



# **INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE A PERCEIVED SERVANT LEADERSHIP STYLE HAS ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

**Name: Purusha Pillay**

**Student Number: 18377956**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Even in today's uncertain and turbulent times, employees remain the key driver of organisational performance. Retaining high performing and loyal employees, while maintaining a high level of organisational performance, is becoming increasingly challenging for today's leaders. Global levels of employee engagement are at an all-time low. It has become imperative for leaders to cultivate a work environment that espouses a more engaged work force. Servant leadership requires leaders to remove positional and authoritative power, and work together with employees to enhance organisational performance, and create an environment that is conducive to meeting organisational goals.

**OBJECTIVE:** The focus of the research was to ascertain whether there is a relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement, and to establish which sub scale of servant leadership had the greatest relationship with employee engagement.

**METHODOLOGY:** The key parameter data in this mono-quantitative study were employees across industries. The study set out to investigate the servant leadership style of an employee's manager, and the engagement of the employee. The study followed a descriptive research design and data was collected from 115 employees across various industries via an online survey. The researcher adapted research instruments for both constructs: servant leadership was measured according to six dimensions, and employee engagement was defined by three dimensions.

**OUTCOME:** The results in the study established a statistically significant relationship between a perceived servant leadership style and overall employee engagement, and found the servant leadership dimension, transcendental spirituality, to have the greatest relationship with employee engagement.

**KEYWORDS**

Servant leadership, Employee engagement, Leadership

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Purusha Pillay

11th November 2019

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Servant Leadership – SL

Employee Engagement - EE

## **1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

### 1.1. Introduction

The study will follow a descriptive approach to investigate and describe the effect a perceived servant leadership style has on how engaged employees are in an organisation.

### 1.2. Background to the Research Problem

#### 1.2.1. Current Business Environment

The South African business environment is volatile, complex, and interconnected (McManus & Mosca, 2015). With a declining GDP, retrenchment and restructuring on the rise, and poor labour force participation (Trading Economics, 2019), building engagement is a viable lever available to South African organisations as a means of creating a healthier labour environment. Improving employee engagement would encourage a more motivated work force, as well as an increased rate of organisational performance and profitability to drive much needed GDP growth (McManus & Mosca, 2015).

#### 1.2.2. Employee Engagement and Organisational Performance

Today, employee engagement is considered imperative in the business world due to the fact it leads to higher levels of profitability and organisational performance (Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Radda, Abubakar, Majidadi, Mubarak, & Akanno, Samuel, 2015; Nada & Singh, 2016). In today's business environment, people are the competitive advantage. Retaining and acquiring high performing employees is critical in today's turbulent business environment (Nienaber & Martins, 2014).

#### 1.2.3. The Role of Leadership in Employee Engagement

It is clear that stronger manager and employee relationships are a crucial component of any employee retention and engagement strategy. For this reason, any initiative driven by

leadership is futile without leaders taking the initiative to foster greater engagement levels amongst their employees. Thus, sound leadership is critical in improving employees' attitude to, and their overall engagement in, their organisation. It is, therefore, imperative for leaders to consider how their actions affect their employees and the success of the organisation they are in.

#### 1.2.4. Why Servant Leadership?

Outdated authoritarian management styles are no longer enough to enhance organisational performance and develop and retain key talent (Bolisani & Bratianu, 2018). Servant leadership, as a leadership model, thus becomes more relevant in fostering employee engagement, as it is particularly concerned with nurturing the interaction between leader and follower (employee), and fostering trust, while building a stronger organisation (Seto & Sarros, 2016; Timