and job resources. This Chapter includes the problem statement, research objectives and proposed hypotheses. A brief overview of the proposed methodology is also included.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework that governed this study, including a description of the systems theory as the grand theory for this research. The framework includes a discussion of the relationship management approach as a worldview, the theoretical domains, sub-fields within those domains and relevant theories within the sub-fields. Chapter 2 further details the concept of communication climate and its relationship with employee engagement, and a detailed discussion on the constructs of communication climate is provided.

Chapter 3 focuses on the concepts of employee engagement and job resources. This includes a detailed analysis of the constructs of both employee engagement and job resources. In this Chapter, the relationship between employee engagement and job resources is unpacked, as is the relationship between job resources and communication climate.

A detailed research plan is put forward in Chapter 4, discussing research design, sampling, data gathering techniques and data analysis. Chapter 5 presents the data analyses, providing insight into the statistical procedures followed and the outcomes of the statistical analyses.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, discusses and presents the findings of the analysed field research in relation to the literature review on communication climate, employee engagement and job resources. Conclusions and recommendations are then drawn.

1.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Communication climate plays an important role in the success of an organisation. It is therefore important to understand this phenomenon, especially the communication climate between a superior and a subordinate or, in other words, a manager and his/her employee within the knowledge worker context. Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between communication climate and employee engagement, but it is seen as merely one of the many drivers of engagement. Thus, as one of the many job resources, communication climate can indeed impact positively on employee engagement. This research, however, delved deeper into the understanding of the role of communication climate as more than just another job resource but rather as a tool that underpins all job resources for improving employee engagement.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Communication climate refers to the subjective experience that both of the members of the superior–subordinate dyad have of the communication environment inside an organisation (Dennis, 1974:29). This experience is critical in order to determine how communication in these micro systems can translate into the success of the larger organisation.

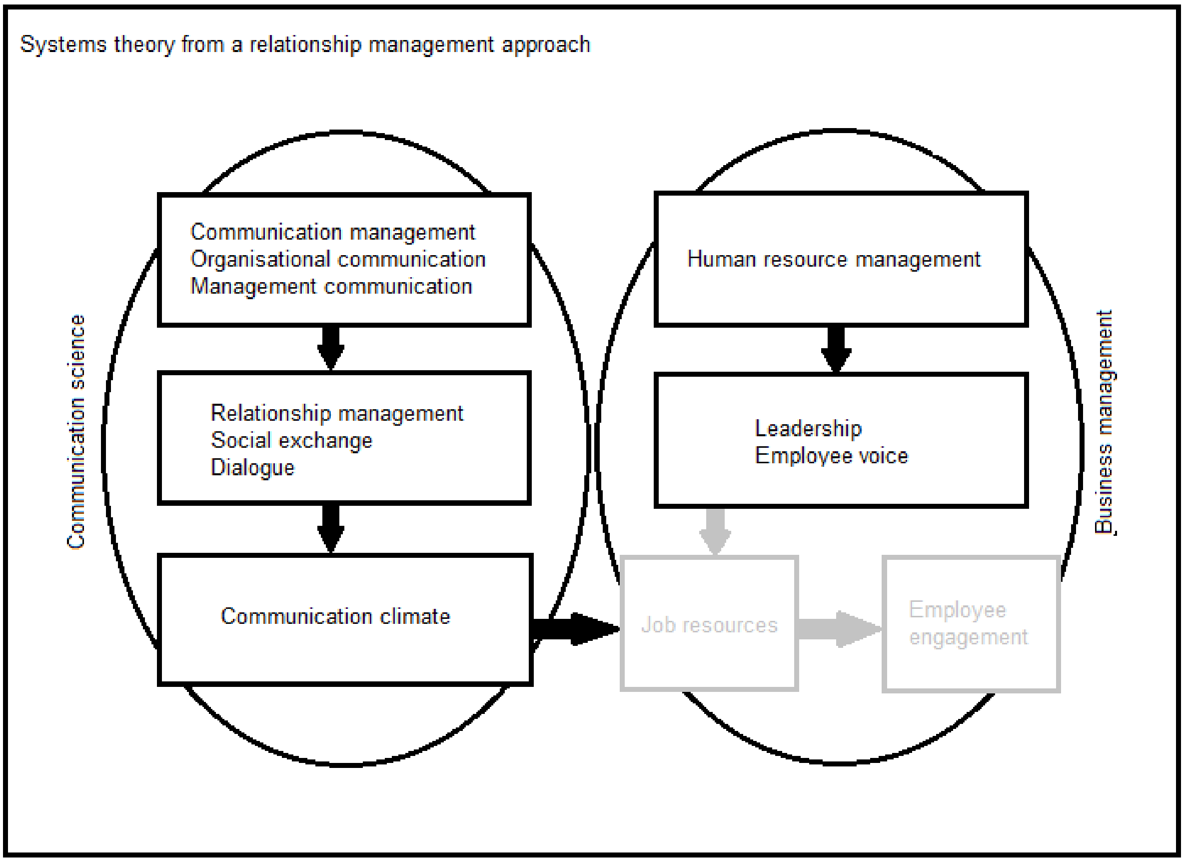
In this study, the focus is on the influence of communication on certain job resources to improve employee engagement. Communication climate is identified in literature as one of these drivers of employee engagement, however, it is proposed here that communication climate plays a much more encompassing role in driving employee engagement than was previously thought.

Figure 2.1 is proposed as a guide to navigate the following chapters, with the aim of plotting this study within the current literature on the topics of communication climate, certain job resources and employee engagement. Within the figure, different components will be highlighted when that section of the figure is discussed.

This chapter relates to the Secondary Research Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources. The focus here will be to conceptualise communication climate.

This Chapter addresses the theoretical framework developed for the study by referring to the grand theory, worldview, theoretical domains, sub-fields within these domains, and theories related to the sub-fields. The second part of the Chapter conceptualises communication climate, as well as the constructs related to communication climate.

Figure 2.1. Chapter 2 orientation



2.2. META-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is conceptualised by making use of a grand theory, based on the general *systems theory*. In terms of a worldview, it is argued that organisations comprise of people and therefore they need to function from a *relationship management perspective*. Given this, two theoretical domains were identified, namely *communication science* and *business management*. For the purposes of this study, these two theoretical domains are related in that the focus remains on the influence of communication on job resources to improve employee engagement. With communication climate clearly sitting within the communication science domain, both job resources and employee engagement find themselves within the domain of the management of the business.

Each of these two theoretical domains have sub-fields pertaining to *communication management*, *organisational communication*, *management communication* and *human resource management*. These sub-fields have theories relating to them including *relationship management theory*, *social exchange theory*, *dialogue theory*, *leadership theories*, and *employee voice*. Within the sub-field also lie different concepts and their constructs. Table 2.1 summarises the meta-theoretical framework as presented in this study. The detail of the framework will be explained in the section that follows.

Table 2.1: Meta-theoretical framework

Grand theory	Systems theory		
Worldview	Relationship management approach		
Theoretical domains	Communication Science	Business Management	
Sub-fields within theoretical domains	Communication Management Organisational Communication Management Communication	Human Resource Management	
Theories from sub-fields	Relationship Management Theory Social Exchange Theory Dialogue theory	Leadership Theories Employee Voice	
Concepts	Communication climate	Job resources	Employee engagement
Constructs	Superior–subordinate communication Quality and accuracy of downward communication Superior openness and candour Opportunities for upwards communication Reliability of information	Autonomy Performance feedback Opportunities for learning and development	Vigour Dedication Absorption
Empirical methods	Quantitative survey using the Dennis communication climate Survey	Quantitative survey using the Job Demand–Resource Scale	Quantitative survey using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
Measurement items	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	Part III, Items 1 – 9	Part II, Items 1 – 17

2.2.1. Grand theory: a systems theory approach

In broad terms, a system can be defined as "an integrated set of interacting variables that together create a larger pattern or whole" (Littlejohn, 2009:950). The focus here is on the interrelatedness, and interconnectedness of different variables (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972:450). Miller (Broom, Shawna & Ritchey, 1997:92) defined a system as "a set of interacting units with relationships among them". The *systems theory* is a general approach to understanding a number of ideas in both the social and natural sciences, and has therefore impacted many different fields of research (Littlejohn, 2009:950).

Within the context of communication, the *systems theory* can help to understand interactions or processes between people and groups, and can even be used to understand communication inside organisations. Often the smallest defined system is between individuals that deal with the establishment and maintenance of relationships. Within the context of internal communication, relationships between employees and their managers, for example, can be described as a small system. This system can also help to describe the nature of the relationship, not just based on the exchange of information, but also in terms of how the nature of the relationship will influence this exchange. Thus, the *systems theory* can help to illustrate the nature of the interactions taking place within a system (Littlejohn, 2009:953-954), or in the words of Klir (Broom *et al.*, 1997:92), "the relations among the things in the system".

A system can be explained by noting its four different aspects: objects, attributes, internal relationships, and an environment. Objects within a system are the parts or elements that comprise that system. The attributes are the characteristics of these objects that comprise the system. Attributes can also include the characteristics of the system itself. Internal relationships are patterns of interaction between different objects, and the environment refers to those things that can influence or have an impact on the system (Littlejohn, 2009:950). The relationship between an employee and his/her manager illustrates these patterns. In this relationship, the employee and the manager are the objects in the system. Amongst others, their different personalities, levels of knowledge, experience, and culture can be seen as the attributes. The communication that takes place between them is based on an internal relationship, and their pattern of communication will influence the interaction. Also, the employee and the manager exist within the larger environment of their workgroup, department and organisation.

Furthermore, there are three characteristics of systems that aid the understanding of how a system functions: interdependence, hierarchy, and self-regulation (Littlejohn, 2009:950-951). Firstly, it is the interaction between the different objects in a system that will help an observer to understand that particular system. These interaction patterns mean that the different objects are interdependent. They have an influence on each other, and through this interaction something is created that one object on its own cannot create. In an organisation, for example, the employee is dependent on the manager to set work goals. The manager will ensure that the goals are aligned with the organisational goals, and the employee must ensure that the goals are still realistically achievable. Secondly, systems are part of other systems, and these systems can be classified in terms of increasing complexity. An employee and his/her manager is a small subsystem, situated in a workgroup. The workgroup is part of a larger department, and even this is part of a larger organisation. Thus, the influence of other larger systems on a small subsystem must be acknowledged. Lastly, the interaction between systems, through networks and feedback loops, will lead to self-regulations within that system. Thus, by taking inputs from other systems and the environment and by releasing outputs, the system is adaptable to change in order to function effectively in reaching its goals.

This study takes a *systems theory* approach to communication inside organisations in terms of the interaction, through communication, between employees and their managers, and between the larger organisation and its employees, with the aim of improving employee engagement. Katz and Kahn (Kamasak & Bulutlar, 2008:136) state that "communication – the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning – is the very essence of a social system or an organisation". Scot and Mitchell (Kamasak & Bulutlar, 2008:136) similarly argue that "communication is the critical process in organising because it is the primary medium of human interaction". Thus, how will the communication interaction between different objects in the system, amongst others, managers and employees, help to engage each other. The most important interaction remains the relationship between an employee and his/her manager, which relates to the system that they function within.

It can be argued that the grand theory of this study, the *systems theory*, naturally leads to a worldview based on relationship management. Two definitions of the systems theory explain how relationships are at the core of how a system functions. According to Katz and Kahn (Broom, Casey & Ritchey, 2000:13), the systems theory is "basically concerned with problems of relationships, of structure, and of interdependence rather than with the constant attributes of objects". Miller (Broom *et al.*, 2000:13) defines a system as "a set of interacting units with relationships among them". Thus, interaction and interdependence between an employee and his/her manager is essential to build a strong, long-lasting, mutually beneficial relationship. It will be argued that because of this strong relationship, effective communication can take place, and that it will activate the drivers (job resources) leading to employee engagement.

2.2.2. Worldview: relationship management approach

Ledingham (2003:81) states that communication "balances the interests of organisations and publics through the management of organisation-public relationships". Ledingham (2003) goes further to explain the importance of understanding relationship management as one of the keys to theorising communication management, and also to better understand the practice of communication management within an organisation. This idea is supported by Grunig and White (1992:81), who confirm that the relationships between an organisation and its publics is a central concept in the understanding communication management.

Ledingham (2003:188) highlights the following as essentials to understanding *relationship management*, or in Ledingham's words, "the organisation-public relationship":

- One of the outcomes of effective organisation–public relationships is the benefit for both parties involved;
- Mutual benefit strategies can generate economic, societal, and political gain for both the organisation and the publics;

- Common interests, and shared solutions to common problems are what develop successful organisation–public relationships;
- Effective organisation–public relationships need an ongoing interchange of need, expectations, and fulfilment;
- Many of the principles that govern interpersonal relationships, such as initiating, maintaining and improving relationships, can be used as the foundation for the understanding of organisation–public relationships; and
- The best way to measure communication management impact is through the organisation–public relationship.

Within the *systems theory*, the smallest system is that between a manager and his/her employee. This system functions within a relationship and it is argued that effective communication is needed in order to create a positive relationship where common interests are shared, expectations are managed and needs are fulfilled. This is true for both parties within the dyad.

Eisenberg (2009:700) agrees that the most important relationship is that between the superior and his/her subordinate, and thus the communication climate as perceived within this relationships is very important. O'Neil (2008:15) states that "employees most prefer communication from immediate supervisors and managers" – which places even more emphasis on this relationship.

Despite this, there is often a difference in the perceptions held by managers versus those held by non-managers in terms of effective communication. In broad terms, an often made assumption is that there is agreement when communication takes place. Thus, employees assume that their managers share their perceptions, agendas, values, and definitions – that there is congruence. This means that often the perception prevails that communication is just about delivering an accurate message using appropriate channels, and not about aligning the differences between different people's views and attitudes (Kelly, 2000:94). Quirke (Kelly, 2000:94) states that the hallmark of organisational communication is the fact that people disagree, rather than that they agree. However, despite this, people do not regularly check whether they are in agreement or not. From this premise, communication should start with the receiver – identifying and understanding the receiver's wants and needs. This could be translated by saying that communication in the superior–subordinate dyad should start by identifying the subordinate's wants and needs. Chan (2001:191) argues that "perceptual congruence between a supervisor and subordinate in their communication relationship is also critical for their work relationship". Thus, when there is perceptual incongruence, the supervisor can misunderstand the communication exchange, leading him/her to be unaware of the need of the subordinate.

In terms of more specific differences between a superior and subordinate, Verčič and Srblin (2011:186) examined the relationship between job level and internal communication satisfaction. They found that there were significant differences in the satisfaction levels, especially related to feedback information, satisfaction with communication with superiors and satisfaction with communication climate, between employees from different job levels. Chan (2001:185-186) found "differences between supervisors and subordinates in their communication relationship". The study found that the greatest differences related to "supervisor's concern for subordinates" and "supervisor's openness in accepting different ideas". Ramirez (2012:60) found that only one demographic characteristic influenced communication satisfaction scores, and that was employee job classification. Thus, managing the superior–subordinate relationship through effective communication is important, but both parties must be mindful of the fact that they will often not hold the same opinions or attitudes.

2.2.3. Theoretical domains

In studying the interactions that build relationships within organisations, two theoretical domains identified in this study are *communication science* and *business management*. These two domains will be discussed below.

Lederman (Nielsen, 2013:2068) defines the term science as "a body of knowledge, a set of methods, and way of knowing". Communication as a science has the origins of its body of knowledge in ancient Greece and Rome, with the study of rhetoric spearheaded by philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. In terms of the modern era, communication science found itself in the social sciences domain with research done in mass media, propaganda, public opinion, and persuasion. This was particularly evident around the World War II period. Within the western world of Europe and the

United States, different areas of research emerged, however, Asia-centric and Afrocentric communication research also developed and articulated the practices and assumptions of these communities (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009:lii).

Today, themes researched within the field include rhetoric, speech communication, mass media, interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, intercultural communication, international communication, organisational communication, development communication and digital media (Cibangu, 2015:26-27). Within the discipline of *communication science*, the construct of communication is defined by Littlejohn and Foss (2009:lii) seen as "the organising principle of human social life: communication constructs the social world rather than simply providing the means for describing the world". Kulczycki (2014:133) states that the science investigates "all the different levels, means and forms of communication", especially within the context of a given culture.

Business management, on the other hand, focuses on all those actions that are needed to strategically plan, organise, control and lead the resources of the organisation to achieve the organisation's set goals (Bates, Botha, Botha, Goodman, Ladzani, De Vries, De Vries, November & Southey, 2005:2). Linking the *business management* perspective to the *systems theory* approach, the different subsystems within an organisation is important to understand and manage, in order to achieve the organisation's larger strategic goals. One of the important resources in an organisation is its people. *Business management* has a stake in how human resources are managed within the organisation, as the most important asset of an organisation is its employees (Bates *et al.*, 2005:280). Further relating to the *systems theory*, the body of knowledge contained within communication as a science, can play an important role in the management of a business in as much as it connects the different human resources within the business, in order for the latter to reach its goals.

2.2.4. Sub-fields within the theoretical domains

Within the theoretical domain of *communication science*, the sub-fields that have been identified as being relevant to this study are: *communication management*, *organisational communication* and *management communication*. "*Communication* *management* is defined as the management of communication between an organisation and its publics (Grunig, 1992:5)". The domain of *communication management* includes external and internal communication functions. It is also much larger than just the techniques of communication such as writing and editing, and is also much larger than publicity and reputation management (defined as public relations in some literature). *Communication management* starts on the level of policy creation and decision-making on executive level. Thus, managers in charge of communication is part of the dominant coalition of an organisation, and is not reduced to a technical role (Grunig, 1992:5-6).

Organisational communication is defined as "the process by which language and social interaction promote coordinated action towards a common goal" (Eisenberg, 2009:700). It is the study of how systematic communication practices are used to coordinate and control the activities of members inside an organisation (Deetz, 2001:4). This practice of communication will then promote organisational effectiveness. Organisational effectiveness is not only about improving the bottom line, but also emphasises the participation of different stakeholders in the process of achieving the organisation's strategic goals, which translates into success. During the first half of the 20th century, the focus of *organisational communication* was on how information was transmitted and what the causes could be if there were to be a breakdown in the transmission. This was very much a top-down, management controlled, approach to communication. More recently, the approach has changed into a more participative climate, focusing on relationships that are formed in the organisation, especially the relationship between the superior and his/her subordinate (Angelopulo & Thomson, 2013:6-7; Eisenberg, 2009:700-701). Grunig (1992:6) agrees that the focus of *organisational communication* is not as broad as the theoretical domain of *communication management*, but rather focuses more specifically on the communication between individuals in the organisation. "*Organisational communication* describes how top managers, subordinates, middle-level managers, and other employees communicate with each other in an organisation" (Grunig, 1992:6).

Management communication as a sub-field can be defined as “management’s use, adaptation and creation of languages, symbols and signs for the effective and profitable management of the corporate enterprise” (Angelopulo & Thomson, 2013:15-16). Thus, the focus of *management communication* is on the communication of the manager, and deals with issues such as writing, speaking and presentations done by managers. It also focuses on how to build managers’ communication skills. The management of communication is about creating tools to assist managers to improve their communication (Angelopulo & Thomson, 2013:16) and should not be confused with communication management, which is a domain encompassing all areas of communication in the organisation and how it is managed effectively to achieve the organisation’s goals.

Within the theoretical domain of *business management*, the sub-field of *human resource management* is identified. *Human resource management* is defined as the “management of the human and social capital in the context of the employment relationship” (Coetzee, 2010:8). It seeks to foster a competitive advantage for the organisation by strategically developing a highly capable and committed labour force. *Human resource management* takes place on the most basic relational level – the interaction between employees and their superiors. Human resource practitioners are furthermore responsible for managing and running, on a day-to-day basis, the personnel of an organisation. They do this through the utilisation of behavioural science knowledge. The practitioners must design and implement certain policies, systems and practices that will support the broader strategy of the business. Skills include industrial psychology, management science and law (Coetzee, 2010:7-8).

Thus, all these sub-fields deal with the management of human capital for the successful achievement of organisational goals and objectives. It is argued that communication plays a critical role in this process of managing people, by promoting the interaction between employees, especially those within the superior–subordinate dyad. It also seeks to equip the superior or manager to more effectively use communication in order to support this relationship.

2.2.5. Theories from sub-fields

There are a number of different theories applicable to the sub-fields. In terms of the sub-field of *communication management*, the theory of *relationship management* is relevant, while in *organisational communication*, there are two theories of particular relevance, namely: the *social exchange theory*, and *dialogue theory*. The second sub-field, *human resource management*, has two sets of theories that are of particular importance to this study and that includes, *leadership theories* and *employee voice*. These theories will be discussed below.

i. Relationship management theory

The focus of *organisational communication* is very much on one of the most important relationships within any organisation – that of the superior–subordinate relationship (Eisenberg, 2009:700). The *relationship management theory* is therefore an important theory for this study, because through this relationship, the superior must translate the organisation's strategic goals into actions.

As a theory originating from *communication management*, the *relationship management theory* suggests that the interests of the organisation and its publics are balanced by the management of organisation–public relationships. This echoes the definition of Cutlip, Center and Broom (Ledingham, 2006:414) who state that maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders will ensure the success of the organisation.

Hon and Grunig (1999:18-19) furthermore state that there are two types of relationships that can be formed between the organisation and its publics. Exchange relationships form when both parties involved provide a benefit to the other party. In this relationship one party is willing to give, only in exchange for the benefit that the other party can bring. This is usually evident in the relationship between organisation and customer or client. Communal relationships, on the other hand, happen when both parties provide benefits to the other. Communal relationships are often found between friends, family and colleagues, and it is advocated that these types of relationships should be created between members of an organisation, and more specifically between a superior and his/her subordinate. This relates to the *social exchange theory* that will be discussed below.

There is a definite connection between the quality of communication, and the nature of the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders (Mitrofan & Bulborea, 2013:515). Communication, as a tool to build image or persuade, through simple techniques such as event planning or a press release, is simply not enough to build a communal relationship. Communication behaviour, grounded in actions, taken by both the organisation and its publics, will lead to improved communal relationships (Grunig, Grunig & Ehling, 1992:82; Ledingham, 2003:194).

More specifically, and related to the nature of this study, communication behaviour, that will improve communal relationships between the organisation and its employees, must create and maintain mechanisms and procedures that will encourage open and honest conversations, and gather feedback from employees on ways to improve organisational performance. Effective communication behaviour will also look to be transparent by involving stakeholders such as employees in the decision-making process; by providing accurate and useful information; and by being truthful about the business goals and challenges. Leadership must also be reliable, show integrity, coach rather than give orders, and must demonstrate concerns for others (Jiang, 2016a; Shen, 2016).

When measuring the quality of communal relationships, certain concepts must be present such as: reciprocity, commitment, trust, credibility, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding. Equality in the relationship is in practice not always present, with one individual usually holding more power. However, with reciprocity, a relationship does not need equality in power to be healthy and functional (Grunig *et al.*, 1992:83; Hon & Grunig, 1999:19-20).

Furthermore, Mishra (2007:112-126) explores in more detail what communication, that seeks to build trusting communal relationships, looks like. The findings support previous research which states that communication plays an integral part of building strong relationships inside organisations. Employees think that face-to-face communication (preferred above digital communication mediums) remains the most important medium through which relationships are built. The ability and comfort of "talking" with their manager on a daily basis, make employees feel secure, valued and happy in their jobs. Thus, employees will seek opportunities for informal, open dialogue with their superiors. Face-to-face communication provides a better opportunity for two-way dialogue where information can be shared, and critically, where feedback from a manager will make an employee feel more connected to that manager. This will result in an employee feeling more connected to the organisation. Thus, it is imperative for relationship building that managers provide time for face-to-face communication with employees, where information sharing, listening and feedback is encouraged from both parties involved. In practice, this means that managers should be equipped, through training, to improve interpersonal communication skills in order to effectively engage with their employees on a face-to-face level. Some of the following more practical techniques can assist managers and their employees to improve their interpersonal communication skills:

- Access: Both managers and employees must provide mutual access to information. This information will assist in the decision-making process.
- Positivity: Both parties must attempt to make the relationship more enjoyable.
- Openness: Both managers and employees should share their thoughts and feelings more openly with each other.
- Assurance: Both parties involved in the relationship should demonstrate to the other party that they are committed to the relationship. This can be done through attempts to assure the other party that they have legitimate concerns that will be listened to.
- Networking: Organisations can show their commitment by building networks with the same groups that the other party would, for example, unions, community groups and environmentalists.
- Sharing of tasks: Both managers and employees can share in solving joint and separate problems, for example, through job creation, improving profit margins, and staying in business.

Taking the theory to practice in an even more specific way, Dent (2006) suggests that partnerships, based on certain characteristics, will ultimately lead to strong relationships, yielding mutually beneficial outcomes. Although the work is more focused on business to business partnerships, many of the principles can be applied to a partnership agreement between a manager and his/her employee. A manager and employee can enter a partnership agreement based on the following characteristics:

- Partnerships are entered into voluntarily: Most often, partnerships, such as teams with colleagues, are not entered into on a voluntary basis, however, all parties involved can choose to commit to a defined goal or even to building trust.
- Partners perceive themselves to be equal in power, accountability, and value: In a true partnership, one party's greater knowledge and experience should be the reason for more power, not their title or position. In reality, this is, however, seldom the situation. Also, the reason for entering into a partnership is because the different parties bring value that is essential to reaching the goal. The unique contribution that each party brings should be valued.
- Partners have equal access to, and openly share, information and knowledge: The emphasis should always be on the task and outcome, and if information and knowledge is not freely shared between the parties, it will be difficult to meet these goals or make good decisions.
- Partners look for opportunities to discover that they are wrong: If both parties are persuaded to reach the goal, they will need to continuously check that their perceptions, decisions and actions will lead to the successful meeting of the goal. Winning the argument is not the end-game, but rather reaching the goal set out in the best manner possible.
- Partners seek out and support success for others: "Partners bring to a relationship an outlook of abundance." Both parties should look for opportunities for the other to succeed and celebrate each other's successes (Dent 2006).

Specific skills that will enable these partnerships to turn into strong, long-lasting, mutually beneficial communal relationships, include: Openly self-disclosing information and giving feedback, creating trust through actions and words, creatively resolving conflicts and solving problems, welcoming change, and valuing interdependence (Dent, 2006). All these skills eco an ideal state where dialogical communication is employed to foster these relationships.

ii. Social exchange theory

The *social exchange theory* has its roots in the fact that people need resources in order to survive. People have learned to exchange these resources or to pool the resources together for the social system to use. People have also learned what behaviour is necessary in order to acquire the needed resources and have created a system of norms that govern how these resources must be exchanged. For example, in direct exchanges, the norm of reciprocity means that when one person receives a resource, they must also return a benefit. In this process, communication facilitates these exchanges (Roloff, 2009:894-895). According to Foa and Foa (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005:880), there are six types of resources: love, status, information, money, goods, and services. In an organisation, the first example of this exchange is the organisation paying money to employees in return for their services. Also, on micro level, the exchange of information happens between superiors and subordinates and between colleagues. This exchange creates an interdependent relationship, which connects with the *systems theory* that explains that all systems are interdependent of each other. This relationship is named the social exchange relationship, which is a relationship between a superior and subordinate and which will evolve when the superior "takes care of his/her subordinate", resulting in effective work behaviour and positive attitudes (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005:876, 882).

iii. Dialogue theory

Broome (2009:301) defines dialogue as "a form of discourse that emphasises listening and inquiry, with the aim of fostering mutual respect and understanding. It is viewed as a dynamic, transactional process, with a special focus on the quality of the relationship between participants". *Dialogue theory* relates to the *relationship management* approach of the study, in that dialogue is seen as an important factor in establishing and maintaining quality relationships. From its Greek roots, dialogue is about creating meaning through interaction, which also ties in with the *systems theory* (Broome, 2009:301).

There are a number of thought leaders in *dialogue theory*, with Carl Rogers considered as being one of the most influential thinkers in promoting dialogue in therapy, within the field of psychology. Rogers believed that dialogue is key in building relationships and that the dialogue must be characterised by a willingness to listen, a genuineness in sharing feelings and ideas, respect for the other, and empathetic understanding (Broome, 2009:302). In terms of *dialogue theories* in communication, amongst others, Richard Johannesen described six major components that are necessary for dialogue communication: "(a) genuineness—avoiding a facade, or projection of an image; (b) accurate empathic understanding—reflecting feelings as seen from the other's viewpoint; (c) unconditional positive regard—confirmation and non-possessive warmth for the other, without necessarily approving the behaviour of the other; (d) presentness—avoiding distractions and being communicatively accessible; (e) spirit of mutual equality—viewing each other as persons, not objects, avoiding superiority and power; and (f) supportive psychological climate—listening without anticipating, interfering, competing, refuting, or warping meanings" (Broome, 2009:304). Many of these components are related to the concepts of communication climate, as discussed later in this chapter.

iv. Leadership theories

Through effective leadership, employee engagement can be improved (Albrecht, 2010:27; Kim, 2014:91; Nielsen & Gonzalez, 2010:139). It is for this reason, that theories on leadership is included in this section.

Leadership in organisations, from senior executive management, to line-managers, play a very important role in the extent to which employees are engaged or not (Albrecht, 2010:27). This rings true particularly for line-managers, or so called middle-managers. These managers play a critical role in achieving organisational goals, and looking after the well-being of employees or subordinates (Nielsen & Gonzalez, 2010:139). Lipman (2015) agreed by stating that, in the end, "people leave managers, not companies".

Nielsen and Gonzalez (2010:145-146) furthermore suggest ways in which managers can engage their subordinates more effectively: Managers can improve self-efficacy through intellectual stimulation and by providing more positive feedback to their subordinates. They must also set clear and specific goals, and support subordinates to achieve these goals. The manager must not only focus on the individual, but must set clear group goals, encourage the development of shared group norms, and help those groups to take collective responsibility for reaching their goals. Another important aspect is a manager's ability to coach and mentor his/her subordinates. Furthermore, managers can create a positive climate by promoting the expression of positive emotions, and finally, in an ever changing environment, managers can themselves be open to change, modelling preferred behaviour to their subordinates.

Segers, De Prins and Brouwer (2010:149, 153) furthermore suggest that positive forms of leadership, such as supportive, developmental, empowering, and transformational leadership will have both a direct and indirect impact on engagement levels. This is because these leadership styles will influence levels of hope, optimism, and self-efficacy, which in turn will positively influence feelings of vigour, dedication and absorption (employee engagement) amongst subordinates. It is therefore imperative that the organisation develops engaged leadership, and teaches managers how to cultivate engaged subordinates (Segers *et al.*, 2010:152).

In a study conducted by Kim (2014:91), it was found that authentic leadership has a positive relationship with organisational behaviour, or in other words, work engagement. "Authentic leadership is the process that draws upon a leader's life course, psychological capital, moral perspective, and a highly developed supporting organisational climate to produce greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours, which in turn foster continuous, positive self-development resulting in veritable, sustained performance" (Avolio & Luthans, 2006:2). Authentic leaders have characteristics including honesty, integrity, and openness. Through these characteristics, they assist their subordinates to achieve their potential, and through openness and honesty, they build trusting relationships with their subordinates. Authentic leaders also model these behaviours to their subordinates. These behaviours will result in a positive work environment, helping form positive relationships between the superior and his/her subordinates, effectively leading to higher levels of work engagement (Kim, 2014:92-93, 96). Although there are many different positive leadership styles, the assumption here is that employing positive leadership will lead to higher levels of engagement.

Another *leadership theory* is called the Leader–Member Exchange Theory (LMX). The premise of this theory is that, within an organisation, different types of relationships will develop between leaders and their subordinates, also called members. Physical and mental effort, material resources, information, and social support between the leader and the member are what characterise these relationships (Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne, 1997:48). In the original work done in 1975 by Dansereau, Graen and Haga (Krishnan, 2005:15), LMX was called the Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory and focused on how the dyadic relationship between leader and member will result in two groups of members: the in-group and the out-group. The leader develops higher quality exchange relationships with some members, bringing them into the in-group. The relationship with the out-group members tend to be more formal. This theory suggests the importance of a relationship between the leader and his/her subordinates, which is built on exchanges, thus tying in with the *systems theory* and the *relationship management* approach.

v. Employee voice

Within the context of *human resource management*, superiors in an organisation can create a workplace environment that would foster certain conditions that would lead to increased levels of employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008:21-22). One of these drivers to improve engagement levels is the *employee voice*.

Hirschman (Beugre, 2010:175) defined voice as “any attempt at all to change an objectionable state of affairs, not only by petitioning management or higher authorities, but also through protests including the mobilisation of public opinion”. The employees’ voice will show their discontent with things happening in the organisation and will also show a hope that by voicing their opinion, changes will be affected. Beugre (2010:177-178) used research done by Macey and Schneider (2008) to develop a model explaining that when employees have a voice it will lead to state engagement, influencing behavioural engagement. Thus, giving employees an opportunity to voice their opinion in the workplace, will lead to higher levels of engagement.

The notion of providing employees with the opportunity to voice their opinions ties in with the important communication activity of listening. Employees will only voice their opinions if there is a culture of listening in the organisation. This culture starts with leadership promoting and supporting dialogue (Macnamara, 2015:9).

2.2.6. Concepts and constructs

A number of concepts can be identified from the sub-fields of communication management, organisational communication, management communication and human resource management. Concept one, communication climate, along with its constructs, will be discussed in more detail below. The concepts of job resources and employee engagement, along with their constructs, will be discussed in more detail in the next Chapter.

2.3. COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

This second part of the Chapter will discuss the concept of communication climate and its constructs of superior–subordinate communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, superior openness and candour, opportunities for upwards communication, and reliability of information.

2.3.1. Defining communication climate

Communication climate as a concept was developed by Redding (1972) to explain the character of an organisation's communication system. Dennis (1974:29) defines communication climate in the following way:

> "Communication climate will refer to a subjectively experienced quality of the internal environment of an organisation; the concept embraces a general cluster of inferred predispositions, identifiable through reports of members' perceptions of messages and message-related events occurring in the organisation".

The communication climate of an organisation affects the way that people talk, whom people like, how they feel, how hard they work, how innovative they are, what people want to accomplish, and how people fit into the organisation. “It also affects perceptions of work conditions, supervision, compensation, advancement, relationships with colleagues, organisational rules and regulations, decision-making practices, available resources, and ways of motivating an organisation’s members” (Falcione, Sussman & Herden, 1987:198, 203). Therefore, understanding the communication climate is vital in order to understand why an organisation is successful or not – a positive communication climate is vitally important for the success of the organisation (Mitrofan & Bulborea, 2013:515; Verma, 2013:63). Jones and James (1979:323) define communication climate as a part of the construct of psychological climate which “includes communication elements such as judgement on the receptivity of management to employee communication or the trustworthiness of information being disseminated in the organisation“.

Goldhaber (1993:19) defines communication climate as “the perception of employees with regard to the quality of the mutual relations and the communication in an organisation”. These definitions show that communication climate pertains to both the perception of communication that takes place in the organisation on a broad level, but also the communication that pertains to the different relationships that are formed in the organisation, including the superior–subordinate relationship. Smidts, Pruyn and Van Riel (2001:1053) agree that communication climate is present on both an individual level, as well as a group level.

Although there is not always a clear difference between organisational and communication climate, the latter is considered as being a separate concept. Organisational climate, is defined as the attitude or assumptions about what is happening inside the organisation. Communication climate refers more specifically to the attitudes or assumptions about the communication activities in the organisation (Guzley, 1992:383). Communication climate has an important role to play in the overall organisational climate inside an organisation.

The original research conducted by Redding (1972) and Dennis (1974), conceptualised five dimensions that constitute communication climate, namely: supportiveness; participative decision-making; trust, confidence and credibility; openness and candour; and high performance goals.

First, supportiveness refers to the supportive relationships that people may experience in an organisation, specifically the perceived support derived from a superior. These supportive relationships will, in turn, build an individual's sense of importance and self-worth.

> "The leadership and other processes of the organisation must be such as to ensure a maximum probability that in all interactions and in all relationships within the organisation, each member, in light of his background, values, desires, and expectations, will view the experience as supportive and one which builds and maintains his sense of personal worth and importance" (Likert, as quoted by Dennis, 1974:32).

Second, participative decision-making means a communication climate where participation from all relevant stakeholders is valued. Redding (1972:157) states that participation is not just a particular behaviour, but is a set of attitudes held about those behaviours. These attitudes and behaviours show a system of communication that is more transactional, than linear in nature. Instead of a traditional, linear, hierarchical model, the organisation values reciprocity (Dennis, 1974:33). Basic communication principles that are important here is the need to listen and to provide appropriate feedback. The communication climate in terms of leadership and decision-making procedures must be open to the notion of employee participation.

Third, trust, confidence and credibility are concepts summarised by Dennis (1974:34) as believability. Thus, the question should always be asked as to whether the message is believable. This will be influenced by whether the receiver of information deems the sender to be an expert and to be reliable. Furthermore, trust, confidence and credibility will be judged based on characteristics of the source of the information, the content of the message itself, as well as the context or situation in which the communication takes place. Thus, if the sender deems the receiver to be a believable source, and if the message is exchanged in a trusting environment, the receiver may interpret the message differently than if it took place in a distrusting context, with an unbelievable sender.

Fourth, openness and candour, refer to the communication that takes place in an upward manner from subordinate to superior; communication that is downward from superior to subordinate; and communication between colleagues (Dennis, 1974:34). As previously stated, Redding (1972:34) advocates for an understanding between the "telling" and the "listening"; thus, superiors should listen. Also, openness, in terms of upward communication, is especially important when a superior wants to encourage employee participation.

Lastly, setting high performance goals are vital for an organisation to function successfully. The organisation and its employees need to know where they are going, what they want to achieve, and how they will reach these goals. Communication is central to transfer these goals throughout the organisation and to secure commitment to these goals (Dennis, 1974:35).

Dennis (1974:129) continued the research in order to fully understand these dimensions, and after empirically testing the dimensions through a quantitative survey, he identified the following factors: superior–subordinate communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, superior openness and candour, opportunities for upward communication, and reliability of information. These constructs have also been included in the operationalisation for this study and will be discussed in the next section. Note that Dennis' communication climate survey is used as one of the scales in this research. Various related studies confirmed the widely acceptable use of the scale (see chapter 4, section 4.3.3).

There are a number of studies that have made use of the communication climate survey developed by Dennis (1974), in order to understand how organisations function. There are also a number of studies that measure the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement. Below, information about other studies will be shared to ensure a complete understanding of the role of communication climate in the context of the organisation.

Guzley (1992:379) surveyed employees from a service organisation in the United States to determine the relationship between levels of organisational commitment and perceptions of organisational climate and communication climate. Amongst others, it was found that there was a positive relationship between perceptions of communication climate and the level of employees' organisational commitment. Of importance is that the study made use of the constructs of communication climate as identified by Dennis (1974), relating to the definition that this study uses to conceptualise communication climate.

Bartels, Pruyn, De Jong and Joustra (2007:173) focused on the impact of communication climate, as well as perceived external prestige, on organisational identification (the perception of belonging to an organisation). As per their research, previous studies have shown a positive relationship between communication climate and identification to the larger organisation, however, not many studies focused on the relationship with lower organisational levels such as work groups. The results show that communication climate has the strongest link to employees' identification with an organisation in terms of their daily work, but a weaker identification with the organisation as a whole. Thus, if management wants to influence the identification with the organisation through a bottom-up process, the role of communication climate must be acknowledged. The study defines communication climate according to the original work done by Dennis (1974) and Redding (1974), as previously discussed in this section. The measurement of communication climate was based on the scale developed by Dennis (1974).

In a similar study, Kamasak and Bulutlar (2008:136-137) examined the relationship between communication climate, job satisfaction, and perceived external prestige. The results showed that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between communication climate and perceived external prestige. Of importance is that communication climate was defined in this study based on the quality of the relationship between management and employees, and the trustworthiness of information being shared. This refers to dimensions of communication climate defined by Dennis (1974), which will be discussed in more detail below.

A constructive communication climate is identified as one of the factors that promote the sharing of knowledge within groups and the larger organisation (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004:117). More specifically, the study by Kamasak and Bulutlar (2008:136-137) found that communication climate will positively influence knowledge donating (communicating own knowledge), knowledge collecting (collecting others' knowledge), and affective commitment (a feeling of attachment to the organisation). The study furthermore defines communication climate, according to Putnam and Cheney (Van den Hooff & De Ridder, 2004:120), "as the atmosphere in an organisation regarding accepted communication behaviour". Two dimensions from Dennis (1974) are used to help define communication climate, namely: reliability of information and superior–subordinate communication.

2.3.2. Relationship between communication climate and employee engagement

In a ground-breaking study first conducted in 2003, Watson Wyatt (Yates, 2006:71) found that organisations "with highly effective internal communication practices produce superior financial results and enjoy greater organisational stability". These communication practices will drive higher market premium, larger shareholder returns, lowered staff turnover, and most importantly, increased employee engagement.

> "In comparing high communication effectiveness companies with those having low communication effectiveness, the (Watson Wyatt) 2005/2006 study found that the highly effective communicators were more than 4.5 times more likely to have highly engaged employees, which positioned them for better financial results" (Yates, 2006:73).

Other studies have also found a positive relationship between effective communication climate and higher levels of employee engagement. In a study done by Hayase (2009:61), the aim was to understand whether there was indeed a relationship between communication climate and employee engagement. The results showed that organisations could use communication to improve employee engagement. Roberts (2013:iii) followed, by also studying the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement, and found a moderate relationship between the two. In a study conducted during 2010-2011 at the Delhi International Airport, Balakrishnan and Masthan (2013:6) sought to find ways of improving employee engagement. Although various drivers of employee engagement were identified, experts and top management thought that communication was the most important driver to investigate.

The results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between communication and employee engagement.

In an exploratory study focusing on the role of the public relations professional in the workplace, Mishra, Boynton and Mishra (2014:199) found that more effective communication could indeed enhance employee engagement.

Furthermore, in a pilot study published in 2015, Karanges, Johnston, Beatson and Lings (2015:129-130) used online surveys distributed to employees at an Australian organisation to confirm that communication had a *"significant part to play in developing and maintaining optimal employee engagement".* Karanges *et al.* (2015:129-130) continue by stating that senior leadership, but especially, the direct supervisor or line manager, must use communication in order to build strong relationships that will foster employee engagement. More specifically, communication must create a culture where employees will be able to share their ideas and opinions with their superiors. Furthermore, communication must facilitate the discussion on the organisation's objectives, and how employees can align their values and goals to those of the organisation.

2.3.3. Constructs of communication climate

From an organisational communication point of view, communication that takes place inside the organisation should focus on relationships between people, for example, the superior–subordinate relationship (Grunig, 1992:6). The *relationship management* approach also shows that strong relationships will have positive outcomes for the organisation (Ledingham, 2006:414). The *management of communication* then advocates for managers to improve their communication skills through training, and as a result to improve the relationship between themselves and their subordinates (Angelopulo & Thomson, 2013:16). However, effective communication is a broad idea and it is therefore suggested in this study that the concept of communication climate be used to assist managers in understanding and improving their communication skills, in order to have a positive impact on employee engagement.

The concept of communication climate has five constructs, or what Dennis (1974:129) called dimensions of communication climate. They include: superior–subordinate communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, superior openness and candour, opportunities for upward communication, and reliability of information.

It is important to note that many studies do not make a distinction between the different constructs of communication. For example, studies often, when referring to superior–subordinate communication which fosters a supportive relationship, include the need for openness and reliability of information as part of a supportive relationship. This section will attempt to clearly distinguish between these constructs.

i. Superior–subordinate communication

Dennis (1974:129) refers to the factor of superior–subordinate communication in terms of the supportive relationship between a superior and a subordinate. Thus, superior–subordinate supportiveness is translated through the communication behaviour of the actors. Supportive exchanges include encouragement, understanding, and fairness (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:4). Smidts *et al.* (2001:1053) state that supportive relationships refer to "the feeling of being taken seriously".

Rooney and Gottlieb (2007:187) state that it is generally accepted in the social support literature that a supportive relationship between a superior and subordinate is one where the support can be communicated in "emotional, instrumental, informational, and esteem/appraisal" terms. Emotional support refers to behaviour showing a caring and empathetic attitude. Instrumental support refers to providing tangible goods or services as support; while informational support is about providing information and advice. Esteem/appraisal support refers to giving feedback in order for a person to do self-evaluation. Rooney and Gottlieb (2007:190) build on this by providing a list of supportive and unsupportive managerial behaviours. Table 2.2 provides the list with the definition of each behaviour.

Table 2.2: Classification of supportive and unsupportive behaviour

Genuine concern	Behaviours that show that the supervisor cares about the employee and that demonstrate interest in and respect for the employee's personal/family life
Recognition	Behaviours that recognise employees' contributions
Task guidance and assistance	Behaviours that provide clarity, suggestions, or practical assistance in dealing with job-related tasks
Trustworthiness	Behaviours that demonstrate that the supervisor can be trusted
Professional development	Behaviours that encourage employees' professional development/career advancement and that show a willingness to advocate on employees' behalf
Open communication	Behaviours that encourage employees to engage in honest dialogue with their supervisors and that keep employees informed
Reasonableness	Behaviours that show that the supervisor is fair, level-headed, consistent, and reasonable in his or her decisions and assessments of situations
Encourages autonomy	Behaviours that encourage employees to be autonomous and to express their ideas
Apathy	Behaviours that show a lack of interest in the employee's work or a lack of awareness/regard for the difficulties that employees are coping with
Untrustworthiness	Behaviours that diminish an employee's trust in his or her supervisor
Bureaucratising	Behaviours that encourage or implement formalized procedures
Monitors face-time	Behaviours that involve monitoring employees' whereabouts
Limits decisional discretion	Behaviours that diminish employees' decision-making authority and creative input
Undermining	Behaviours that demean, belittle, cause personal humiliation, or that undermine an employee's confidence in his or her job-related abilities

Source: Rooney and Gottlieb (2007:190)

Note should be taken that three of the behaviours identified in the above table relate to the constructs of job resources as discussed in detail in the next Chapter. Recognition (defined as performance feedback), autonomy, and professional development (defined as opportunities for learning and development), as will be discussed, are three drivers leading to employee engagement. Therefore, it seems that literature shows support for the positive relationships between the communication climate construct of superior–subordinate communication and the job resources constructs of autonomy, performance feedback, and opportunities for learning and development. This will be discussed in more detail in the next Chapter.

Rooney, Gottlieb and Newby-Clark (2009:422) state that when a manager displays supportive behaviour, the subordinate may feel more valued and competent. This feeling of being valued and being deemed competent is connected to the term reflective appraisals. Reflective appraisals as defined by Schwalbe, Gegas and Baxter (Rooney *et al.*, 2009) refer to the perception that people hold of others' reactions to themselves. Rooney *et al.* (2009:415) state that reflective appraisals are important in the understanding of workplace relationships, especially the supportive relationship between a superior and subordinate. When superiors show supportive behaviour towards their subordinates, the subordinates may develop positive reflected appraisals, such as, "my manager trusts me" and "my manager has confidence in my abilities".

In 1961, Gibbs (Forward, Czech & Lee, 2011:2) sought to identify communication behaviours that would help define communication climate. The research identified two poles in communication climate: supportive and defensive communication climates. A supportive communication climate is defined by encouragement, understanding, acceptance, empathy, and where information is freely and accurately shared. A defensive climate, on the other hand is where individuals feel threatened or anxious when communicating.

To explain a supportive versus a defensive communication climate better, six dichotomies have been identified: Superiority versus equality; evaluation versus description; strategy versus spontaneity; control versus problem orientation; certainty versus provisionalism; and neutrality versus empathy. Beck and Beck (1986:16) state that when a manager believes himself/herself to be superior, the attitude will convey the notion of "I am the boss", leaving the employee reluctant to approach him/her. The climate of equality will encourage participative decision-making because the subordinate's knowledge and talent are respected. Evaluation will create a defensive culture as it passes judgement and blame. Employees may not volunteer information "for fear of looking bad". On the other hand, description helps employees feel supported because the manager will ask for information before passing judgement (Beck & Beck, 1986:17).

When strategy is employed, a manager will have the appearance of being open, even though he/she might have a hidden agenda. Spontaneity refers to honest and straightforward communication that shows the employees that they are respected. A climate of control means that the manager is trying to control or influence the subordinate to change his/her attitude or behaviour. This is in contrast to problem orientation which "seeks solutions without inhibiting the receiver's goals, decisions, and progress" (Beck & Beck, 1986:17). This climate creates a cooperative environment that helps the subordinate feel supported. "Certainty appears in the dogmatic, 'need-to-be-right' supervisor" (Beck & Beck, 1986:18). Subordinates may feel that they cannot raise issues with their superior as the superior never listens. In contrast, provisionalism means that superiors know that there are alternative ways in accomplishing tasks and solving problems. When managers show neutrality, subordinates may feel that their managers are not concerned for them or respect them. Empathy means that a manager will take time to listen and will show true concern for the issues that the subordinate may raise (Beck & Beck, 1986:18).

ii. Quality and accuracy of downward communication

Quality of information refers to the perceived quality and accuracy, as well as the integrity of downward communication. This construct is reflected in employees who are satisfied with the way superiors communicate the sources of information that they use, the rewards that the subordinates receive, as well as a clear understanding of the organisational goals and their job requirements to reach those goals (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). This means that there needs to be top-down communication transparency. Karanges *et al.* (2015:38) define quality of information as the individual employee perception of the value of the information that they receive. Is the communication timely, accurate, adequate and complete, therefore, does it have considered value. Smidts *et al.* (2001:1053) refer to the importance of adequate information. For example, receiving adequate information is important so that the employee can know what role he/she plays in the achievement of the organisation's success. This relates to the Job Resource of performance feedback, in that employees cannot improve their performance if they do not receive adequate information about their job role.

Part of sharing adequate, accurate, complete and timely information is through the feedback process between the superior and the subordinate. Feedback to a message is vital in order to ensure that the meaning of the message is mutually shared. The cyclical process of feedback between a sender and receiver ensures improved communication levels. This process can take place on two levels: between individuals, or between the organisation and a select audience. Communication between individuals (or interpersonal communication) often takes place between a superior and his/her subordinate, or between colleagues (Krippendorff, 2009:286; Redding, 1972:40).

Feedback that is perceived as being threatening instead of supportive, can lead to a loss in productivity (Gibb, 1961:141). Perceived threatening feedback will lead to defensive behaviour from both the manager and the employee. Gibbs identifies the following behaviours that could arise as a consequence: withholding information, misunderstanding, taking up the role of the "yes-man", outright hostility, and poor job performance. A communication activity that provides constructive feedback on how an employee can improve his/her job performance, can very quickly have a negative impact, the exact opposite of what is intended (Redding, 1972:51). A second consequence to this could be what is called executive isolation. Executive isolation refers to managers being cut off from their subordinates due to these threatening feedback encounters. Managers can become so isolated that they are no longer in touch with reality or with what is happening on grass roots level. This does not only happen with top management functioning on executive level, but also with middle management. Middle management is often referred to as the gatekeepers of information. They have perceived control and power by influencing the flow of information, especially from the bottom, in an upwards direction. Traditional hierarchical structures perpetuate this control due to the vertical nature of communication flow within the organisation (Fraser & Dutta, 2008:18). This tendency to regulate the flow of information will further increase the isolation of middle managers *and* top-management.

In terms of feedback between individuals, especially between a superior and his/her subordinate, the process becomes more formalised, as in the case of performance reviews/feedback. Performance reviews/feedback have historically been one of the main ways through which managers could provide detailed feedback to the employee in terms of their work performance during a set time period. Formal feedback – as in the case of a performance review – is a very important factor that impacts on employee satisfaction and engagement. In many cases, however, it tends to be a threatening communication encounter that does not lead to mutual understanding (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:1; Gibb, 1961:141). Feedback is discussed in the next Chapter as one of the constructs of job resources. There is thus in literature a clear link between receiving quality information, through the process of a performance review. This link with job resources will also be discussed more in detail in the next Chapter.

Furthermore, Jiang (2016a) states that transparency in communication is vital in order to create a trusting relationship. Communication that is transparent is categorised by open decision-making, holding the organisation accountable for its actions, and providing accurate information to subordinates. This transparent communication will also improve the perception of consistency between leaders' beliefs and actions.

iii. Superior openness and candour

This refers to superiors' perceptions of communication relationships with subordinates; especially the affective aspects of these relationships, such as perceived openness, candour and empathy. This shows the extent to which subordinates feel that superiors are open and honest when sharing information, and vice versa (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5).

Serpa (1985:425) states that candid communication is very often taken for granted, or overlooked as a behaviour that can be compromised in situations that suit a certain individual or even the organisation itself. However, false or even blatantly deceptive behaviour will ultimately break the trust relationship between the superior and subordinate and even between the organisation and customers. Managers, according to Serpa (1985:425-426), are responsible for creating a candid corporate culture characterised by open and honest communication, sincerity, straightforwardness, and frankness. Serpa builds the argument by explaining that line-managers play an important role in influencing key decisions taken on executive level as they must supply executives with information needed to make those decisions. If the information is not candid and free of intentional errors, the decisions made on executive level along with goals and strategies set for the organisation will not be well formulated or realistic. These same line-managers must then also disseminate the executive decisions to their subordinates. If information traveling down to the subordinates is not honest and candid, it will impede the subordinates' ability to deal effectively with problems they face on ground level.

When there is a lack of candour or frankness between a superior and subordinate, one of the main reasons is fear on the part of the subordinate. The subordinate may fear that if he/she does not agree with his/her superior, this may lead to loss of prestige, demotion or even dismissal. There are a couple of indicators that show a culture where candour and frankness are not present, which are: before subordinates share their views, they will first listen to what the superior thinks; a form of group think occurs where everyone agrees and there are no dissenting views; subordinates are reluctant to provide bad news; no new information is provided to justify decisions or action, which means decisions and actions are not readily criticised; and after a formal meeting, there are many informal one-on-one meetings, showing that the information shared in the initial formal meeting was not open and honest (Serpa, 1985:427-428).

iv. Opportunities for upward communication

This factor shows subordinates' perceptions of upward communication opportunities, or in other words, how subordinates feel about their views and opinions being heard, and if those views and opinions are incorporated in their work or in the decision-making process (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). Opportunities for upward communication can only be present with a superior that actively listens to his/her subordinate.

> "The biggest block between two people is their inability to listen to each other intelligently, understandingly, and skilfully" (Rogers & Roethlisberger, 1991:111).

The act of effective listening (listening for understanding and listening with empathy) is the foundation of effective dialogue. The ideal form of communication infers that both the sender and receiver of a message have equal opportunity to provide feedback in the communication process. This act ensures that the meaning of the message is correctly interpreted by the receiver. Effectively listening starts with an organisational culture that promotes active listening; with a leadership team that is supportive of good communication; and with a communication department with the technical skills to listen (Macnamara, 2015:9). Technical skills are, however, just one component of a superior's ability to listen and encourage communication. According to Macnamara (2015:8), there has to be an architecture of listening, which includes: a culture of listening, policies for listening, addressing the politics of listening, structures and processes for listening, technologies for listening, resources for listening, skills for listening and an articulation of listening to decision-making and policy making. Listening means that subordinate opinions are not just being heard and acknowledged, but also that those opinions are being implemented in their work.

Redding (1973:34) states that if superiors in the organisation listen, they will become more inclusive and will encourage more participation from their subordinates. Moreover, focus must be placed on the human interest inside the organisation (Burger, 2015:40). This means that employees need to be granted more participation in decision-making, which cannot happen if superiors do not listen effectively to what their subordinates have to say.

There are different types of employee participation, however; most relevant to this discussion is direct communication and upward problem solving. Direct communication and upward problem solving involves direct communication from individuals, and usually takes place between a superior and his/her subordinate. These communication interactions can be in the form of a verbal face-to-face exchange, or in written format (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2005; Wilkinson, Gollan, Marchington & Lewin, 2010).

At the start of the 20th century, most communication theories operated from the assumption that communication was a transmission process that was usually linear in nature. In other words, communication is a top-down, management-controlled event with very little emphasis on feedback. The goal was to increase productivity as much as possible, and communication was merely a tool to achieve this end-goal (Eisenberg, 2009:700). However, the importance of feedback in a cyclical communication process, as well as active listening are recognised as effective strategies that will encourage and improve employee participation in decision-making.

McConkey (1980:69) wrote specifically on the role of participative management styles in creating, amongst others, greater motivation, more job satisfaction and better decisions amongst subordinates in an organisation. Participative management means that subordinates are given space to determine and influence their jobs in order to reach the organisation's goals. This implies a great extent of self-management, through which subordinates can determine their job content, scope and goals; they can do their own planning; and they must play a key role in decision-making. McConkey (1980:67) does, however, note that participation is not the same as a democracy. In a democracy every participant has equal share in taking the final decision, whereas participation means that the superior secures the input and recommendations from the subordinates to ensure that the superior makes a good quality decision. This relates back to the importance of the superior in listening to the input from subordinates before a decision is made.

v. Reliability of information

The last factor refers to subordinates' perceptions of reliability of information that they receive from their superiors. Reliability of information infers trust, confidence and credibility in the relationship (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5).

Jiang (2016a) refers to the importance of trust between superiors and their subordinates when stating that there needs to be a consistency between the beliefs and actions of both a superior and a subordinate – this is especially true for the leaders in the organisation. Trustworthy and authentic leaders must understand their own strengths and weaknesses; they need to show a high moral value; and must exhibit integrity in their behaviour. Leaders must also demonstrate a real concern for their subordinates' well-being. Subordinates will then in turn trust their leader's competence, goodwill, reliability and integrity.

Furthermore, trust is a very important component when developing relationships in the work environment, and there is a higher likelihood of people engaging with others when there is a degree of trust (Barbera & Young, 2010:159). Macey and Schneider (2008:22), also included trust as an antecedent, moderating the relationship between leadership and behavioural engagement. The authors state that "leaders create trust in followers, and it is the trust that followers experience that enables behavioural engagement".

Schneider, Macey, Barbera and Young (2010:165) state that trust is the extent to which employees will feel safe around their superiors, their co-workers, as well as the feeling of safety in the organisation as a whole. This ties in with Khan's (1990:705) conceptualisation of safety as one of the psychological conditions impacting on levels of engagement. Employees must feel that their superiors, co-workers and the organisation as a whole will not act in an opportunistic manner, harming those employees, and they must feel that when they work hard and make positive investments in the organisation, the hard work will yield positive results (Schneider, Macey, Barbera & Young, 2010:165). Due to the fact that the superior is credible, the subordinate will trust the reliability of the information they receive. This is also true in the relationship between colleagues.

2.4. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The aim of this Chapter was to explain the role of communication climate within the larger theoretical framework that governs this study. From a *systems theory* perspective, the establishment and maintenance of the relationship between a superior and subordinate is very important, and communication plays a key role in that relationship. The *relationship management* approach, after all, argues that without effective communication, these key relationships cannot be managed successfully.

Communication organises human social life by constructing the world, not just describing it. This principle is vital to understand within the context of *business management*, as these superior–subordinate relationships will help construct the plan that will achieve organisational success. Thus, *human resources management* takes place within these relationships and must work effectively in order to reach the goals of the organisation.

Communication climate as a concept, serves to provide a deeper understanding of what the communication looks like in these relationships. This was done by deconstructing the supportive communication between a superior and a subordinate; the quality and accuracy of communication flowing from the superior down to the subordinate; the superiors' willingness to be open; opportunities for subordinates to communicate information from the bottom up, as well as the reliability of information shared between the parties involved.

CHAPTER 3: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND JOB RESOURCES AS DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The 2017 engagement trends (Aon & Hewitt, 2017:4) show that global engagement levels standing at 63% have decreased by two percentage points since measured in 2016. Interestingly to note is the fact that engagement levels in Africa have increased to 61%, although still below global levels.

> "People create business value. That is an indisputable fact. People also are emotional and fickle. They want to be won over often. That is why employee engagement can be an organization's great differentiator in times of stability or in times of rapid change. When you have a culture of engagement, your competitors better take notice" (Aon & Hewitt, 2017:15).

Starting with the work of Kahn (1990) in the early 1990s to the current statistics on engagement provided by Aon and Hewitt (2017), the concept of employee engagement has developed through time. Although there are many definitions of employee engagement, researchers seem to agree on the importance of organisations to understand employee engagement and to improve on it (Aon & Hewitt, 2017:15; Welch, 2011:328).

Drivers or antecedents are tools used in order to improve employee engagement, and as with the concept of engagement, there are many proposed drivers that will facilitate higher levels of engagement. One of the most widely used and cited research on drivers, is the job demand–resource model (Bakker, 2011:268; De Braine & Roodt, 2011:9; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:510; Rothmann *et al.*, 2006:83; Rothmann & Rothman, 2010; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908). Demetriou, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) developed the concepts of job demands and job resources as drivers of employee engagement, and their well-tested scale has supported a positive relationship between job demands and resources, and employee engagement (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:510).

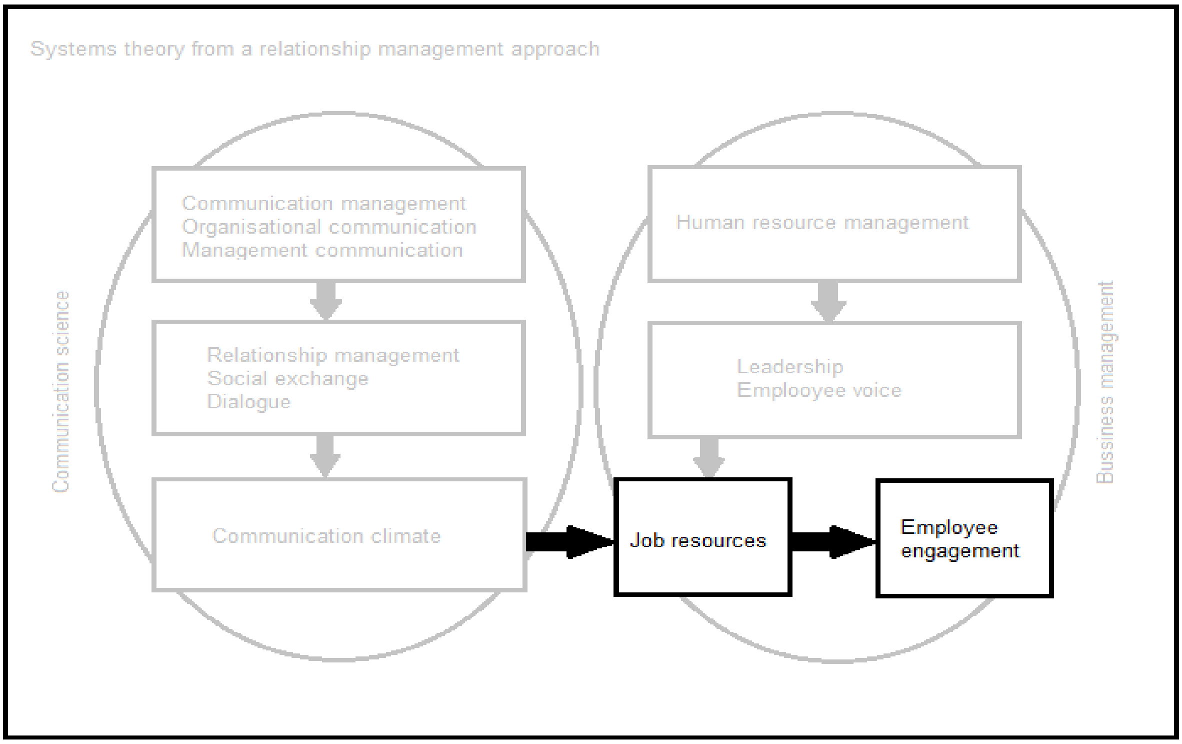
It is important to start by explaining the two terms, *drivers* and *antecedents* of employee engagement. They refer to personal and/or work related conditions that would lead to, or cause employee engagement to improve (Fleck & Inceoglu, 2010:33). They are used interchangeably in literature on the matter, and will be used in a similar manner in this study.

This chapter relates to the Secondary Research Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement. This Chapter conceptualises employee engagement by referring to the historical development of the concept through three waves. It then defines the role of job resources as drivers of employee engagement.

It is, however, important to acknowledge that research on job resources as defined by Demetriou, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001), is not the only research that has been conducted on drivers or antecedents of engagement. In order to best understand job resources in the context of existing literature, other proposed concepts to understand what drives employee engagement will also be discussed here.

The Chapter orientation in Figure 3.1 shows the influence of communication climate on job resources. It also shows the relationship between job resources (as drivers) and employee engagement, in the context of *business management's* need to provide a strategy that will influence how human resources are managed within the organisation.

Figure 3.1: Chapter 3 orientation



3.2. CONCEPTUALISING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

When defining employee engagement, it is clear that there is some overlap with other concepts used to explain the working of the organisation – concepts such as organisational commitment, job involvement, and job satisfaction. Albrecht (2010:6) reminds scholars that these concepts refer to positive work-related psychological states, and thus, it is expected that there would be an overlap. However, he concludes that there are considerable research conducted that support the notion that employee engagement is a unique and distinct construct.

Erickson (Macey & Schneider, 2008:7) states the following:

> "Engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer — characteristics that most companies have measured for many years. Engagement, in contrast, is about passion and commitment — the willingness to invest oneself and expend one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed."

In a study done by Inceoglu and Fleck (2010:82-84), the concepts of job satisfaction and employee engagement are part of the motivational construct. They argue that both job satisfaction and employee engagement can be found on a continuum, ranging from trait-like motivation (being motivated by something), feeling motivation (engagement), to behavioural motivation (showing motivated work behaviours). The implication of differentiating between concepts on the continuum, such as between employee engagement and job satisfaction, will help researchers and practitioners to use these concepts in a more targeted manner, and for specific application, such as selecting staff, staff development, and employee surveys. Khalid, Khalid, Waseem, Farooqi and Nazish (2015) define organisational commitment as the attachment and belief in the values of the organisation, which lead to a desire to stay with the organisation. It is argued that employee engagement takes a more in-depth approach as it focuses on how employees invest themselves in the organisation on a cognitive, emotional and physical level.

Employee engagement as a concept is fairly well researched and there are a number of definitions in the literature on the topic. Albrecht (2010:5) defines the concept as “a positive work-related psychological state characterised by a genuine willingness to contribute to organisational success”. Kahn (1990:700), one of the first to research engagement in the workplace, defined engagement as people being physically, emotionally, and cognitively connected to their work. Perhaps the most widely accepted and used definition is coined by Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá and Bakker (2002:74):

> “Engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption. Rather than a momentary and specific state, engagement refers to a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behaviour”.

In an attempt to conceptualise employee engagement and the value for employees and management in more detail, Welch (2011) identified a number of evolutionary waves in the historical development of employee engagement. These waves are discussed below.

3.2.1. The pre-wave era: before 1990

Before 1990 the concept of employee engagement had not been coined. No real empirical research, to fully understand the concept of employee engagement, had been conducted. However, amongst scholars and practitioners, there existed a general recognition that engaging with employees in an organisation was vitally important for the effective functioning of that organisation. Discussions amongst scholars took place to understand the organisation's role in creating a work environment that would promote innovation and cooperation from employees; beyond their normal work role requirements (Welch, 2011:329-332; Welch, 2014).

3.2.2. Wave 1: 1990–1999

Kahn (1990) ushered in the first wave of research into employee engagement. He was one of the first researchers to theorise on the concept of employee engagement, defining it and identifying what drives it. He stated that employee engagement can be defined as how positively employees think (cognitively) and feel (emotionally) about the organisation and how they behave (physically) towards achieving organisational goals. It thus refers to how involved, committed and passionate employees are about their work (Attridge, 2009:383; Cook, 2008:3; Kahn, 1990:700).

Kahn (1990:700) explains how engagement functions by building on Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor. Goffman (Steinberg, 2007:183) theorises how people present themselves during short interpersonal interactions. He states that people play certain roles according to what is socially and contextually acceptable. Kahn (1990:964) narrows Goffman's theory and explains role-playing behaviour in a working environment. He states that through role-playing behaviour, employees would bring into, or leave out of the working environment, their personal or private self, leading to personal engagement or disengagement.

Kahn (1990:700) states that personal engagement is when employees engage themselves cognitively, emotionally and physically in their role as employees. An engaged employee would put effort into his/her work, would be involved and mindful, and would be highly motivated. These employees would also be more creative, expressive, authentic and ethical in their work behaviour.

> “People become physically involved in tasks, whether alone or with others, cognitively vigilant, and empathically connected to others in the service of the work they are doing in ways that display what they think and feel, their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connections to others” (Kahn, 1990:700).

Personal disengagement, on the other hand, can be seen as the uncoupling of themselves from their work role on a cognitive, emotional and physical level. They become robotic or automatic, burnt out, apathetic, detached, closed impersonal, and emotionally inexpressive. They move through the motions of completing their required tasks, without truly engaging all their cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions. Thus they become physically uninvolved in tasks, cognitively unvigilant, and emotionally disconnected from others (Kahn, 1990:964-702).

> “Personally disengaging means uncoupling self from role; people’s behaviours display an evacuation or suppression of their expressive and energetic selves in discharging role obligations” (Kahn, 1990:700).

Kahn (1990:700) moves from the premise that people have different dimensions or parts of themselves, and proposes that people prefer to present only a certain dimension of themselves – depending on the context. When employees “play” their work roles, they present a certain dimension of themselves, while at the same time not fully detaching from their other dimensions. The different roles become integrated and employees’ personal views are reflected through their work roles. Thus, when the other dimensions filter through the work role, they are recognised as fully engaged employees. When personal disengagement happens, employees withdraw the other dimensions from the work role.

Kahn (1990), therefore, sought to understand the general psychological conditions that would be present when an employee is engaged or disengaged from his/her work. The researcher found three general conditions that, if present, would lead to an engaged person: meaningfulness, safety and availability. These conditions will be discussed in more detail later in this Chapter.

3.2.3. Wave 2: 2000–2005

The second wave was characterised by research conducted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), and Aon Hewitt Associates (2004). Research conducted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:295) will be discussed in more detail below (see Section 3.3 in this Chapter).

Aon Hewitt Associates (2017), a Management Consulting firm, developed an employee engagement model during the second wave, which is still widely accepted practice within leading corporate organisations. They define employee engagement as follows: "Employee engagement is the level of an employee's psychological investment in their organization" (Aon & Hewitt, 2017:2).

Aon Hewitt (Merry, 2014:25) conducted research to examine the relationship between employee engagement and financial performance. The research showed a positive relationship between engagement and sales growth, with each percentage point of higher levels of employee engagement, leading to a 0.6 percentage point growth in sales.

> "Just imagine, a $5 billion organisation with a gross margin of 55% and operating margins of 15% increased operating income by $20 million with just a 1% improvement in employee engagement" (Merry, 2014:25).

The engagement model that was developed to increase employee engagement, has three outcomes namely: Say, Stay and Strive (Aon & Hewitt, 2017:2). The engagement outcome, Say, would indicate employees who speak positively about the organisation to their co-workers, potential employees as well as customers. Stay refers to employees' sense of belonging and their desire to be a part of the organisation. Lastly, Strive refers to what extent employees are motivated to exert effort in order to achieve success for the company.

These positive engagement outcomes should inevitably lead to four business outcomes or categories, namely: Talent, Operational, Customer and Financial Outcomes (Aon & Hewitt, 2017:2). Talent Outcomes refer to the retention of talented employees in the organisation, lowered absenteeism and higher levels of productivity.

Operational Outcomes pertain to higher levels of productivity amongst employees as well as a better health and safety record. Customer Outcomes denote that customers are more satisfied and customer retention is high. Lastly, Financial Outcomes refer to growth in sales and a higher total shareholder return.

Table 3.1 shows engagement and business outcomes. Engagement drivers lead to engagement outcomes, namely: Say, Stay and Strive, which then lead to the desired business outcomes. The engagement drivers, (amongst them job resources) will be discussed later in this Chapter.

Table 3.1: Aon Hewitt employee engagement model

Engagement Drivers			Engagement Outcomes	Business Outcomes
Differentiators	**The Company Practices** Communication Customer focus Diversity and inclusion Enabling infrastructure Talent and staffing	**Brand** Reputation Brand/EVP Corporate responsibility	**Say**	**Talent** Retention Absenteeism Wellness
	Leadership Senior leadership BU leadership		**Stay**	**Operational** Productivity Safety
Foundation	**Performance** Career opportunities Learning & development Performance management People management Rewards and recognition	**The Basics** Benefits Job security Safety Work environment Work/life balance	**Strive**	**Customer** Satisfaction NPS Retention
	The Work Collaboration Empowerment/autonomy Work tasks			**Financial** Revenue/sales growth Op. income/margin Total shareholder return

Source: Aon and Hewitt (2017:2)

3.2.4. Wave 3: 2006–2010

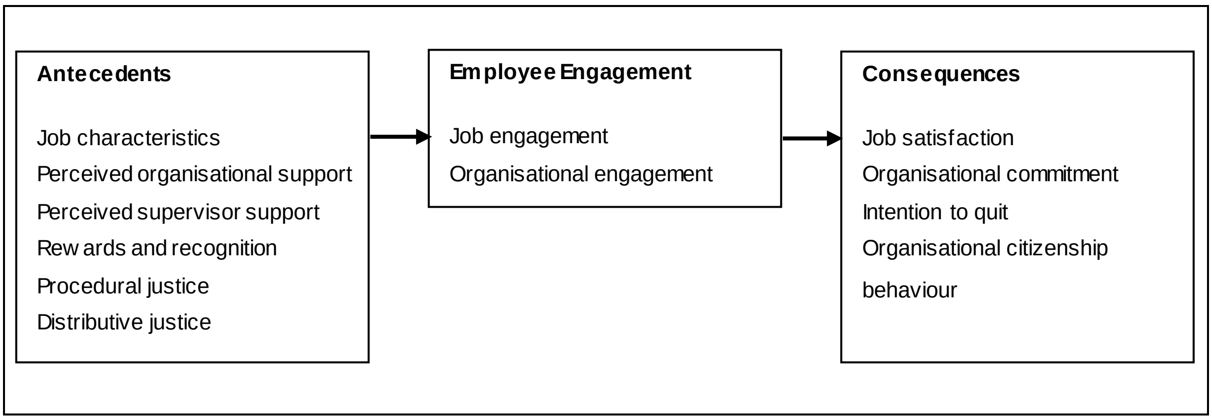
During the third wave, many survey reports were developed on the concept of employee engagement and best practices on how to increase engagement. Kahn

(1990) again played an important role in the further development of the concept and how employees will show or hide different dimensions of themselves (Welch, 2014). Other important research include work done by Saks (2004), and Macey and Schneider (2008).

Kahn (Welch, 2014) emphasised the notion that employee engagement is not a static concept, but a dynamic, ever changing idea; and that interaction between employees and the organisation can change engagement levels. Kahn (2010:29-30) furthermore refers to employee engagement being fragile, but also resilient. The fragility refers to how vulnerable employees feel, and how vulnerable they are, when they choose to be fully present in any given work situation. Employees will constantly scan their environment to determine if their engagement and input truly matters; whether they are safe in the situation; and if their superiors welcome their contribution. This will determine if an employee will fully engage or choose to disengage. In terms of resilience, employees have a desire to engage, and with hard work from leadership, an organisation can always improve engagement, no matter the seemingly negative current situation (Kahn, 2010:29-30).

Saks (2006) built on the research conducted by Kahn (1990), and went further to test a model of the antecedents and consequences of engagement based on the Social exchange theory (see previous Chapter for more detail on this theory).

Figure 3.2: A model of the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement



Source: Saks (2006:604)

Figure 3.2 shows that various antecedents or drivers would lead to employee engagement, and if employees are engaged, there are certain positive consequences such as increased job satisfaction, increased organisational commitment, a lowered intention to quit, and positive organisational citizenship behaviour (Saks, 2006:604).

The first finding of the research shows a difference between the meaning of job engagement and organisational engagement. Also, perceived organisational support and job characteristics are predictors for both job and organisational engagement. As previously stated, employees that are both engaged in terms of their jobs and to the organisation, show positive consequences, as illustrated in the model above. The research also shows that engagement partially mediates the relationship between the antecedents and consequences, as indicated above (Saks, 2006:613).

Macey and Schneider (2008) wrote on the meaning of engagement and created a number of propositions about psychological state engagement, behavioural engagement, and trait engagement. They also developed a conceptual model to explain engagement, its antecedents and consequences.

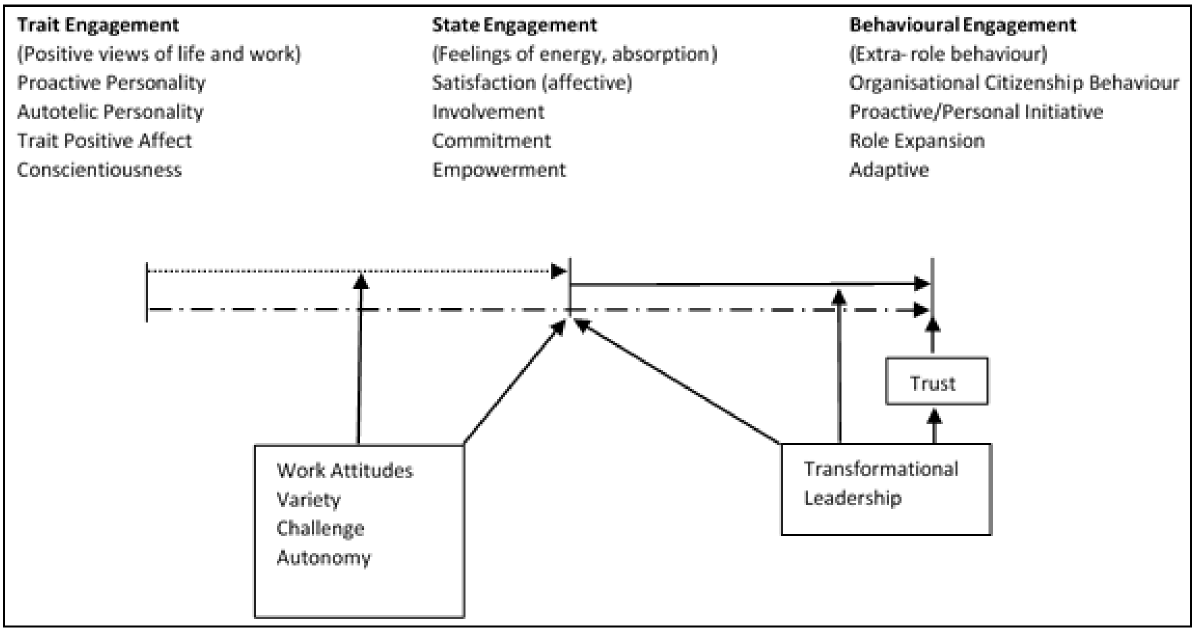
Macey and Schneider (2008:5) started by conceptualising engagement as a psychological state (involvement, commitment, attachment, mood), performance construct (either effort or observable behaviour), and the disposition which refers to the positive effects of engagement.

> "…the notion that employee engagement is a desirable condition, has an organisational purpose, and connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort, and energy, so it has both attitudinal and behavioural components" (Macey & Schneider, 2008:4).

From this viewpoint, the authors created a conceptual model to understand employee engagement, defining engagement as a psychological trait, state and a behaviour. Trait engagement is defined as a disposition through which the world is experienced, for example, positive views of the world and life. This trait engagement will then reflect in psychological state engagement. State engagement includes feelings of energy, absorption, satisfaction, and commitment. It is the "investment of the self in the person's work and the perceived importance of work outcomes and organisation membership to that person's identity" (Macey & Schneider, 2008:13). Psychological state engagement is conceptualised as an antecedent of behavioural engagement. Thus, state engagement will lead to behavioural engagement, which includes actions or "innovative behaviours, demonstrations of initiative, proactively seeking opportunities to contribute, and going beyond what is, within specific frames of reference, typically expected or required" (Macey & Schneider, 2008:15).

Figure 3.3 shows the relationships between trait, state, and behavioural engagement. It also shows how job resources (or what the authors call "conditions in the workplace") and leadership will affect both state and behavioural engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008:6).

Figure 3.3: Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement



Source: Macey and Schneider (2008:6)

Finally, Welch (2014) predicts that the focus of the fourth wave will centre on research pertaining to the use of internal communication to improve employee engagement. The focus of this study is, therefore, the more encompassing role that communication climate plays in improving employee engagement.

3.3. VIGOUR, DEDICATION AND ABSORPTION AS INDICATORS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:295) built on Kahn's theory through their work engagement model. The model aimed to "predict burnout and engagement from job demands and job resources, and related both types of employee well-being to potential individual and organisational costs". The focus of the research was on understanding burnout amongst employees; burnout referring to a mental state of weariness. Although employee engagement was not deemed as the opposite of burnout, it had become the concept contrasting, or the antipode of burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:294). The work engagement model provides for three constructs that can be identified when an employee is engaged, namely: vigour, dedication and absorption. These constructs will be discussed in detail below.

From the work done to understand the constructs of employee engagement – vigour, dedication and absorption – a self-report instrument was developed to test the variables that could ascertain whether engagement is present or not. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) instrument tested all three these constructs, and has been a widely cited and acceptably used instrument to measure engagement (Albrecht, 2010:9; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:86-87). In the South African context, various studies under the leadership of Sebastiaan Rothman have been conducted using the UWES instrument (Rothmann & Rothman, 2010) (See next Chapter for more detail on the UWES).

3.3.1. Vigour

Vigour refers to high levels of energy, mental resilience when working, employees' commitment to putting effort into their work, and their willingness to show persistence despite difficulties (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74). Van Schalkwyk, Du Toit, Bothma and Rothmann (2010:2) also emphasise that when vigorous employees face a challenge, they will persevere. Sonnentag and Niessen (2008:137) add that vigour is "an activated positive affect" that is defined by a positive tone and increased happiness. Nix, Ryan, Manly and Deci (1999:271) furthermore note that vitality and happiness are distinct constructs, but they are indeed highly connected.

Shriom (2003:5) defines vigour as “a positive affective response to one’s ongoing interaction with significant elements in one’s job and work environment that comprises the interconnected feeling of: 1) physical strength, 2) emotional energy, and 3) cognitive liveliness”. When an individual has physical strength, he/she has positive feelings about his/her own physical abilities, and can excerpt higher levels of physical energy in the workplace. Emotional energy pertains to emotional support towards others, and feelings of empathy and sympathy. Cognitive liveliness refers to a person’s “flow in thought”, their mental agility and their cognitive awareness.

Sonnentag and Niessen (2008:436) state that employees who experience high levels of vigour, will exhibit more personal initiative, and other types of proactive behaviour. Frese and Fay (2001:139-141) refer to personal initiative as self-starting, proactive and persistent behaviours. Self-starting behaviour suggests that a person “does something without being told”. When a person is self-starting, they do not need explicit instructions or explicit job role requirements. An example is when an employee seeks to set his/her own goals and not just wait for work goals to be assigned to them. Frese and Fay (2001:139) state that, when looking at “high-level jobs”, initiative is more difficult to define, as it is often a requirement for management to show initiative when doing their jobs. It is thus part of their job description to show initiative. When a person is proactive, it means that they will have a long-term focus, and will quickly respond to any demands placed on them. This long-term focus means that the individual has the capacity to anticipate future demands, new or even reoccurring problems, as well as new opportunities. Persistence is needed in the workplace, as change is often part of the environment. Individuals regularly experience failures and setbacks, and it requires persistence from an individual to take initiative in order to overcome resistance from people and other technical barriers

3.3.2. Dedication

Dedication pertains to employees’ sense of significance in the organisation, their enthusiasm, inspiration, pride in their work, and their willingness to accept challenges

– thus, employees who are highly involved with their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74). Dedication, or involvement in this instance, goes a step beyond just positively identifying with one's work (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74). Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2010:2) state that a dedicated employee will derive a sense of significance from his/her work.

Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996:525) state that when a person is dedicated to his/her job, he/she will be motivated to work harder, to take more initiative, to follow the rules in order to support the objectives of the organisation, and to show self-discipline. Employees will go beyond just the normal scope of the job and will carry out extra tasks (Harzer & Ruch, 2014:187; Van Scotter, 2000:86).

Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996:527) furthermore developed a measurement scale to test job dedication. Supervisors had to rate the likeliness of: 1) to "put in extra hours to get work done on time", 2) to "pay close attention to important details", 3) to "work harder than necessary", 4) to "ask for a challenging work assignment", 5) to "exercise personal discipline and self-control", 6) to "take initiative to solve a work problem", 7) to "persist in overcoming obstacles to complete a task", and 8) to "tackle a difficult work assignment enthusiastically".

3.3.3. Absorption

Some of the earliest conceptualisations of absorption was done by Tellegen and Atkinson (1974). The researchers defined absorption as a "state of total attention" where the person focuses all his/her energy and attention on an object (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274). They continue by stating that an individual that is absorbed will very often not take notice of events external to themselves that would normally draw their attention. Thus, "the experience of one part of reality, while other aspects recede from awareness" (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274). Other terms used to describe absorption include "deep involvement" and "wholehearted" (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:275). The measurement scale used to understand absorption is called the Tellegen Absorption scale (TAS). This scale consists of nine clusters of content, including: "imaginative and oblivious involvement" (I can imagine some things so vividly that they hold by attention in the way a good movie or story does); "affective responsiveness to engaging stimuli” (I can be deeply moved by a sunset); “responsiveness to highly inductive stimuli” (when listening to organ music or other powerful music, I sometimes feel as if I am lifted into the air); “vivid re-experiencing of the past” (Sometimes I feel and experience things as I did when I was a child); “expansion of awareness” (I sometimes step outside my usual self and experience an entirely different state of being); “powerful inductive imaging (Sometimes I can change noise into music by the way I listen to it); “imaginal thinking” (My thoughts often don’t occur as words but as visual images); “cross-modal experiencing” (Different colours have distinctive and special meanings to me) (Tellegen, 1981:220-221). Although this research did not refer directly to absorption in the workplace, it did set the groundwork for further research.

Within the workplace context, absorption means that employees fully concentrate on, and are happily engrossed in their work. Work is enjoyed, time passes by quickly and employees find it easy to focus their attention on the job at hand. Employees will therefore find it more difficult to detach themselves from their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:75). Csikszentmihalyi (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:75) named this heightened sense of absorption the “flow”. “Flow” refers to a state of mind where a person can focus their attention, clear their mind, have effortless concentration, achieve a union between body and mind, exercise complete control over themselves, experience a distortion of time, can have a loss of self-consciousness, and feels intrinsic joy.

3.4. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

Gilbert (2001:32) stated that employees who are highly educated, tended to be more absorbed in the workplace. Referring to them as knowledge workers, work was very central to these employees and they tended to work longer hours, which made it difficult for them to detach from their jobs. Gilbert (2001:18-20) included a number of reasons for the rise in absorption levels of workers. Firstly, she stated that due to globalisation and increased use of technologies in the workplace, workers may be finding their work more stimulating and rewarding and are therefore spending more time and energy in their workplace. Another reason may be the need amongst workers for more material wealth due to an increase in consumerism. This is especially true for more educated workers that may feel that they get an even greater reward for their work than do those with a lower level of education. Also, there seems to be an increase in competition in the market place and higher demands from customers, as well as from employees. Organisations have also spent much time to improve the workplace experience, by making the office more "home-like" and comfortable. Lastly, from a psychological perspective, work has become a means to gratify emotional needs and give meaning to a person.

In terms of knowledge workers, in the modern age, organisations have had to optimise certain forces that drive their success: "efficacy in manufacturing, mass marketing, rapid adoption of technology, financial acumen, and a specific set of people skills". Organisations in the post-modern age no longer manage employee performance by controlling a process and creating specific job designs. Management must now partner with employees in order to drive organisational success (Khoury, 2005:16).

With the focus shifting to employees as the organisation's most important assets, the nature of their work has also changed. Previously, employees were required to do routine work where the processes were engineered to create maximum output. Now, work has become focused on knowledge – the creation, integration, and application of knowledge (Khoury, 2005:17). The term knowledge worker is defined by Van Staden and Du Toit (2012:30) as a person "who has considerable knowledge and learning in a specialist field". It is within the context of the knowledge worker in the financial sector of South Africa that this research is done.

Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2006:38) studied the engagement levels of academic staff working in higher education institutions in South Africa. Amongst others, the focus was on understanding the relationship between different demographic groups and their engagement levels. The UWES instrument was used to measure engagement levels, and the results found that levels of engagement were significantly impacted by job and qualification level. "Professors were significantly more dedicated to their work than senior lecturers and more absorbed in their work than junior lecturers and senior lectures respectively". The results showed "no significant differences" in terms of vigour, based on job level. Staff with doctoral degrees showed a higher degree of absorption compared to staff with a four year or an honours degree. In terms of vigour and dedication, “no significant differences were found” (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006:42-43). There were, however, no statistically significant difference between engagement levels based on age.

Refer to chapter 4 on research methodology. The populations for this research study is knowledge workers within the short-term insurance industry in South Africa.

3.5. CONCEPTUALISING DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

This section will discuss drivers of employee engagement as identified through literature and will explain job resources as a set of drivers within the larger context of improving employee engagement. When discussing the Job Resource drivers of employee engagement, those drivers will also be linked to the constructs of communication climate that were defined in the previous Chapter. This review will attempt to show, through literature, the influence of communication climate on job resources, leading to improved levels of employee engagement.

This section will begin by addressing meaningfulness, safety and availability as defined in research conducted by Kahn (1990), followed by a discussion of the drivers of employee engagement as identified by Aon Hewitt (2017). Thereafter, drivers of engagement according to Macey and Schneider will be covered, followed by a discussion on job resources as drivers of employee engagement.

3.5.1. Meaningfulness, safety and availability as defined by Kahn

Kahn (1990:702) wanted to understand how the conditions of their work, and people’s personal experiences of themselves, influence their personal engagement or disengagement. The author identified three drivers of employee engagement, or as he calls them “psychological conditions”, impacting on levels of engagement. These conditions are: meaningfulness, safety and availability. Kahn (1990:703) theorised that employees would ask themselves three questions that would impact their engagement or disengagement:

1. How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into this performance?

2. How safe is it to do so?
3. How available am I to do so?

Thus, employees will be more engaged if they can see that their work has clear and desired benefits; if they believe that there are certain protective guarantees; and if they believe themselves to have the necessary resources to complete their work (Kahn, 1990:703). The three conditions are discussed in more detail below.

i. Meaningfulness

Meaningfulness pertains to the sense of return on investment of the self in role performance and is expressed through the notion of feeling worthwhile and valuable (Kahn, 1990:704). In other words, the question can be asked whether there is a benefit when employees spend their physical, cognitive and/or emotional energy performing a task.

An organisation drives meaningfulness by providing jobs that are challenging; by providing variety, creativity and autonomy; and by creating an environment where interaction between people will promote dignity, self-appreciation and value (Kahn, 1990:704). Thus, employees must feel that they are making a difference of some sort through the work that they do.

According to Kahn (1990:704-708), there are three factors that will influence or drive meaningfulness: task characteristics, role characteristics and work interactions. Task characteristics include work that is challenging, clearly defined, varied, creative and autonomous. It relates to both routine work and new skills – routine work will allow for a feeling of competence, and new skills will create a feeling of growth and learning. There needs to be a degree of autonomy so that the employee does not need to constantly look for direction – employees' tasks should be clearly defined, allowing them to successfully reach their goals.

Role characteristics have two components: Firstly, the role of a certain position requires certain identities, for example the role of trusting councillor. Employees must feel that they fit in with these identities. Secondly, the role must carry some form of status or influence. Employees need to feel that they have power, are important, and can influence others or their work environment. This will make them feel valued and needed. Lasch (Kahn, 1990:706) states: “People search for ways to feel important and special, particularly since they generally feel powerless in the world as a whole”.

Work interactions refer to relationships through which employees will give, but also receive from others. It denotes to tasks that would include rewarding personal interactions with co-workers and superiors. Having meaningful interaction with others leads to a feeling of dignity, self-appreciation, and worthwhileness.

ii. Safety

Safety refers to an employees’ ability to reveal many of his/her different dimensions through his/her work role without fear of a negative impact on his/her status or career. A working environment must therefore be secure, trusting, predictable, and clear in terms of behavioural consequences. Organisational culture and leadership will drive this need for security (Kahn, 1990:708).

Kahn (1990:708-713) states that there are four factors that will directly influence safety, namely: interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and process, and organisational norms. Interpersonal relationships promote safety when these relationships are built on trust and support. Employees should feel that they can share ideas and concepts freely, and that any criticism would be of a constructive kind. This is especially true in the relationship between superior and subordinate. Due to the fact that there is often a power difference, the superior has the power to alter or change the subordinate’s role. Without trust, the subordinate will fear the power of the superior.

Within group and intergroup dynamics, employees are given, or assume, certain roles. Very often these roles are “played” unconsciously. An example would be were an organisation’s president could be cast as the father figure. This would be perceived as a positive role, however, other employees could be cast in a less attractive role, such as the trouble-maker, or the tattle-tale. It is often difficult to escape from these roles, and these roles would inhibit a person’s true self in the workplace, thus stifling their voice as an employee.

Supportive, resilient, and clarifying management styles or processes will lead to a feeling of safety amongst employees. Employees need to have some control over their work, or they will feel that their superior does not trust them. This lack of trust is made worse when a superior is unpredictable, inconsistent, and/or hypocritical.

When following organisational norms, employees will feel safer. These norms are all manners of acceptable behaviour set by shared expectations between both employees and their superiors. When employees move beyond the boundary of the organisation's norms, they will feel unsafe, causing anxiety and frustration. In some instances, these norms would also prevent an employee from voicing his/her opinion.

iii. Availability

When employees feel positive towards the concept of availability, it means that they believe themselves to have the psychological, physical and emotional ability to do their work well. In other words, they believe that they can cope with their work and life-stress (Kahn, 1990:714).

Kahn (1990:7014-717) indicates that there are four types of distractions that will influence availability, namely: depletion of physical energy, depletion of emotional energy, individual insecurity, and outside lives. Physical energy is simply about having enough energy, strength and readiness to engage in work activities. Without energy, employees will be too worn out and depleted to engage. Emotional energy is the emotional ability to personally engage with others. Work and interactions with others can become emotionally draining, leaving employees to withdraw and isolate themselves. Insecurity refers to how secure an employee feels about the work they do and their status. Insecurity shows a lack of self-confidence and is generally a big source of anxiety amongst employees. Being self-conscious due to insecurity will distract employees from their work, and cause them to spend much time on managing impression, rather than the work itself. Employees' outside lives have the potential to take them psychologically away from the work. Events or issues from their personal lives can influence and distract them, taking away valuable energy that should be spent on their work. The importance of striking a healthy work-life balance is therefore critical. It should, however, be noted that events in an employee's personal life can also create energy, "charging" him/her to perform with more energy in the workplace.

On a final note, May, Gilson and Harter (2004) empirically tested the research done by Kahn (1990) on meaningfulness, safety and availability. Their research contributed to the understanding of the psychological conditions that relate to an individual's engagement levels, and confirmed that indeed all three psychological conditions are important when it comes to determining an individual's level of engagement at work (May, Gilson & Harter, 2004:30).

3.5.2. Aon Hewitt's drivers of employee engagement

Aon Hewitt (2017) developed a more complex work related model of employee engagement, focusing specifically on the drivers of employee engagement. The study proposes six main drivers of employee engagement and 22 organisational antecedents that explain the main drivers. These drivers will lead to engagement outcomes, including Say, Stay and Strive, further improving business outcomes such as a higher level of productivity and revenue or sales growth.

Aon Hewitt (2017:2) states that there are six main drivers that shape the experience in the organisation, and these are also the areas over which the organisation has control. These main drivers include: company practices, the basics in the work environment, the brand of the organisation, leadership, employee performance, and the work people do.

Table 3.2 shows the relationship between the main drivers and the 22 antecedents:

Table 3.2: Aon Hewitt's drivers of employee engagement

Driver	Antecedent
Company Practices	Communication Customer focus Diversity and inclusion Enabling infrastructure Talent and staffing
The Basics	Benefits Job securing Safety Working environment Work/life balance
Brand	Reputation Brand/employee value proposition Corporate responsibility
Leadership	Senior leadership Business unit leadership
Performance	Career opportunities Learning and development\ Performance management People management\ Reward and recognition
The Work	Collaboration Empowerment/autonomy Work tasks

Source: Adapted from Aon and Hewitt (2017:2)

In the 2017 global engagement report, Aon Hewitt (2017:13-14) highlights the drivers and their antecedents that currently present the best opportunity to increase engagement levels. These include: reward and recognition, employee value proposition, senior leadership, career opportunities, and enabling infrastructure. Reward and recognition deal to a large extent with pay and bonuses. In the current world economic conditions, organisations may not be able to make adjustments, however, these organisations must address issues such as fairness in paygrades, and real or perceived gaps in pay between the organisation and its competitors. The employee value proposition measures whether an organisation properly articulates and then delivers on its promises to its employees. It is also about creating a sense of belonging to the organisation. Senior leadership is a very important aspect in the 2017 report, due to the fact that there has been major shifts in the global political, social and technological environment. This has created anxiety amongst employees – senior leadership must make key decisions, showing employees the way, especially in these changing times. Career opportunities show the importance of advancement, ensuring that employees' do not stagnate; and enabling infrastructure provides the support employees need in order to work optimally.

3.5.3. Drivers of engagement according to Macey and Schneider

Macey and Schneider (2008), conceptualised state and behavioural engagement as a way to explain the meaning of engagement. They summarise state engagement to have "a strong affective tone connoting, at a minimum, high levels of involvement (passion and absorption) in work and the organisation (pride and identity) as well as affective energy (enthusiasm and alertness) and a sense of self-presence in the work". Behavioural engagement is summarised as all things done that "goes beyond the usual or typical" in the context of the workplace. It is from this reference point that the authors define antecedents or drivers of state and behavioural engagement. The authors refer to trait engagement as a cause of engagement behaviour, workplace attributes, as well as conditions in the workplace, such as leadership – all being antecedents or drivers of engagement.

In the first instance, Macey and Schneider (2008:19-21) regard engagement as a disposition, or what they call trait engagement, which represents dispositions or traits that are suggested as causal factors in positive behavioural engagement – in other words, they are drivers or antecedents of state and behavioural engagement. The authors argue that trait engagement, with facets including positive affectivity, proactive personality, conscientiousness and autotelic personality, will lead to work being experienced in a more positive, active and energetic manner. The authors furthermore identify four threads of research as relevant to trait engagement, namely: positive affectivity as trait engagement, proactive personality as trait engagement, conscientiousness as trait engagement, and autotelic personality as trait engagement. In brief, positive affectivity as trait engagement indicates "feelings of persistence, vigour, energy, dedication, absorptions, enthusiasms, alertness, and pride" (Macey & Schneider, 2008:12). Proactive personality as trait engagement refers to what Crant (Macey & Schneider, 2008:20) defines as a "general tendency to create or influence the work environment". Conscientiousness as trait engagement, according to Roberts, Chernyshenko, Stark and Goldberg (Macey & Schneider, 2008:20), means individuals characterised as "hard-working, ambitious, confident and resourceful". Lastly, autotelic personality as trait engagement presents the idea of "flow or being present". People with this trait "engage in activities for their own sake rather than for a specific gain or reward." (Macey & Schneider, 2008:20).

Next, although workplace attributes are central to engagement, the degree to which these tasks are done, or in other words, the extent to which a person will implement themselves in the work, is also important. Work attributes include autonomy, challenge and variety (Macey & Schneider, 2008:21). These attributes will have both a direct and an indirect impact on state and behavioural engagement.

Lastly, the conditions around the work was also an important research area. Gallup (Macey & Schneider, 2008:21-22) states that when certain conditions are present in the workplace, it leads to improved performance from employees. These conditions include workplace attributes, the manager, the availability of resources, relationships with co-workers, and the possibility of career development. Management is, however, identified as the key factor needed to ensure that the conditions are present in the workplace. Thus, research on leadership, trust and employee voice have become very important in the understanding of effective managers to introduce positive work conditions. Macey and Schneider (2008:22) furthermore refer to research done on transformational leadership to engage employees. In brief, transformational leadership can be defined as leaders that motivate their subordinates to achieve more than what they originally intended and even more than what they themselves thought possible to achieve. With higher expectations, subordinates will often achieve higher performance (Bass & Avolio, 1994:3).

Macey and Schneider (2008:22) summarise work conditions and leadership to drive engagement in the following manner:

> "Psychologically, it appears to follow that when people have certain kinds of work to do (e.g., the work has challenge, variety, and autonomy) and when they work under certain kinds of managers (e.g., the managers make expectations clear, are fair, and recognize superior behaviour), they feel engaged and behave in adaptive and constructive ways that produce results that were perhaps unexpected."

3.6. JOB RESOURCES AS DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The original job demands–resources (JD-R) model was created by Demerouti *et al.* (2001) in order to explain how burnout is experienced in the workplace. The authors proposed that two processes take place, leading to burnout. Firstly, when there is extreme job demands, or in other words, demanding aspects of work, employees can overtax themselves, leading to exhaustion. Secondly, when there is a lack of resources in the workplace to assist with the high job demands, employees may withdraw, ultimately leading to disengagement from their work (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:502).

From this, the authors identified two important concepts, namely: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to physical, social and organisational aspects of an employee's job that may require ongoing physical and/or mental effort. They are, as a result, associated with a psychological cost, such as exhaustion (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:501). Job resources are drivers of employee engagement. They are physical, social and organisational aspects of an employee's job that may reduce job demands; are functional in helping the employees achieve their work goals; and help stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Bakker, 2011:266; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008:218; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:501). Thus, increasing job resources, will enhance employee engagement (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:510).

Job resources are located on four levels: the organisational level, the interpersonal and social relations level, the organisation of work level, and the level of the task

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312). Table 3.3 shows examples of different job resources at the different levels.

Table 3.3: Job resources

Organisational level	Pay Career opportunities Job security Opportunities for learning and development
Interpersonal and social relations level	Supervisor and co-worker support Team climate
The organisation of work level	Role clarity Participation in decision-making
Level of the task	Skill variety Task identity Task significance Autonomy Performance feedback

Source: Adapted from Bakker and Demerouti (2007:312)

More studies have identified similar and other job resources, including: communication (Rothmann *et al.*, 2006:76); autonomy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008:212; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:894); performance feedback (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008:212; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:894); opportunities for learning and development (Rothmann *et al.*, 2006:78; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:894); supportive superiors and colleagues, (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008:212; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:501; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:894); participation in decision-making (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003:345; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:501); salary or wages (Bakker *et al.*, 2003:345; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2); career opportunities (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2; Rothmann *et al.*, 2006:78); job security (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2); and role clarity (Bakker *et al.*, 2003:345; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011:2).

Note should be taken of the fact that communication is often included as one of the antecedents or drivers of employee engagement. In the section below, communication is also identified as a job resource to improve employee engagement. The term communication refers to a broad range of activities ranging from interpersonal communication between a superior and a subordinate, to writing a press release with the purpose of managing the broader reputation of the organisation. Communication climate, the concept used in this study, shows a more nuanced approach to the study of communication. It refers to the perceptions, attitudes and assumptions of employees with regard to the quality of communication that shapes relationships, and also in more general terms, the quality of the broad organisational activities. The focus of this study is not simply to look at measurable outputs such as a press releases, but to understand the communication climate between a superior and a subordinate. The study proposes, however, that communication climate is not just another driver or job resource, but that it plays a much more encompassing role in improving employee engagement. It is proposed that communication climate is the driver through which other job resources will influence employee engagement.

The following objective was developed using the constructs of communication climate and the constructs of job resources:

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.

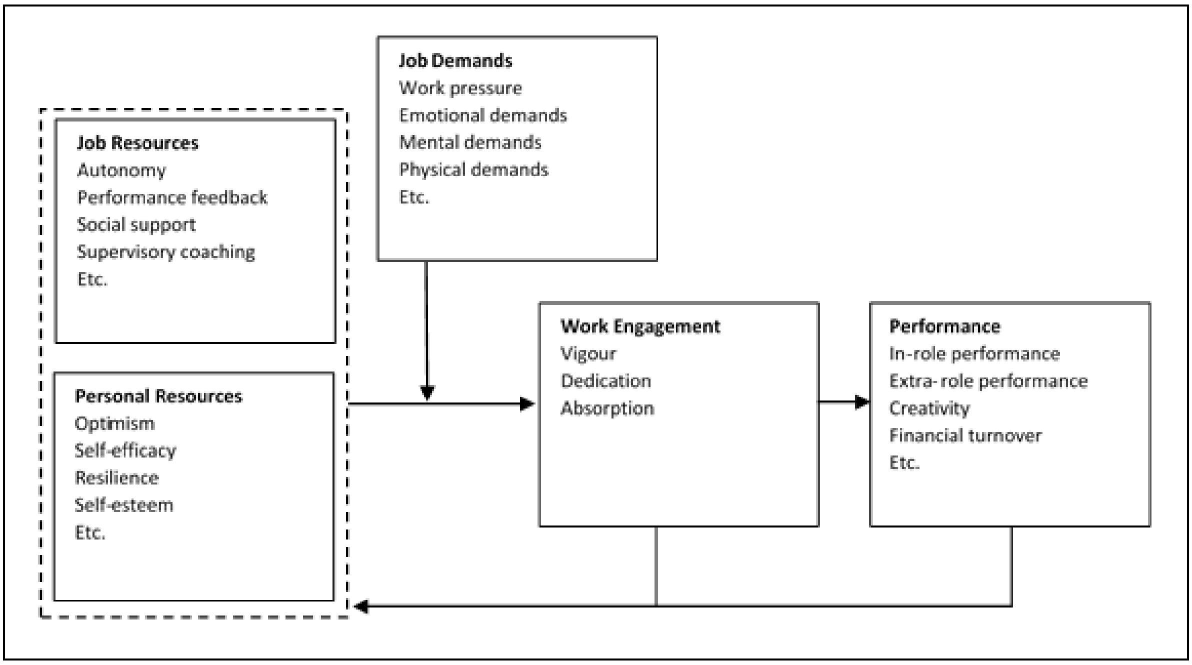
Bakker and Demerouti (2007:313-314) continue by stating that the JD-R model is motivational in its nature, both on an intrinsic and extrinsic level. In terms of intrinsic motivation, job resources fulfil basic human needs such as the need for autonomy and growth through, for example, learning and development. Extrinsic motivations refer to the fact that job resources are very important for employees in order to achieve their work goals, because these resources impact on an employee's willingness to commit their efforts and abilities to the task at hand.

Furthermore, job resources can act as a buffer for job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:314-315). The authors use a few examples: Firstly, a good relationship between superior and subordinate can alleviate the negative aspects of job demands, such as work overload and other emotional demands. This is due to the fact that a superior's support and appreciation for the work being done, can help a subordinate cope with the job demands and help facilitate performance. Secondly, greater autonomy assists an employee to cope during stressful situations. Lastly, receiving constructive feedback from a superior, will help the employee to perform more effectively. It will also help to maintain an employee’s positive attitude and motivate him/her to continuously improve his/her performance.

In subsequent research, Bakker and Demerouti (2008:218) updated the original JD-R model of work engagement, by adding another driver of engagement, namely personal resources. Personal resources are employees’ ability to successfully control or impact their environment. They will need to positively self-evaluate in order to create some level of resilience so that they can deal with their work stressors. Positive self-evaluation impact goal setting, motivation, performance and job satisfaction. The more positive the employee’s self-evaluation is, the more positive that individual’s self-regard and confidence will be. Employees will, therefore, expect to succeed in their work life – this will motivate them even more to achieve their goals. A positive self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and the ability to regulate emotions are strong predictors of employee engagement (Bakker, 2011:266; Bakker & Demerouti, 2008:218).

The updated model, shown in Figure 3.4, shows that two drivers of engagement, namely, job resources and personal resources will positively impact on an employee’s level of engagement, especially when the job demands are high. Work engagement will, in turn, impact on the employee’s job performance and when employees are able to perform well, they will be able to create their own resources, which will again foster engagement.

Figure 3.4: The JD-R model of work engagement



Source: Bakker and Demerouti (2008:218)

Many international studies, including in the South African context, have used this model to understand the relationship between job resources and employee engagement, and have found there to be a positive relationship between job resources and employee engagement (Bakker, 2011:268; De Braine & Roodt, 2011:9; Demerouti *et al.*, 2001:510; Rothmann *et al.*, 2006:83; Rothmann & Rothman, 2010; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908). The Job demand-resource scale was developed to test the variables in the JD-R model. Various related studies confirmed the widely acceptable use for this this scale (refer to chapter 4, section 4.3.3).

The reason for this study focusing on job resources is because job resources can be directly influenced by the organisation – employees should be provided with these resources through management processes in order to promote engagement (Gruman & Saks, 2011:127). The writer, however, continuously acknowledges that there are other factors, such as personal resources, that may also impact on levels of engagement. However, these are factors that cannot necessarily be controlled by the organisation.

In order to verify these findings, the following objective was developed using the constructs of job resources (to be discussed below) and the constructs of employee engagement (as previously discussed in this Chapter):

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.

The following hypotheses were developed in order to measure the relationship between certain job resources (autonomy, performance feedback, and opportunities for learning and development) and employee engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption):

H1: Autonomy is related to vigour.

H_o: Autonomy is not related to vigour.

H2: Autonomy is related to dedication.

H_o: Autonomy is not related to dedication.

H3: Autonomy is related to absorption.

H_o: Autonomy is not related to absorption.

H4: Performance feedback is related to vigour.

H_o: Performance feedback is not related to vigour.

H5: Performance feedback is related to dedication.

H_o: Performance feedback is not related to dedication.

H6: Performance feedback is related to absorption.

H_o: Performance feedback is not related to absorption.

H7: Opportunities for learning and development is related to vigour.

H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to vigour

H8: Opportunities for learning and development is related to dedication.

H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to dedication.

H9: Opportunities for learning and development is related to absorption.

H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to absorption

For the purpose of this study, three job resources where measured using the Job–Demand Resource Scale (see the next Chapter for detail on the measurement scale used) namely: autonomy, performance feedback, and opportunities for learning and development (discussed below).

There are a number of reasons for selecting these three constructs to measure: Firstly, various studies have shown the positive relationship between autonomy and employee engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015:56); feedback and employee engagement (Maslach *et al.*, 2001:417; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908); and opportunities for learning and development (Maslach *et al.*, 2001:417; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908). Secondly, the motivational process is driven by job resources, such as proper autonomy, performance feedback, and opportunities for learning and development, which will play an instrumental role in an employee's growth, and his/her ability to achieve his/her work goals (Gruman & Saks, 2011:126; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:895).

3.6.1. Autonomy

Autonomy is defined by Hackman and Oldham (Menguc, Auh, Fisher & Haddad, 2013:2165), as "the degree to which employees feel they have independence, flexibility, discretion, and control in performing their jobs". Autonomy is important as it is a job resource that will foster feelings of control, independence, flexibility, and discretion, assisting employees to both grow and achieve their work goals (Menguc *et al.*, 2013:2165). Kahn (1990:711) also states that employees feel safer when they have some degree of control over their work. Rooney *et al.* (2009:413) define autonomy as "actions that are self-driven rather than regulated by external forces", which means that they will be able to work with a fair degree of discretionary effort to make decisions independently.

Furthermore, Rooney *et al.* (2009:414) found that job autonomy mediates the relationship between supportive and unsupportive management behaviour and job-related outcomes such as job satisfaction. Of importance is the relationship between the construct of autonomy and the communication climate construct called superior–subordinate communication. The authors state that the supportive or unsupportive behaviour of a superior may impact the perceptions that subordinates have about the control they have over certain parts of their job and work environment – thus, establishing the positive relationship between autonomy and superior–subordinate communication. Rooney and Gottlieb (2007:190) created a list of supportive behaviours that a manager can show. One of these behaviours include encouraging autonomy (behaviour that encourages subordinates to be autonomous). Akre, Falkum, Hoftvedt and Aasland (1997:521) state that a supportive communication atmosphere is defined by dialogue, trust and mutual acceptance, while unsupportive behaviour includes competition, vigilance, and denial of personal limitations. This positive and supportive communication atmosphere requires space, meaning enough autonomy or what they called "*decision latitude*". From this information, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H10: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

In a study conducted by Nonaka (1988:9), the author seeks to understand how to create information and knowledge through the important role of middle managers. Although the focus of the article is on information creation through interaction and a fair degree of autonomy, it does shed valuable light on the importance of sharing information in the process of creating new and innovative ideas. The author proposes that top management has a certain vision or strategy for the organisation. It is the role of middle management to translate that strategy to the lower levels of the organisation so that employees will implement this strategy. However, there is often a gap between the vision of what the organisation wants to achieve and the current reality. Middle managers must also facilitate interaction and create autonomy for the employees at the bottom in order to creatively close the gap between "what exists at the moment and what management hopes to create" (Nonaka, 1988:17). Autonomy is vital in the creative process to close the gap, but employees need the information about the vision, and the direction they should go in.

Similarly, Yang and Choi (2009:294) argue that employees need information in order to improve their performance and to make good quality decisions to accomplish their job tasks. Within the process of decision-making, there is a certain level of autonomy needed, which will help employees meet the work goals. In order to understand the relationship between quality and accuracy of downward communication and autonomy, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H13: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

Abdul-Razzak, You, Sherifali, Simon and Brazil (2014:4) conducted research unrelated to the organisational context, but perhaps telling in the role that truthful candid information sharing plays in an individual's ability to make autonomous decisions. Within the healthcare context, patients stated that candid disclosure of information allowed patients to make informed decisions that played an important role in the preservation of autonomy. One patient stated: "How can you make decisions about what you want if you don't have all of the information you need?" In the organisational context, Badaracco and Ellsworth (1991:48-50) interviewed executive management who stated that the ideal organisation would be characterised by, amongst others, "open and candid communication", from both the executives, but also from subordinates. The authors stated that autonomy can only be had, when there is a certain level of trust and mutual respect present. Thus, where subordinates are afforded autonomy, "honest, candid, and open" communication is needed. The following hypotheses have been developed to test the relationship between superior openness and candour, and autonomy:

H16: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

When employees have some measure of autonomy, it usually breeds creativity, and when there are opportunities for upward communication to their manager, this creativity can be utilised to, for example, solve problems. This is supported by research stating that in order to achieve autonomy and the motivation towards working autonomously, dialogue is needed. This dialogue must invite participation; active listening must be involved; it must be more open; and employee perspectives must be acknowledged. Thus, both the superior and the subordinate must participate in sharing knowledge through an open and supportive dialogue in order to enhance autonomy (Akre *et al.*, 1997:521; Stone, Deci & Ryan, 2009:79-80). From this literature, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H19: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception autonomy.

H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

Employee empowerment is another term related to the concept of autonomy. Empowerment is defined as the "delegation of decision-making responsibilities down the hierarchy" in order to give "employees increased decision-making authority in respect of the execution of their primary work tasks" (Wall, Cordery & Clegg, 2002:147). This term incorporates principles of job redesign in order to foster higher levels of autonomy. In a study conducted by Leach, Wall and Jackson (2003:37) on the role of empowerment on job knowledge, the authors emphasise the importance of providing appropriate information and technical management support in order to improve empowerment. "The feedback (information) and support were integral parts of empowerment" (Leach *et al.*, 2003:47). Spreitzer (Wall *et al.*, 2002:163) also stated that "social support and access to information and resources" will impact the perceived levels of empowerment amongst subordinates. Thus, information that supports the subordinate will enhance the ability of the employee to work autonomously and from this, the following hypotheses were developed:

H22: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.

3.6.2. Performance feedback

Gruman and Saks (2011:131) state that performance feedback in the context of employee engagement "should also include an assessment of an employees' engagement behaviour (persistence, proactivity, role expansion and adaptability) in addition to job performance". This feedback can be conducted through formal performance appraisals and more informal feedback sessions. Performance feedback from supervisors, no matter formal and/or informal, will also foster learning and assist in employees reaching their work goals (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:895). Grote (Kondrasuk, 2011:57) states that performance feedback, also termed performance appraisals, is the management process that probably has the most impact on an individual's career and work life. Performance feedback is designed to make the organisation more productive by highlighting where employees perform well, how they can improve performance, and if they have achieved their work goals.

Kondrasuk (2011:57-58) furthermore proposes the ideal performance feedback session by stating that, from the perspective of a superior, the appraisal should be accurate, factual, and helpful – it should improve the performance of the subordinate. It should help the superior make better decisions on administrative matters such as salary increases. From the perspective of subordinates, they may probably want the appraisal to clearly and honestly show their contribution to achieving the organisation's goals. In summary, Kondrasuk (2011:69) states that ideal performance feedback is a continuous process whereby the expectation of both the superior and subordinate are clearly stated, making sure the subordinate performs to these set expectations, providing feedback as to the results of his/her performance, and then using these results to improve the subordinate's performance.

Furthermore, ensuring successful performance feedback means that it remains vital to provide constructive feedback in order to create a safe environment for employees. Cherise-Charles (Gruman & Saks, 2011:132) discusses aspects of constructive feedback, including: creating a trusting relationship, providing support as a superior, being sensitive to differences in individuals, and working to promote self-efficacy in the subordinate. Rooney *et al.* (2009:422) found that supportive or unsupportive superior behaviour communicates to subordinates how their superiors regard them, for example, that they are valued and deemed competent. Rooney and Gottlieb (2007:190) also list recognition (behaviours that recognise the contributions of employees) as a supportive managerial behaviour. From this information, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H11: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

Providing quality and accurate information during a feedback session will help employees learn and grow in order to reach their work goals and to know how their goals will contribute to the organisation reaching its goals. (Krippendorff, 2009:286; Redding, 1972:40; Smidts *et al*., 2001:1053). Balakrishnan and Masthan (2013:1053) state that subordinates will understand their job requirements and what part they must play in achieving the organisation's goals, if they are satisfied that their superiors are open about the source of their information. From this literature, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H14: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

Beer (1981:27-28) studied some of the issues arising when performance feedback or appraisals are done in an organisation. One of the major problems identified is the idea of ambivalence or avoidance during the performance feedback session between a superior and a subordinate. The author states that there may be some degree of conflict involved in a performance feedback session, which means that superiors may not always be completely open and truthful in terms of the feedback given. There are a number of reasons for this less than truthful feedback to avoid conflict, one of which is that the superior must maintain a good relationship with the subordinate in order to continue working productively together. Although the superior does not necessary actively try to be less than truthful, their own fear of the process could mean that they talk to the subordinate in "very general terms", "alluding only vaguely to problems", thus leading to ambivalence about problems on the part of the subordinate.

Moreover, the subordinate may also wish to avoid negative feedback, resulting in small talk or long and vague conversations. This results in a less than frank and candid discussion specifically in terms of problems that the subordinate needs to work on. Gray (2002:16) similarly states that performance feedback is often not communicated effectively, especially when subordinates judge the information they receive about the performance criteria as being inaccurate. Also, subordinates may feel that they are not given clear directions on how they must move forward in using this feedback to improve their performance. Vinson (1996:12) states that "most people won't act on something that they don't understand". From this literature, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H17: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

During a feedback session, employees must have the ability to provide their view on their own performance, and in more formal performance appraisals, they need to be able to participate in setting their work goals. Therefore, employees must be empowered, through dialogue, to share their opinions and ideas (Baker, Perreault, Reid & Blanchard, 2013:265). They will feel heard and will take ownership of these goals. Wilson (1991:30) argues that even the process to be followed in setting up performance feedback should involve subordinates. Organisations must tailor-make formal performance appraisals to suit their needs, but the organisation must consult and involve subordinates in this process so that they may feel comfortable with the process followed that will review their performance. There will then be greater acceptance and ownership on the side of subordinates. From this information, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H20: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

When information is reliable and superiors can be trusted, employees can effectively use this information to improve their performance and reach their goals. Research that further supports the need for reliable information states that a positive feedback environment is characterised by high quality information that is delivered in a tactful manner by the manager, and the manager must be a knowledgeable and credible source of such information (Dahling & O'Malley, 2011:2-3). From this information, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H23: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.

3.6.3. Opportunities for learning and development

Opportunities for learning and development, such as training opportunities, will provide employees with the needed skills and knowledge to conduct their work successfully (Gruman & Saks, 2011:131). It will also directly impact on their growth, equipping employees to deal with their work demands to reach their work goals (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:895). Kahn (1990:704) adds to this by stating that employees will find their work meaningful if they have a sense of competence (being able to do their job) and growth, established through learning opportunities.

Yang, Watkins and Marsick (2004:34-35) write about the concept of a learning organisation. They define a learning organisation as an organic organisation that can adapt to a changing environment through its capacity to learn. Adapting to complex and changing environments is important for the sustainable development of the organisation, and this learning should take place as a continuous process (Wen, 2014:290, 293).

Örtenblad (2001:2, 6) differentiates between the concepts of learning organisation and organisational learning. On a basic level, a learning organisation refers to the form of an organisation (perhaps part of the culture) where organisational learning pertains to the activities or processes of learning in these organisations. The author does, however, note that learning takes place on the individual level, thus, individuals must learn in order for the organisation to learn. Wen (2014:295) contributes by stating that organisational learning cannot take place without strong leaders. The leader must respect his/her subordinates' opinion, must share the vision of the organisation, promote dialogue and teamwork, and must create a culture of learning.

Furthermore, managers need to support their employees' growth through formal learning and development programmes, as well as through informal learning processes. Managers must therefore create a supportive environment for learning to take place (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008:448). This can be done by creating a learning culture, where dialogue is used to transfer knowledge and skills (Berg & Chyung, 2008:230). Rooney and Gottlieb (2007:190) also list professional development (behaviour that encourages subordinates' professional development) as a supportive managerial behaviour. From this, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H12: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

Andrews and Delahaye (2000:799, 802) distinguish importing knowledge and sharing knowledge as concepts that are present in the learning process in an organisation. They focus on the individual-level learning that takes place within an organisation. Importing knowledge refers to when an individual acquires or imports knowledge from another source, while sharing knowledge refers to the sharing of knowledge by a person in the organisation. The authors use the term, psychological filters, to explain different factors they have found to influence the importing and sharing of knowledge. These factors include social confidence, perceived credibility and trustworthiness. Of importance here is perceived credibility. The participants in the study indicated that the quality of information they receive when importing information was very important in the learning process. They also stated that because a learning organisation is a dynamic and very complex environment, differentiating between irrelevant and useful knowledge was difficult, but important. This need for quality information in order to learn and develop has led to the following hypotheses:

H15: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

Wen (2014:293) defines some basic characteristics of a learning organisation. One of these characteristics is the "emphasis on the proactive learning and the deep dialogue". This refers to the sharing of true ideas through communication, thus promoting knowledge sharing through dialogue by telling "the truth in an open, unfettered and pressure-less way". From this idea that dialogue should be based on truthfulness, frankness and candidness, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H18: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

In a learning environment, employees will be encouraged to question assumptions and ideas, leading to even greater learning (Mazutis & Slawinski, 2008:447-448). Watkins and Marsick (Yang *et al.*, 2004:34) state that one of the dimensions of an organisation that promotes learning, is where dialogue and inquiry is present. The organisation must build a culture where individuals can question, experiment, and give and receive feedback. Gavin, Edmondson and Gino (2008:1) argue that leadership must be willing to entertain alternative viewpoints, engaging in active listening, and remaining open-minded. From this, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H21: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning development.

Wen (2014:297) argues that there are a few barriers to effective learning, of which one is a self-centred work style. The authors use an example of organisational learning in China to illustrate this. Chinese leaders, for example, often feel that they must save face, preventing them from telling the truth, and also preventing them from expressing and sharing information and their ideas to their subordinates.

Andrews and Delahaye (2000:802-804) found in their study on factors that may influence the importance and sharing of knowledge that the quality of information is important in the learning process (as previously discussed). Taking this one step further, the study also found that the quality of information is dependent on the quality and credibility of the source of the information. Finding information from the right person was really important, because importing knowledge from the wrong person would mean that the information may be wrong or misleading. "What seemed to come forward quite distinctly from these descriptions was that the credibility of knowledge was very much tied up with the credibility of the knower" (Andrews & Delahaye, 2000:803). The study also found that when sharing knowledge, the participants deemed the trustworthiness of the recipient an important factor in their decision to share or not. The old adage that “knowledge is power”, seems to still be relevant. Knowledge sharing did not happen automatically, and participants stated that because knowledge was deemed as a valuable commodity, it would only be shared with recipients that they trusted. Thus, the importance of transparency and trust during the learning and development process led to the development of the following hypotheses:

H24: Reliability of information is related to an employee’s perception of opportunities for learning and development.

H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee’s perception of opportunities for learning and development.

3.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This Chapter provided a broad overview of the development of the concepts of employee engagement, based on what Welsh (2011), defined as historical waves. There are many different definitions of employee engagement, and by discussing some of the important work scholars have done on the topic, this Chapter has attempted to define employee engagement more clearly. A widely accepted definition is one put forward by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma and Bakker (2002:74), and is accepted in this study as the workable definition of employee engagement. The UWES measurement instrument is also a widely used scale to determine engagement levels inside organisations, and have also served as the measurement scale in this study.

Furthermore, the drivers of employee engagement, according to Demerouti *et al.* (2001), were discussed, with a specific focus on job resources as drivers of employee engagement. The job–demand resource scale, which is a widely accepted measurement tool to determine drivers that lead to employee engagement, have also been used in this study to measure three job resources as drivers of employee engagement, namely autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development.

In the conceptualising of both job resources and employee engagement, this Chapter aimed to plot the literature within this study. There is a proven positive relationship between communication climate and employee engagement, and communication has also been identified as a driver of engagement, or termed a job resource. However, this study aims to delve deeper into the role of communication climate in the process to improve employee engagement, by plotting it as not just another driver, but the avenue through which job resources improve employee engagement.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This Chapter discusses the choice of research design, population and sampling methods, data gathering techniques and approaches to data analysis. The methodological orientation, design choice and specific data gathering methods were informed by the research objectives and hypotheses.

This study made use of a quantitative survey method of data gathering. Stratified random sampling was implemented in four short-term insurance organisations in the South African financial sector. Data were gathered using a self-administered, internet-based questionnaire and analysed using the statistical programmes SPSS and AMOS.

The following table provides a brief overview of the research approach and design employed.

Table 4.1: Research overview

Quantitative Research approach	
Survey research	
Sampling design	Population: Employees from four short-term insurance companies in the South African financial sector Sampling technique: Stratified random sampling as a probability sampling technique. Stratum included management and non-management employees.
Data collection	Instrument: Self-administered online questionnaire using the online tool Qualtrics (2018). Three pre-existing measurement scales were combined: 1. Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES) 2. Job demand–resources scale (JD-RS) 3. Dennis' communication climate survey (DCC)
Data analysis	Step 1: Demographic profile Step 2: Validity and reliability testing through confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis Step 3: Structural equation modelling (SEM) Step 4: Mediation

4.2. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Quantitative research focuses on the quantification of constructs by assigning numbers to the perceived qualities of elements. It makes use of what is known as variable analysis, i.e. the use of variables in describing and analysing behaviour as well as understanding the nature of relationships between different variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:49; Creswell, 2014:4). Through deductive reasoning, theories are tested by incorporating strategies to avoid bias, create controls for possible alternative findings and replicate and generalise the findings of the test (Creswell, 2014:4). This control is a major component of quantitative research. The researcher has control over data collection and analysis through statistical controls imbedded in multivariate analyses (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:49). Furthermore, quantitative research can stem from a post-positivist worldview in that research starts with a theory, after which data are collected to support or refute the theory (Creswell, 2014:7). One of the main criticisms of quantitative research is, however, that the converting of constructs to numerical form can potentially lead to a loss of data richness. Despite the advantage of constructs being explicitly defined, this subtracts from the richness of other possible meanings (Babbie, 2013:24-26).

4.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Creswell (2014:247) refers to research design as "types of enquiry within quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches that provide specific direction of procedures in a research study". More specifically, this author identifies certain techniques and methods that serve as guides in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data (Du Plooy, 2009:51). Babbie and Mouton (2001:647) describe a research design as a structured plan or framework that guides the researcher to "solve the research problem". The detailed research design is discussed in the following section.

4.3.1. Survey research

Surveys are mostly associated with deductive reasoning and are often used in descriptive research. A deductive reasoning approach means that a true premise is offered through theories and that this true premise is verified by constructing hypotheses that are tested through measurement techniques (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:641; Du Plooy, 2009:27).

Survey studies are quantitative in nature, with the purpose of providing a "broad overview of a representative sample of a large population" (Mouton, 2001:152). By studying a sample from a larger population, a survey design can provide numerical descriptions of trends, attitudes, perceptions, opinions or relationships between variables. With survey results, it is possible to generalise or draw inferences about the larger population. The results are further used to describe possible reasons for relationships that exist between certain variables, with the aim of producing a model (Creswell, 2014:155-156; Fowler, 2014:1; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012:177).

The most noted advantage in using survey research lies in the fact that questionnaires can be used to collect standardised data from a large population in an economical way. It also allows for easy comparison of data and is perceived as an authoritative method of data collection, as the findings can be generalised for a large population as long as the sample is representative. Furthermore, if the questionnaire is well-constructed there is a higher level of measurement reliability, and if controls have been put in place, there is high construct validity (Creswell, 2014:157; Mouton, 2001:153; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:178).

The biggest drawback, however, is the energy it takes to ensure an adequate response rate, which directly affects the validity of the study. Due to the need to achieve high response rates, survey questionnaires cannot be too long, and items must be limited to ensure that a respondent is able to complete the questionnaire in a timely manner. Moreover, the creation of a survey questionnaire is time-consuming and, if not correctly pre-tested, may yield inaccurate results (Creswell, 2014:157; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:178). In this study, quantitative survey research was conducted by administering survey online questionnaires to four prominent short-term insurance organisations within the South African financial services industry.

4.3.2. Sampling design

The aim of sampling is to lessen the total number of data collected during quantitative research. This is done by “considering only data from a sub-group rather than all the possible cases or elements” (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:258). This process whereby a researcher selects observations is known as sampling. The two main ideas imbedded in sampling design are the larger population and techniques used to identify the elements to be observed.

i. Population

A population consists of all the elements that a researcher wishes to study and from which certain conclusions can be drawn. However, it is more often the case that all the elements of a population cannot be studied, and for this reason a sample is selected from the population. This sample enables in-depth analysis of the elements, and if the sample is randomly selected the collected data can be generalised for the total population. Thus, for example, the findings from a small group of people can be seen as a true reflection of the opinions of the total group or population (Babbie, 2011:91; Babbie & Mouton, 2001:100).

A valid sample must be taken, and it is therefore necessary that the population be identified and that a researcher have access to the population and elements in the population. If a researcher does not have access to a population or if some elements of the population are unavailable, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to take a correct sample and to conduct a valid survey (Creswell, 2014:158).

To refine the scope of this study, the focus was placed on the short-term insurance industry within the South African financial sector. The private financial sector plays an important part in the growth and sustainability of a strong middle class, providing financial stability both in South Africa and the sub-Saharan region. In South Africa, a young, increasingly mobile middle class is establishing itself and is in need of financial inclusion. This does not only apply to the banking sector but also to the insurance industry, as is evident from the strong growth rates reported from the top South African short-term insurance organisations. Long-term per capita income growth rates are forecast over the next decade and will lead to improved growth rates for household consumption expenditure on fixed assets. This new middle class will look for companies to insure their assets (KPMG, 2014:5; PwC, 2015:3).

The identified population for this study was four prominent and successful short-term insurance companies in South Africa. It is important to note that these companies have diversified product offerings, but that for the purpose of this study the population only included short-term insurance subsidiaries. The structure of these four organisations are similar, although their sizes differ.

A typical short-term subsidiary has a “core business”, “supporting departments”, “pricing”, “distribution channels” and what are historically known as “brokers” or financial advisors. Within the core business of these organisations, there are new business, existing business, and claims functions. The new business function refers to the identification of potential new clients. They subsequently assess the risk of the client, price the risk and collect the premium. The existing business function refers to the new or changing needs of existing clients, including alterations to existing business. The claims function refers to the processing, assessment and payment of claims made by clients or, in some instances, the need to decline the payment of the claim through repudiation and/or negotiation. The supporting departments, such as finance, human resources, information technology and operations, function around this core business. Of these, the finance department is crucial due to its regulatory compliance measures and its need to track profit versus losses. Alongside the core business functions exists what is called pricing (underwriting/actuarial services). Pricing is responsible for the creation and pricing of competitive new products. This department is responsible for re-pricing existing products, usually on an annual basis. They are also responsible for underwriting unusual risk profiles or claims. The distribution channels have two levels. Firstly, it has a supporting function to the distribution of services. Employees working in this capacity are historically known as “broker consultants”. They work to support external brokers through, for example, providing updated pricing structures and marketing new products. Secondly, within the distribution channels is the in-house distribution, usually in the form of call centres.

Finally, brokers can work either as an independent brokers or “tied brokers”. The former work for themselves, selling many different products from different organisations. Tied brokers also work independently but only sell one organisation’s products. Both independent and tied brokers work for their clients, only selling the products of the relevant insurance organisations. Thus, they are not classified as employees of the insurance company. Those classified as employees of an organisation only include those who work in the core business, the supporting departments, pricing and distribution channels. The respondents included in the sample population therefore comprised only such employees from the four insurance companies.

Employees, both management and non-management, are typically knowledge workers, defined by Van Staden and Du Toit (2012:30) as a person “who has considerable knowledge and learning in a specialist field”. These workers have to create, integrate and apply their specialised knowledge to innovate and solve problems. Gilbert (2001:32) mentions that highly educated employees, or knowledge workers, tend to be more absorbed in the workplace. The population of this study consisted of knowledge workers.

ii. Sampling technique

It is often not possible to conduct research with an entire population as respondents. For this reason, researchers choose specific sampling techniques to select smaller groups or numbers of respondents to participate in a particular study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:175). There are two main types of sampling method: non-probability and probability sampling methods.

Non-probability sampling is used when it is not possible to use probability techniques to sample from the population. A researcher chooses a non-probability sampling technique based on the availability of the population; the technique relies on sampling only those elements available in the population. The main disadvantage to using this technique is that the data gathered cannot always be generalised to the larger population (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:166).

The population for this study, as previously mentioned, consisted of employees of four organisations operating in the South African short-term insurance industry. These four organisations were selected through a non-probability sampling technique based on the availability of these organisations. Through industry contacts, a number of short-term insurance organisations were approached to participate in the study, with four ultimately agreeing to participate in the research. The heads of the human resources departments in each of these organisations were contacted. They agreed to a meeting, whereby the ethical considerations were explained, such as that both the organisation and participating employees would remain anonymous. Each organisation signed an ethical clearance document and provided a formal letter indicating their willingness to partake in the study. The four organisations are all prominent role players in the short-term insurance industry and will be identified only as Organisations A, B, C and D.

The main aim of probability sampling is to guarantee that the sampling unit is selected in such a way as to ensure that it accurately represents the population from which it is selected. This means that the characteristics found in the sample must reflect those of the population. The findings of research conducted on a sample may then be generalised to the relevant population. The most important factor guaranteeing a representative sample is to ensure that the selection is done randomly. Random selection means that each element or respondent has an equal chance of being selected (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:175; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:213). Respondents were sampled from the four insurance organisations based on probability sampling.

It is, nevertheless, important to note that despite adequate measures to ensure that a random sample is drawn, sampling errors still occur. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:175), probability theory does, however, allow for an expected degree of error. Just as sampling errors can occur, the possibility of errors in the data collection stage and actual instrument can render the findings less valid. Fowler (2014:9) referred to two specific errors that survey methodology needs to address. Firstly, it is vital to answer the question as to how closely a sample of respondents mirrors the population and, secondly, how well the questions in the survey measure what they intend to measure. A stratified sampling method can be employed to counter possible sampling errors.

Creswell (2014:159) suggested three elements that need to be considered when choosing a sample size, namely the margin of error, the confidence of the margin of error and the estimated percentage that the sample will respond in a certain way. Errors in the sampling methods can render a study invalid. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that the data collection procedures remain valid and reliable and that the instrument is rigorously tested.

Stratified random sampling is a probability sampling technique that does not just randomly draw from a sampling frame but rather follows more than one step to select a random sample. The first step in the process is to select certain homogeneous strata or categories into which the population can be divided. These strata are created to ensure that the characteristics of the sample matches that of the population, ensuring a higher level of representativeness by decreasing the probable sampling error. For example, strata can include gender, generation (age) and organisational level. The second step in the process is for the researcher to randomly select respondents from each stratum, making sure that the number of respondents selected is proportionately taken from each stratum (Babbie, 2013:150-151; Leedy & Ormrod, 2014:217).

The sample frame in this study was constructed from a list of employees obtained from the human resources department of each of the four organisations in the population. A typical short-term subsidiary has a “core business”, “supporting departments”, “pricing”, “distribution channels” and what are historically known as “brokers” or financial advisors. Brokers are not classified as employees of the insurance company and was therefore not included in the sample. Each employee working for the respective organisations was categorised into the selected stratum, namely according to organisational level (e.g. management or non-management) (Table 4.2). Employees, both management and non-management, are typically knowledge workers.

The sample size for this study depended on the population size of each organisation. The sample only included employees of the organisation and not the so-called brokers. Although the focus was on the organisational level of management and non-management, other biographical profile information was included in the questionnaire, including gender, age and race (refer to chapter 5, section 5.4 on sample characteristics).

Table 4.2: Sample size per organisation

Organisation	**Stratum**	
	Managers	**Non-managers**
A	100	100
B	100	100
C	200	200
D	200	200

The sample sizes for the organisations are provided in Table 4.2. The samples needed to access both the management and non-management strata, and therefore each stratum was sampled in proportion to the other. Larger samples needed to be obtained from Organisations C and D, as they were both much larger than Organisations A and

B. The human resources manager from each organisation provided a complete list of employees from their respective organisations. Due to restriction of information based on the South African Protection of Personal Information Act (4/2013), the managers allocated a number, starting at one, to each employee in the organisation. The only information provided was these numbers and the organisational level of each employee, i.e. whether they were management or non-management.

Simple random sampling was applied to each stratum. Then, using Microsoft Excel, each group was randomly sampled, allowing for 100 or 200 managers or non-managers depending on the organisation size. These sampled lists were returned to the respective organisations, where the human resources manager converted the numbers back into identifiable employees. Only those on the sampling lists were then invited by the organisation itself to participate. The organisations sent a series of emails that contained the link to the survey. The one exception was organisation D, where the human resources department requested that the researcher send the emails requesting participation to the sampled employees. Their email addresses were given to the researcher, upon which a series of emails were sent, requesting voluntary and anonymous participation in the study.

The total number of employees from all the organisations was 4198, and the total sample size was 1200 employees (management and non-management). Saunders *et al.* (2012:265) state that for a sample to be generalisable to the larger population, with fewer errors, a larger sample size in relation to the population must be chosen. Saunders *et al.* (2012:266) provide a guideline for the minimum sample size depending on the size of the population (Table 4.3), which was applied in this study.

Table 4.3: Sample size guide according to the sample population size, with the population size in this study highlighted in grey

Population	Margin of error			
	5%	3%	2%	1%
2000	322	698	1091	1655
5000	357	**879**	**1622**	3288
10 000	370	964	1936	4899

Source: Saunders *et al.* (2012:266)

As indicated in Table 4.3, with a population of 4198 and a sample size of 1200, this study worked with a margin of error of 2–3%. In total, from a sample of 1200 management and non-management employees who were asked to participate, 504 employees consented and completed the questionnaire, of whom 185 were management and 319 non-management. According to Boomsma (1982) and Boomsma (1985), the sample size was sufficient for the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis conducted in this study.

The decision to include strata (management and non-management employees) was informed by the fact that the communication climate instrument (discussed in more detail in 4.3.3) included items that referred specifically to the role of a manager, for example, "I understand my subordinate's problems" or "My subordinates are frank and candid with me". Evidently, a non-management employee could not answer such questions. Therefore, the communication climate instrument was split into two parts, one completed by managers and one completed by non-managers, where the inapplicable items were removed.

4.3.3. Data collection instruments

Self-administered questionnaires are commonly used to collect data in a quantitative survey study. A survey questionnaire is an instrument used to obtain numerical information from respondents (Mouton, 1996:111). Although the term "questionnaire" implies that only questions are asked, it is typical for a questionnaire to include statements. Statements can help a researcher understand the attitudes or perspectives of respondents by asking them whether they agree or disagree with the statement. Babbie and Mouton (2001:233-238) suggested the following guidelines for constructing a questionnaire: items must be clearly stated to ensure that respondents understand, double-barrelled questions must be avoided at all costs, respondents must be competent and willing to provide answers to the questions, questions should remain short and relevant and negative and biased items should be avoided.

The data collection instrument used for this study was a self-administered online questionnaire using the online tool Qualtrics (2018). The measurement instrument consisted of four parts. After the respondent agreed and gave consent to participate, the survey started with basic demographic information, including gender, age, race and organisational level. Thereafter, three pre-existing and pre-validated measurement scales were combined to create the main part of the instrument used in this study. The three pre-existing measurement scales were the Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES), selected items from the job demand–resources scale (JD-RS) and Dennis' communication climate survey (DCC).

Internet-based data collection methods are becoming increasingly popular and include tools such as Qualtrics (Fowler, 2014:5). The biggest criticism of online surveys is the question of representativeness – not all people have access to the internet (Babbie, 2011:272). This, however, was not deemed a problem for this particular study, as all employees within the population had their own email addresses and access to the internet. Furthermore, according to Babbie (2011:274), research has shown that internet-based surveys yield the same response rate as mailed questionnaires.

Qualtrics (2018) is an online survey tool with a simple interface that can be accessed through a computer or smartphone. After creating the survey, Qualtrics generated an anonymous link that directed the respondent to the website where they could complete the survey. Each organisation sent emails to the sampled respondents with the anonymous link. Follow-up emails were sent to ensure an adequate response rate to counter response rate error. The only exception was organisation D, where the organisation requested the researcher to send the emails with the anonymous link. In this instance, although the researcher sent the requests, respondents who completed the survey and those who chose not to could not be monitored. This was due to the anonymous link that the respondents used to access the survey. A discussion of the various scales used in this survey is provided in the following sections.

Scale measurement was used to construct the items in the different questionnaires. A scale uses standardised response categories to determine the relative intensity of different items (Babbie, 2011:164). The standardised responses differed for the three scales. Employee engagement used the standardised response categories of “never”, “almost never” (a few times a year), “rarely” (once a month), “sometimes” (a few times a month), “often” (once a week), “very often” (a few times a week) and “always” (every day). Job resources used the standardised response categories of “never”, “sometimes”, “regularly”, “often” and “very often”. Communication climate used the standardised response categories of “to no extent”, “to a little extent”, “to some extent”, “to a great extent” and “to a very great extent”.

i. Utrecht work engagement scale

The UWES was developed for the purpose of testing levels of engagement in university students (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). It tests employees’ level of vigour, dedication and absorption, which are indicators of engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006:714). The scale used in this research consisted of 17 items that measured the three constructs of vigour (six items), dedication (five items) and absorption (six items). As indicated by Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2010:4), when the scale indicates high numbers, it shows that an individual is experiencing high levels of engagement. The scale included items such as “At work, I feel bursting with energy” (vigour), “To me, my job is challenging” (dedication) and “Time flies when I am working” (absorption). Items were scored on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from “never” to “always”.

The UWES has also been extensively tested in the South African context. Storm and Rothmann (2003:67) examined the psychometric properties of the UWES for the first time in South Africa, with a sample of police officers, to determine the construct validity and internal consistency of the scale. Their data suggested that a one-factor model better fit the data than the three-factor model as originally created. For their hypothesised three-factor solution, the statistically significant $x2$ value of 1978.79 (df=116; *p*=0.00) showed a poor fit. The three-factor model was then re-specified with the $x2$ value (df=85; *p*=0.000). Vigour and dedication showed a correlation of 0.97, vigour and absorption a correlation of 0.96 and dedication and absorption a correlation of 0.9. The hypothesised one-factor model also showed a poor overall fit. The one-factor re-specified model showed a good fit, although it still had a high $x2$ value (df=63; *p*=0.00). The other fit statistics indicated an excellent fit with the Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), and comparative fit index (CFI) all greater than 0.95 and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) with a value of 0.06. Note should be taken that the original scale was developed using data from samples in the Netherlands, which could be a reason for the better fit on the one-factor model (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:299; Storm & Rothmann, 2003:68).

Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2006:42-43) tested the UWES in higher educational institutions in South Africa. These researchers found that, amongst academic staff, a three-factor model fit best; however, the model needed to be modified to fit the date better. The three-factor model was then re-estimated with certain items being removed and was thus based on a 15-item version of the UWES. Furthermore, the findings showed that job level and level of qualification impacted significantly on the levels of engagement. One statement read: "Professors were significantly more dedicated to their work than senior lecturers and more absorbed in their work than junior lecturers and senior lectures respectively". The results showed "no significant differences" in terms of vigour based on job level. Staff with doctoral degrees showed a higher degree of absorption compared to staff with a four-year or honours degree. In terms of vigour and dedication, "no significant differences were found". Lastly, the research found "no statistically significant" differences between the engagement levels of staff of different age groups.

Diedericks (2016:212-213) investigated the "interrelationship dynamics between the psychological constructs of resistance to change, work engagement and psychological capital" in a South African open-distance higher education institution. The study showed a two-factor model for work engagement based on the UWES. The two factors were named vigour/dedication and absorption, which explained 62.3% of the variance.

Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2010:4) used the UWES to "investigate the relationship between job insecurity, leadership empowerment behaviour, employee engagement and intention to leave their jobs in a petrochemical laboratory". When a principal factor analysis was performed on the scale, the results showed only one factor explaining 49.49% of the total variance. Rathbone (2006:62) used the UWES to determine the work engagement of employees in the South Africa mining industry. The study showed no statistically significant differences between the one- and two-factor models tested. For the purpose of that study, the author continued using the one-factor model.

ii. Job demand–resources scale

The JD-RS was developed to test the variables in the JD-R model (Bakker, 2014:1). Job demands lead to burnout and impaired health, whereas job resources mitigate the negative outfall of job demands, leading to employee engagement. In terms of job resources, this scale tests what drives employee engagement and thus the relationship between job resources and levels of employee engagement inside organisations (Rothmann *et al.*, 2006:80).

Various studies have tested job resources using a variety of scales. Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "never" to "very often". Three constructs of job resources were used in this study, namely autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development. The scale consisted of nine items that measured autonomy (three items), feedback (three items) and opportunities for learning and development (three items). Some items in the scale included the following: "I have control over how my work is carried out", "My job offers me opportunities to find out how well I do my work" and "In my work, I can develop myself sufficiently". The main reason for selecting these constructs was that various studies have shown a positive relationship between employee engagement and autonomy (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015:56), feedback (Maslach *et al.*, 2001:417; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908) and opportunities for learning and development (Maslach *et al.*, 2001:417; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:908), respectively. The second reason was that these constructs play an important role in employees' ability to grow and reach their work goals (Gruman & Saks, 2011:126; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:895).

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004:302) wanted to understand the relationship between job demands, job resources, burnout and engagement. These researchers made use of an instrument developed by Karasek in 1985 to measure job resources. The resources measured included performance feedback, social support from colleagues and supervisory coaching. Similarly, Du, Derks, Bakker and Lu (2017:99) wanted to understand whether homesickness undermined the potential of job resources. The researchers used a scale of six items measuring feedback as developed by Karasek in 1985 and social support developed by Van Veldhoven, de Jonge, Broersen, Kompier, and Meijman in 2002.

In another study measuring job resources, Rothmann *et al.* (2006:78-80) used a JD-RS developed by Jackson and Rothmann in 2005. The result showed that the 48 items loaded onto five factors. Factor One was labelled *growth opportunities*, which related to “learning opportunities and independence in the job”. Factor Two was labelled *organisational support*, referring to “the relationship between supervisors and colleagues, flow of information, communication, role clarity, and participation in decision-making”. Factor Three was labelled *achievement*, referring to “remuneration, career possibilities, and training opportunities”. Factor Four, labelled *overload*, showed factors relating to “pace and amount of work, mental load and emotional load”. Factor Five, labelled *job insecurity*, referred to “uncertainty about the future”. Principle component analysis was carried out on the correlations between the five factors. From this, two factors were extracted with eigenvalues of 2.08 and 1.04; 62.2% of the total variance was explained by these two factors. These factors were labelled *job demands* and *job resources*.

iii. Dennis’ communication climate survey

The third scale, DCC, was developed to test employee perceptions on the state of communication within an organisation (Dennis, 1974:85). Dennis focused on superior–subordinate communication (Factor One), quality and accuracy of downward communication (Factor Two), superior openness and candour (Factor Three), opportunities for upwards communication (Factor Four) and reliability of information (Factor Five). The researcher accepted a five-factor solution, accounting for 52% of the total variance (Dennis, 1974:83). Factors One to Five accounted for 20%, 14%, 6%, 7% and 5% of the total variance, respectively.

For this study, DCC was divided into two parts, one completed by managers and the other by non-managers. Both instruments tested the original five factors. The management scale consisted of 44 items testing the communication climate. Items included “I believe my subordinates are really frank and candid with me” and “I really understand my subordinates’ problems”. The non-management scale consisted of 40 items. Four items were removed, as they pertained to the role of a manager. Items in this scale included “My superior really understands my job problems” and “My superior is frank and candid with me”. Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “to no extent” to “to a very great extent”.

More research conducted using DCC include work done by Hayase (2009:iii), who wanted to understand “whether there is a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement”. Hayase (2009) omitted the construct of superior openness/candour, because this factor related to managers, and the research was focused on undergraduate and graduate university students, assuming their levels of work experience and ages. For the same reason, two items related to opportunities for upward communication were removed (Hayase, 2009:35). The results showed new factors emerging from both the original factors of superior–subordinate communication and quality of information. From the former, the three emerging factors were titled *positive superior communication*, *open communication with supervisor*, and *superior–subordinate understanding*. These factors assumed 65.8% of the total variance. In terms of the original quality of information factor, two new factors emerged, titled *effective communication* and *open communication in the organisation*. These two new factors assumed 59.32% of the total variance (Hayase, 2009:40-42).

Guzley (1992:379) researched the relationship between levels of organisational commitment and perceptions of organisational and communication climates. This researcher used 20 items selected from DCC. In this study, 7 of the 20 items that the researcher selected had acceptable loadings on their Factor Two. These items were categorised as superior–subordinate communication, with an eigenvalue of 3.992, accounting for 7% of the variance. The internal reliability, measured through Cronbach’s alpha, was measured at 0.94 (Guzley, 1992:389-390).

In conclusion, in this study, the combination of the above three measurement scales sought to measure the strength of the relationships between the three constructs of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. The next section provides the study's questionnaire.

4.3.4. The study's questionnaire

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and Management Science
Dept. of Communication Management

The influence of communication climate on job resources, to improve employee engagement

You are hereby invited to participate in this PhD study.

Briefly, the purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth understanding of the communication climate of the organisation and how employee engagement can be improved.

NO INFORMATION WILL BE RETURNED TO YOUR ORGANISATION THAT WOULD IDENTIFY ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY. In other words, you answers will be statistically grouped in such a way as to insure your anonymity.

There are no right or wrong answers to questions being asked; therefore, your first reaction to the question being asked is extremely important. When reading each question think of your current job when answering.

Please note the following:

- This is an anonymous study survey as NO individual's name will appear on the questionnaire. The answers participants give will be treated as strictly confidential as they cannot be identified in person based on the answers they give.
- Your organisation's participation in this study is very important. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. A summary of the findings will be made available on request.
- The information will be gathered using a quantitative survey method. The survey will be available online (on your computer of smart phone) for completion. With the assistance of your HR department and executive endorsement, both non-management and management in the organisation will be prompted through an email to follow a link to the survey. You can save the survey at any point and then log in later to complete.
- Please contact Ms Annerie Reyneke (reyneke.a@gmail.com), or her supervisor, Dr Estelle de Beer (estelle.debeer@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please click on the 'I agree' option below to indicate that:

- You have read and understood the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

I agree ☐
I do not agree ☐

Did not agree: Thank you very much. You can go ahead and close the browser.
Did agree: **Question III: Demographic** Please answer the following demographic information by clicking on the most appropriate box.
1. Gender a. Male b. Female
2. Year of birth a. Before 1940 b. 1940-1959 c. 1960-1979 d. 1980-1999 e. After 1999
3. Race a. Black African b. Coloured c. Indian/Asian d. White e. Other
4. Organisational level a. Non-management b. Management

Question IV: Employee engagement

Employee engagement refers to how you feel about your organisation, what you think about it, and how you behave towards the organisation.

The following statements therefore refer to the way that you feel, think and behave at work. Indicate the frequency of these by clicking on the most appropriate answer.

		Never	**Almost never** (a few times a year)	**Rarely** (once a month)	**Sometimes** (a few times a month)	**Often** (once a week)	**Very often** (a few times a week)	**Always** (every day)
1	At work, I feel busting with energy							

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

Question V: Job resources

The following statements refer to your work situation and your experience of it, your opportunities for personal development, and the feedback that you receive about your work.

Indicate your choice by clicking on the most appropriate answer.

		Never	Sometimes	Regularly	Often	Very often
1	I have flexibility in the execution of my job					
2	I have control over how my work is carried out					
3	I can participate in decision-making regarding my work					
4	I receive sufficient information about my work objectives					
5	My job offers me opportunities to find out how well I do my work					
6	I receive sufficient information about the results of my work					
7	In my work, I have the opportunity to develop my strong points					
8	In my work, I can develop myself sufficiently					
9	My work offers me the possibility to learn new things					

Question VI: Please indicate if you are a manager or if you are a non-manager in your organisation.

(Manager could refer to any level of management in the organisation as long as you have employees reporting to you)

(Non-manager means you do not have any employees reporting to you)

☐ Non-management

☐ Management

Question VII: Communication climate (management)

Communication climate tests the health of the relationships between different people in the organisation.

Here you need to refer to the relationships with your immediate superior and your immediate subordinate(s).

Indicate the extent to which you agree with these statements by clicking on the most appropriate answer.

		To no extent	To a **little** extent	To **some** extent	To a **great** extent	To a **very great** extent
1	My superior makes me feel free to talk with him/her					
2	My superior really understand my job problems					
3	My superior encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job					
4	My superior make it easy for me to do my best work					
5	My superior expresses his/her confidence with my ability to perform my job					
6	My superior encourage me to bring new information to his/her attention, even when that new information may be "bad news"					
7	My superior makes me feel that things I tell him/her are really important					
8	My superior is willing to tolerate arguments and give a fair hearing to all points of view					
9	My superior has my best interests in mind when he/she talks to his/her bosses					
10	My superior a really competent expert manager					
11	My superior listen to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me					
12	It is safe to say to my superior what I am really thinking					
13	My superior is frank and candid with me					
14	I can "sound off" about job frustrations to my superior					

15	I can tell my superior about the way (in my opinion) he/she manages our work group					
16	I am free to tell my superior that I disagree with him/her					
17	I think I am safe in communicating "bad news" to my superior without fear of any retaliation on his/her part					
18	I think that my superior believes that he/she really understand me					
19	I believe that my superior thinks that I understand him/her					
20	My superior really understands me					
21	I really understand my superior					
22	In general, I think that people in this organisation say what they mean and mean what they say					
23	People in top management say what they mean and mean what they say					
24	People in this organisation are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other					
25	People in this organisation can freely exchange information and opinions					
26	I am kept informed about how well organisational goals or objectives are being met					
27	My organisation succeeds in rewarding and praising good performance					
28	Top management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need					
29	I am receiving information from those sources (for example, from superiors, department meetings, co-workers, newsletters, emails) that I prefer					
30	I am pleased with top management's efforts to keep employees up-to-date on recent developments that are related to the organisation's welfare – such as success in competition, profitability, future growth plan etc.					
31	I am notified in advance of changes that affect my job					

32	I am satisfied with explanations I get from top management about why things are done as they are					
33	My job requirements are specified in clear language					
34	I believe my subordinates are really frank and candid with me					
35	My colleagues (co-workers) are frank and candid with me					
36	I really understand my subordinates' problems					
37	I believe that my subordinates think that I really understand their problems					
38	My opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect my job					
39	My superior lets me participate in the planning of my own work					
40	Members of my work group are able to establish our own goals and objectives					
41	My views have real influence in my organisation					
42	I expect that recommendations I make will be heard and seriously considered					
43	I think that information received from my subordinates is really reliable					
44	I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is really reliable					

Question VIII: Communication climate (non-management)

Communication climate tests the health of the relationships between different people in the organisation.

Here you need to refer to the relationships with your immediate superior and your immediate subordinate(s).

Indicate the extent to which you agree with these statements by clicking on the most appropriate answer.

	To no extent	To a **little** extent	To **some** extent	To a **great** extent	To a **very great** extent

1	My superior make me feel free to talk with him/her					
2	My superior really understand my job problems					
3	My superior encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job					
4	My superior make it easy for me to do my best work					
5	My superior expresses his/her confidence with my ability to perform my job					
6	My superior encourage me to bring new information to his/her attention, even when that new information may be "bad news"					
7	My superior makes me feel that things I tell him/her are really important					
8	My superior is willing to tolerate arguments and give a fair hearing to all points of view					
9	My superior has my best interests in mind when he/she talks to his/her bosses					
10	My superior a really competent expert manager					
11	My superior listen to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me					
12	It is safe to say to my superior what I am really thinking					
13	My superior is frank and candid with me					
14	I can "sound off" about job frustrations to my superior					
15	I can tell my superior about the way (in my opinion) he/she manages our work group					
16	I am free to tell my superior that I disagree with him/her					
17	I think I am safe in communicating "bad news" to my superior without fear of any retaliation on his/her part					
18	I think that my superior believes that he/she really understand me					
19	I believe that my superior thinks that I understand him/her					

20	My superior really understands me					
21	I really understand my superior					
22	In general, I think that people in this organisation say what they mean and mean what they say					
23	People in top management say what they mean and mean what they say					
24	People in this organisation are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other					
25	People in this organisation can freely exchange information and opinions					
26	I am kept informed about how well organisational goals or objectives are being met					
27	My organisation succeeds in rewarding and praising good performance					
28	Top management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need					
29	I am receiving information from those sources (for example, from superiors, department meetings, co-workers, newsletters, emails) that I prefer					
30	I am pleased with top management's efforts to keep employees up-to-date on recent developments that are related to the organisation's welfare – such as success in competition, profitability, future growth plan etc.					
31	I am notified in advance of changes that affect my job					
32	I am satisfied with explanations I get from top management about why things are done as they are					
33	My job requirements are specified in clear language					
34	My colleagues (co-workers) are frank and candid with me					
35	My opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect my job					
36	My superior lets me participate in the planning of my own work					

37	Members of my work group are able to establish our own goals and objectives					
38	My views have real influence in my organisation					
39	I expect that recommendations I make will be heard and seriously considered					
40	I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is really reliable					

4.3.5. Pilot testing the questionnaire

Pilot testing a questionnaire is an important step in ensuring validity and reliability of the survey. A pilot test is a small-scale test to determine whether respondents understand the questionnaire and whether there are any problems recording the gathered data. The pilot test includes a set of questions posed to respondents after completion of the pilot questionnaire to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:266). Thus, the aim is to determine whether questions or statements are understandable to the respondents. Feedback should seek to test the understandability of the language and to provide suggestions on the structure of the questionnaire (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:451).

The pilot study for this research was undertaken to test the user-friendliness, structure of the sections and language usage of the questionnaire. Although the survey was based on three existing instruments, it was nonetheless important to ensure that the language was understandable in a South African context. The pilot test was administered to 15 respondents from different private-sector organisations. The respondents were randomly recruited based on their availability and were from two organisations in the financial and private higher education industries. The pilot study was not administered within the same industry as the final survey was, but this did not matter as the pilot aimed to test the understandability of statements where industry was not relevant. The following follow-up questions were posed to the pilot study respondents:

- Was it clear that you could refuse to participate in the survey?

- Did you understand the requirements of each section and that which what you had to complete?
- Were there any statements that were unclear or not well-phrased?
- Were there any statements that you did not understand?
- Were there particular words that you did not understand the meaning of?
- Did you see any spelling or grammar errors? If so, which question?
- What changes would you suggest for making the survey more user-friendly?
- Do you have any general comments or concerns?

None of the 15 pilot study respondents indicated any problems in understanding the statements. They all indicated that they understood that the survey was voluntary and it was clear what each section tested. They indicated that the statements were clear and well-phrased, and there was nothing that they did not understand. None suggested any changes, and no general comments or concerns were raised.

4.4. DATA ANALYSIS

This study made use of descriptive and inferential data analyses. The following section describes the analysis process in detail.

4.4.1. Demographic profile

The first step in the analysis process was an analysis of the basic demographic information according to gender, age, race and organisational level. The most notable of these categories was the data on organisational level, which divided the respondents into management and non-management categories. Also included in this step was the descriptive information in graph form showing respondents' views on employee engagement, job resources and communication climate.

4.4.2. Validity and reliability testing of measurement scales through confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis

Creswell (2014:160) states that validity refers to whether meaningful inferences can be drawn from answered questionnaires. Thus, whether "we are actually measuring what we say we are measuring" (Babbie, 2013:191). Babbie (2013:191) reflects that the instrument must measure the true meaning of the concept that it shows to measure. Validity therefore focuses on the accuracy of the instrument used when conducting research. This was an important step in this study, as it made use of pre-existing instruments. These instruments were employed in a new and unique environment (South African short-term insurance organisations), which made testing for validity important.

The second aspect crucial to the legitimacy of research is reliability. Reliability refers to the quality of the research methods and asks whether, if a particular data collection method or instrument were applied in different circumstances, it would yield the same results as those in the original research. An instrument must therefore gather information that the respondents are able to provide. The information must also be relevant to them, and the questions or statements must be understood (Babbie, 2013:188). Field workers can cause unreliability, but for the self-administered, internet-based questionnaire implemented in this study no external field workers were used to collect data; thus, there was no fieldworker influence. One way in which to establish reliability is to use instruments proven to be reliable in other research. However, careful consideration should be given to ensure that the items remain relevant in an ever-changing society (Babbie, 2013:190). The most common measure of scale reliability is Cronbach's alpha, with 0.7 or more as an acceptable value (Field, 2009:674; Saunders *et al.*, 2012:668). Taking this into consideration, step two in the data analysis process included validity and reliability testing with the use of confirmatory factor analysis followed by exploratory factor analysis. During this step, the latest statistical programmes SSPS and AMOS were used.

Factor analysis can be defined as a process that aims to understand the "relationship between the scores of the different items and uses the correlations between them to specify where the relationships are strong enough to indicate underlying factors" (Hinton, 2004:305). Thus, it is a technique for reducing data to determine whether there is a set number of factors to explain the different variables included in a study (Pallant, 2013:188). Babbie (2013:483-484) states that it is an effective method to uncover the predominant patterns when dealing with a large number of variables. This is done by generating "artificial dimensions", also called factors, that correlate well with multiple real variables. Of utmost importance when conducting factor analysis is the sample size; Pallant (2013:190) recommends that "the larger, the better". When data sets are too small, "the correlation coefficients among the variables are less reliable" and they tend not to generalise well to the larger populations. Another important aspect is the intercorrelations among items in the data set. This is measured using the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sample adequacy and Bartlett's test of sphericity.

i. Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis is done to confirm the existence of already proposed factors (Hinton, 2004:305). This means that a researcher has to already have an idea about the number of factors involved, the relationship between these factors and the relationship between the measured variables and the factors (Ullman, 2006:37). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine the model fit for the three existing scales, namely employee engagement, job resources and communication climate. The results of all three scales were split between results from management and non-management categories.

To determine the appropriate fit, different goodness-of-fit indicators can be used, namely the CFI, the residual-based fit index called the RMSEA, the TLI and the incremental fit index (IFI). In terms of CFI, the model is estimated to fit on a continuum, with 0.000 indicating an unacceptable fit and 1.00 indicating a perfect fit. At the one end, this continuum shows the uncorrelated variables and, at the other end, the perfect model with zero degrees of freedom. RMSEA, on the other hand, "is a measure of noncentrality relative to sample size and degrees of freedom" (Ullman, 2006:44). Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow and King (2006:330) suggest cut-off criteria for the above-mentioned CFI, TLI and IFI of equal to or greater than 0.95. These authors indicate an RMSEA smaller than 0.06–0.08 and a Chi-square Mean/Degree of Freedom (CMIN/df) value equal or smaller than 2 or 3. Note should be taken of other authors who state that all the fit indices (CFI, TLI and IFI) should show an acceptable value of greater than 0.9 (Byrne, 2010:78; Hox & Bechger, 1998:362; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006:46). This is confirmed by Schreiber *et al.* (2006), reporting that some authors indicate fit indexes of as low as 0.85. Schumacker and Lomax (2010:76) state that a value close to 0.9 or 0.95 shows a good fit for CFI, TLI and IFI.

ii. Exploratory factor analysis

Exploratory factor analysis can be defined as the process to discover new underlying factors (Hinton, 2004:305). It explores the "interrelationships between a set of variables" (Pallant, 2013:188). The first test conducted was the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test, which measures the sample adequacy of the data. This shows the "common variance amongst the variable that the factors will account for" (Hinton, 2004:305). The KMO value should range from 0 to 1, with one source indicating 0.5 and others indicating 0.6 as the minimum value for an appropriate factor analysis (Field, 2009:660; Hinton, 2004:305; Pallant, 2013:190). The next test was Bartlett's test of sphericity, which examines the correlation between the variables (Hinton, 2004:305). For a good correlation, the value should be $p<0.5$ (Field, 2009:660; Pallant, 2013:190).

The extraction method used to identify the factors was principle axis factoring, with promax rotation with Kaiser normalisation as a rotation method where applicable. Factors are extracted according to their eigenvalue, which assigns a weight to each of the factors in terms of the percentage of variance explained (Hinton, 2004:306). Only the factors with an eigenvalue of greater than one should be extracted (Field, 2009:640).

4.4.3. Structural equation modeling

Structural equation modeling (SEM) is a "large set of statistical techniques based on the general linear model" (Ullman, 2006:35). These techniques are also referred to as causal modeling, analysis of covariance structures or simultaneous equation modeling. Raykov and Marcoulides (2006:1) state that "SEM provides researchers with a comprehensive method for the quantification and testing of substantive theories". SEM is used to quantify or test hypotheses about the interrelationships between different constructs. It also tests these interrelationships and the measurement items that assess them (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006:1). In terms of hypothesis testing, SEM can be used to test a phenomenon of interest or a theory and, in the case of this study, a conceptual model based on a theoretical framework.

Raykov and Marcoulides (2006:2) summarised the following three characteristics of structural equation models: (1) Potential errors of measurement in the observed variables are taken into consideration, (2) covariance or correlation matrices measure the interrelationship between variables and (3) a model is created based on hypothetical constructs. As previously stated, there are a number of fit measurements for determining the adequate or inadequate fit of a measurement model. Table 4.4 summarises the parameter fit indices as previously discussed.

Table 4.4: Model fit criterion and acceptable fit levels

Model fit criterion	Acceptable level
CMIN/df	<3
RMSEA	<0.08
CFI	≥0.9
IFI	≥0.9
TLI	≥0.9

Sources: (Byrne, 2010:78; Hox & Bechger, 1998:362; Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006:46; Schumacker & Lomax, 2010:76)

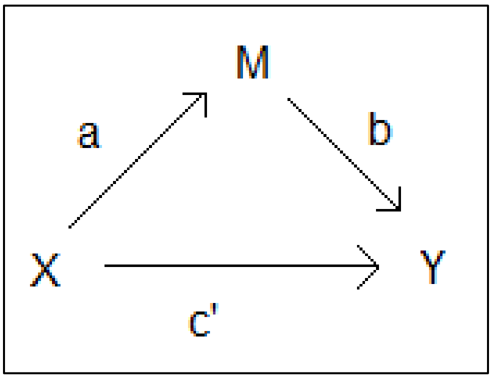
The structural equation model often needs to be modified to produce a better fit or to test hypotheses. Ullman (2006:46) warned that conclusions drawn from an extremely modified model should be treated with caution and that cross-validation should be performed on these models. When modifying a model, the initial model can be called a subset of the newer, larger model. In other words, the initial model is nested within the new model (Ullman, 2006:47). With nesting, the x^2 value related to the new, larger model is subtracted from the x^2 value of the initial, nested model. The difference (x^2) "is evaluated with degrees of freedom equal to the difference between the degrees of freedom in the two models" (Ullman, 2006:47).

There are a number of ways in which to modify the original measurement model, of which the following were considered in this study: Firstly, all non-significant relationships can be deleted, after which items with loadings of less than 0.5 can be deleted (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010:64). Lastly, modification indices are considered. Hox and Bechger (1998:262) state that "the value of a given modification index is the minimum amount that the chi-square statistic is expected to decrease if the corresponding parameter is freed". These authors continue by stating that when a factor shows a large modification index, the parameter can be freed, which may improve the fit of the model. Researchers warn, however, that modifications should only be applied when adequate theoretical justification can be found (Hox & Bechger, 1998:262). It is critical that these changes are not made purely to improve the model fit statistics and that the model used still portrays the core theoretical model postulated. After modifications, the results of the analyses are presented in tables and figures. These results are interpreted and conclusions are drawn to accept or reject the hypotheses (Creswell, 2014:165).

4.4.4. Mediation

MacKinnon, Cheong and Pirlott (2012:313) define mediation as "a chain of relations by which an antecedent variable affects a mediating variable, which in turn affects a dependent variable". Hayes and Preacher (2014:451) note that it is important to "describe and quantify the mechanism responsible for the effect" between the independent and dependent variables. Kenny and Judd (2014:334) describe the basic mediation model as one with three variables. The independent or causal variable *X* has an influence on variable *M* – the intervening or process variable – which in turn influences variable *Y*, the dependent or outcome variable (Figure 4.1). The effect that *X* has on *M* is indicated by path *a*. The effect that *M* has on *Y* is indicated by path *b*, and the total effect is labelled *c'*.

Figure 4.1: Basic mediation model



There are four steps when testing for mediation as discussed by Kenny and Judd (2014) and Baron and Kenny (1986). Step 1 seeks to determine whether there is an effect that could be mediated. This refers to whether the independent or causal variable has an influence on the dependent or outcome variable, which relates to path *c'*. If this is the case, step 2 must determine whether there is a relationship between the independent or causal variable and the moderator, thus whether the independent or causal variable influences the mediator, as indicated in path *a*. Step 3 can then proceed to determine whether the mediator or intervening variable has an effect on the dependent or outcome variable, as indicated in path *b*. Lastly, step 4 must determine whether the effect of the independent or causal variable on the dependent variable will decrease after controlling for the effects of the mediator, as indicated in path *c'*.

Full mediation is when all the steps are followed and the influence of the independent or casual variable is non-significant (not different from zero) in the presence of the mediator (Kenny & Judd, 2014:336). Partial mediation, on the other hand, is when the conditions above are satisfied, but the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable are still statistically significant in the presence of the mediator.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of mediation, considering the management and non-management models. Since the aim of this study was to determine the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement, the researcher acknowledges that this conceptual model presents itself as a mediation model. For this reason, statistical analyses were done to determine whether job resources mediate the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement. However, understanding the role and impact of the mediator was not the principal aim of this study, and it is suggested that job resources as a mediator in the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement be investigated through further research.

4.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consent to participate was granted by the human resources director of each of the four participating organisations. The consent form, giving permission for the research to be conducted, was signed and a written consent form provided. In terms of individual consent, each respondent participating in the research had to provide formal consent to participate. Before a respondent could start with the first section of the electronic questionnaire, a letter of consent to be undersigned was provided. The respondent was given information such as that:

- participation was completely voluntary;
- participants could opt out at any time;
- all information would remain completely anonymous and could not be traced back to the individual;
- the gathering of information was endorsed by their organisation; and
- researcher contact details were provided

After reading this letter, the respondent could click to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed to participate. Indicating disagreement redirected them to the end of the survey, thanking them for their time. If a respondent agreed and gave consent, they could start with the survey. Thus, both the organisation and individual respondents voluntarily agreed to participate in the research.

4.6. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This Chapter covered the methods used to conduct this research and analyse the data gathered. The research design was quantitative in nature to understand the relationships between the constructs of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. Stratified random sampling, as a probability sampling technique, was used to sample 1200 management and non-management employees from four participating organisations. An online survey method was used to capture information from employees working in four short-term insurance organisations in the South African financial sector. The online tool Qualtrics (2018) was used to administer the survey. A total of 504 completed questionnaires was collected and used for data analysis. Data analyses were done using the statistical programmes SSPS and AMOS.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This Chapter reports on the results of the field research that were gathered using a quantitative survey method. The results were analysed following a step-by-step statistical analysis approach. The first step was to discuss the demographical profile of the respondents, making use of charts to display the information. The next step was to conduct confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis on the existing instruments, thereby establishing construct validity and reliability of the measuring instruments. Lastly, structural equation modeling was done in order to determine the strength and statistical significance of the relationships in the conceptual models, as indicated in the previous Chapter. The data were analysed using version 25 of the statistical programmes SPSS and Amos.

5.2. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Below is a summary of the primary and secondary research objectives of this study.

5.2.1. Primary research objective

To determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers, regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement.

5.2.2. Secondary research objectives

I. To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.

II. To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.

5.3. OPERATIONALISATION

The following section illustrates how the secondary objectives relate to the research hypotheses identified for the study (Table 5.1 to Table 5.24). Note should be taken that the sources of the original scales that were used to construct the measurement instrument, are included in the analysis.

Table 5.1: Hypothesis H1

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">H1: Autonomy is related to vigour.
H_o: Autonomy is not related to vigour.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Concepts</th><th>Constructs</th><th>Measurement</th><th>Original scales</th></tr>
<tr><td>Job resources</td><td>Autonomy</td><td>Part III, Items 1 – 9</td><td>(Bakker, 2014:4-8)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employee engagement</td><td>Vigour</td><td>Part II, Items 1 – 17</td><td>(Schaufeli et al., 2006:714)</td></tr>
</table>

Table 5.2: Hypothesis H2

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">H2: Autonomy is related to dedication.
H_o: Autonomy is not related to dedication.</td></tr>
<tr><th>Concepts</th><th>Constructs</th><th>Measurement</th><th>Original scales</th></tr>
<tr><td>Job resources</td><td>Autonomy</td><td>Part III, Items 1 – 9</td><td>(Bakker, 2014:4-8)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employee engagement</td><td>Dedication</td><td>Part II, Items 1 – 17</td><td>(Schaufeli et al., 2006:714)</td></tr>
</table>

Table 5.3: Hypothesis H3

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.			
H3: Autonomy is related to absorption. H_o: Autonomy is not related to absorption.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Job resources	Autonomy	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)
Employee engagement	Absorption	Part II, Items 1 – 17	(Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006:714)

Table 5.4: Hypothesis H4

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.			
H4: Performance feedback is related to vigour. H_o: Performance feedback is not related to vigour.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)
Employee engagement	Vigour	Part II, Items 1 – 17	(Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006:714)

Table 5.5: Hypothesis H5

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.			
H5: Performance feedback is related to dedication. H_o: Performance feedback is not related to dedication.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)
Employee engagement	Dedication	Part II, Items 1 – 17	(Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006:714)

Table 5.6: Hypothesis H6

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.			
H6: Performance feedback is related to absorption. H_o: Performance feedback is not related to absorption.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)
Employee engagement	Absorption	Part II, Items 1 – 17	(Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006:714)

Table 5.7: Hypothesis H7

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.			
H7: Opportunities for learning and development is related to vigour. H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to vigour.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)
Employee engagement	Vigour	Part II, Items 1 – 17	(Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006:714)

Table 5.8: Hypothesis H8

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.			
H8: Opportunities for learning and development is related to dedication. H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to dedication.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)
Employee engagement	Dedication	Part II, Items 1 – 17	(Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006:714)

Table 5.9: Hypothesis H9

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.			
H9: Opportunities for learning and development is related to absorption. H_o: Opportunities for learning and development is not related to absorption.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)
Employee engagement	Absorption	Part II, Items 1 – 17	(Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006:714)

Table 5.10: Hypothesis H10

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H10: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of autonomy. H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Superior–subordinate communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Autonomy	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.11: Hypothesis H11

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H11: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback. H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Superior–subordinate communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.12: Hypothesis H12

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H12: Superior–subordinate communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development. H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Superior–subordinate communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development.	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.13: Hypothesis H13

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H13: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of autonomy. H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Autonomy	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.14: Hypothesis H14

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H14: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback. H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.15: Hypothesis H15

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H15: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development. H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development.	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.16: Hypothesis H16

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H16: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of autonomy. H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Superior openness and candour	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Autonomy	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.17: Hypothesis H17

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H17: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback. H_o: Superior and candour is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Superior openness and candour	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.18: Hypothesis H18

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H18: Superior openness and candour is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development. H_o: Superior openness and candour is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Superior openness and candour	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development.	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.19: Hypothesis H19

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H19: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception autonomy. H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Opportunity for upward communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Autonomy	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.20: Hypothesis H20

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H20: Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback. H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Opportunity for upward communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.21: Hypothesis H21

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H21 Opportunities for upward communication is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development. H_o: Opportunities for upward communication is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Opportunity for upward communication	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development.	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.22: Hypothesis H22

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H22: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of autonomy. H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of autonomy.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Reliability of information	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Autonomy	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.23: Hypothesis H23

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H23: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of performance feedback. H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of performance feedback.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Reliability of information	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Performance feedback	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

Table 5.24: Hypothesis H24

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.			
H24: Reliability of information is related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development. H_o: Reliability of information is not related to an employee's perception of opportunities for learning and development.			
Concepts	**Constructs**	**Measurement**	**Original scales**
Communication climate	Reliability of information	Part IV, Items 1 – 44 (management) Part V, Items 1 – 40 (non-management)	(Dennis, 1974:105)
Job resources	Opportunities for learning and development.	Part III, Items 1 – 9	(Bakker, 2014:4-8)

The Figure 5.1 provides a visual depiction of the basic conceptual model representing the primary research objective that is to determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers, regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement.

Figure 5.1: Conceptual model: primary research objective management and non-management

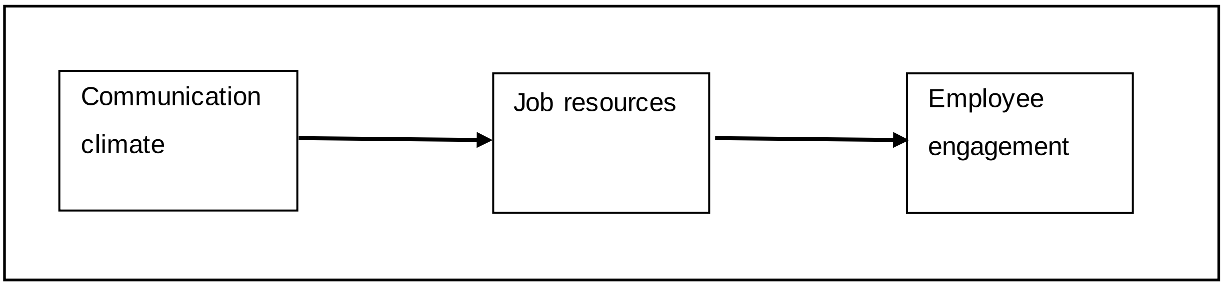
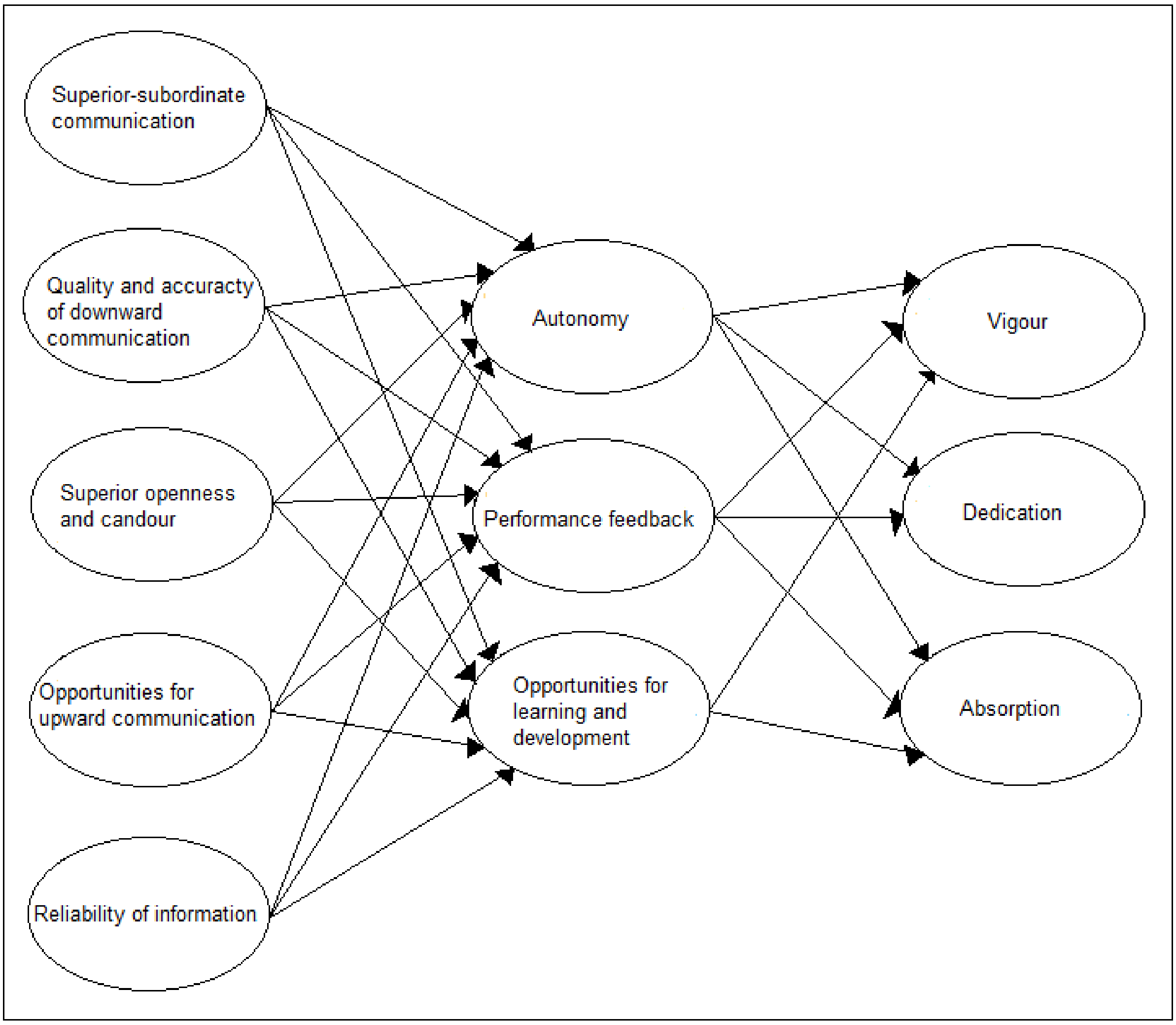


Figure 5.2 provides a visual depiction of a conceptual model representing the relationships between the concepts in the secondary research objectives.

Figure 5.2: Conceptual model management and non-management: secondary research objectives I and II



"Communication climate" has five constructs depicted on the left, namely: *superior–subordinate communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, superior openness and candour, opportunities for upward communication*, and *reliability of information*. In the middle row, the constructs of "job resources" are depicted, namely: *autonomy*, *performance feedback* and *opportunities for learning and development*. On the right, the constructs of "employee engagement" are depicted, namely: *vigour*, *dedication*, and *absorption*. Figure 5.2 conceptualises the secondary research objectives, which are to determine the relationship between communication climate and certain job resources; and to determine the relationship between certain job resources and employee engagement among managers and non-managers in an organisation. This was done by measuring the strength of the relationships between the constructs of each of the named concepts.

5.4. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

As discussed in the previous Chapter, the target population for this study is employees from four prominent short-term insurance organisations within the financial industry in South Africa. The identified sample consisted of managers and non-managers in these companies. Twelve hundred online surveys were distributed as a sample; and 504 completed responses were received. Of those 504 responses, 185 were managers, and 319 were non-managers. In the section below, the biographical data of the sample are discussed.

5.4.1. Demographic profile

The demographic information of all the respondents is explained by means of Figure 5.3 to Figure 5.6. This information includes gender, age, race, and organisational level.

Figure 5.3: Gender (n=504)

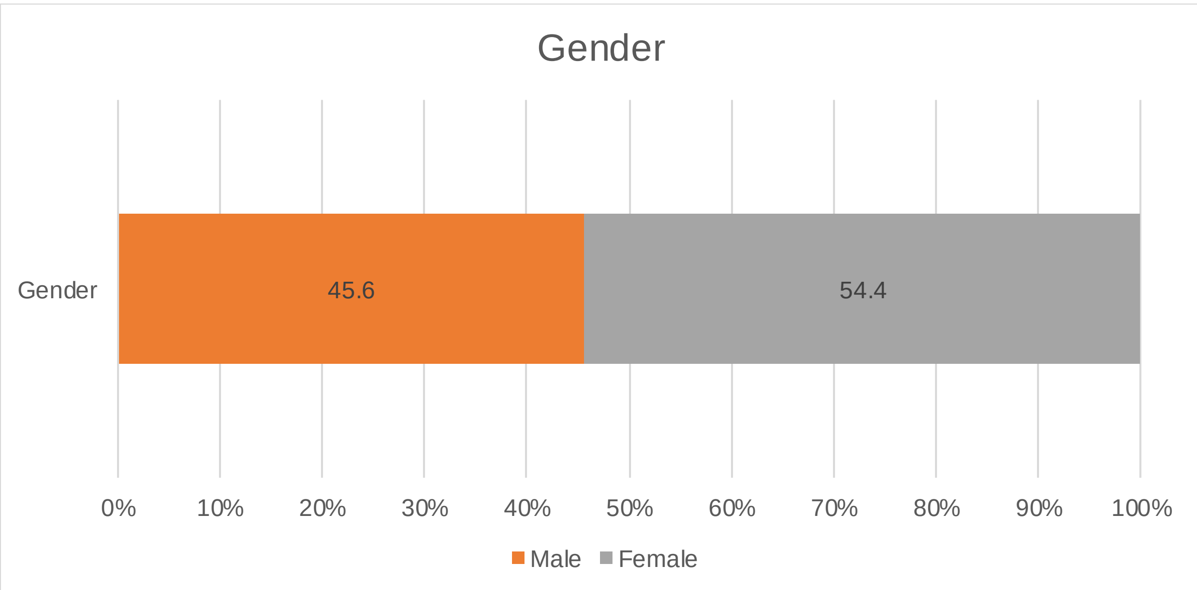
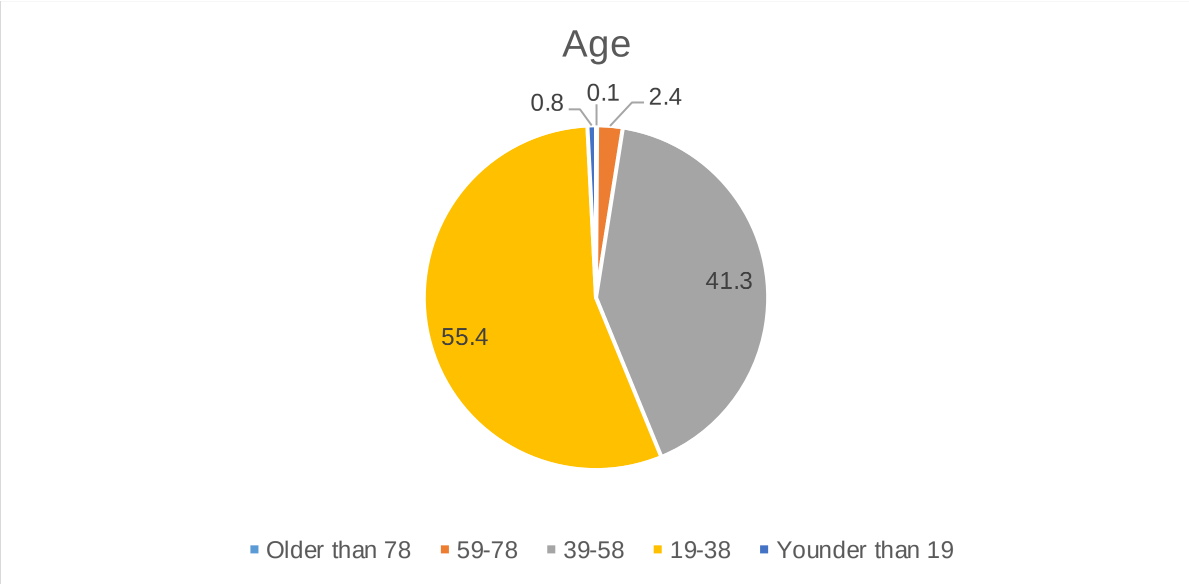


Figure 5.3 indicates that the majority (54.4%) of employees (management and non-management) are female, while 45.6% of employees are male.

Figure 5.4: Age (n=504)



As shown in Figure 5.4, the majority (55.4%) of respondents were born between 1980 and 1999 (age 19–38). This categorises them into the Millennial Generation (Kuhn, 2011:6). The other prominent generation was born between 1960 and 1979 (41.3%), classifying them as Generation X (aged 39 to 58) within the South African context (Kuhn, 2011:6).

Figure 5.5: Race (n=504)

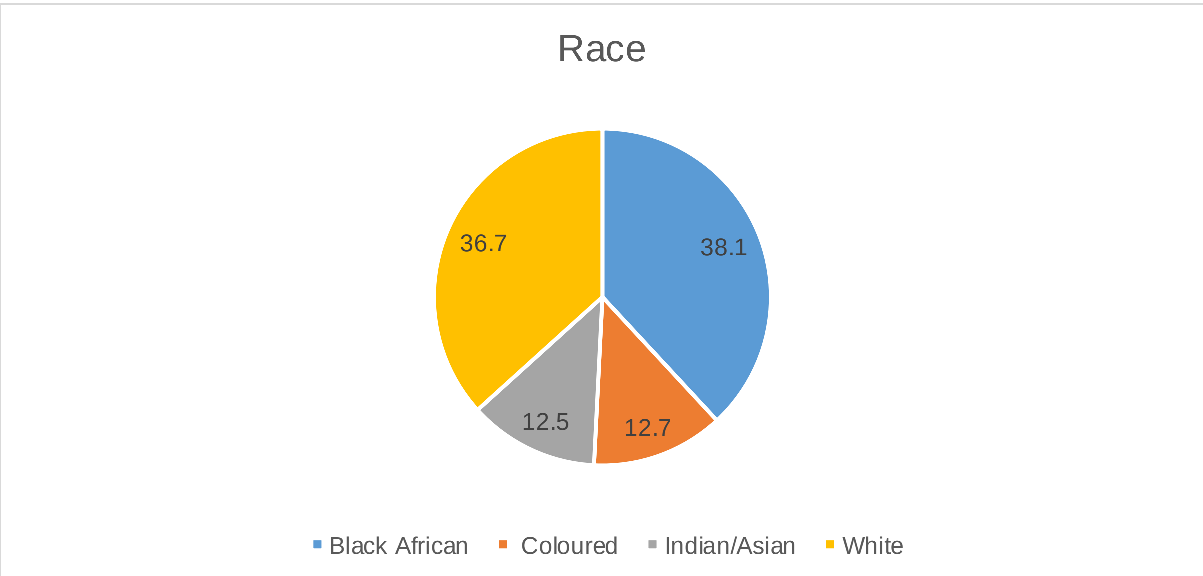
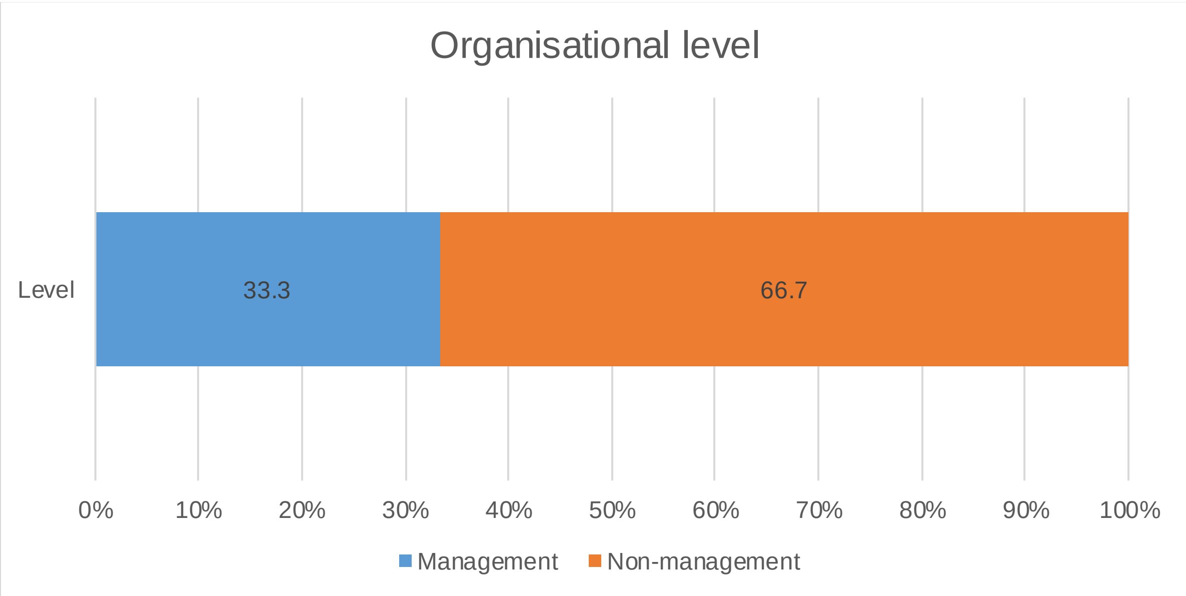


Figure 5.5 indicates that the largest race group in the sample is Black African employees (38.1%). This is closely followed by White employees (36.7%). The other two race groups are similarly distributed, namely: Coloured (12.7%) and Indian/Asian (12.5%).

Figure 5.6: Organisational level (n=504)



The last demographic figure (Figure 5.6), indicates the level on which respondents work in their respective organisations. Two thirds of respondents (66.7%) work as non-managers, while a third (33.3%) work as managers. In terms of the sampling design, half were managers and half non-managers. This graph thus reflects the design.

5.4.2. Descriptive statistics of employee engagement, job resources and communication climate

The descriptive graphs below show respondents' views on employee engagement, job resources, and communication climate per item. The original instruments for measuring employee engagement and job resources can be used for managers and non-managers. However, the communication climate instrument was split into management and non-management groups. Further analyses were thus conducted separately for the manager respondent group and the non-management respondent group. The manager group consists of 185 respondents and the non-management group of 319 respondents.

i. Employee engagement

For ease of understanding and interpretation, the seven point Likert type response scale responses for employee engagement, were grouped into three groups, namely: the "never", "almost never" and "rarely" responses were grouped together; the "sometimes" responses were used as is; and the "often", "very often" and "always" responses were grouped together. The results for employee engagement are shown in Figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7: Employee engagement: management (n=185)

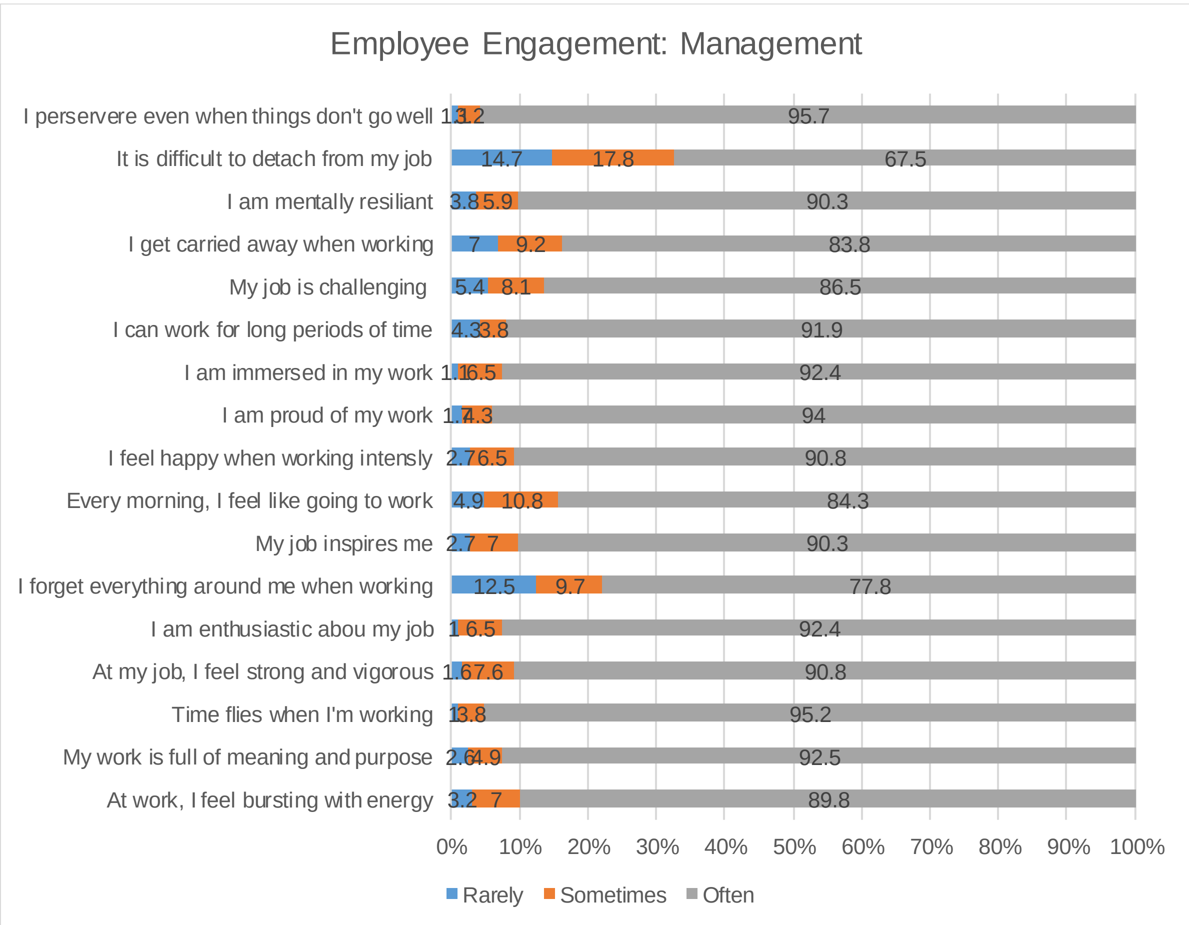
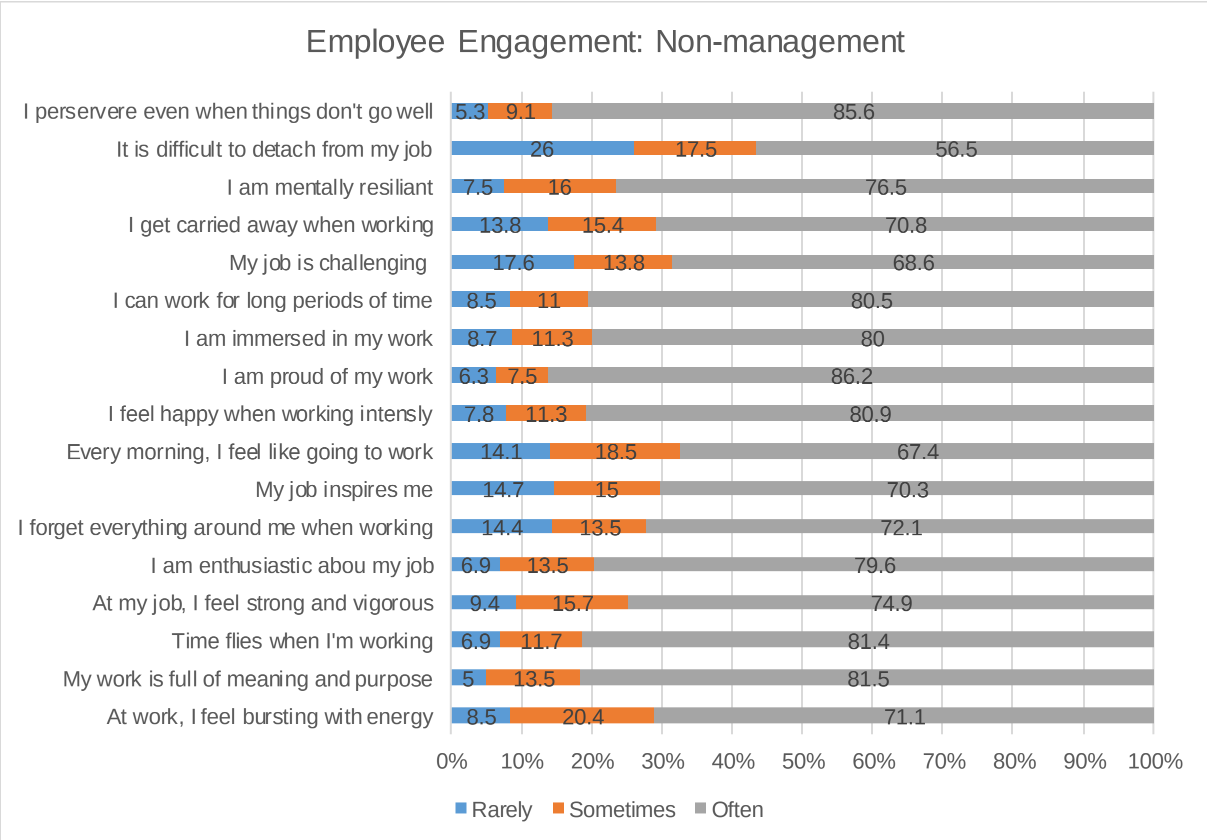


Figure 5.7 indicates that managers are generally very engaged – 16 of the 17 items show that more than three quarters of the respondents indicated a frequency of often, very often or always. A very large majority (95.7%) of respondents state that they often,

very often or always persevere, even when things do not always go well for them. The only statement with less than 70% (67.5%), is the one where managers state that they find it often, very often or always difficult to detach from their job. Although attachment and concentration are important at work in order to fully engage, managers must be able to detach from their work for a healthy balance.

Figure 5.8: Employee engagement: non-management (n=319)



When comparing management with non-management, the non-management respondents are slightly less engaged. However, the Figure 5.8 indicates that non-management employees are still generally very engaged, with nine of the 17 items indicating that more than three quarters of the respondents indicated a frequency of often, very often or always. A large majority (85.6%) of respondents state that they often, very often or always persevere, even when things do not always go well for them. This is slightly less than what management indicated (95.7%). Only 56.5% (compared to management's 67.5%) of respondents stated that they find it often, very often or always difficult to detach from their job. As previously stated, attachment and concentration are important at work in order to fully engage, however, non-management employees need to detach from their work for a healthy balance. It is clearly easier for non-management to detach from their job, than it is for management. A percentage of 67.4% of non-management employees state that they often, very often or always feel like going to work every morning; compared to management employees indicating 84.3%. Also scoring lower (71.1%) is non-managers who said that they often, very often or always feel bursting with energy at work; compared to 89.8% of management who feel this way.

ii. Job resources

The five point Likert type response scale for job resources was grouped into three groups for ease of understanding and interpretation, namely: the “never” and “sometimes” responses were grouped together; the “regularly” responses were used as is; and the “often” and “very often” responses were grouped together. The results for job resources are shown below.

Figure 5.9: Job resources: management (n=185)

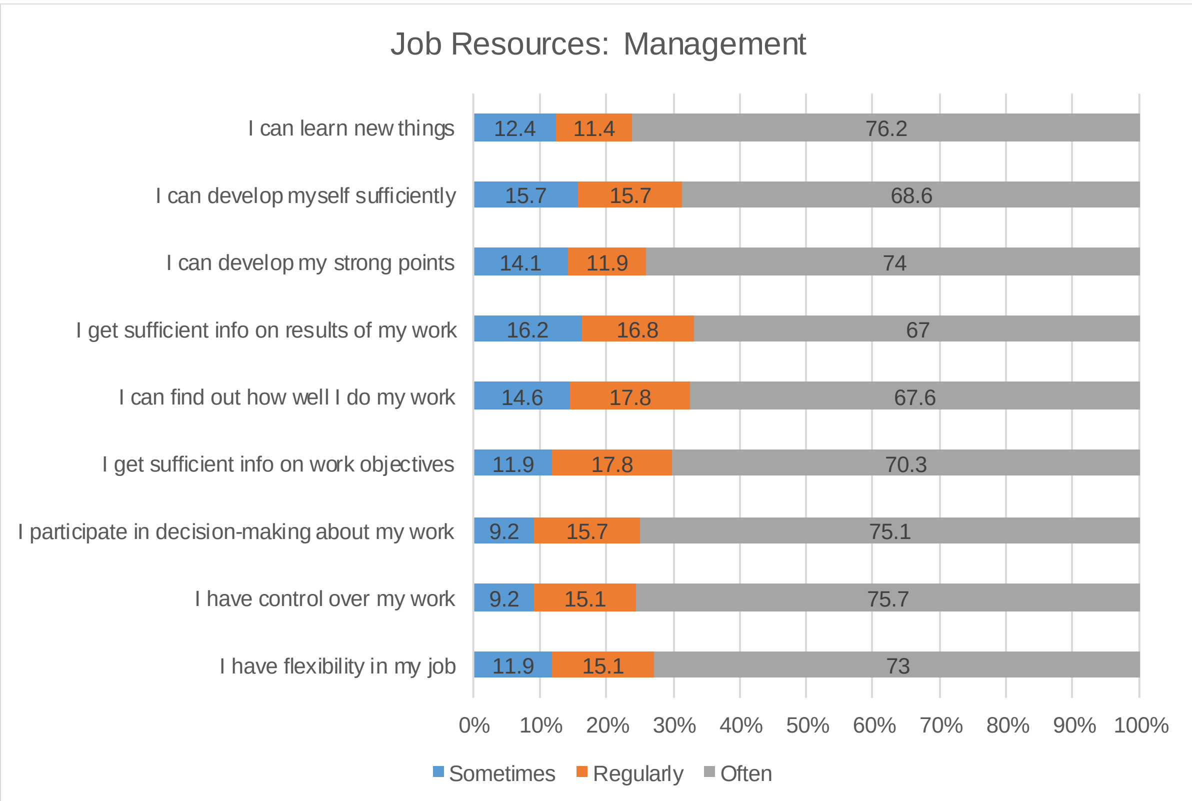
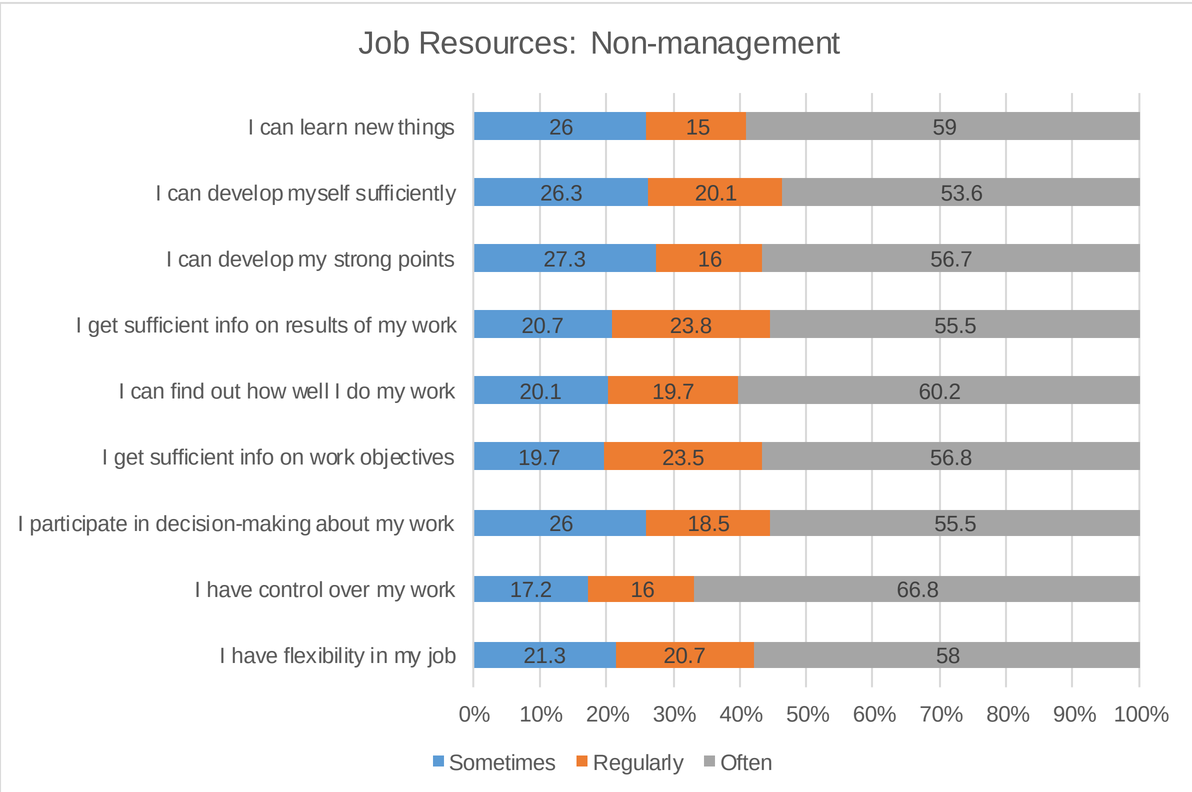


Figure 5.9 shows that, in general, at least two thirds of the respondents feel that they have the necessary resources in order to perform their jobs. Most notably, three quarters of the respondents often or very often feel that they have control over their work (75.7%), and feel that they can participate in decision-making about their work (75.1%), which shows high levels of job autonomy. Also, more than three quarters of respondents often or very often feel that they can learn new things (76.2%), indicating that they feel there are opportunities for learning and development.

Figure 5.10: Job resources: non-management (n=318)



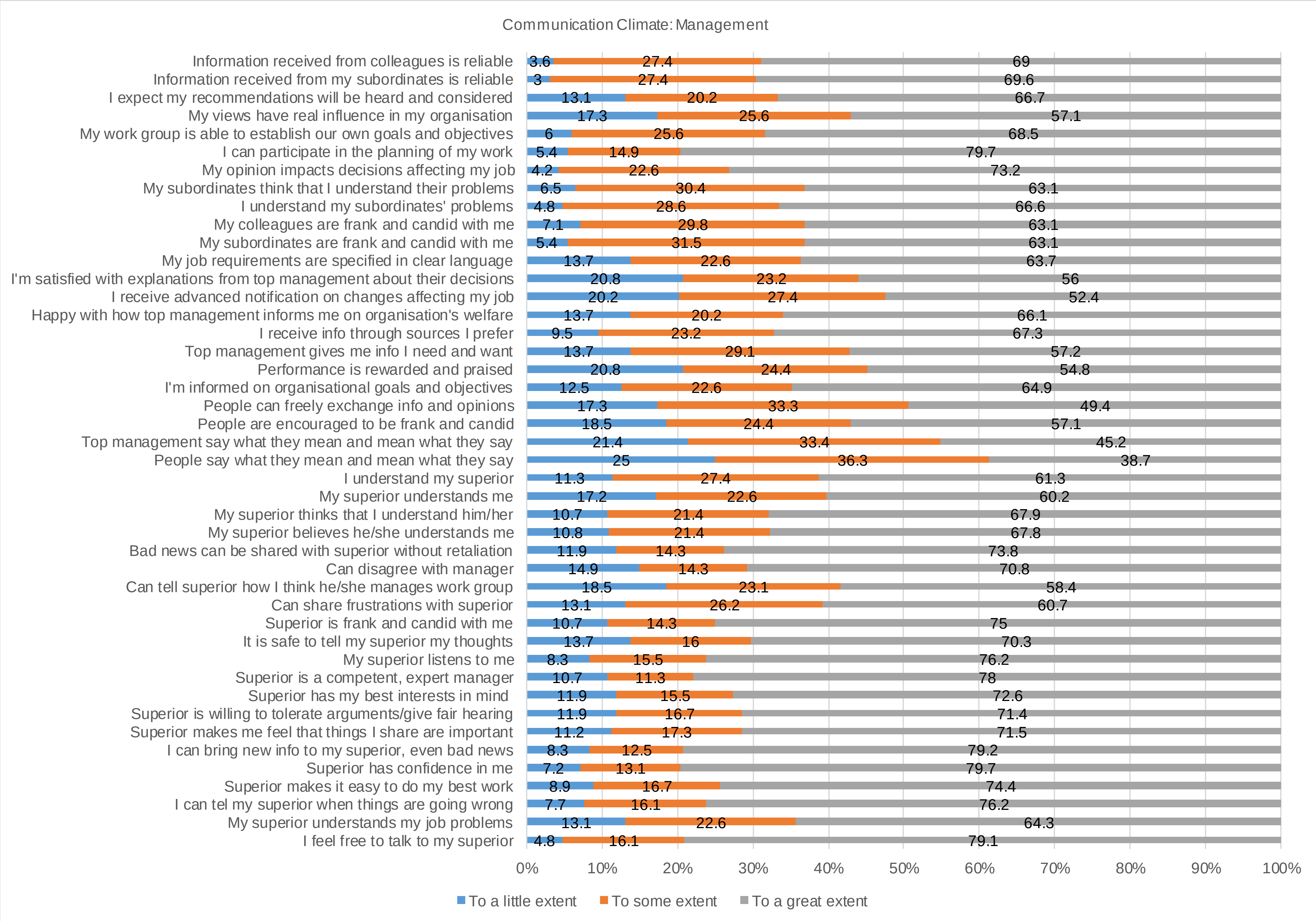
When compared to management, the non-management respondents feel less strongly that they have the necessary resources in order to perform their jobs, with the percentage of respondents who answered often or very often ranging between 55.5% and 66.8% (Figure 5.10). Two thirds of non-manager respondents (66.8%) (compared to 75.7% of management) often or very often feel that they have control over their work. However, it is important to note that between 17.2% and 26.3%% of respondents indicated never or sometimes for the job resources statements. It thus appears that the organisations can do more in order to provide better resources to non-management employees in terms of providing more autonomy to them, improving performance feedback mechanisms, and creating opportunities for better learning and development.

iii. Communication climate

The five point Likert type response scale for communication climate was grouped into three groups for ease of understanding and interpretation, namely: “to no extent” and “to a little extent” responses were grouped together; the “to some extent” responses were used as is; and the “to a great extent” and “to a very great extent” responses were grouped together.

The original communication climate survey instrument is divided into two groups, namely management and non-management. The reason for this division is due to the fact that the original instrument contained a number of items related only to management, for example, “I believe my subordinates are really frank and candid with me”. The management scale consists of 44 items and the non-management scale consists of 40 items – removing all items referring to the role and opinion of subordinates.

Figure 5.11: Communication climate: management (n=185)


Communication Climate: Management
Information received from colleagues is reliable 3.6 27.4 69
Information received from my subordinates is reliable 3 27.4 69.6
I expect my recommendations will be heard and considered 13.1 20.2 66.7
My views have real influence in my organisation 17.3 25.6 57.1
My work group is able to establish our own goals and objectives 6 25.6 68.5
I can participate in the planning of my work 5.4 14.9 79.7
My opinion impacts decisions affecting my job 4.2 22.6 73.2
My subordinates think that I understand their problems 6.5 30.4 63.1
I understand my subordinates' problems 4.8 28.6 66.6
My colleagues are frank and candid with me 7.1 29.8 63.1
My subordinates are frank and candid with me 5.4 31.5 63.1
My job requirements are specified in clear language 13.7 22.6 63.7
I'm satisfied with explanations from top management about their decisions 20.8 23.2 56
I receive advanced notification on changes affecting my job 20.2 27.4 52.4
Happy with how top management informs me on organisation's welfare 13.7 20.2 66.1
I receive info through sources I prefer 9.5 23.2 67.3
Top management gives me info I need and want 13.7 29.1 57.2
Performance is rewarded and praised 20.8 24.4 54.8
I'm informed on organisational goals and objectives 12.5 22.6 64.9
People can freely exchange info and opinions 17.3 33.3 49.4
People are encouraged to be frank and candid 18.5 24.4 57.1
Top management say what they mean and mean what they say 21.4 33.4 45.2
People say what they mean and mean what they say 25 36.3 38.7
I understand my superior 11.3 27.4 61.3
My superior understands me 17.2 22.6 60.2
My superior thinks that I understand him/her 10.7 21.4 67.9
My superior believes he/she understands me 10.8 21.4 67.8
Bad news can be shared with superior without retaliation 11.9 14.3 73.8
Can disagree with manager 14.9 14.3 70.8
Can tell superior how I think he/she manages work group 18.5 23.1 58.4
Can share frustrations with superior 13.1 26.2 60.7
Superior is frank and candid with me 10.7 14.3 75
It is safe to tell my superior my thoughts 13.7 16 70.3
My superior listens to me 8.3 15.5 76.2
Superior is a competent, expert manager 10.7 11.3 78
Superior has my best interests in mind 11.9 15.5 72.6
Superior is willing to tolerate arguments/give fair hearing 11.9 16.7 71.4
Superior makes me feel that things I share are important 11.2 17.3 71.5
I can bring new info to my superior, even bad news 8.3 12.5 79.2
Superior has confidence in me 7.2 13.1 79.7
Superior makes it easy to do my best work 8.9 16.7 74.4
I can tel my superior when things are going wrong 7.7 16.1 76.2
My superior understands my job problems 13.1 22.6 64.3
I feel free to talk to my superior 4.8 16.1 79.1
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
To a little extent
To some extent
To a great extent

From Figure 5.11, it would seem that, in general, managers experience the communication climate as satisfactory. Managers feel that they are supported in their work by their own superiors, with more than three quarters (79.1%) of respondents stating that they, to a great and very great extent, feel free to talk to their superiors. The majority (79.7%) of respondents also indicated that they felt that their superior had confidence in them. The superior–subordinate relationship is thus viewed in a very positive light.

Respondents also indicated that they receive good quality information from their superiors, with more than half (63.7%) of respondents indicating that, to a great and very great extent, their job requirements are specified in clear language. However, of note is the fact that a large percentage of respondents indicated that, to no extent and to a little extent (21.4%), and to some extent (33.4%), top management mean what they say and say what they mean. Similarly, respondents indicated that, to no extent and to a little extent (25%), and to some extent (36.3%), people in the organisation say what they mean and mean what they say. This could indicate that, although information is deemed as understandable and clear, respondents do not always trust what others in the organisation say to be truthful and dependable.

It would, however, seem that when indicating how frank and candid respondents (managers) experience others, most respondents (63.1%), to a great and very great extent, believe that their subordinates are frank and candid with them. Most respondents (63.1%), also think, to a great and very great extent, that their colleagues are frank and candid with them. Moreover, most respondents (75%) think, to a great and very great extent, that their superiors are frank and candid with them. This could show that, although, as seen previously, people do not always trust others to say what they mean and mean what they say, to some extent, the superior and subordinate, and colleagues, are able to trust and have confidence in one another.

Figure 5.12: Communication climate: non-management (n=319)

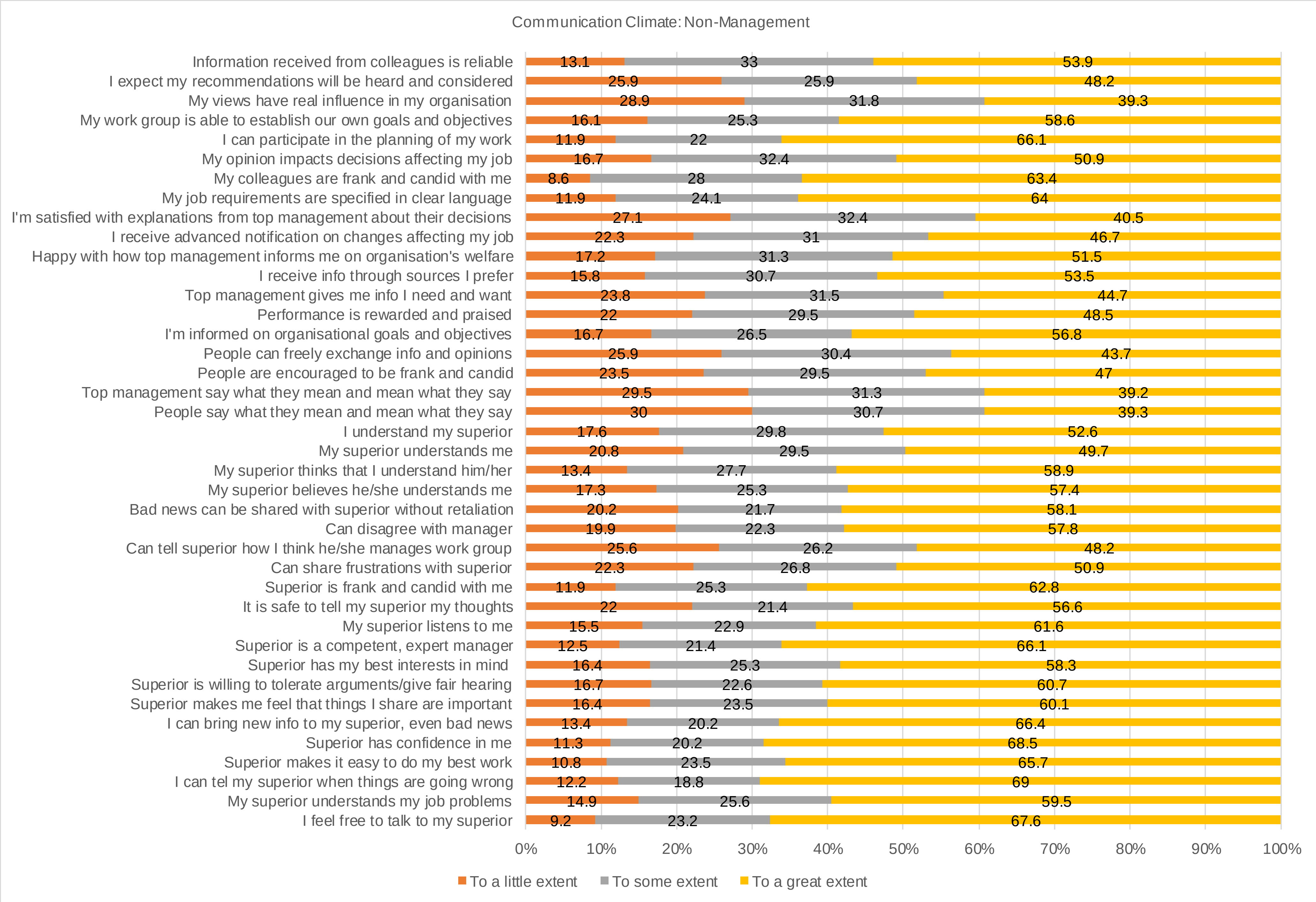

Communication Climate: Non-Management
Information received from colleagues is reliable 13.1 33 53.9
I expect my recommendations will be heard and considered 25.9 25.9 48.2
My views have real influence in my organisation 28.9 31.8 39.3
My work group is able to establish our own goals and objectives 16.1 25.3 58.6
I can participate in the planning of my work 11.9 22 66.1
My opinion impacts decisions affecting my job 16.7 32.4 50.9
My colleagues are frank and candid with me 8.6 28 63.4
My job requirements are specified in clear language 11.9 24.1 64
I'm satisfied with explanations from top management about their decisions 27.1 32.4 40.5
I receive advanced notification on changes affecting my job 22.3 31 46.7
Happy with how top management informs me on organisation's welfare 17.2 31.3 51.5
I receive info through sources I prefer 15.8 30.7 53.5
Top management gives me info I need and want 23.8 31.5 44.7
Performance is rewarded and praised 22 29.5 48.5
I'm informed on organisational goals and objectives 16.7 26.5 56.8
People can freely exchange info and opinions 25.9 30.4 43.7
People are encouraged to be frank and candid 23.5 29.5 47
Top management say what they mean and mean what they say 29.5 31.3 39.2
People say what they mean and mean what they say 30 30.7 39.3
I understand my superior 17.6 29.8 52.6
My superior understands me 20.8 29.5 49.7
My superior thinks that I understand him/her 13.4 27.7 58.9
My superior believes he/she understands me 17.3 25.3 57.4
Bad news can be shared with superior without retaliation 20.2 21.7 58.1
Can disagree with manager 19.9 22.3 57.8
Can tell superior how I think he/she manages work group 25.6 26.2 48.2
Can share frustrations with superior 22.3 26.8 50.9
Superior is frank and candid with me 11.9 25.3 62.8
It is safe to tell my superior my thoughts 22 21.4 56.6
My superior listens to me 15.5 22.9 61.6
Superior is a competent, expert manager 12.5 21.4 66.1
Superior has my best interests in mind 16.4 25.3 58.3
Superior is willing to tolerate arguments/give fair hearing 16.7 22.6 60.7
Superior makes me feel that things I share are important 16.4 23.5 60.1
I can bring new info to my superior, even bad news 13.4 20.2 66.4
Superior has confidence in me 11.3 20.2 68.5
Superior makes it easy to do my best work 10.8 23.5 65.7
I can tel my superior when things are going wrong 12.2 18.8 69
My superior understands my job problems 14.9 25.6 59.5
I feel free to talk to my superior 9.2 23.2 67.6
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
To a little extent
To some extent
To a great extent

Figure 5.12 (for non-management) shows a slightly different communication climate experience compared to the previous figure from management. Although, in general, it seems that non-management respondents experience a positive communication climate, they experience it less positively than management respondents (Compare Figure 5.11 and Figure 5.12).

The majority (69%) of non-management respondents indicated that, to a great and very great extent, they feel free to tell their superiors when things are going wrong at work. This ties in with the notion that, to a great and very great extent, non-management respondents feel free to talk with their superior (67.6%). Note that this score is lower for non-management (67.6%), than for management (79.1%) (Figure 5.11). Although the majority (68.5%) of non-management respondents indicated, to a great and very great extent, that they felt their superior had confidence in them, this was notably lower than the 79.9% of management respondent's score on the same item (Figure 5.11). This seems to show that there is strong superior–subordinate communication and that the subordinate feels supported by his/her superior, although non-management respondents do not feel as strongly about this as do management respondents.

Non-management respondents indicated that, in general, they believe that they receive good quality information from their superiors. Most respondents (64%) indicated that, to a great and very great extent, their job requirements are specified in clear language. However, the majority of respondents indicated that, to no extent and to a little extent (29.5%), and to some extent (21.3%), top management mean what they say and say what they mean. This is similar (just slightly less) to respondent's indicating that, to no extent and to a little extent (30%), and to some extent (30.7%), people in the organisation say what they mean and mean what they say. The non-management respondents in this instance seem to hold the same sentiment as that of the management respondents (Figure 5.11). This could indicate that, throughout the organisation's levels, respondents may not always trust what others in the organisation say to be truthful and dependable.

Furthermore, a large number (63.4%) of non-management respondents indicated that, to a great and very great extent, they feel their colleagues are frank and candid with them. This is on par with the opinions from management respondents (63.1%) (Figure 5.11). This seem to confirm the notion that, for the most part, colleagues are able to trust and have confidence in one another.

5.5. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE MEASUREMENT SCALES

Validity testing refers to the fact that meaningful inferences can be made from measurement instruments, while the test for reliability seeks to ensure that data collected from a particular measurement instrument can be applied in different circumstance, yielding the same results (Babbie, 2013:188; Creswell, 2014:160). Construct validity will be investigated through confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis and the Cronbach alpha coefficient, a measure of internal consistency, will be used to determine reliability. The results will be discussed in the section below.

5.5.1. Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to understand how well the measurement models fit the data. As the name states, confirmatory factor analysis, confirms the existence of already proposed factors and it is classified as a type of structural equation modeling (Hinton, 2004:305; Ullman, 2006:37). Existing measurement instruments were used in this research, namely the Utrecht work engagement scale, the job demand–resource scale, and Dennis' communication climate survey (See previous Chapter for more information). First, a confirmatory factor analysis was done on these existing measurement instruments in order to determine if the measurement models fit the data that were captured within the specific context of short-term insurance companies in South Africa.

The following section will show the results of the confirmatory factor analysis of employee engagement, job resources and communication climate, each divided into the categories of management and non-management.

The model adequacy (fit) was tested using goodness-of-fit measures. The set of measures included were the fit indices CFI, IFI, TLI, RMSEA and CMIN/df. As stated in the previous Chapter, the CFI, IFI and TLI values should be above the acceptable threshold of 0.9 (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006:46), with the RMSEA value below 0.08 (Schreiber *et al.*, 2006:330). CMIN/df, should show a value of less than 3 (Schreiber *et al.*, 2006:330).

i. Confirmatory factor analysis of employee engagement

Confirmatory factor analysis was done in order to determine the construct validity of the 17 items in the employee engagement scale, consisting of three constructs, namely: vigour, dedication and absorption.

Figure 5.13: Employee engagement measurement model for management

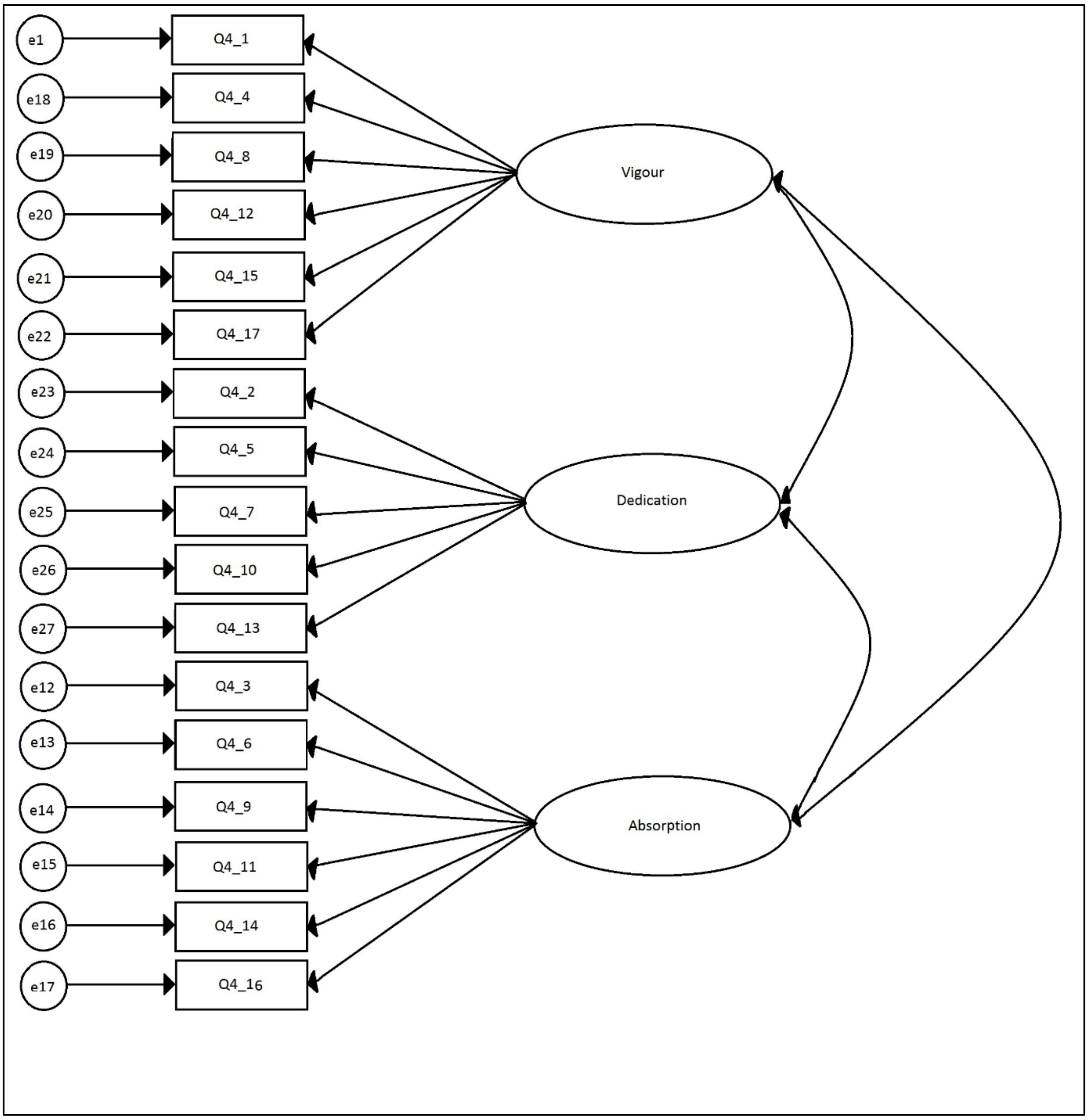


Figure 5.13 indicates the measurement model for employee engagement according to the management group. Table 5.25 refers to the factor loadings for employee engagement management.

Table 5.25: Factor loadings for employee engagement management

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q4 1	Vigour	0.61
Q4 4	Vigour	0.68
Q4 8	Vigour	0.71
Q4 12	Vigour	0.40
Q4 15	Vigour	0.33
Q4 17	Vigour	0.46
Q4 2	Dedication	0.68
Q4 5	Dedication	0.80
Q4 7	Dedication	0.70
Q4 10	Dedication	0.59
Q4 13	Dedication	0.37
Q4 3	Absorption	0.39
Q4 6	Absorption	0.23
Q4 9	Absorption	0.40
Q4 11	Absorption	0.66
Q4 14	Absorption	0.43
Q4 16	Absorption	0.26

The results show an unacceptable fit for the measurement model. The fit shows a value of 0.789 for TLI and 0.820 for CFI. This is below the threshold of 0.9. RMSEA shows 0.132 which indicates an unacceptable fit. Furthermore, the CMIN/df value is 4.219 which is above the acceptable value of 3.

Figure 5.14: Employee engagement measurement model for non-management

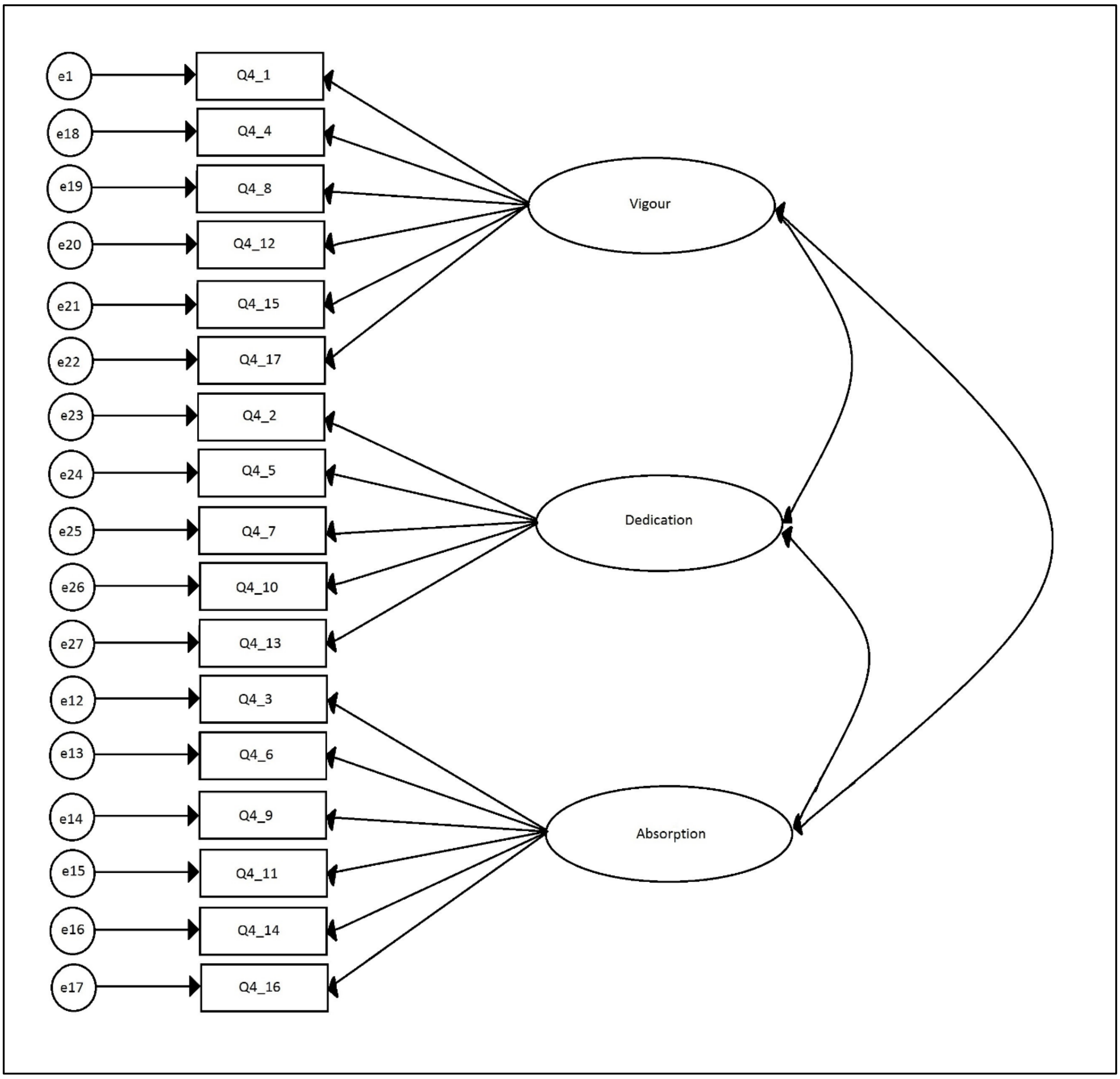


Figure 5.14 indicates the measurement model for employee engagement according to the non-management group. Table 5.26 refers to factor leadings for employee engagement non-management.

Table 5.26: Factor loadings for employee engagement non-management

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q4 1	Vigour	0.55
Q4 4	Vigour	0.65
Q4 8	Vigour	0.72
Q4 12	Vigour	0.45
Q4 15	Vigour	0.40
Q4 17	Vigour	0.32
Q4 2	Dedication	0.68
Q4 5	Dedication	0.80
Q4 7	Dedication	0.78
Q4 10	Dedication	0.65
Q4 13	Dedication	0.40
Q4 3	Absorption	0.48
Q4 6	Absorption	0.35
Q4 9	Absorption	0.58
Q4 11	Absorption	0.66
Q4 14	Absorption	0.46
Q4 16	Absorption	0.31

The results show an unacceptable fit for the measurement model for non-management. Values of 0.897 for TLI and 0.912 for CFI were found. This appears to be acceptable given the threshold of 0.9. However, there is a RMSEA of 0.094, which is above the acceptable threshold of 0.08. Furthermore, the CMIN/df value is 5.408 which is above the acceptable value of 3.

ii. Confirmatory factor analysis of job resources

Confirmatory factor analysis was done in order to determine the construct validity of the nine items in the job resources scale, consisting of autonomy, performance feedback, and opportunities for learning and development.

Figure 5.15: Job resource measurement model for management

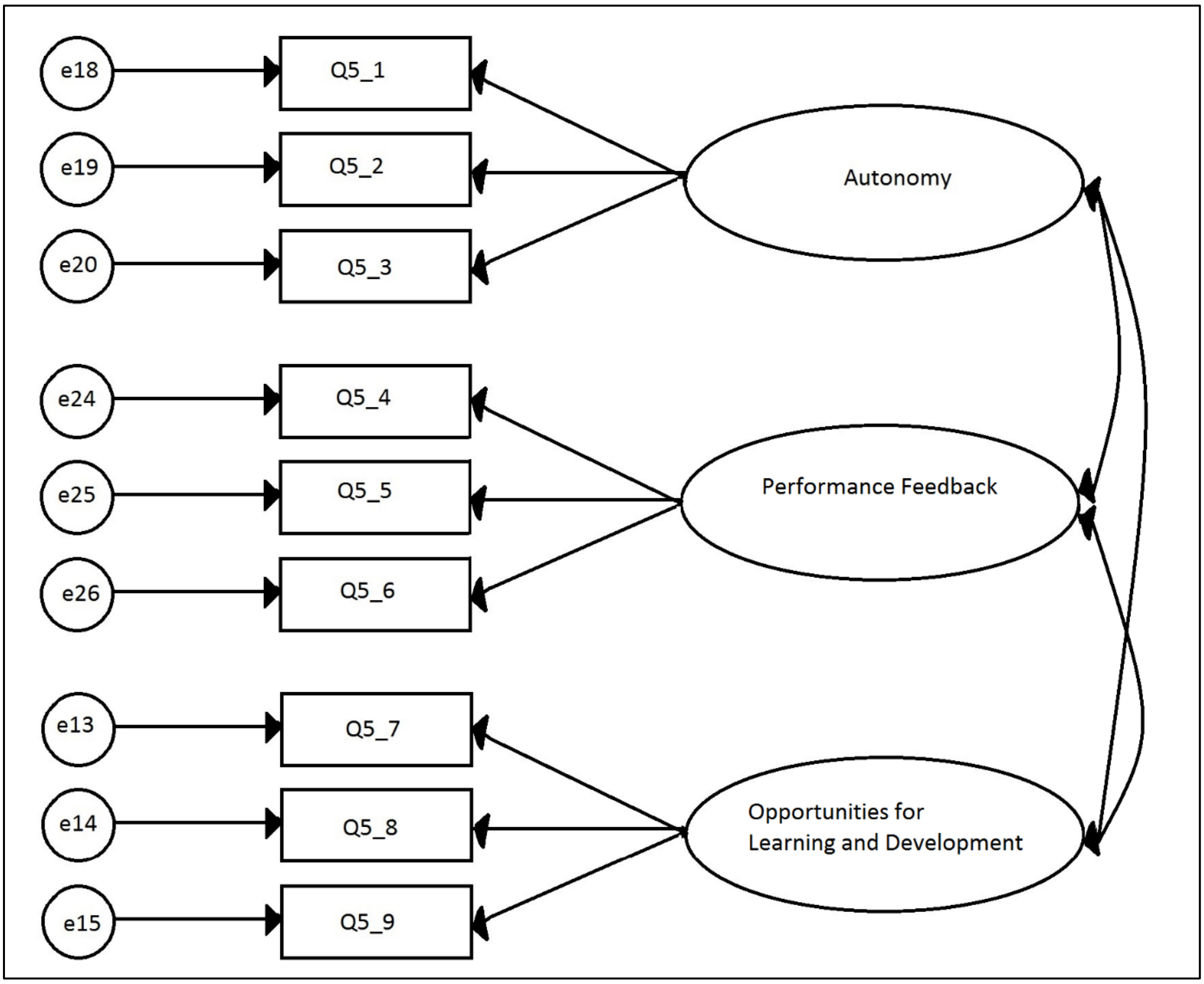


Figure 5.15 indicates the measurement model for job resources according to management. Table 5.27 refers to factor loadings for to job resources according to management.

Table 5.27: Factor loadings for job resource management

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q5 1	Autonomy	0.55
Q5 2	Autonomy	0.73
Q5 3	Autonomy	0.52
Q5 4	Performance feedback	0.76
Q5 5	Performance feedback	0.81
Q5 6	Performance feedback	0.73
Q5 7	Opportunities for learning and development	0.87
Q5 8	Opportunities for learning and development	0.83
Q5 9	Opportunities for learning and development	0.70

The results show an unacceptable fit for the measurement model for management and the constructs of autonomy, feedback, and opportunities for learning and development. Values of 0.944 for TLI and 0.963 CFI were found. This is above the threshold of 0.9 which as acceptable. However, a RMSEA of 0.105 indicates an unacceptable fit. Furthermore, the CMIN/df value is 3.037 which is slightly above the acceptable value of 3.

Figure 5.16: Job resource measurement model for non-management

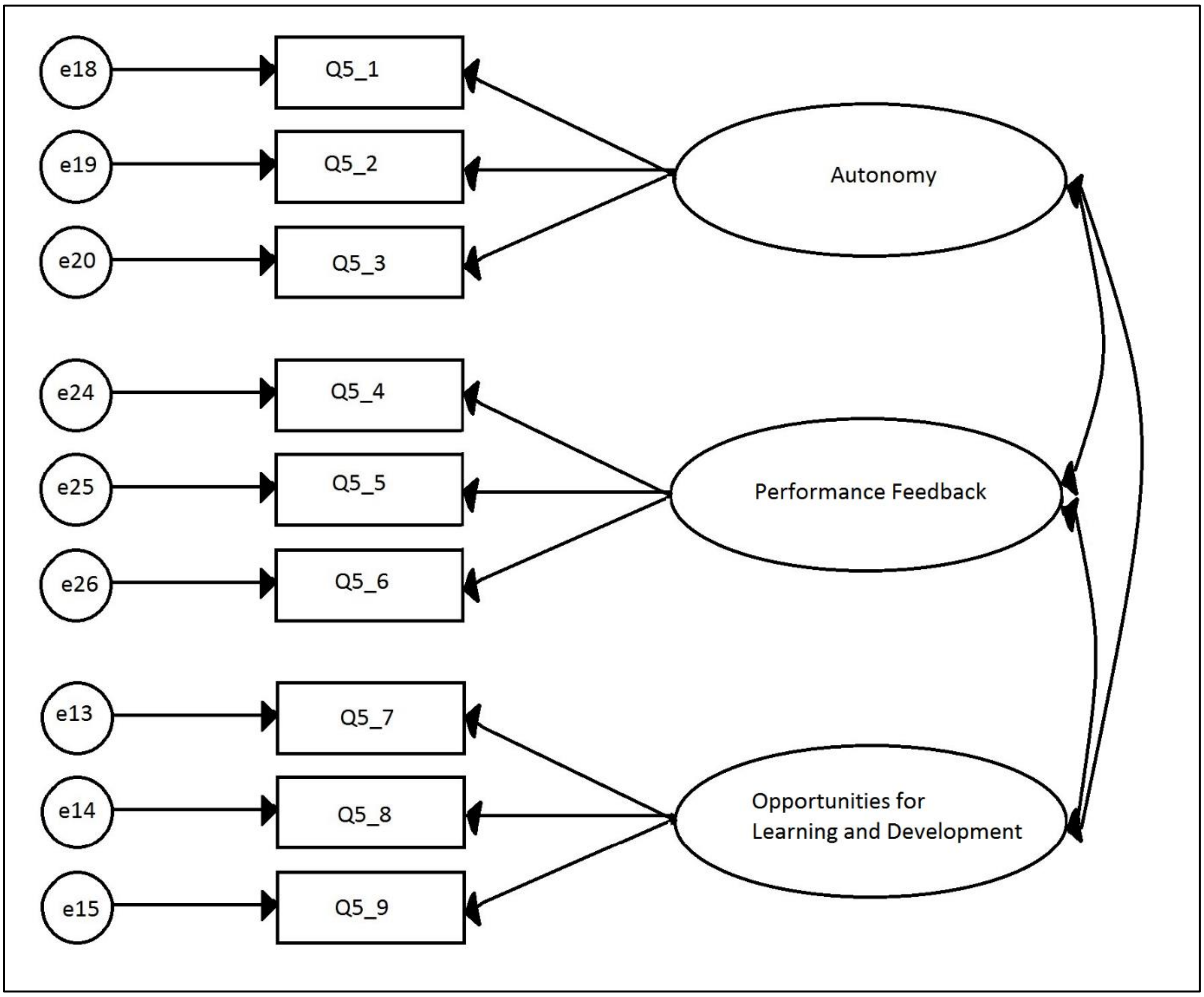


Figure 5.16 indicates the measurement model for job resources according to non-management. Table 5.28 refers to factor loadings for job resources according to non-management.

Table 5.28: Factor loadings for job resource non-management

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q5 1	Autonomy	0.52
Q5 2	Autonomy	0.58
Q5 3	Autonomy	0.72
Q5 4	Performance feedback	0.63
Q5 5	Performance feedback	0.81
Q5 6	Performance feedback	0.74
Q5 7	Opportunities for learning and development	0.82
Q5 8	Opportunities for learning and development	0.83
Q5 9	Opportunities for learning and development	0.71

The results shows an acceptable fit for the measurement model for non-management. Values of 0.969 for TLI and 0.979 for CFI were found. This is above the threshold of 0.9. The RMSEA of 0.075 indicates an acceptable fit. Furthermore, the CMIN/df value is 2.798 which is above the acceptable value of 3.

iii. Confirmatory factor analysis of communication climate

Confirmatory factor analysis was done in order to determine the construct validity of the 44 items in the employee engagement management scale, and the 40 items in the employee engagement non-management scale, consisting of the constructs of superior–subordinate communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, superior openness/candour, and reliability of information.

Figure 5.17: Communication climate measurement model for management

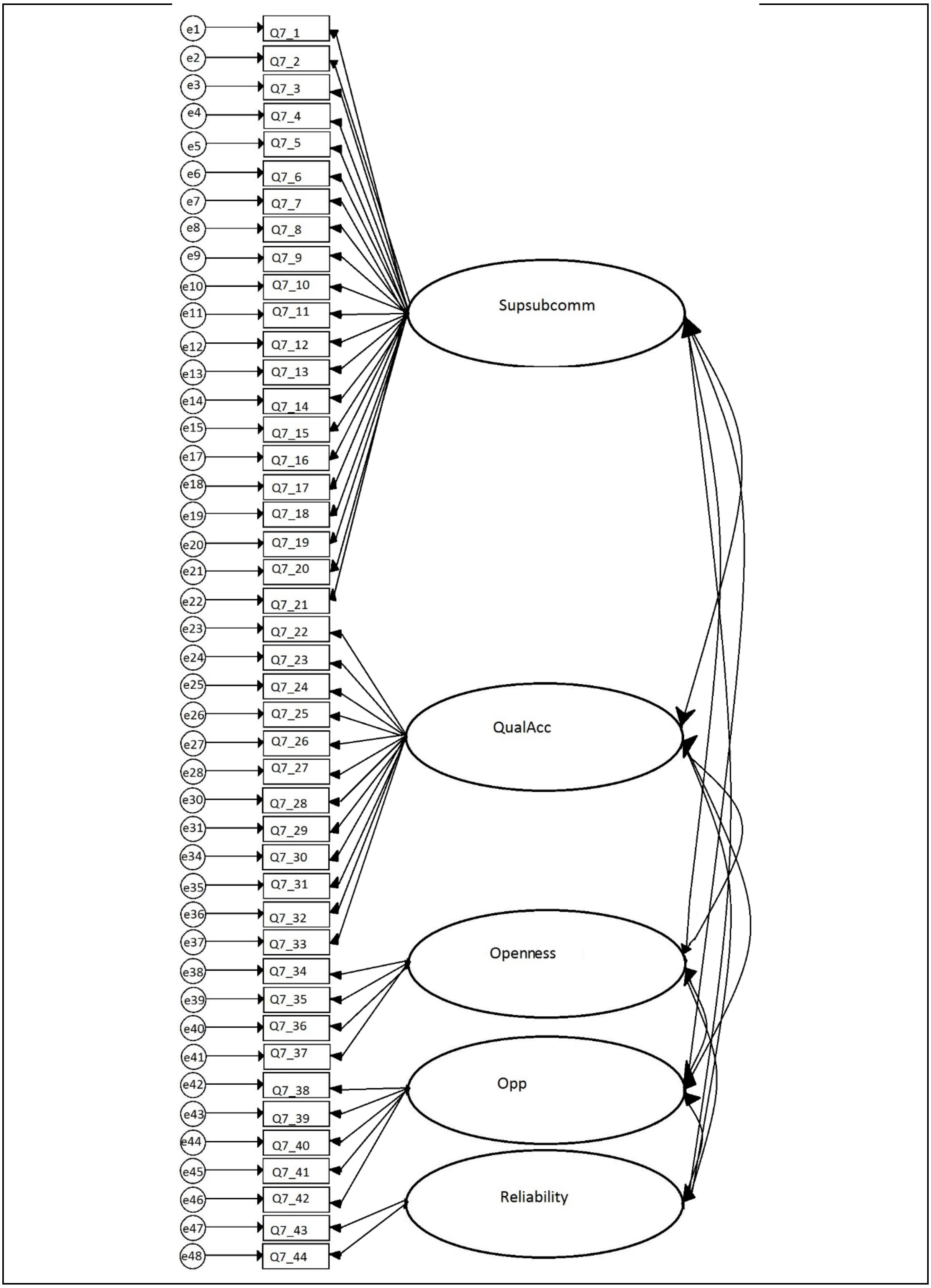


Figure 5.17 indicates the measurement model for communication climate according to management. Table 5.29 refers to the factor loadings for communication climate according to management.

Table 5.29: Factor loadings for communication climate management

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q7 1	Superior–subordinate communication	0.34
Q7 2	Superior–subordinate communication	0.69
Q7 3	Superior–subordinate communication	0.74
Q7 4	Superior–subordinate communication	0.69
Q8 5	Superior–subordinate communication	0.63
Q7 6	Superior–subordinate communication	0.67
Q7 7	Superior–subordinate communication	0.45
Q7 8	Superior–subordinate communication	0.73
Q7 9	Superior–subordinate communication	0.83
Q7 10	Superior–subordinate communication	0.72
Q7 11	Superior–subordinate communication	0.79
Q7 12	Superior–subordinate communication	0.83
Q7 13	Superior–subordinate communication	0.71
Q7 14	Superior–subordinate communication	0.73
Q7 15	Superior–subordinate communication	0.75
Q7 16	Superior–subordinate communication	0.77
Q7 17	Superior–subordinate communication	0.74
Q7 18	Superior–subordinate communication	0.74
Q7 19	Superior–subordinate communication	0.70
Q7 20	Superior–subordinate communication	0.84
Q7 21	Superior–subordinate communication	0.72
Q7 22	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.66
Q7 23	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.74
Q7 24	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.71
Q7 25	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.75
Q7 26	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.62
Q7 27	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.68
Q7 28	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.81
Q7 29	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.77
Q7 30	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.69

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q7 31	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.69
Q7 32	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.80
Q7 33	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.62
Q7 34	Superior openness/candour	0.74
Q7 35	Superior openness/candour	0.64
Q7 36	Superior openness/candour	0.71
Q7 37	Superior openness/candour	0.80
Q7 38	Opportunities for upward communication	0.59
Q7 39	Opportunities for upward communication	0.53
Q7 40	Opportunities for upward communication	0.48
Q7 41	Opportunities for upward communication	0.64
Q7 42	Opportunities for upward communication	0.62
Q7 43	Reliability of information	0.74
Q7 44	Reliability of information	0.81

The results show an unacceptable fit for the measurement model. The values are 0.797 for TLI and 0.817 for CFI. This is below the acceptable threshold of 0.9. The RMSEA of 0.099 indicates an unacceptable fit. Although the CMIN/df value is 2.994, which is below the acceptable value of 3, the other values indicated an unacceptable fit, as indicated above.

Figure 5.18: Communication climate measurement model for non-management

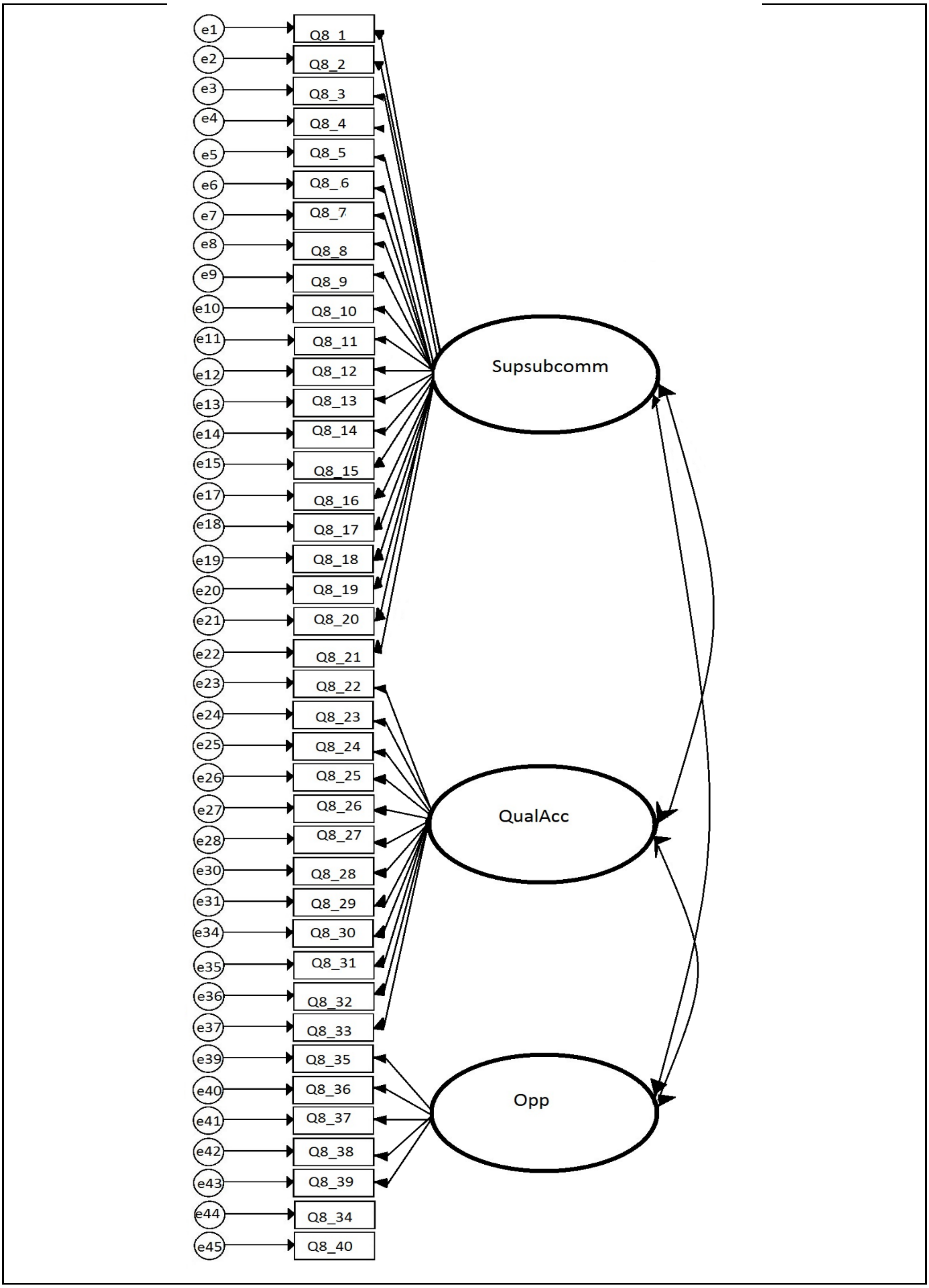


Figure 5.18 indicates the measurement model for communication climate according to non-management. Table 5.30 refers to the factor loadings for communication climate according to non-management.

Table 5.30: Factor loadings for communication climate non-management

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q8 1	Superior–subordinate communication	0.41
Q8 2	Superior–subordinate communication	0.68
Q8 3	Superior–subordinate communication	0.69
Q8 4	Superior–subordinate communication	0.69
Q8 5	Superior–subordinate communication	0.62
Q8 6	Superior–subordinate communication	0.65
Q8 7	Superior–subordinate communication	0.50
Q8 8	Superior–subordinate communication	0.75
Q8 9	Superior–subordinate communication	0.76
Q8 10	Superior–subordinate communication	0.70
Q8 11	Superior–subordinate communication	0.77
Q8 12	Superior–subordinate communication	0.78
Q8 13	Superior–subordinate communication	0.69
Q8 14	Superior–subordinate communication	0.69
Q8 15	Superior–subordinate communication	0.74
Q8 16	Superior–subordinate communication	0.76
Q8 17	Superior–subordinate communication	0.80
Q8 18	Superior–subordinate communication	0.79
Q8 19	Superior–subordinate communication	0.72
Q8 20	Superior–subordinate communication	0.83
Q8 21	Superior–subordinate communication	0.75
Q8 22	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.68
Q8 23	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.72
Q8 24	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.67
Q8 25	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.76
Q8 26	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.63
Q8 27	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.57
Q8 28	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.78
Q8 29	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.68
Q8 30	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.67

Item	Construct	Estimate
Q8 31	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.66
Q8 32	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.72
Q8 33	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	0.51
Q8 35	Opportunities for upward communication	0.70
Q8 36	Opportunities for upward communication	0.63
Q8 37	Opportunities for upward communication	0.73
Q8 38	Opportunities for upward communication	0.74
Q8 39	Opportunities for upward communication	0.66
Q8 34		0.00
Q8 40		0.00

The results show an unacceptable fit for the measurement model. The values of 0.809 for TLI and 0.828 for CFI are below the acceptable threshold of 0.9. The RMSEA of 0.103 shows an unacceptable fit. Furthermore, the CMIN/df value is 4.393 which is above the acceptable value of 3.

Note that items 34, and 40 were removed. As discussed in the previous chapter, the original communication climate instrument included 44 items. Due to some items referring only to the role of a manager, the instrument was divided into management and non-management, with the non-management instrument having four less items. Due to this division, two of the non-management items, namely 34, and 40 were the only two items loading on their respective constructs. Thus, these single items were removed.

5.5.2. Exploratory factor analysis

As the confirmatory factor analysis only indicated acceptable fit in the case of the job resources instrument for non-management, the data were subsequently subjected to exploratory factor analysis to determine the underlying factor structure of the data for each of the three instruments, namely: employee engagement, job resources and communication climate, except for the case of job resources for non-management. The factor extraction method used was Principle Axis Factoring, and the rotation method was promax with Kaiser normalization.

In terms of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, all variables tested above the recommended threshold of 0.5. According to Field (2009:660), the KMO statistic will range from 0 to 1; and.5 is the minimum value for an appropriate factor analysis. The Bartlett's test of sphericity showed a statistical significance ($p<0.000$) for all the constructs. According to Field (2009:660), Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant at the value of $p<0.05$. It was therefore appropriate to conduct exploratory factor analysis for all the instruments and their associated constructs. Table 5.31 provides a summary of the exploratory factor analysis for management:

Table 5.31: Summary of the exploratory factor analysis for management

Construct	Item description	KMO & Bartlett's test	% Variance explained	Factor Loadings				Cronbach Alpha
				1	2	3		
Employee Engagement		0.917	66.728					
		p<0.000						
1	At work, I feel bustling with energy			0.702				0.936
2	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose			0.783				
3	Time flies when I am working				0.305			0.846
4	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous			0.762				
5	I am enthusiastic about my job			0.808				
6	When I am working I forget everything else around me					0.444		0.785
7	My job inspires me			0.860				
8	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work			0.967				
9	I feel happy when I am working intensely				0.421			
10	I am proud of the work that I do			0.493				
11	I am immersed in my work				0.517			.
12	I can continue working for very long periods at a time				0.561			
13	To me, my job is challenging					0.566		
14	I get carried away when I am working					0.991		
15	At my job, I am mentally very resilient				0.632			

16	It is difficult to detach myself from my job					0.517		
17	At my work I always persevere even when things don't go well				0.738			
Construct	**Item description**	**KMO & Bartlett's test**	**% Variance explained**	**Factor Loadings**				**Cronbach Alpha**
				1	**2**			
Job Resources		0.901	77.117					
		p<0.000						
1	I have flexibility in the execution of my job				0.690			0.805
2	I have control over how my work is carried out				1.023			
3	I can participate in decision-making regarding my work				0.416			
4	I receive sufficient information about my work objectives			0.836				0.943
5	My job offers me opportunities to find out how well I do my work			0.886				
6	I receive sufficient information about the results of my work			0.896				
7	In my work, I have the opportunity to develop my strong points			0.862				
8	In my work, I can develop myself sufficiently			0.814				
9	My work offers me the possibility to learn new things			0.828				
Construct	**Item description**	**KMO & Bartlett's test**	**% Variance explained**	**Factor Loadings**				**Cronbach Alpha**
				1	**2**	**3**	**4**	
Communication climate		0.954	74.823					
		p<0.000						
1	My superior make me feel free to talk with him/her			0.907				0.979
2	My superior really understand my job problems			0.780				
3	My superior encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job			0.838				.
4	My superior make it easy for me to do my best work			0.842				
5	My superior expresses his/her confidence with my ability to perform my job			0.934				

6	My superior encourage me to bring new information to his/her attention, even when that new information may be “bad news”			1.039				
7	My superior makes me feel that things I tell him/her are really important			0.871				
8	My superior is willing to tolerate arguments and give a fair hearing to all points of view			0.919				
9	My superior has my best interests in mind when he/she talks to his/her bosses			0.883				
10	My superior a really competent expert manager			0.838				
11	My superior listen to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me			0.753				
12	It is safe to say to my superior what I am really thinking			0.718				
13	My superior is frank and candid with me			0.631				
14	I can “sound off” about job frustrations to my superior			0.685				
15	I can tell my superior about the way (in my opinion) he/she manages our work group			0.442				
16	I am free to tell my superior that I disagree with him/her			0.660				
17	I think I am safe in communicating “bad news” to my superior without fear of any retaliation on his/her part			0.613				
18	I think that my superior believes that he/she really understand me						0.655	0.962
19	I believe that my superior thinks that I understand him/her						0.607	
20	My superior really understands me						0.558	
21	I really understand my superior						0.606	
22	In general, I think that people in this organisation say what				0.690			0.968

	they mean and mean what they say							
23	People in top management say what they mean and mean what they say				0.816			
24	People in this organisation are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other				0.799			
25	People in this organisation can freely exchange information and opinions				0.758			
26	I am kept informed about how well organisational goals or objectives are being met				0.852			
27	My organisation succeeds in rewarding and praising good performance				0.890			
28	Top management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need				0.973			
29	I am receiving information from those sources (for example, from superiors, department meetings, co-workers, newsletters, emails) that I prefer				0.741			
30	I am pleased with top management's efforts to keep employees up-to-date on recent developments that are related to the organisation's welfare – such as success in competition, profitability, future growth plan etc.				0.986			
31	I am notified in advance of changes that affect my job				0.660			
32	I am satisfied with explanations I get from top management about why things are done as they are				0.900			
33	My job requirements are specified in clear language				0.518			
34	I believe my subordinates are really					0.873		0.928

	frank and candid with me							
35	My colleagues (co-workers) are frank and candid with me					0.688		
36	I really understand my subordinates' problems					0.870		
37	I believe that my subordinates think that I really understand their problems					1.047		
38	My opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect my job					0.482		
39	My superior lets me participate in the planning of my own work					0.460		
40	Members of my work group are able to establish our own goals and objectives					0.590		
41	My views have real influence in my organisation				0.572			
42	I expect that recommendations I make will be heard and seriously considered				0.372			
43	I think that information received from my subordinates is really reliable					0.600		
44	I think that information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is really reliable					0.618		

In terms of employee engagement for management, the factor analysis identified three factors, which explained a total of 66.728% of the variance. These factors were identified based on the eigenvalue criterion. According to Field (2009:640), the eigenvalue criterion required that the number of factors identified is the number of factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The number of factors agree with the number of factors (constructs) of the instrument used, however, the items that loaded on each of the factors identified indicated that items across the three constructs grouped together. (The process of renaming the factors, in conjunction with literature, is discussed in Section 5.5.3.) The Cronbach alpha values for the three factors are above the acknowledged threshold of 0.7 (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:668). Therefore, the internal consistency (reliability) is considered satisfactory.

In terms of job resources for management, the factor analysis indicated two factors, which explained a total of 77.12% of the variance, based on the eigenvalue criterion of greater than one (Field, 2009:640). The number of factors do not agree with the number of factors (constructs) of the instrument used. The initial instrument indicated three dimensions. (The process of renaming the factors, in conjunction with literature, is discussed in Section 5.5.3.) The Cronbach alpha values for the two factors are above the acknowledged threshold of 0.7 (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:668). The internal consistency (reliability) is thus considered satisfactory.

When focusing on communication climate for management, four factors were identified by the factor analysis, which explained a total of 74.82% of the variance. The number of factors do not agree with the number of factors (constructs) of the instrument used. The initial instrument indicated five dimensions. (The process of renaming the factors, in conjunction with literature, is discussed in Section 5.5.3.) The Cronbach alpha values for the four factors are above the acknowledged threshold of 0.7 (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:668). Therefore, the internal consistency (reliability) is considered satisfactory.

In Table 5.32, a summary of the factor analysis for non-management is provided.

Table 5.32: Summary of the factor analysis for non-management

Construct	Item description	KMO & Bartlett's test	% Variance explained	Factor Loadings			Cronbach Alpha
				1	2		
Employee Engagement		0.956	61.792				
		p<0.000					
1	At work, I feel bustling with energy			0.767			0.942
2	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose			0.954			
3	Time flies when I am working			0.650			
4	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous			0.861			
5	I am enthusiastic about my job			0.877			
6	When I am working I forget everything else around me				0.398		0.864
7	My job inspires me			0.740			

8	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work			0.670			
9	I feel happy when I am working intensely			0.529			
10	I am proud of the work that I do			0.639			
11	I am immersed in my work				0.542		
12	I can continue working for very long periods at a time				0.406		
13	To me, my job is challenging				0.491		
14	I get carried away when I am working				0.784		
15	At my job, I am mentally very resilient				0.517		
16	It is difficult to detach myself from my job				0.638		
17	At my work I always persevere even when things don't go well				0.689		
Construct	**Item description**	**KMO & Bartlett's test**	**% Variance explained**	**Factor Loadings** **1**			**Cronbach Alpha**
Job Resources		9.900	62.741				
		p<0.000					
1	I have flexibility in the execution of my job			0.602			0.925
2	I have control over how my work is carried out			0.641			
3	I can participate in decision-making regarding my work			0.761			
4	I receive sufficient information about my work objectives			0.766			
5	My job offers me opportunities to find out how well I do my work			0.814			
6	I receive sufficient information about the results of my work			0.765			
7	In my work, I have the opportunity to develop my strong points			0.872			
8	In my work, I can develop myself sufficiently			0.846			
9	My work offers me the possibility to learn new things			0.768			

Construct	Item description	KMO & Bartlett's test	% Variance explained	Factor Loadings 1	2	3	Cronbach Alpha
Communication climate		0.975	72.898				
		p<0.000					
1	My superior make me feel free to talk with him/her					0.463	0.945
2	My superior really understand my job problems					0.549	
3	My superior encourages me to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job					0.581	
4	My superior make it easy for me to do my best work					0.646	
5	My superior expresses his/her confidence with my ability to perform my job					0.583	
6	My superior encourage me to bring new information to his/her attention, even when that new information may be “bad news”					0.491	
7	My superior makes me feel that things I tell him/her are really important			0.488			0.979
8	My superior is willing to tolerate arguments and give a fair hearing to all points of view			0.540			
9	My superior has my best interests in mind when he/she talks to his/her bosses			0.521			
10	My superior a really competent expert manager			0.569			
11	My superior listen to me when I tell him/her about things that are bothering me			0.661			
12	It is safe to say to my superior what I am really thinking			0.898			
13	My superior is frank and candid with me			0.676			
14	I can “sound off” about job frustrations to my superior			0.935			
15	I can tell my superior about the way (in my opinion) he/she manages our work group			0.861			

16	I am free to tell my superior that I disagree with him/her			0.916			
17	I think I am safe in communicating "bad news" to my superior without fear of any retaliation on his/her part			0.915			
18	I think that my superior believes that he/she really understand me			0.830			
19	I believe that my superior thinks that I understand him/her			0.846			
20	My superior really understands me			0.865			
21	I really understand my superior			0.763			
22	In general, I think that people in this organisation say what they mean and mean what they say				0.771		0.967
23	People in top management say what they mean and mean what they say				0.885		
24	People in this organisation are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other				0.748		
25	People in this organisation can freely exchange information and opinions				0.878		
26	I am kept informed about how well organisational goals or objectives are being met				0.768		
27	My organisation succeeds in rewarding and praising good performance				0.734		
28	Top management provides me with the kinds of information I really want and need				0.937		
29	I am receiving information from those sources (for example, from superiors, department meetings, co-workers, newsletters, emails) that I prefer				0.816		

30	I am pleased with top management's efforts to keep employees up-to-date on recent developments that are related to the organisation's welfare – such as success in competition, profitability, future growth plan etc.				0.887		
31	I am notified in advance of changes that affect my job				0.695		
32	I am satisfied with explanations I get from top management about why things are done as they are				0.885		
33	My job requirements are specified in clear language				0.518		
35	My opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect my job				0.559		
36	My superior lets me participate in the planning of my own work				0.344		
37	Members of my work group are able to establish our own goals and objectives				0.462		
38	My views have real influence in my organisation				0.684		
39	I expect that recommendations I make will be heard and seriously considered				0.694		

In terms of employee engagement for non-management, the factor analysis identified only two factors, which explained a total of 61.79% of the variance. This is different from the three factors identified in literature. The number of factors thus do not agree with the number of factors (constructs) of the instrument used; and the items that loaded on each of the factors identified indicated that items across the three constructs grouped together. (The process of renaming the factors, in conjunction with literature, is discussed in Section 5.5.3.) The Cronbach alpha values for the two factors are above the acknowledged threshold of 0.70 (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:668). Thus the internal consistency (reliability) was considered satisfactory.

In terms of job resources for non-management, the factor analysis indicated one factor, which explained a total of 62.741% of the variants. This is different from the three factors identified in literature. The number of factors thus do not agree with the number of factors (constructs) of the instrument used; and the items that loaded on each of the factors identified, indicated that items across the three constructs grouped together. (The process of renaming the factor, in conjunction with literature, is discussed in Section 5.5.3.) The Cronbach alpha values for the one factor are above the acknowledged threshold of 0.70 (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:668). Thus the internal consistency (reliability) was considered satisfactory. Although the confirmatory factor analyses indicated a fit for job resources for non-management, it was observed that there was multicollinearity present between the three constructs. Lin (2007) stated that "if the absolute value of Pearson correlation is close to 0.8 (such as 0.7), collinearity is likely to exist". Therefore, it was decided to conduct an exploratory factor analyses on job resources for non-management.

The factor analysis of communication climate for non-management indicted three factors, which explained a total of 72. 9% of the variances. This is different from the four factors identified in literature. The number of factors thus do not agree with the number of factors (constructs) of the instrument used, and the items that loaded on each of the factors identified, indicated that items across the four constructs grouped together. (The process of renaming the factor, in conjunction with literature, is discussed in Section 5.5.3.) The Cronbach alpha values for the four factors are above the acknowledged threshold of 0.70 (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:668). Therefore, the internal consistency (reliability) was considered satisfactory.

5.5.3. Renaming of the factors and new hypotheses

As the exploratory factor analysis indicated a different factor structure for the current context in which the measurement instrument was used (namely in short-term insurance organisations in the South African financial sector). It was decided to study the items that loaded onto each factor and to rename the factors given; taking into account the current literature on the constructs. Due to the renaming of the factors, a set of new hypotheses had to be developed. These hypotheses were grouped into management and non-management categories.

i. Renaming of the factors

Table 5.33 and Table 5.34 indicate these new naming conventions, compared with the original constructs.

Table 5.33: Renaming of management factors

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Employee engagement original factors	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption		
Employee engagement new naming conventions	Taking initiative with persistence (EE1)	Happily energetic with persistent focus (EE2)	Attention (EE3)		
Job resources original factors	Autonomy	Feedback	Opportunities for learning and development		
Job resources new naming conventions	Open knowledge sharing to empower (JR1)	Candid dialogue to empower (JR2)			
Communication climate original factors	Superior–subordinate communication	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	Opportunities for upward communication	Superior openness/candour	Reliability of information
Communication climate new naming conventions	Superior–subordinate communication (CC1)	Two-way dialogue (CC2)	Superior openness, candour and trust (CC3)	Empathetic listening to encourage participation (CC4)	

Table 5.34: Renaming of non-management factors

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Employee engagement original factors	Vigour	Dedication	Absorption		
Employee engagement new naming conventions	Taking initiative with persistent focus (EE1)	Energetically focused (EE2)			
Job resources original factors	Autonomy	Feedback	Opportunities for learning and development		

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
Job resources new naming conventions	Open knowledge sharing to empower (JobRes)				
Communication climate original factors	Superior–subordinate communication	Quality and accuracy of downward communication	Opportunities for upward communication	Superior openness/candour	Reliability of information
Communication climate new naming conventions	Superior–subordinate communication (Supsubcomm)	Quality and accuracy of downward communication (QualAcc)	Empathetic listening to encourage participation (EmpList)		

ii. New hypotheses

The original hypotheses were constructed based on the conceptual model created from existing literature on the concepts of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. However, due to the results from the exploratory factor analysis, new factors were named from which a new set of hypotheses were formulated based on the categories of management and non-management, and in alignment with the research objectives. Table 5.35 and Table 5.36 indicate the newly formulated hypotheses.

Table 5.35: Objectives and hypotheses: management

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Primary objective: To determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers, regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Secondary Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.</td><td>H1: Superior–subordinate communication is related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H2: Two-way dialogue is related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H_o: Two-way dialogue is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H3: Superior openness, candour and trust is related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H_o: Superior openness, candour and trust is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H4: Empathetic listening to encourage participation is related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H_o: Empathetic listening to encourage participation is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower.

H5: Superior–subordinate communication is related to candid dialogue to empower.

H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to candid dialogue to empower.

H6: Two-way dialogue is related to candid dialogue to empower.

H_o: Two-way dialogue is not related to candid dialogue to empower.

H7: Superior openness, candour and trust is related to candid dialogue to empower.

H_o: Superior openness, candour and trust is not related to candid dialogue to empower.

H8: Empathetic listening to encourage participation is related to candid dialogue to empower.

H_o: Empathetic listening to encourage participation is not related to candid dialogue to empower.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Secondary Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on</td><td>H9: Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to taking initiative with persistence.

H_o: Open knowledge sharing to empower is not related to taking initiative with persistence.

H10: Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to happily energetic with persistent focus.</td></tr>
</table>

employee engagement.	H_o: Open knowledge sharing to empower is not related to happily energetic with persistent focus. H11: Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to attention. H_o: Open knowledge sharing to empower is not related to attention. H12: Candid dialogue to empower is related to taking initiative with persistence. H_o: Candid dialogue to empower is not related to taking initiative with persistence. H13: Candid dialogue to empower is related to happily energetic with persistent focus. H_o: Candid dialogue to empower is not related to happily energetic with persistent focus. H14: Candid dialogue to empower is related to attention. H_o: Candid dialogue to empower is not related to attention.

Table 5.36: Objectives and hypotheses: non-management

Primary objective: To determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers, regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement.	
Secondary Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.	H15: Superior–subordinate communication is related to open knowledge sharing to empower. H_o: Superior–subordinate communication is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower. H16: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to open knowledge sharing to empower. H_o: Quality and accuracy of downward communication is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower. H17: Empathetic listening to encourage participation is related to open knowledge sharing to empower. H_o: Empathetic listening to encourage participation is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower.
Secondary Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.	H18: Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to taking initiative with persistent focus. H_o: Open knowledge sharing to empower is not related to taking initiative with persistent focus. H19: Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to energetically focused. H_o: Open knowledge sharing to empower is not related to energetically focused.

iii. Updated conceptual models

Figure 5.19 provides a visual depiction of the conceptual model representing the primary research objective, which is to determine if there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers, regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement. This is followed by Figure 5.20 and Figure 5.21, depicting the updated conceptual models based on the newly formulated research hypotheses.

Figure 5.19: Conceptual model: primary research objective for management and non-management – unchanged

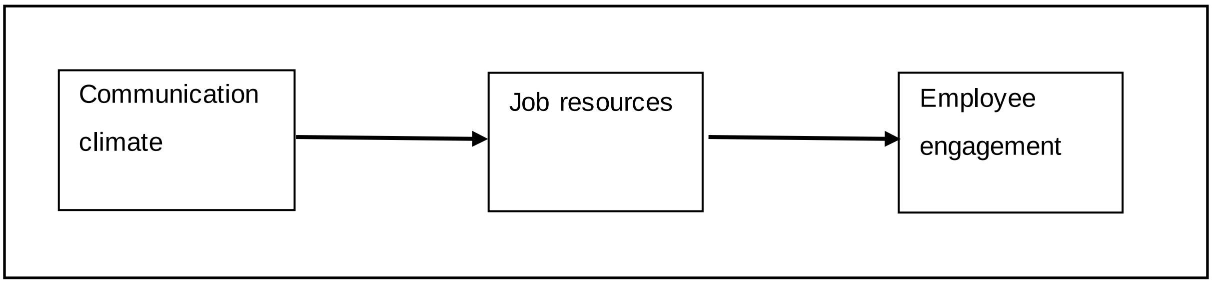


Figure 5.20: Updated conceptual model: secondary research objectives – management

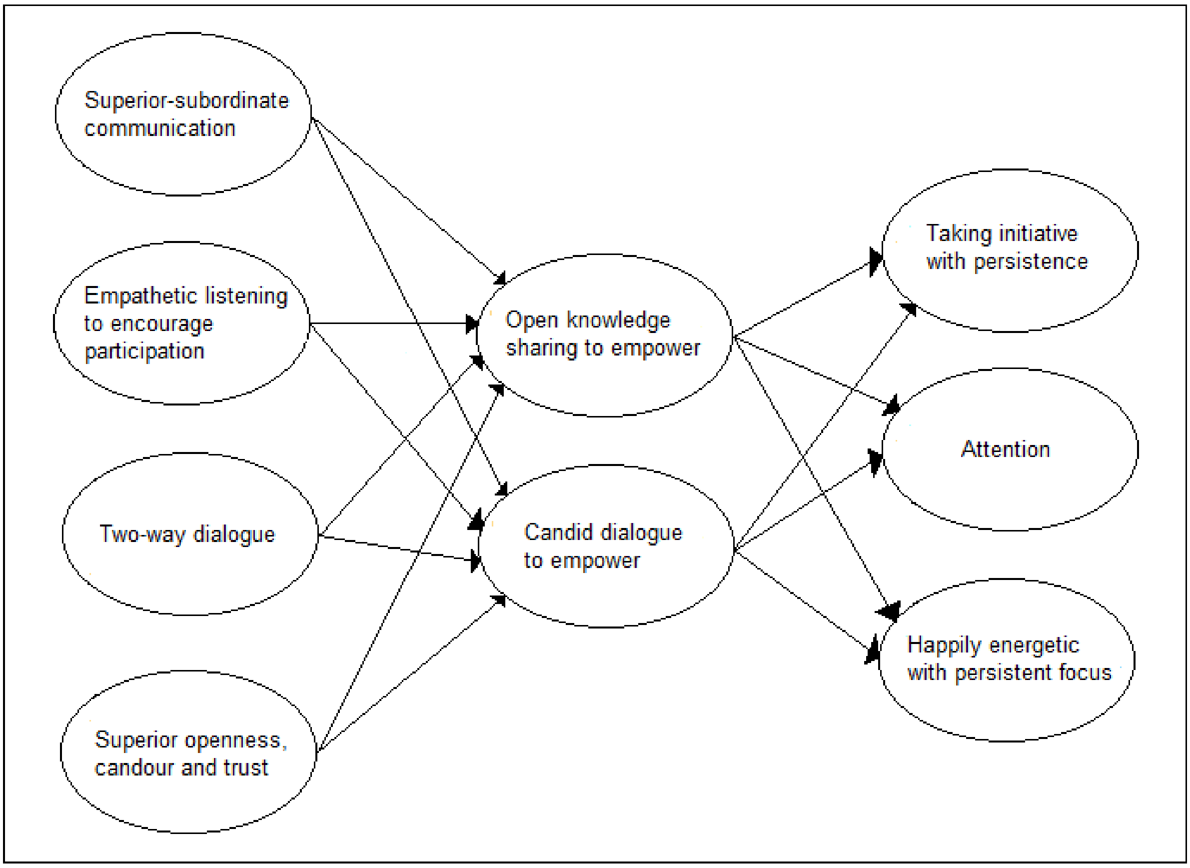
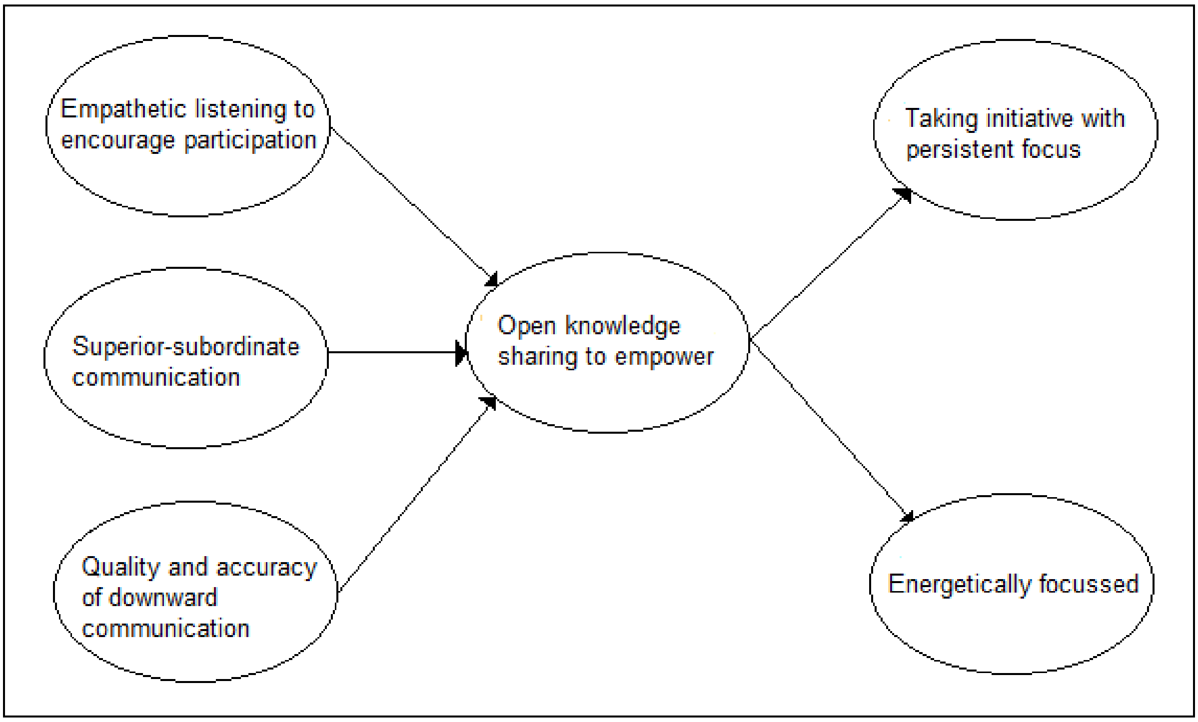


Figure 5.21: Updated conceptual model: secondary research objectives – non-management



5.6. CONSTRUCT DESCRIPTIVES

This section reports on the construct descriptive statistics based on the three measurement instruments. The descriptive statistics are divided between management (Table 5.37) and non-management (Table 5.38). Note that three respondents did not answer question 8; these answers were replaced with the mean. According to Kline (2016:83), missing values of less than 5% of the total data set is of little concern, and one method to solve the problem is to “replace a missing score with the overall sample mean”.

Table 5.37: Construct descriptive statistics: management

Construct	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min	Max
EE1	5.9969	6.1429	.89313	-1.603	4.975	1	7
EE2	6.1153	6.1667	.78611	-1.965	8.246	1.17	7
EE3	5.5243	5.75	1.13884	-1.248	2.19	1	7
JR1	4.0180	4	.86374	-.865	.342	1	5
JR2	3.9108	4	.96637	-.803	-.107	1	5
CC1	3.9968	4.1176	.92351	-.946	.269	1.06	5
CC2	3.6255	3.7143	.94383	-.372	-.427	1	5
CC3	3.9253	4	.69521	-.239	-.484	1.89	5
CC4	3.7864	4	1.05931	-.673	-.209	1	5

The descriptives indicate that the construct, happily energetic with persistent focus (EE2), has the highest mean value of the three employee engagement constructs. In terms of job resources, the construct, open knowledge sharing to empower (JR1), has the highest mean value. The construct with the highest mean value for communication climate is superior–subordinate communication (CC1). The skewness and kurtosis values for job resources and communication climate constructs indicate that the assumption of normality can be assumed. In the case of employee engagement, all kurtosis values were above the threshold of 2. However, note should be taken that the SEM employed is robust against deviations from normality (Haas & Scheiff, 1990; Knez & Ready, 1997).

Table 5.38: Construct descriptive statistics: non-management

Construct	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Min	Max
EE1	5.5409	5.8889	1.1481	-1.101	1.241	1	7
EE2	5.2833	5.5	1.06644	-.829	.356	2	7
JobRes	3.5733	3.6667	0.95249	-.301	-.836	1.22	5
Supsubcomm	3.6114	3.7333	1.02569	-.493	-.450	1	5
QualAcc	3.4049	3.5	0.91068	-.227	-.374	1	5
EmpList	3.8882	4	0.95802	-.666	-.261	1	5

The descriptives indicate that the construct, taking initiative with persistent focus (EE1), has the highest mean value of the three employee engagement constructs. The construct with the highest mean value for communication climate is empathetic listing to encourage participation (EmpList). The skewness and kurtosis values for employee engagement, job resources and communication climate concepts indicate that the assumption of normality can be made.

5.7. FACTOR CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Inferential statistics were done to determine the statistical significance and strength of the relationship between the different variables for management (Table 5.39) and non-management (Table 5.40). Pearson correlation coefficients were used to evaluate the strength and statistical significance of the relationships between the different combinations of the variables and the results are summarised in the section below.

Table 5.39: Correlation: management

		EE1	EE2	EE3	JR1	JR2	CC1	CC2	CC3	CC4
EE1	Pearson Correlation	1	0.760**	0.515**	0.446**	0.624**	0.531**	0.613**	.503**	0.463**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
EE2	Pearson Correlation	0.760**	1	0.623**	0.372**	0.467**	0.494**	0.543**	0.470**	0.423**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
EE3	Pearson Correlation	0.515**	0.623**	1	0.156*	0.369**	0.292**	0.406**	0.302**	0.271**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.034	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
JR1	Pearson Correlation	0.446**	0.372**	0.156*	1	0.598**	0.488**	0.478**	0.510**	0.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.034		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
JR2	Pearson Correlation	0.624**	0.467**	0.369**	0.598**	1	0.726**	0.714**	0.645**	0.626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
CC1	Pearson Correlation	0.531**	0.494**	0.292**	0.488**	0.726**	1	0.730**	0.674**	0.864**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
CC2	Pearson Correlation	0.613**	0.543**	0.406**	0.478**	0.714**	0.730**	1	0.738**	0.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
CC3	Pearson Correlation	0.503**	0.470**	0.302**	0.510**	0.645**	0.674**	0.738**	1	0.670**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
CC4	Pearson Correlation	0.463**	0.423**	0.271**	0.419**	0.626**	0.864**	0.702**	0.670**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

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

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

The results indicated that statistical significant relationships exist at the 1% level of significance between all combinations of the variables. Table 5.39 shows that EE1 has statistically significant strong positive relationships with EE2 and EE3, as well as JR2, CC1, CC2 and CC3 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.503 and 0.760). EE1 has statistically significant moderate positive relationships with JR1 and CC4 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.446 and 0.463). EE2 has statistically significant strong positive relationships with EE3 and CC2 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.543 and 0.623). EE2 has statistically significant moderate positive relationships with JR1, JR2, CC1, CC3 and CC4 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.372 and 0.494). EE3 has statistically significant moderate positive relationships with JR2, CC2 and CC3 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.302 and 0.406). EE3 has statistically significant weak positive relationships with JR1, CC1 and CC4 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.156 and 0.292). JR1 has statistically significant strong positive relationships with JR2 and CC3 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.510 and 0.598). JR1 has statistically significant moderate positive relationships with CC1, CC2 and CC4 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.419 and 0.488). JR2 has statistically significant strong positive relationships with CC1, CC2, CC3 and CC4 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.626 and 0.726). CC1 has statistically significant strong positive relationships with CC2, CC3 and CC4 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.674 and 0.864). CC2 has statistically significant strong positive relationships with CC3 and CC4 (correlation coefficient varied between 0.402 and 0.738). CC3 has a statistically significant strong positive relationship with CC4 (correlation coefficient is 0.670).

Table 5.40: Correlation: non-management

		EE1	EE2	JobRes	Subsup	QualAccComm	EmpListen
EE1	Pearson Correlation	1	0.803**	0.626**	0.406**	0.520**	0.434**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
EE2	Pearson Correlation	0.803**	1	0.505**	0.284**	0.383**	0.290**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
JobRes	Pearson Correlation	0.626**	0.505**	1	0.642**	0.700**	0.663**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
Supsubcomm	Pearson Correlation	0.406**	0.284**	0.642**	1	0.754**	0.891**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
QualAcc	Pearson Correlation	0.520**	0.383**	0.700**	0.754**	1	0.718**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
EmpList	Pearson Correlation	0.434**	0.290**	0.663**	0.891**	0.718**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

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

Table 5.40 shows that EE1 has statistically significant strong positive relationships with EE2, JobRes and QualAcc (correlation coefficient varied between 0.520 and 0.803). EE1 has statistically significant moderate positive relationships with Supsubcomm and EmpList (correlation coefficient varied between 0.406 and 0.434). EE2 has a statically significant strong positive relationship with JobRes (correlation coefficient of 0.505). EE2 has a statistically significant moderate positive relationship with QualAcc (correlation coefficient of 0.383). EE2 has statically significant weak positive relationships with Supsubcomm and EmpList (correlation coefficient varied between 0.284 and 0.290). JobRes has statistically significant strong positive relationships with Supsubcomm, QualAcc and EmpList (correlation coefficient varied between 0.642 and 0.700). Supsubcomm has statistically significant strong positive relationships with QualAcc and EmpList (correlation coefficient varied between 0.754 and 0.891). QualAcc has a statistically significant strong positive relationship with EmpList (correlation coefficient of 0.718).

5.8. STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING

The following section shows the results of the SEM conducted on the conceptual models for management and non-management relating to the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement.

The model adequacy (fit) was tested using goodness-of-fit measures. The set of measures included were the fit indices CFI, IFI, TLI, RMSEA and CMIN/df. As previously stated, both the CFI, IFI and TLI values should be above the acceptable threshold of 0.90 (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2006:46), with the RMSEA value below 0.08 (Schreiber *et al.*, 2006:330). The other measure is CMIN/df, which should show a value of less than 3 (Schreiber *et al.*, 2006:330).

5.8.1. Management model fit

Figure 5.22 shows the conceptual model fitted to the data for management. The factors used are the three factors for employee engagement (EE1, EE2, and EE3), the two factors for job resources (JR1 and JR2), as well as the four communication climate factors (CC1, CC2, CC3, and CC4).

Figure 5.22: Structural model for management

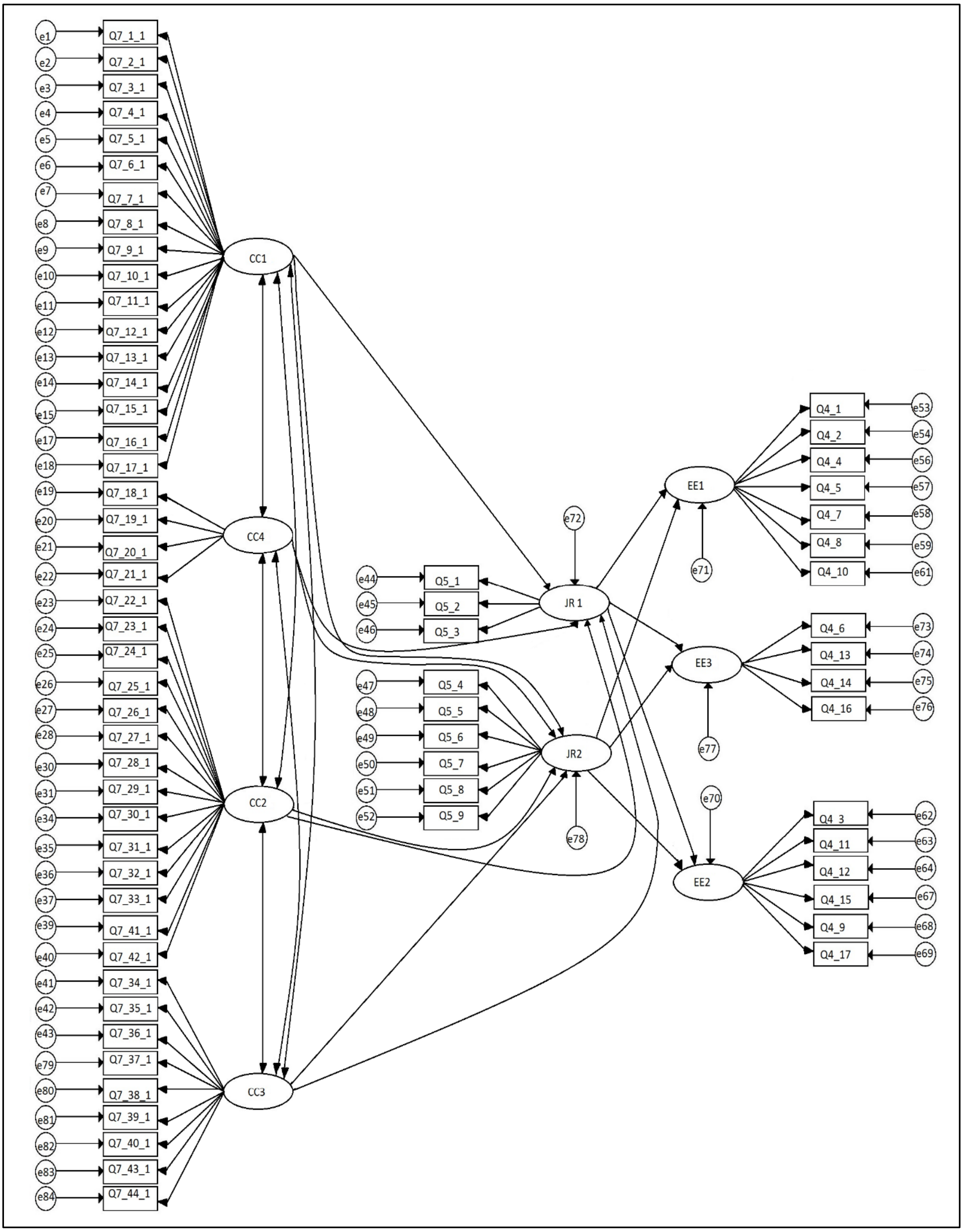


Table 5.41: Goodness of fit indices

Model	TLI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/df
Goodness of fit indices	0.781	0.790	0.789	0.84	2.296
Indicate acceptable fit	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≤0.08	<3

The fit indices show a value of 0.781 for TLI, a value of 0.790 for IFI, and a value of 0.789 for CFI. These indices values are below the acceptable threshold of 0.90. The model also shows a RMSEA value of 0.084, which is slightly above the acceptable threshold of 0.08. These values indicate an unacceptable structural model fit for management. An additional measure for the goodness-of-fit, is the CMIN/df value of 2.296 which is below the acceptable value of less than 3 (Table 5.41).

Although the indices indicated unacceptable fit, the unstandardised and standardised regression coefficients associated with the structural paths of the model are presented for model improvement and comparative purposes. Table 5.42 shows the unstandardised regression weights for the management measurement model. Standardised regression weights assist in comparing the coefficients as they represent the regression weight in the standard deviation units.

Table 5.42: Unstandardised and standardised regression weights

			Unstandardised estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Standardised estimate
JR1	<---	CC1	0.531	0.231	2.303	0.021		0.456
JR1	<---	CC2	0.040	0.115	0.344	0.731		0.045
JR1	<---	CC3	0.446	0.149	3.004	0.003		0.385
JR1	<---	CC4	-0.272	0.154	-1.772	0.076		-0.331
JR2	<---	CC1	0.681	0.182	3.735	***		0.565
JR2	<---	CC4	-0.214	0.114	-1.882	0.060		-0.251
JR2	<---	CC2	0.301	0.088	3.417	***		0.328
JR2	<---	CC3	0.228	0.108	2.111	0.035		0.189
EE1	<---	JR1	0.092	0.069	1.335	0.182		0.092
EE3	<---	JR1	-0.190	0.095	-1.997	0.046		-0.176

			Unstandardised estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Standardised estimate
EE2	<---	JR1	0.072	0.054	1.336	0.182		0.112
EE3	<---	JR2	0.590	0.112	5.265	***		0.565
EE2	<---	JR2	0.320	0.061	5.228	***		0.514
EE1	<---	JR2	0.635	0.080	7.944	***		0.661

The structural model shown in Figure 5.22 did not show an acceptable fit across all the fit indices. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate if the model can be improved. Potential improvements on the model could be made by 1) deleting items with loadings less than 0.5; 2) deletion of non-statistical significant paths and 3) studying the modification indices for potential additional covariances with the condition that these need to be theoretically justified as well. However, it is critically important that these changes are not made purely to improve the model fit statistics; and that the model used still portray the core theoretical model postulated.

Table 5.42 indicates that not all the structural paths were statistically significant. Three paths were deleted, namely: the relationship between JR1 and CC2 (open knowledge sharing to empower and two-way dialogue), the relationship between EE1 and JR1 (taking initiative with persistence and open knowledge sharing to empower), and the relationship between EE2 and JR1 (happily energetic with persistent focus and open knowledge sharing to empower). All the other paths show a statistical significant relationship.

Secondly, all items showed high loadings of above 0.5 to their respective constructs and therefore none of the items were deleted. Studying the modification indices, nine covariances were considered for inclusion in the model. Further additional covariances were considered, but they did not contribute to significantly improve model fit, and could not be theoretically justified. Thus, it was decided to conclude the model fit with the addition of the nine covariances included. Table 5.43 indicates the theoretical justification for the modification indices.

Table 5.43: Theoretical justification for modification indices

Error terms		Descriptions	Theoretical justification
e72 <--> e78	JR1 <--> JR2	Open knowledge sharing to empower subordinates (JR1) Candid dialogue to empower employees (JR2)	Key ideas tying these two constructs together include open, candid, truthful, dialogue, and information sharing. Yang and Choi (2009:294) argue that employees need information in order to improve their performance and to make good quality decisions to accomplish their job tasks. Badaracco and Ellsworth (1991:48-50), interviewed executive management who stated that the ideal organisation would be characterised by, amongst others, "open and candid communication". Both the superior and the subordinate must participate in sharing knowledge through an open and supportive dialogue (Akre *et al.*, 1997:521; Stone *et al.*, 2009:79-80).
e71 <--> e77	EE1 <--> EE3	Taking initiative with persistence (EE1) Attention (EE3)	Both these two constructs are related to being a dedicated employee, with dedication refereeing to taking initiative and paying more attention. Due to their enthusiasm, inspiration and pride in their work, these employees are highly involved with their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74). Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996:527) developed a measurement scale to test job dedication, which looks at areas such as paying close attention, working harder and taking initiative.
e70 <--> e77	EE2 <--> EE3	Happily energetic with persistent focus (EE2) Attention (EE3)	These constructs are both closely related in that they both refer to a certain level of dedication and absorption required from an employee. Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996:527) refer to dedication as paying close attention, tackling difficult tasks, and being persistent in overcoming obstacles. The

			idea of absorption refers to a “state of total attention”, while focusing all energy and attention on an object (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274).
e71 <--> e70	EE1 <--> EE2	Taking initiative with persistence (EE1) Happily energetic with persistent focus (EE2)	The idea of persistence is what these two constructs have in common. Persistence relates to both the concepts of vigour and dedication. Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2010:2) emphasises that when vigorous employees face a challenge, they will persevere. Frese and Fay (2001:139) state that Individuals regularly experience failures and setbacks, and it requires persistence from an individual to take initiative in order to overcome resistance from people and other technical barriers. Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996:525, 527) state that when a person is dedicated to his/her job, he/she will be motivated to work harder, tackle difficult work enthusiastically and will persist in order to overcome problems.
e81 <--> e82	Q7_39 <--> Q7_40	My superior lets me participate in the planning of my own work. Members of my work group are able to establish our own goals and objectives.	These two items related to the opportunities employees have for upward communication. This relates to how subordinates feel about their views and opinions being heard, and if those views and opinions are incorporated in their work or in the decision-making process (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). Thus, employees must be able to participate in the planning of their work by establishing their own work goals and objectives. This can be done on an individual basis, as well as within the work group or team.
e83 <--> e84	Q7_43 <--> Q7_44	I think that information received from my subordinates is really reliable. I think information received from my colleagues (co-workers) is really reliable.	Reliability of information connects these two items, whether information is received from a subordinate or a colleague on the same hierarchical level. Reliability of information infers trust, confidence and credibility in the relationship (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5)

e24 <--> e23	Q7_23 <--> Q7_22	People in top management say what they mean and mean what they say. In general, I think that people in this organisation say what the mean and mean what they say.	Both these two items refer to the quality, accuracy and integrity of communication. Karanges *et al.* (2015:38) define quality of information as individual employee perception of the value of information they receive. Is the communication timely, accurate, adequate and complete; therefore, does it have considered value? Jiang (2016b) states that transparency in communication is vital in order to create a trusting relationship. Communication that is transparent is categorised by open decision-making, holding the organisation accountable for its actions, and providing accurate information to subordinates. This transparent communication will also improve the perception of consistency between leaders' beliefs and actions.
e39 <--> e40	Q7_41 <--> Q7_42	My views have real influence in my organisation. I expect that recommendations I make will be heard and seriously considered.	These items relate to the opportunity for upward communication. how subordinates feel about their views and opinions being heard, and if those views and opinions are incorporated in their work or in the decision-making process (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). McConkey (1980:69) wrote specifically on the role of participative management styles in creating, amongst others, greater motivation, more job satisfaction and better decisions amongst subordinates in an organisation. Participative management means that subordinates are given space to determine and influence their jobs in order to reach the organisation's goals. This implies a great extent of self-management, through which subordinates can determine their job content, scope and goals; they can do their own planning; and they must play a key role in decision-making. This means that employees need to

			be granted more participation in decision-making, which cannot happen if superiors do not listen effectively to what their subordinates have to say.
e41 <--> e42	Q7_34 <--> Q7_35	I believe my subordinates are really frank and candid with me. My colleagues (co-workers) are really frank and candid with me.	Both these two items relate to the openness and candour of employees, whether they are subordinates or colleagues on the same organisational level. This refers to the affective aspects of relationships, such as perceived openness, candour and empathy. It shows the extent to which people feel that others are open and honest when sharing information (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). Managers, according to Serpa (1985:425-426), are responsible for creating a candid corporate culture characterised by open and honest communication, sincerity, straightforwardness, and frankness.

5.8.2. Management optimised measurement model

Figure 5.23 shows this optimisation based on the above-mentioned criteria.

Figure 5.23: Optimised measurement model for management

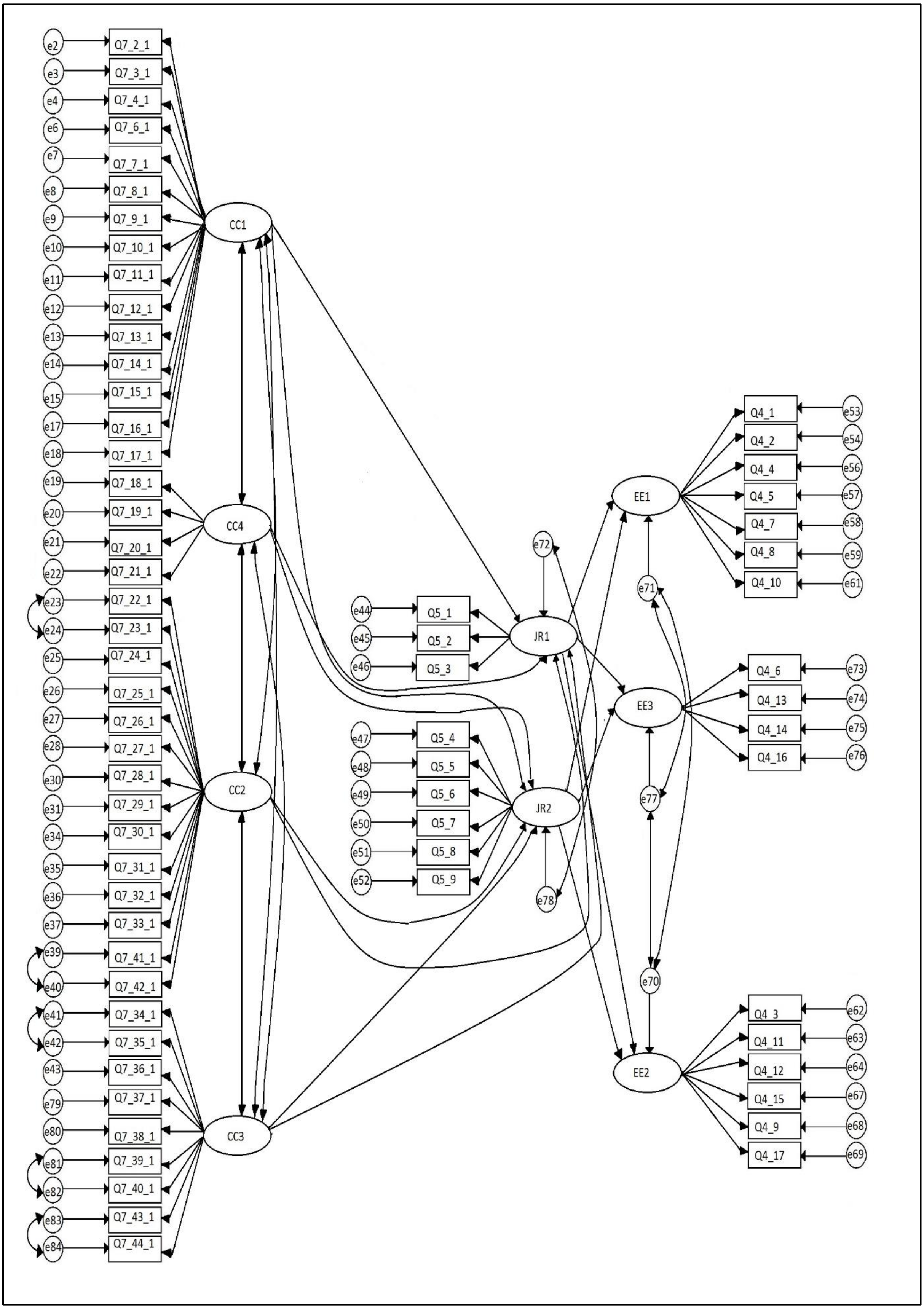


Table 5.44: Goodness of fit indices

Model	TLI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/df
Goodness of fit indices	0.825	0.833	0.832	0.076	2.057
Indicate acceptable fit	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≤0.08	<3

The fit indices show a value of 0.825 for TLI, a value of 0.833 for IFI, and a value of 0.832 for CFI. This is below the acceptable threshold of 0.90. It also shows a RMSEA value of 0.076, which is lower than the threshold of 0.08 and is thus acceptable. An additional measure for the goodness-of-fit, is the CMIN/df value of 2.057 which is below the acceptable value of less than 3. The TLI, IFI and CFI values show an unacceptable fit, although the RMSEA and CMIN/df values show an acceptable fit (Table 5.44).

The unstandardised and standardised regression coefficients associated with the structural paths of the model are presented for comparative purposes. Table 5.45 shows the unstandardised regression weights for the management measurement model. Standardised regression weights assist in comparing the coefficients as they represent the regression weight in the standard deviation units.

Table 5.45: Unstandardised and standardised regression weights

			Unstandardised estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Standardised estimates
JR1	<---	CC1	0.393	0.174	2.259	0.024		0.436
JR1	<---	CC3	0.453	0.128	3.544	***		0.396
JR1	<---	CC4	-0.219	0.151	-1.446	0.148		-0.275
JR2	<---	CC1	0.503	0.141	3.561	***		0.518
JR2	<---	CC4	-0.175	0.118	-1.491	0.136		-0.205
JR2	<---	CC2	0.290	0.079	3.666	***		0.317
JR2	<---	CC3	0.242	0.107	2.253	0.024		0.197
EE3	<---	JR1	-0.331	0.115	-2.875	0.004		-0.292
EE3	<---	JR2	0.672	0.132	5.091	***		0.637
EE2	<---	JR2	0.350	0.060	5.872	***		0.535

			Unstandardised estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Standardised estimates
EE1	<---	JR2	0.666	0.077	8.642	***		0.685

The above Table indicates the significant structural paths. The results will be discussed in Section 5.8.5

5.8.3. Non-management model fit

Figure 5.24 shows the conceptual model fitted to the data for non-management. The factors used are the two factors for employee engagement (EE1 and EE2), the one factor for job resources (JobRes), as well as the three communication climate factors (Supsubcomm, QualAcc, and EmpList).

Figure 5.24: Structural model for non-management

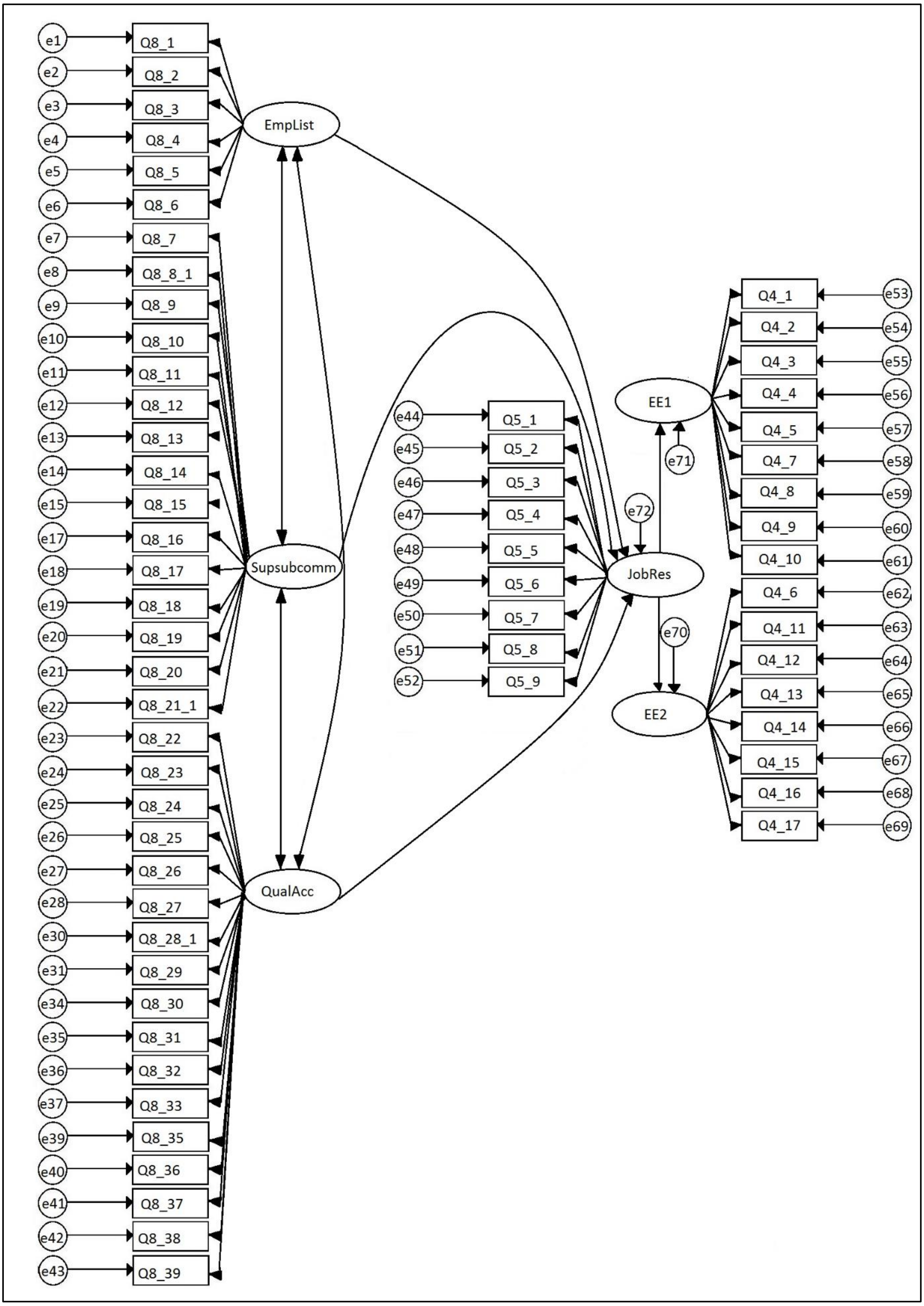


Table 5.46: Goodness of fit indices

Model	TLI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/df
Goodness of fit indices	0.826	0.838	0.837	0.074	2.296
Indicate acceptable fit	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≤0.08	≤3

The fit indices show a value of 0.826 for TLI, a value of 0.838 for IFI, and a value of 0.837 for CFI. This is below the acceptable threshold of 0.90. The model also shows a RMSEA value of 0.074, which is acceptable, as it is below the upper threshold of 0.08. The TLI, IFI and CFI values show an unacceptable fit, although the RMSEA value shows an acceptable fit. An additional measure for the goodness-of-fit, is the CMIN/df value of 2.296 which is below the acceptable value of less than 3 (Table 5.46).

Although not all the indices indicated unacceptable fit, the unstandardised and standardised regression coefficients associated with the structural paths of the model are presented for model improvement and comparative purposes. Table 5.47 shows the unstandardised regression weights for the management measurement model. Standardised regression weights assist in comparing the coefficients as they represent the regression weight in the standard deviation units.

Table 5.47: Unstandardised and standardised regression weights

			Unstandardised estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Standardised estimate
JobRes	<---	EmpList	0.592	0.153	3.866	***		0.483
JobRes	<---	QualAcc	0.564	0.081	6.986	***		0.498
JobRes	<---	Supsubcomm	-0.143	0.111	-1.280	.201		-0.156
EE1	<---	JobRes	0.639	0.059	10.760	***		0.697
EE2	<---	JobRes	0.558	0.067	8.339	***		0.587

The structural model as shown in Figure 5.24 did not show an acceptable fit across the set of fit indices considered. Although RMSEA and CMIN/df showed an acceptable fit with values of 0.074 and 2.296, the TLI, IFI and CFI values did not reach the acceptable 0.90 threshold. Therefore, it was necessary to investigate if the model can be improved.

Table 5.47 indicates that all the structural paths were statistically significant, with the exception of the relationship between JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) and Supsubcomm (Superior–subordinate communication). All the other paths show a statistical significant positive relationship, which could indicate that a more effective communication climate, could positively impact the job resources, which in turn could increase the employee engagement.

Therefore, the first step was to delete the statistically non-significant path. All items show high loadings of above 0.50 and therefore none of the items were deleted. Studying the modification indices, fourteen covariances were considered for inclusion in the model. Further additional covariances were considered, but they did not contribute to significantly improve model fit, and could not be theoretically justified. Thus, it was decided to conclude the model fit with the addition of the fourteen covariances included. Table 5.48 indicates the theoretical justification for the modification indices.

Table 5.48: Theoretical justification for modification indices

Error terms		Descriptions	Theoretical justification
e71 <--> e70	EE1 <--> EE2	Taking initiative with persistent focus (EE1). Energetically focused (EE2).	Both these two constructs relate to the idea of being highly focused on ones work. Both constructs relate to attention, focus and being engrossed (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:75).
e65 <--> e68	Q4_13 <--> Q4_16	To me, my job is challenging. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.	Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2010:2) emphasise that when vigorous employees face a challenge, they will persevere. They have a willingness to show persistence despite difficulties (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74). This persistence can translate into high levels of absorption where they become so focused that they find it difficult to detach themselves from their work.
e46 <--> e45	Q5_3 <--> Q5_2	I have control over how my work is carried out. I can participate in decision-making regarding my work.	Both these items relate to empowerment – defined as the delegation of decision-making responsibilities with the aim of giving employees increased decision-making authority (Wall *et al.*, 2002:147). This empowerment gives control over work through participation in decision-making.
e46 <--> e44	Q5_3 <--> Q5_1	I have flexibility in the execution of my job. I can participate in decision-making regarding my work.	Autonomy is defined by Hackman and Oldham (Menguc *et al.*, 2013:2165), as "the degree to which employees feel they have independence, flexibility, discretion, and control in performing their jobs". Akre *et al.* (1997:521) refer to decision latitude, or needs opportunity, to make decisions regarding ones work. An employee need to have decision latitude to be flexible.

e67 <--> e69	Q4_15 <--> Q4_17	At my job, I am mentally very resilient. At my work I always persevere even when things don't go well.	Resilience refers to a person's ability to bounce back from a setback or failure. This resilience requires persistent behaviour from an individual in order to overcome barriers (Frese & Fay, 2001:139).
e65 <--> e66	Q4_13 <--> Q4_14	To me, my job is challenging. I get carried away when I am working.	When faced with a challenge or difficulties, vigorous employees persevere and will work with persistence. (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74); Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2010:2). This persistence can translate into high levels of absorption. An absorbed employee can experience "flow" – a state of mind where a person can focus their attention, clear their mind, have effortless concentration and experience a distortion of time (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:75).
e45 <--> e44	Q5_2 <--> Q5_1	I have control over how my work is carried out. I have flexibility in the execution of my job.	Both these items refer to autonomy – defined by, amongst others, flexibility and control in performing their jobs (Menguc *et al*., 2013:2165). Employee empowerment is another term related to the concept of autonomy. Empowerment is defined as the "delegation of decision-making responsibilities down the hierarchy" in order to give "employees increased decision-making authority in respect of the execution of their primary work tasks" (Wall *et al*., 2002:147). When an employee has control over his/her job, it obviously lends a degree of flexibility as he/she can make his/her own decisions regarding his/her work.
e49 <--> e48	Q5_6 <--> Q5_5	I receive sufficient information about the opportunities to develop my strong points. My job offers me opportunities to find out how well I do my job.	These items relate to performance feedback. Grote (Kondrasuk, 2011:57) states that performance feedback is designed to make the organisation more productive by highlighting where employees perform well, how they can improve performance, and if they have achieved their work goals. In other

			words, how well an employee does his/her job, and information on how they can develop or improve their strong points.
e52 <--> e51	Q5_9 <--> Q5_8	My work offers me the possibility to learn new things. In my work, I can develop myself sufficiently.	These two items are related to an employee's opportunities for learning and development. Opportunities for learning and development will directly impact on employees' growth, equipping them to deal with their work demands to reach their work goals (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:895). Kahn (1990:704) adds to this by stating that employees will find their work meaningful if they have a sense of competence (being able to do their job) and growth, established through learning opportunities.
e55 <--> e64	Q4_3 <--> Q4_12	Time flies when I am working. I can continue working for very long periods of time.	Both these items relate to the idea of time. Employees will experience how time flies when they enjoy their work, which means they can often work for longer periods of time. When absorbed, time passes by quickly and employees find it easy to focus their attention on the job at hand. Employees will therefore find it more difficult to detach themselves from their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli et al., 2002:75), probably leading them to work for longer periods of time.
e42 <--> e43	Q8_38 <--> Q8_39	My views have real influence in my organisation. I expect that recommendation I make will be heard and seriously considered.	These items relate to the opportunity for upward communication. How subordinates feel about their views and opinions being heard, and if those views and opinions are incorporated in their work or in the decision-making process (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). McConkey (1980:69) wrote specifically on the role of participative management styles in creating, amongst others, greater motivation, more job satisfaction and better decisions amongst subordinates in an organisation. Participative management means that

			subordinates are given space to determine and influence their jobs in order to reach the organisation’s goals. This implies a great extent of self-management, through which subordinates can determine their job content, scope and goals; they can do their own planning; and they must play a key role in decision-making. This means that employees need to be granted more participation in decision making, which cannot happen if superiors do not listen effectively to what their subordinates have to say.
e40 <--> e41	Q8_36 <--> Q8_37	My superior lets me participate in the planning of my own work. Members of my work group are able to establish our own goals.	These two items relate to the opportunities employees have for upward communication. This relates to how subordinates feel about their views and opinions being heard, and if those views and opinions are incorporated in their work or in the decision-making process (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). Thus, employees must be able to participate in the planning of their work by establishing their own work goals and objectives. This can be done on an individual basis, as well as within the work group or team.
e62 <--> e66	Q4_6 <--> Q4_14	When I am working I forget everything else around me. I get carried away when I am working.	Both items relates to the concept of absorption. Absorption is defined as a “state of total attention” where the person focuses all his/her energy and attention on an object. “The experience of one part of reality, while other aspects recede from awareness” (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274). Csikszentmihalyi (Schaufeli et al., 2002:75) named this heightened sense of absorption the “flow”. “Flow” refers to a state of mind where a person can focus his/her attention, clear his/her mind, have effortless concentration, and experience a distortion of time. Thus, when employees forget everything around them, and they get carried away, they experience absorption.

e26 <--> e25	Q8_25 <--> Q8_24	People in this organisation can freely exchange information and opinions. People in this organisation are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.	Both these two items relate to subordinates’ ability to be open and transparent, and to freely share accurate and complete information with each other and their subordinates (Karanges *et al.*, 2015:38). Within the workplace this happens through formal and informal feedback. A threatening instead of supportive environment can lead to withholding information, misunderstanding, hostility and poor job performance (Gibb, 1961:141).

5.8.4. Non-management optimised measurement model

Figure 5.25 shows the optimisation, based on the above discussed criteria.

Figure 5.25: Optimised measurement model for non-management

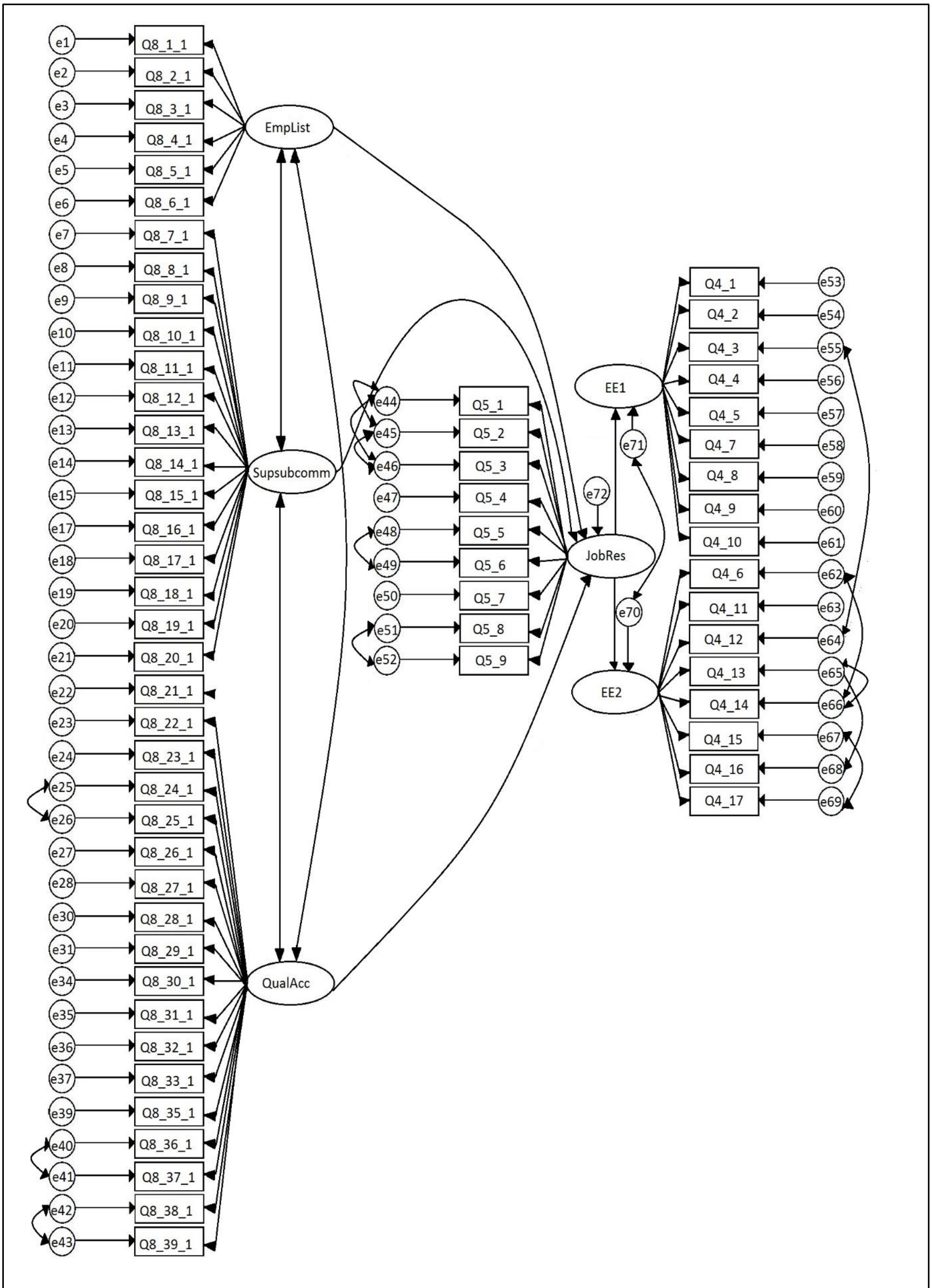


Table 5.49: Goodness of fit indices

Model	TLI	IFI	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/df
Goodness of fit indices	0.865	0.871	0.871	0.066	2.394
Indicate acceptable fit	≥0.9	≥0.9	≥0.9	≤0.08	≤3

The fit indices show a value of 0.865 for TLI, a value of 0.871 for IFI, and a value of 0.871 for CFI. This is fairly close, but still below the acceptable threshold of 0.90. The model also shows a RMSEA value of 0.066, which is acceptable as it is below the threshold of 0.08. An additional measure for the goodness-of-fit, is the CMIN/df value of 2.394 which is below the acceptable value of less than 3. The TLI, IFI and CFI values show an unacceptable fit, although the RMSEA value shows an acceptable fit (Table 5.49).

The unstandardised and standardised regression coefficients associated with the structural paths of the model are presented for comparative purposes. Table 5.50 shows the unstandardised regression weights for the management measurement model. Standardised regression weights assist in comparing the coefficients as they represent the regression weight in the standard deviation units.

Table 5.50: Unstandardised and standardised regression weights

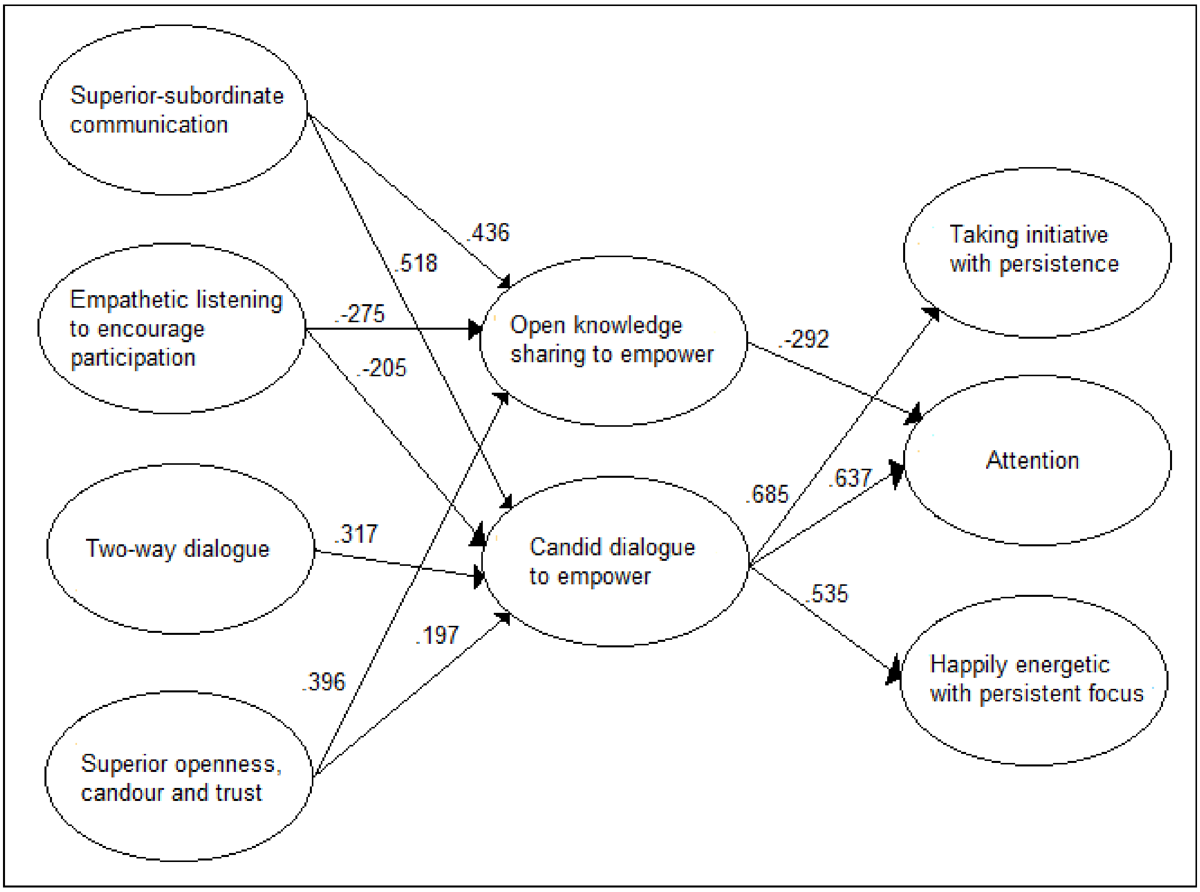
			Unstandardisded estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Standardised estimate
JobRes	<---	EmpList	0.452	0.083	5.438	***		0.373
JobRes	<---	QualAcc	0.513	0.076	6.738	***		0.458
EE1	<---	JobRes	0.622	0.061	10.239	***		0.672
EE2	<---	JobRes	0.542	0.068	7.951	***		0.559

Table 5.50 indicates that all the structural paths are statistically significant. All the paths show a statistical positive relationship, which could indicate that a more effective communication climate, could positively relate to job resources, which in turn could increase the employee engagement.

5.8.5. Hypotheses testing

Structural equation modeling was then done to determine the strength of the relationships between the newly identified constructs. Provisionally, given that both in the management and non-management structural models two fit statistics, namely RMSEA and CMIN/df, did show a model fit, the structural coefficient can be interpreted. This section will therefore discuss the relationships between the different constructs. Figure 5.26 indicates the findings in terms of the strength of the relationships when testing the conceptual structural equation model for management.

Figure 5.26: Conceptual SEM for management



As shown in Figure 5.26, there are a total of 11 statistically significant paths. The structural path coefficient from CC1 (Superior–subordinate communication) to JR1 (Open knowledge sharing to empower) (.436) was statistically significant, indicating a moderate positive statistical significant relationship. Higher levels of CC1 are therefore related to higher levels of JR1. This result gives support for the newly formulated H1: *Superior–subordinate communication is related to open knowledge sharing to empower.*

The structural path coefficient from CC1 (Superior–subordinate communication) to JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) (.518) was statistically significant, indicating a strong positive significant relationship. Higher levels of CC1 are therefore related to higher levels of JR2. This result gives support for H2: *Superior–subordinate communication is related to candid dialogue to empower.*

The structural path coefficient from CC4 (Empathetic listening to encourage participation) to JR1 (Open knowledge sharing to empower) (-.275) was statistically significant, indicating a weak negative relationship. This can possibly be explained by the fact that respondents generally agreed less (lower mean values) with CC4 (3.7864), thus pointing to potentially less emphatic listening to encourage participation perceived, while they do tend to agree with JR1 (4.0180). This result therefore supports H3: *Empathetic listening to encourage participation is related to open knowledge sharing to empower.*

The structural path coefficient from CC4 (Empathetic listening to encourage participation) to JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) (-.205) was statistically significant, indicating a weak negative relationship. This can possibly be explained by the fact that respondents generally agreed slightly less (lower mean values) with CC4 (3.7864), thus pointing to potentially less empathetic listening to encourage participation, while they tend to agree more with JR2 (3.9108). This result therefore supports H4: *Empathetic listening to encourage participation is related to candid dialogue to empower.*

The structural path coefficient from CC2 (Two-way dialogue) to JR1 (Open knowledge sharing to empower) was not statistically significant. Therefore, H_o: *Two-way dialogue is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower*, cannot be rejected.

The structural path coefficient from CC2 (Two-way dialogue) to JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) (.317) was statistically significant, indicating a moderate positive statistically significant relationship. Higher levels of CC2 are therefore related to higher levels of JR2. This result gives support for H6: *Two-way dialogue is related to candid dialogue to empower.*

The structural path coefficient from CC3 (Superior openness, candour and trust) to JR1 (Open knowledge sharing to empower) (.396) was statistically significant, indicating a moderate positive statistically significant relationship. Higher levels of CC3 are therefore related to higher levels of JR1. This result gives support for H7: *Superior openness, candour and trust is related to open knowledge sharing to empower.*

The structural path coefficient from CC3 (Superior openness, candour and trust) to JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) (.197) was statistically significant, indicating a weak positive statistically significant relationship. Higher levels of CC3 are therefore related to higher levels of JR2. This result gives support for H8: *Superior openness, candour and trust is related to candid dialogue to empower.*

The structural path coefficient from JR1 (Open knowledge sharing to empower) to EE1 (Taking initiative with persistence) was not statistically significant. Therefore, H_o: *Open knowledge sharing to empower is not related to taking initiative with persistence*, cannot be rejected.

The structural path coefficient from JR1 (Open knowledge sharing to) to EE3 (Attention) (-.292) was statistically significant. This can possibly be explained by the fact that respondents generally agreed less (lower mean values) with JR1 (4.0180), thus pointing to potentially less open knowledge sharing perceived, while they do tend to agree with EE3 (5.5243). This result therefore supports H10: *Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to attention.*

The structural path coefficient from JR1 (Open knowledge sharing to empower) to EE2 (Happily energetic with persistent focus) was not statistically significant. Therefore, H_o: *Open knowledge sharing to empower is not related to happily energetic with persistent focus*, cannot be rejected.

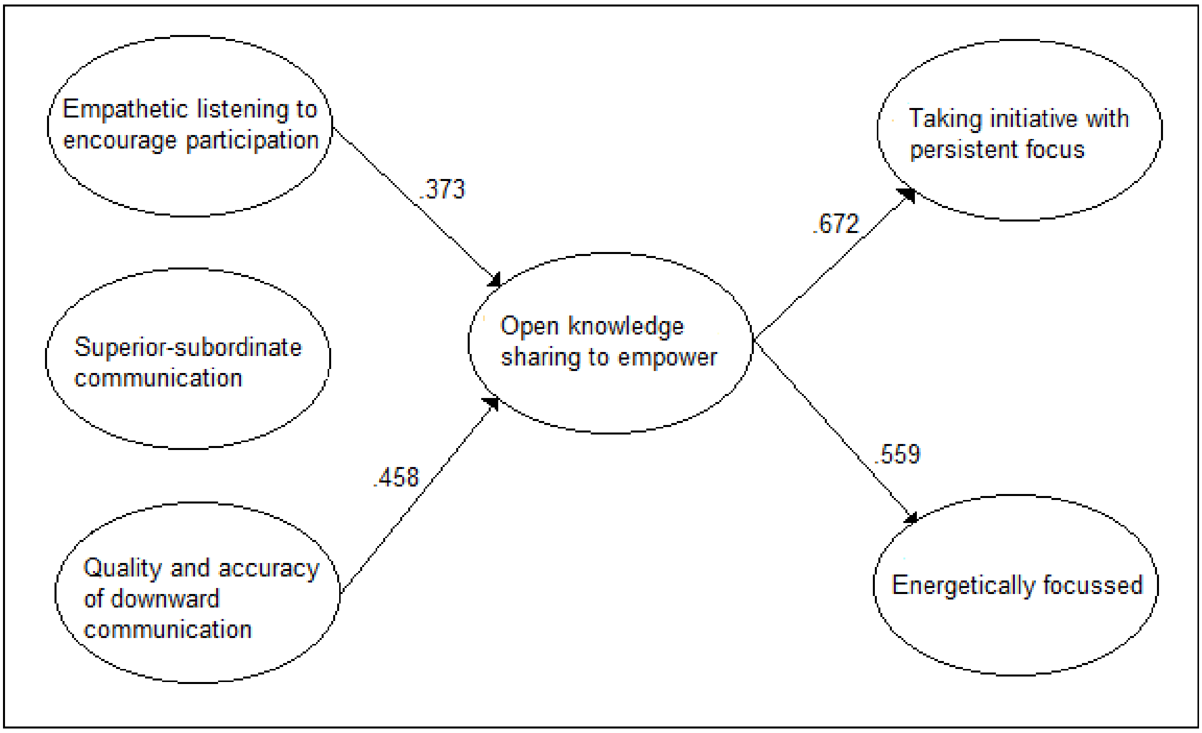
The structural path coefficient from JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) to EE1 (Taking initiative with persistence) (.685) was statistically significant, indicating a strong positive significant relationship. Higher levels of JR2 are therefore related to higher levels of EE1. This result gives support for H12: *Candid dialogue to empower is related to taking initiative with persistence.*

The structural path coefficient from JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) to EE3 (Attention) (.637) was statistically significant, indicating a strong positive significant relationship. Higher levels of JR2 are therefore related to higher levels of EE3. This result gives support for H13: *Candid dialogue to empower is related to attention*.

The structural path coefficient from JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) to EE2 (Happily energetic with persistent focus) (.535) was statistically significant, indicating a strong positive significant relationship. Higher levels of JR2 are therefore related to higher levels of EE2. This result gives support for H14: *Candid dialogue to empower is related to happily energetic with persistent focus.*

Figure 5.27 indicates the findings in terms of the strength of the relationships when testing the conceptual non-management measurement model.

Figure 5.27: Conceptual SEM for non-management



The structural path coefficient from EmpList (Empathetic listening to encourage participation) to JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) (.373) was statistically significant, indicating a moderate positive significant relationship. Higher levels of EmpList are therefore related to higher levels of JobRes. This result gives support for H15: *Empathetic listening to encourage participation is related to open knowledge sharing to empower*.

The structural path coefficient from Supsubcomm (Superior–subordinate communication) to JobRest (Open knowledge sharing to empower) was not statistically significant. Therefore, H_o: *Superior–subordinate communication is not related to open knowledge sharing to empower subordinates*, cannot be rejected.

The structural path coefficient from QualAcc (Quality and accuracy of downward communication) to JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) (.458) was statistically significant, indicating a moderate positive significant relationship. Higher levels of QualAcc are therefore related to higher levels of JobRes. This result gives support for H17: *Quality and accuracy of downward communication is related to open knowledge sharing to empower*.

The structural path coefficient from JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) to EE1 (Taking initiative with persistent focus) (.672) was statistically significant, indicating a strong positive significant relationship. Higher levels of JobRes are therefore related to higher levels of EE1. This result gives support for H18: *Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to taking initiative with persistent focus*.

The structural path coefficient from JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) to EE2 (Energetically focused) (.559) was statistically significant, indicating a positive significant relationship. Higher levels of JobRes are therefore related to higher levels of EE2. This result gives support for H19: *Open knowledge sharing to empower is related to energetically focused*.

5.9. MEDIATION

The following section presents the findings related to the investigation into mediation, looking at both management and non-management models. Mediation follows a four step process:

1. Is there an affect that could be mediated (*c*)?
2. If there is a relationship between the independent variable and the moderator (*a*)?
   If the mediator has an effect on the dependent variable (*b*)?
3. If the effect on the independent variable on the dependent variable will reduce after controlling for the effects of the mediator (*c'*)?

5.9.1. Management

Table 5.51 and Table 5.52 follow the four step process, as indicated above, to show if any of the job resources act as a mediator between the constructs of communication climate and employee engagement. As will be indicated, JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) is a partial mediator in the relationships of CC2 to EE1 (Two-way dialogue to Taking initiative with persistence), and CC2 to EE3 (Two-way dialogue to Attention).

Note should be taken that step one yielded three statistically significant direct effects (CC2 to EE1, CC2 to EE2, and CC2 to EE3), however, only two satisfied the conditions according to all four steps as indicated above. The two relationships that showed partial mediation due to JR2, was between CC2 to EE1 and CC2 to EE3. These two will be discussed below.

Table 5.51: Mediation: CC2 to EE1

Regression steps	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	Std beta	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**
Step 1: CC2 to EE1	0.440 (Path *c*)	$p<0.001$						

Regression steps	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
Step 2: CC2 to JR2			0.308 (Path *a*)	0.001				
Step 3: JR2 to EE1					0.438 (Path *b*)	p<0.001		
Step 4: CC2 to EE1							0.301 (Path *c*’)	0.006

Step Four shows a significant relationship and a standardised beta value close to zero between CC2 and EE1, which means that JR2 is a partial mediator in the relationships between CC2 and EE1. Thus, when JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) is introduced, there is a reduced effect of CC2 (Two-way dialogue) on EE1 (Taking initiative with persistence).

Table 5.52: Mediation: CC2 to EE3

Regression steps	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	Std beta	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**
Step 1: CC2 to EE3	0.514 (Path *c*)	p<0.001						
Step 2: CC2 to JR2			0.308 (Path *a*)	0.001				
Step 3: JR2 to EE3					0.469 (Path *b*)	0.002		
Step 4: CC2 to EE3							0.380 (Path *c*’)	0.008

Step Four shows a significant relationship and a standardised beta value close to zero between CC2 and EE3, which means that JR2 is a partial mediator in the relationships between CC2 and EE3. Thus, when JR2 (Candid dialogue to empower) is introduced, there is a reduced effect of CC2 (Two-way dialogue) on EE3 (Attention).

5.9.2. Non-management

Table 5.53 to Table 5.55 follow the four step process as indicated above to show if the job resource construct acts as a mediator between the constructs of communication climate and employee engagement. As will be indicated, JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) is a full mediator in the relationships of EmpList to EE1 (Empathetic listening to encourage participations to Taking initiative with persistent focus), QualAcc to EE1 (Quality and accuracy of downward communication to Taking initiative with persistent focus), and QualAcc to EE2 (Quality and accuracy of downward communication to Energetically focused). No other paths were tested as no other relationships presented as significant in the first step as described above.

Table 5.53: Mediation: EmpList to EE1

Regression steps	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	Std beta	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**
Step 1: EmpList to EE1	0.358 (Path *c*)	0.018					.	
Step 2: EmpList to JobRes			0.372 (Path *a*)	p<0.001				
Step 3: JobRes to EE1					0.706 (Path *b*)	p<0.001		
Step 4: EmpList to EE1							-0.006 (Path *c'*)	0.965

Step Four shows a non-significant relationship and a standardised beta value close to zero between EmpList and EE1, which means that JobRes is a full mediator in the relationships between EmpList and EE1. Thus, when JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) is introduced, EmpList (Empathetic listening to encourage participations) no longer has an effect on EE1 (Taking initiative with persistent focus).

Table 5.54: Mediation: QualAcc to EE1

Regression steps	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	Std beta	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**
Step 1: QualAcc to EE1	0.451 (Path *c*)	$p<0.001$						
Step 2: QuallAcc to JobRes			0.460 (Path *a*)	$p<0.001$				
Step 3: JobRes to EE1					0.706 (Path *b*)	$p<0.001$		
Step 4: QualAcc to EE1							0.132 (Patch *c'*)	0.100

Step Four shows a non-significant relationship and a standardised beta value close to zero between QualAccc and EE1, which means that JobRes is a full mediator in the relationships between QualAcc and EE1. Thus, when JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) is introduced, QualAcc (Quality and accuracy of downward communication) no longer has an effect on EE1 (Taking initiative with persistent focus).

Table 5.55: Mediation: QualAcc to EE2

Regression steps	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
	Std beta	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**	**Std beta**	**P**
Step 1: QualAcc to EE2	0.400 (Path *c*)	$p<0.001$						
Step 2: QualAcc to JobRes			0.460 (Path *a*)	$p<0.001$				
Step 3: JobRes to EE2					0.700 (Path *b*)	$p<0.001$		

Regression steps	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
Step 4: QualAcc to EE2							0.082 (Path *c'*)	0.378

Step Four shows a non-significant relationship and a standardised beta value close to zero between QualAccc and EE2, which means that JobRes is a full mediator in the relationships between QualAcc and EE2. Thus, when JobRes (Open knowledge sharing to empower) is introduced, QualAcc (Quality and accuracy of downward communication) no longer has an effect on EE2 (Energetically focused).

5.10. CHAPTER SUMMARY

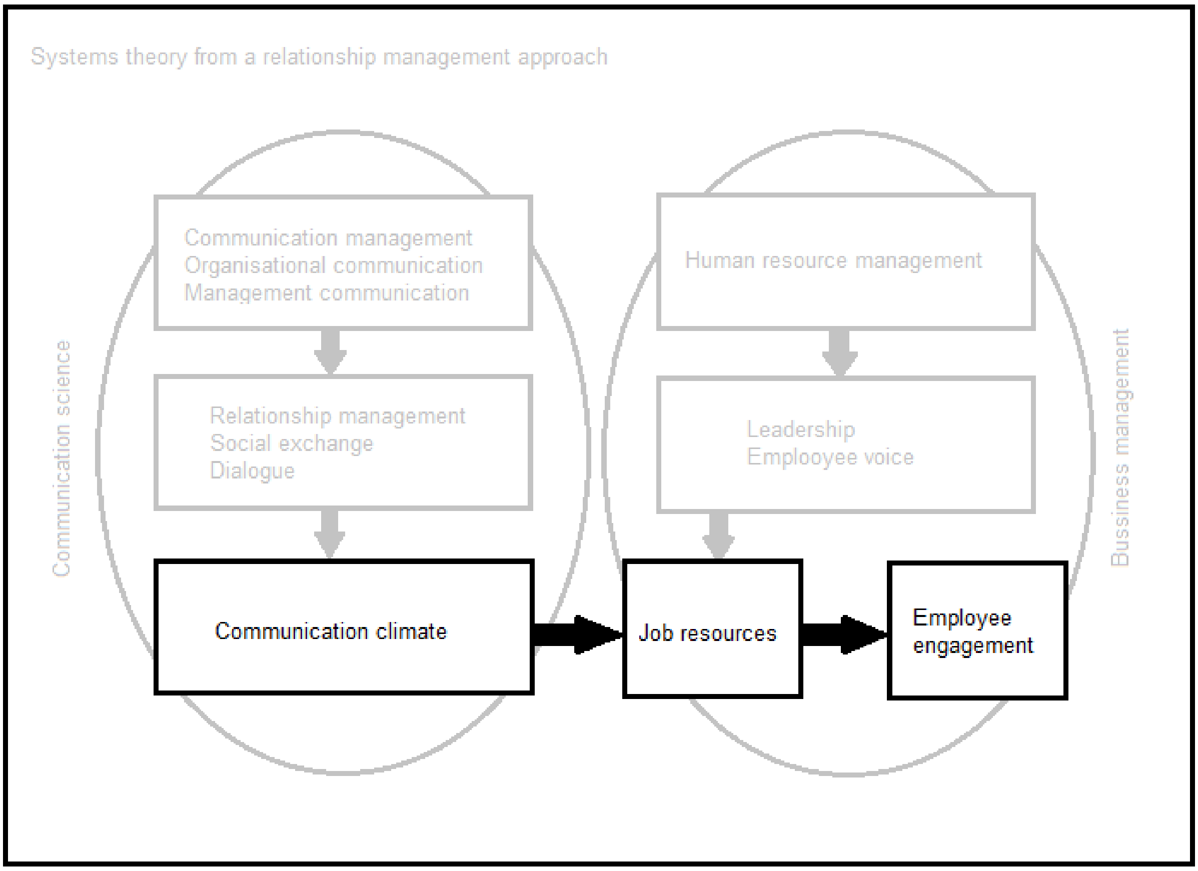
This chapter reported the results from the data that was gathered. Analysis started with analysing the biographical data; validity and reliability testing through confirmatory and then exploratory factor analysis on the original measurement instruments; renaming of the management and non-management factors; creating new hypotheses based on the renaming of the factors; conducting structural equation modeling; testing for mediation.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This final Chapter discusses the results as reported in Chapter 5. The discussion synthesises the findings from these results with literature set out in Chapters 2 and 3 as well as theories set out in the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2. This Chapter shows how the primary and secondary research objectives were reached, which ultimately addressed the original research problem, as identified in Chapter 1. Finally, implications for managers in practice and future research are discussed. Figure 6.1 shows the basic orientation model within the context of the theoretical framework.

Figure 6.1: Chapter 6 orientation



6.2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATED TO SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study made use of two secondary research objectives, as derived from the primary research objective. This section discusses the research results within the context of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 and the literature presented in Chapters 2 and 3. It provides an overview of the main concepts and findings and then shows how the two secondary research objectives were met.

Communication climate is defined in Chapter 1 as the character of an organisation's communication system (Redding, 1972). This includes positive or negative perceptions and attitudes that superiors and subordinates have of communication activities taking place in their organisation (Dennis, 1974:29). These activities occur on a macro level in terms of general organisational communication, but much emphasis is placed on the smallest system (as discussed in systems theory in Chapter 2), namely the relationship between a superior and his/her subordinate within the context of an organisation's communication climate.

As indicated in the literature review, communication climate consists of five constructs: superior–subordinate communication, quality and accuracy of downward communication, superior openness and candour, opportunities for upwards communication and reliability of information (Dennis, 1974:129). Superior–subordinate communication is defined as the extent to which there is a supportive relationship between a superior and his/her subordinate. Thus, whether there are feelings of encouragement, understanding and fairness (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:4; Dennis, 1974:129).

Quality and accuracy of downward communication is defined as top-down communication transparency. Subordinates need to feel that there is value in the information they receive from their superiors, involving the quality, accuracy, integrity and adequacy of the information (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5. 38; Smidts *et al.*, 2001:1053). Superior openness and candour refers to both superiors' and subordinates' feeling that the other party is open, honest, straightforward and frank when sharing information (Serpa, 1985:425-426).

Opportunities for upward communication is defined as subordinates' perceptions of whether their views and opinions are being heard and incorporated when decision-making takes place (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5). Superiors, therefore, need to listen to their subordinates. Making a show of listening but not incorporating input from subordinates is therefore not sufficient. Therefore, authentic listening must occur, with real participation from subordinates. Lastly, reliability of information implies a relationship based on trust, confidence and credibility (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5).

The theory of communication climate is nestled within the relationship management worldview. Relationship management theory states that mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders can lead to economic, social and political gains (Ledingham, 2003:188). Again, this does not only refer to the broader relationships between organisations and external stakeholders, such as customers, but, within the context of this study, also to relationships on a micro level, i.e. those between superiors and subordinates play an important role in the success of an organisation. Relationships are created and maintained through effective communication between the parties involved. The aim should be to create a positive communication climate to build and sustain positive relationships (Grunig *et al.*, 1992:82; Ledingham, 2003:194). Thus, relationships are essential to the well-being of an organisation, and without a positive communication climate these relationships cannot benefit all the parties involved.

During the analysis of the results, confirmatory factor analysis was performed to determine the validity of the original measurement instruments used. A model fit could not be achieved. Thereafter, exploratory factor analysis determined that the original constructs, as discussed above, could not be accepted. Both management and non-management respondents defined the constructs of communication climate differently. These new constructs consequently had to be renamed, as they did not fit clearly into the original categories.

It was clear from the onset of the data analysis that management and non-management were two distinct groups with different views and experiences of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. Thus, they were independently analysed, creating two distinct structural equation models – one for management and one for non-management. This relates to the primary research objective, which is discussed later in this section.

Management identified communication climate in terms of four factors, namely *superior–subordinate communication*, *empathetic listening to encourage participation*, *two-way dialogue* and *superior openness, candour and trust*. Superior–subordinate communication was defined, as per the original definition, as the supporting relationship that exists between a superior and a subordinate. Empathetic listening to encourage participation was defined by incorporating elements of superior–subordinate communication and opportunities for upward communication. Key words such as *listening*, *dialogue*, *feedback*, *participation*, *empathy*, *understanding*, *honesty* and *information sharing* defined this construct (Macnamara, 2015:8; Redding, 1972:34; Rogers & Roethlisberger, 1991:111; Rooney & Gottlieb, 2007:187-190). Two-way dialogue incorporated elements from the original constructs of quality and accuracy of downward communication and opportunities for upward communication. Important key words included: *transparency*, *accuracy*, *adequacy feedback*, *listen*, *dialogue*, *inclusivity* and *participation* (Karanges *et al.*, 2015:38; Krippendorff, 2009:286; Redding, 1972:34; Smidts *et al.*, 2001:1053). The final factor, superior openness, candour and trust, incorporated elements from the original constructs of superior openness and candour and reliability of information. Key words included *openness*, *candour*, *trust*, *honesty* and *frankness* (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:5; Schneider *et al.*, 2010:165; Serpa, 1985:425-426).

Non-management identified communication climate as three factors, namely *empathetic listening to encourage participation*, *superior–subordinate communication*, and *quality and accuracy of downward communication*. Empathetic listening to encourage participation was defined similarly to management's views. It incorporated elements from the original constructs, including superior–subordinate communication and opportunities for upward communication. The second construct, superior–subordinate communication was defined similarly to the original and thus similarly to how management identified superior–subordinate communication. The last construct of quality and accuracy of downward communication linked with the original construct and was therefore defined in the same way.

As per the original literature, job resources are identified as a set of drivers to improve employee engagement. Job resources are further defined as the physical, social and organisational aspects of an employee's job that may reduce job demands (Bakker, 2011:266). These job resources are resources that the organisation has control over and that the organisation can provide to employees with the aim of improving their performance and ultimately their level of engagement. The list of job resources available to organisations is discussed in Chapter 3. For the purpose of this study, three job resources were used, namely autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development. As discussed in Chapter 3, there are many other studies that have shown the positive relationship between these three constructs and employee engagement. These three job resources also relate specifically to employees' motivational process to promote growth and improve their abilities to achieve their work goals (Gruman & Saks, 2011:126; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009:895). Autonomy is defined as an employee's ability to work independently and with a fair degree of flexibility and control over his/her work. Performance feedback refers to an opportunity for an employee to assess his/her performance in areas such as persistence, proactivity, role expansion and adaptability (Gruman & Saks, 2011:131). Opportunities for learning and development is defined in basic terms as formal and informal training opportunities that aim to improve knowledge and skills so that employees can work more successfully (Gruman & Saks, 2011:131). As with communication climate, new factors emerged for job resources, and the renaming of factors was done through exploratory factor analysis. The management and non-management groups showed differences in factor loadings, with some overlap.

Management identified job resources as two factors, namely *open knowledge sharing to empower* and *candid dialogue to empower*. The former incorporated elements from the original constructs of autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development. Key words included *empowerment*, *flexibility*, *independence*, *control*, *open*, *candid information*, *trust*, *dialogue*, *participation* and *knowledge sharing* (Baker *et al.*, 2013:265; Krippendorff, 2009:286; Menguc *et al.*, 2013:2165). The second renamed construct of candid dialogue to empower included elements from the original constructs of autonomy and performance feedback. Key words included *open*, *candid*, *truthful*, *information sharing*, *dialogue* and *empowerment* (Abdul-Razzak *et al.*, 2014:4; Baker *et al.*, 2013:265; Beer, 1981:27-28; Wall *et al.*, 2002:147). Non-management identified job resources through only one factor: *open knowledge sharing to empower*. This construct was the same as that defined by the management group.

As per the literature, employee engagement is defined by Erickson (Macey & Schneider, 2008:7) as employees that are more than just satisfied with their work. Engagement relates to passion, commitment and the willingness to go above and beyond what is expected to ensure that the organisation is successful. Engagement is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74). Vigour is defined by high levels of energy, persistence, cognitive liveliness and initiative taking (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008:436). Dedication refers to employees having enthusiasm and pride in their work; they are likely to accept challenges and show self-discipline (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996:525). Absorption is defined as a "state of total attention" (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274), i.e. when employees are engrossed in their work and fully concentrate on what they do. They can focus all their attention on the job at hand. As previously shown, the construct of employee engagement did not fit when the original confirmatory factor analysis was done. Through exploratory factor analysis, new factors emerged and factors were renamed. The management and non-management groups showed differences in factor loadings.

Management identified employee engagement as three constructs, namely *taking initiative with persistence*, *attention* and *happily energetic with persistent focus*. Taking initiative with persistence incorporated elements from the original constructs of vigour and dedication. Key words included *energy*, *initiative*, *proactive* and *persistence* (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74). The second construct, attention, incorporated elements from absorption and dedication, with the following key words: *attention*, *focus* and *engrossed* (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996:527). The third construct, happily energetic with persistent focus, incorporated elements from the original constructs of dedication, absorption and vigour. Key words included *initiative*, *persistence*, *energy*, *happiness*, *attention* and *focus* (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:75; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996:527).

Non-management identified employee engagement as two constructs: *taking initiative with persistent focus* and *energetically focused*. Taking initiative with persistent focus differed slightly from that defined by management and incorporated elements from the original constructs of dedication and vigour as well as some measure of absorption. Key words included *initiative*, *persistence*, *focus* and *attention* (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74; Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274; Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996:527). The second construct, energetically focused, incorporated elements from the original constructs of absorption and vigour as well as a small measure of dedication. Key words included *attention*, *engrossed*, *focus*, *happy* and *energy* (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004:295; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002:74; Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008:137; Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974:274).

6.2.1. Secondary research objective I

The following secondary research objective was posed for this study and is addressed in the section below:

Objective I: To determine whether communication climate has an influence on certain job resources.

Regarding the first secondary research objective, there seems to be a positive relationship between communication climate and certain job resources. Thus, communication climate probably influenced these job resources.

In terms of the management model, the different constructs of communication climate may have had an influence on the job resources identified, namely open knowledge sharing to empower and candid dialogue to empower. Superior–subordinate communication had a moderate to strong influence on both job resources. Thus, it may be that when managers feel that they or their employees function within a supportive relationship, they feel freer to openly share knowledge and to engage in more candid dialogue. This empowers them by giving them more autonomy. Moreover, they learn more and would be able to use this information to perform better in their jobs. This finding is supported by Rooney *et al.* (2009:414), who state that when employees feel that they function within a supportive relationship with their superior, they feel that they have more control over their jobs and work environment, i.e. it empowers them. Berg and Chyung (2008:230) state that managers must create a supportive environment for a learning culture to manifest. This supportive environment encourages dialogue, where knowledge and skills are transferred. This also relates to the social exchange theory, which states that for people to thrive they must exchange their resources with others. Within the business environment, superiors support their subordinates in exchange for good work from them (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005:876, 882). In other words, when a superior is supportive, a subordinate may openly share knowledge and information.

Empathetic listening to encourage participation had a weak negative significant influence on both job resource constructs. In a negative significant relationship, the weaker empathetic listening to encourage participation is, the stronger both open knowledge sharing to empower and candid dialogue to empower become. The communication climate construct had the inverse effect on these job resource constructs. This finding shows that managers may feel that when less empathetic listening takes place, more knowledge is shared openly and more empowerment takes place. Similarly, this may be true for candid dialogue: Less empathetic listening produces more candid dialogue. Managers may therefore feel less strongly about the important act of listening to encourage participation. This may also be true for the construct of two-way dialogue.

Two-way dialogue had a statistically non-significant relationship with open knowledge sharing to empower. Moreover, two-way dialogue only had a moderate significant positive relationship with candid dialogue to empower. Baker *et al.* (2013:265) opine that for employees to be empowered, they must be able to share their opinions and ideas through dialogue. This is supported by Wilson (1991:30), who states that when employees feel that their voice is being heard, they take ownership of their performance. Both listening and creating a climate for dialogue mean that managers must value input from their subordinates enough to merit their participation. Therefore, management, it seemed, placed less value on both listening and creating dialogue. This argument is unpacked in more detail in the next section.

Superior openness and candour and trust had a moderate positive significant relationship with open knowledge sharing to empower and a weak positive significant relationship with candid dialogue to empower. Badaracco and Ellsworth (1991:48-50) state that candid and open communication is needed from both managers and non-managers for an organisation to be ideal. Wen (2014:293) argues that, within the context of a learning organisation, knowledge sharing can only take place when there is truthful and open communication. Furthermore, Andrews and Delahaye (2000:803) confirm that knowledge sharing does not happen automatically, and because “knowledge is power”, knowledge is only shared with those who can be trusted.

In terms of the non-management model, most of the constructs of communication climate may have had an influence on the identified job resources. Empathetic listening to encourage participation had a moderate positive significant relationship with open knowledge sharing to empower. According to Baker *et al.* (2013:265), during feedback sessions, employees are empowered if they are able to share their ideas and opinions. Furthermore, to promote autonomy and empowerment in employees, dialogue is needed. Superiors must therefore listen to the opinions of their subordinates and their perspectives must be acknowledged (Akre *et al.*, 1997:521; Stone *et al.*, 2009:79-80). In terms of the social exchange theory, non-managers feel that when their superiors listen to them, they, in turn, share knowledge openly, ultimately leading to higher levels of engagement. In this social exchange relationship, as previously discussed, management wants their superiors to support them, whereas non-managers want their superiors to listen to them.

Furthermore, in terms of non-management, the construct of superior–subordinate communication did not have a statistically significant relationship with open knowledge sharing to empower. This was in direct contrast to the opinion of management, who identified a strong relationship between these constructs.

Lastly, non-management indicated a moderately positive significant relationship between quality and accuracy of downward communication and open knowledge sharing to empower. Yang and Choi (2009:294) make a strong argument that employees need information from the top to improve their own performance and to make good decisions to accomplish their tasks. More specifically, within the context of performance reviews, employees need good and accurate information to reach their work goals, which in turn contributes to the organisation reaching its goals (Krippendorff, 2009:286; Redding, 1972:40; Smidts *et al.*, 2001:1053). Within the context of a learning environment, the quality and credibility of the information non-management receive have a profound impact on the importing and sharing of knowledge (Andrews & Delahaye, 2000:799, 802). Thus, for non-management it may be important that a communication climate exists where managers listen to encourage participation and share good information with their subordinates. Non-managers are subsequently empowered through the knowledge that they receive.

6.2.2. Secondary research objective II

The following secondary research objective was posed for this study and is addressed in this section:

Objective II: To determine whether certain job resources have an influence on employee engagement.

Regarding the second secondary research objective, there seems to be a positive relationship between certain job resources and employee engagement. Thus, certain job resources may have had an influence on employee engagement.

In terms of the management model, the different constructs of job resources may have had an influence on most of the constructs of employee engagement. Firstly, open knowledge sharing to empower did not have statistically significant relationships with either taking initiative with persistence or being happily energetic with persistent focus. Secondly, open knowledge sharing to empower had a weak negative significant relationship with attention. Managers may have believed that, with more open knowledge sharing to empower, employees lose focus and pay less attention to their work. Thus, management may have negative views towards sharing too much knowledge, as this may impact negatively on employee engagement. This was in contrast to the view of non-management, who indicated that open knowledge sharing to empower has a positive influence on employee engagement.

Thirdly, candid dialogue to empower had a strong positive significant relationship with taking initiative with persistence, attention and being happily energetic with persistent focus. Managers may have believed that, with candid dialogue to empower, employee engagement improves. This is supported by a number of studies (Maslach *et al*., 2001:417; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al*., 2009:908; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015:56) that found a positive relationship between candid dialogue (consisting of the original constructs of performance feedback and autonomy) and employee engagement. Note that this candid dialogue may take place based on terms set by the managers. As previously discussed, the communication climate as identified by management may not be one where dialogue and listening are strongly advocated. This candid dialogue may not incorporate non-management's views to the extent that the construct suggests. Thus, they may seek to limit the amount of listening and dialogue that takes place.

In terms of the non-management model, the construct of job resources may have had an influence on both the employee engagement constructs identified. Open knowledge sharing to empower had a strong positive significant relationship with both taking initiative with persistent focus and being energetically focused. This is supported by a number of studies (Maslach *et al*., 2001:417; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli *et al*., 2009:908; Slåtten & Mehmetoglu, 2015:56) that found a positive relationship between open knowledge sharing to empower (consisting of the original constructs of autonomy, performance feedback and opportunities for learning and development) and employee engagement.

In conclusion, neither the structural equation modeling (SEM) for management nor that for non-management showed an absolute model fit. However, two of the indices (RMSEA and CMIN/df) did show both models to fit. Based on this information, it can reasonably be deducted that communication climate influences job resources to some extent, which then improves employee engagement. This was the case for both managers and non-managers in the participating organisations. Thus, if employee engagement needs to be improved within an organisation, the communication climate could be addressed to some extent, as this may influence the job resources, which may improve employee engagement.

6.3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATED TO PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This section discusses the research results in terms of the primary research objective:

Primary research objective: To determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers, regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement.

As indicated in the discussion on the secondary objectives, the primary research objective has been met: The results showed a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources, which then seems to positively affect employee engagement levels. Noticeably, however, neither the management nor non-management SEM showed a perfect model fit, even though some indices did. Thus, although the findings were not conclusive, it can be deducted within reason that communication climate influences job resources to improve employee engagement, with a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers.

Based on the results of the exploratory factor analysis, it became apparent that the way in which management perceives communication climate, job resources and employee engagement differs to a certain extent from the perceptions of non-management. After exploratory factor analysis, the renaming of the factors brought to light these differences. The demographic information and SEM for management and non-management further emphasised these differences.

The demographic results from management showed a more positive communication climate than those of non-management did. Furthermore, management had more positive perceptions towards job resources and was more engaged than non-management was. Although non-management was not disengaged, this group was less engaged than management was. There is thus a need to improve employee engagement among non-managers. If the rationale is followed that communication climate may positively influence job resources to improve employee engagement, it is within reason to suggest that if an organisation seeks to improve the employee engagement of non-management, they must produce a more positive communication climate. This positive communication climate may then positively influence the perceptions of non-managers towards the job resources available to them, which in turn may improve their engagement levels. Thus, the process of improving employee engagement seems to start with a more positive communication climate.

Furthermore, there was a difference between what management and non-management perceived as a positive communication climate. A positive communication climate, according to management, is one where there is strong emphasis on superior–subordinate communication, which refers to a supportive relationship characterised by empathy, encouragement, understanding and fairness (Balakrishnan & Masthan, 2013:4; Dennis, 1974:129). Management further wants some degree of dialogue as well as openness, candour and trust. With empathetic listening having an inverse effect on open knowledge sharing to empower and candid dialogue to empower, listening and dialogue have to be acted out in a way that suits the needs of the manager. Management felt that less effective listening may have a positive impact on job resources. Within the dialogue theory, Johannesen, as described by Broome (2009:304), argues that, for true dialogue to take place, communication must be genuine; there must be a spirit of mutual equality and listening without anticipation, interference, completion or warping of meaning. If managers pretend to listen or pretend to create a space for dialogue, then true transaction would not occur. Without listening, dialogue cannot take place. Therefore, if managers feel that empathetic listening would have a negative effect on job resources, it stands to reason that they would not engage in true listening with their subordinates.

Non-management, on the other hand, felt that superior–subordinate communication (a supportive relationship characterised by empathy, encouragement, understanding and fairness) has a non-significant (i.e. weak) effect on job resources, as indicated by the results of this study, and may thus play a less important role in this context. They did, however, emphasise the need for empathetic listening to encourage participation, which was of less importance to management. Management cannot ignore participation from non-management, according to the theory on employee voice. Hirschman (Beugre, 2010:175) states that employee voice is the attempt by employees to create change by petitioning management, i.e. they need to voice their opinions in the workplace. This is essential for improving engagement levels (Beugre, 2010:177-178). Thus, non-management wants to have a voice that is listened to, and management cannot ignore this need if they want to improve non-management's engagement levels.

The difference in experience between management and non-management is not a new finding, especially in the context of communication. The assumption that, when any form of communication takes place, there is agreement is a fallacy. Instead, it should be assumed that employees would disagree rather than agree, i.e. that there would be perceptual incongruence, especially in the superior–subordinate dyad (Chan, 2001:191; Kelly, 2000:94). This study has confirmed perceptual incongruence between managers and non-managers.

Quirke (Kelly, 2000:94), therefore, states that communication should start with the wants and needs of the receiver rather than with that of the sender of the information. In this context, managers, who have the power to influence the communication climate between themselves and their subordinates, should consider the needs and wants of the subordinates. Thus, if communication climate is to be improved, it must be done starting with the non-manager's perceptions of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement and not those of the manager. In other words, if non-management's communication climate is to be improved to positively impact job resources (leading to improved employee engagement), then management must improve their listening skills and give non-management a voice. If the latter is truly given a voice, their opinions must not only be listened to but must also have an impact on decision-making.

Management should focus their attention on the job resources that are important to non-management rather than those that they perceive to be important. Just as much as there is perceptual incongruence in terms of the definition of a positive communication climate, there are differences in terms of the job resources needed to improve employee engagement. This study shows that managers and non-managers have differing perceptions of job resources, and this could point to the changing nature of job resources. For example, on a macro level, knowledge workers may have a need for a set of job resources that are different from those of blue collar workers. The macro socio-economic environment within a specific country may differ between, for example, developed versus emerging market countries. Moreover, the needs of employees in terms of job resources may differ within their specific positions. It is, therefore, important to understand the needs, wants and perceptions of non-managers in terms of job resources. This is where a positive communication climate is vital. Through a positive communication climate, a non-manager can communicate his/her needs and wants for specific job resources. Thus, within the superior–subordinate dyad, the non-manager can identify his/her need through dialogue, and the manager can begin to address this need.

6.4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS RELATED TO THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Within the knowledge worker context, most educated employees, including management and non-management, tend to be engaged (Gilbert, 2001:32). However, it is essential for an organisation to always work towards continuously improving engagement levels. Communication has traditionally been identified as one item in a long list of drivers to improve employee engagement. Communication climate, as a concept, has further been proven to positively impact engagement levels. Nonetheless, this study aimed to show that a positive communication climate plays a much more encompassing role in the process of employee engagement than has previously been thought. It is suggested that a positive communication climate has an influence on, and therefore underpins, job resources, which leads to improved levels of employee engagement.

This statement is supported to a certain extent by the results from this study. If organisations seek to improve their employee engagement, the findings suggest that they could start by improving their communication climate. However, as discussed in the previous section, management must understand non-management's ideals for a positive communication climate, which is necessarily different from their own. They should therefore create a communication climate in line with non-management's perceptions, after which they can begin the process of impacting job resources to improve employee engagement.

Note that efforts to adapt to the communication climate of non-managers should take place within the superior–subordinate dyad. From the systems theory perspective, the smallest and arguably most important system is the relationship between a superior and their subordinate. It is argued that, within this system – within this relationship – a manager and his/her subordinate (i.e. non-manager) can begin to understand their differences regarding communication climate, and adjustments can consequently be made. This ties in with relationship management theory, stating that within the superior–subordinate relationship both parties' interests should be balanced, leading to mutually beneficial outcomes (Eisenberg, 2009:700; Ledingham, 2006:414). One of these outcomes is for non-managers to become more engaged, impacting positively on their work performance, which, in turn, positively impacts the organisation's performance, benefiting both parties. Effective and smart leadership, within the context of relationship management, is therefore needed from managers. Managers are critical role players in the relationship, as they have to look after the well-being of their subordinates (Nielsen & Gonzalez, 2010:139). The onus is therefore on the managers, as leaders, to improve the communication climate with non-managers.

On the one hand, communication climate plays a much more encompassing role in employee engagement than previously suggested, as it could influence certain job resources. On the other hand, a second aspect of communication climate that is likely more important than previously considered is that it may assist managers in understanding their subordinates' needs and wants in terms of job resources. Thus, a positive communication climate is needed to identify the job resources important to non-management. As previously discussed, job resources for management and non-management differ to some extent, and therefore, regular communication can help keep track of which job resources are important so that employee engagement can improve.

6.5. MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Management implications of this study include the following:

Firstly, the study shows that non-managers are less engaged than managers are, and if these engagement levels are to be increased, management could improve the communication climate of non-managers, which may positively impact job resources, leading to improved levels of engagement. Secondly, as previously stated, managers seem to believe that a positive communication climate is one where there is a supportive relationship between superior and subordinate and where there is superior openness, candour and trust. However, the levels of support, openness and candour are determined by the manager; the manager decides what supportive behaviour, openness and candour are. This seems to be done without much input from the subordinate. The subordinate's feedback and participation are gathered through listening and dialogue, but the findings of this study suggest that it may not be particularly important to management.

This is in contrast with what non-managers revealed. Non-managers perhaps place a higher value on empathetic listening and the quality and accuracy of information communicated from the top. They want to participate in decision-making and need good and accurate information in order to do so. This has an important impact on open knowledge sharing to empower. According to non-management, knowledge sharing is the only driver that could perhaps improve employee engagement. However, open knowledge sharing can only take place (1) when managers listen to their subordinates so that the latter can participate and (2) where the information shared with subordinates by their managers is accurate and of a high quality. In contrast with management, non-management places less value on superior–subordinate communication. Rather, they want them to listen and share good information.

Thus, management should acknowledge the fact that they should listen more attentively and encourage more participation from their subordinates. They must ensure that information is shared more readily and that it is accurate and of high value and quality. This will improve knowledge sharing to empower employees and, according to non-managers, increase their engagement levels.

The perception of a positive communication climate differs to some extent between managers and non-managers. If managers want to improve non-management's engagement levels, they must understand this difference and create a climate that non-management deems important, not what they deem important. They must acknowledge that their perspective is unlikely to improve non-management's communication climate. They must also understand how their subordinates, who are non-managers, would respond differently to the communication climate and how that influences job resources to improve employee engagement. Within this relationship, through dialogue and by listening, the manager can begin to understand these differences and manage accordingly. However, this needs a more positive communication climate as defined by subordinates.

Moreover, there is a difference between management's and non-management's perceptions of job resources. Job resources may be more fluid and dynamic, especially considering an ever-changing macro business environment. Thus, it is important for management to know and understand the needs and wants of non-management in terms of job resources, to ultimately improve employee engagement. It is suggested that through a positive communication climate, managers can continually track the needs and wants of their subordinates – remembering that it may be different from their own.

6.6. RESEACH LIMITATIONS

The first limitation of this study is the fact that there are many drivers of employee engagement, as identified by various other studies (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007:312; Rothman *et al*., 2006:76; Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003:345). It would have been difficult to include all the possible drivers as constructs in the questionnaire, as it would have rendered the survey much too long. This study, therefore, focused on only three identified job resources.

Secondly, it is acknowledged that not only job resources but also personal resources, such as drive and motivation, and outside forces, such as economic instability, influence engagement levels. An organisation does, however, not have power to control all the external factors involved in creating engaged employees but can control the resources that they make available to employees.

Lastly, the focus of this research was limited to knowledge workers in four prominent short-term insurance organisations in South Africa. This limited the generalisability to similar knowledge workers within the insurance sector. If respondents from other financial industry sectors were selected, the generalisability of the research could have been further increased to include the larger financial industry.

6.7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since exploratory factor analysis indicated constructs that differed from those used in the original instruments, this study tested conceptual models through SEM. During the course of SEM, neither the management nor non-management models fit absolutely based on all the goodness-of-fit indices, although it is noted that both RMSEA and CMIN/df did show a good fit. Therefore, further research should be conducted within the same context to refine the model fit. Such research could use different job resources or different measurement instruments to test whether a better model fit can be achieved to more definitively show whether communication climate has a positive influence on job resources to improve employee engagement.

The aim of this study was to understand the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement and whether managers and non-managers had different perceptions regarding this process. These basic conceptual models present themselves as a mediation model (Chapter 5). For this reason, statistical analyses were performed to determine whether job resources mediate the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement. However, understanding the role and impact of the mediator was not within the scope of this study, and it is suggested that job resources as a mediator in the relationship between communication climate and employee engagement be investigated through further research.

Future research can also investigate other job resources and more general drivers of employee engagement. From the viewpoint of this study, knowledge workers within the South African insurance industry may not identify the same set of drivers as set out in European and American literature. Thus, a study can be done to test what South African participants in the insurance sector and broader financial industry believe to be drivers that improve employee engagement. This study only looked at three original drivers, while there are many others that can be examined within this specific context.

Furthermore, future research can investigate, through qualitative studies, management's views on what a positive communication climate entails and why their views on this topic may be different from those of non-managers. Research can look to suggest ways of closing this gap between management's and non-management's perceptions regarding a positive communication climate by addressing specific barriers. Finally, research of a similar nature can be conducted using respondents from other sectors, such as the banking industry. This would contribute towards the generalisability of this study's findings to the broader financial industry in South Africa.

Lastly, this study focussed on two distinct groups within a business environment: management and non-management. It is suggested that future research can further distinguish between middle-management and top/senior-management. Due to their different roles within the organisation, these groups of employees may also hold different perceptions related to the topic at hand.

6.8. SUMMARY

The primary research objective of this study was to determine whether there is a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers regarding the influence of communication climate on job resources to improve employee engagement. Through SEM, the results showed that, within reason, communication could impact job resources, which then influences employee engagement. However, there was a difference in the perceptions of managers and non-managers.

There was a clear difference in the level of employee engagement when comparing management with non-management. Although both groups scored high on engagement levels, non-management was less engaged than management was. Management also perceived a more positive communication climate than non-management did and had more positive perceptions towards job resources available to them.

The results from the statistical analyses showed that in the case of both management and non-management communication climate could influence job resources, which could lead to improved levels of employee engagement. Thus, when management experiences a more positive communication climate, it may lead to a more positive experience of the job resources, which may inspire higher levels of employee engagement. Non-management had a slightly less positive attitude towards communication climate, which may lead to a slightly less positive experience with job resources. In turn, this may result in slightly poorer employee engagement compared to that of management.

There is, furthermore, a distinct difference between how management and non-management perceive the concepts of communication climate, job resources and employee engagement. The question then becomes: How can communication climate begin to influence job resources to improve employee engagement if people perceive the concepts to be different? There is incongruence. The only real way to align the views of management and non-management is through effective communication. Thus, improving the communication climate may ultimately improve the understanding and experience of job resources to improve employee engagement. A positive communication climate in the superior–subordinate dyad appears to be the key for management to ensure that they understand the needs of non-managers in terms of job resources. Only when these needs are adequately addressed can employee engagement improve. Moreover, these needs can only be understood and addressed when there is a positive communication climate between a superior and his/her subordinate.

In conclusion, a more positive communication climate, especially between a superior and his/her subordinate, could improve the experience of job resources, which in turn could improve levels of employee engagement amongst subordinates. Moreover, a better understanding of subordinates' needs in terms of communication climate may help to improve the subordinate's employee engagement levels. This research, however, delved deeper into the understanding of the role of communication climate as more than just another job resource but rather as a tool that underpins all job resources for improving employee engagement.

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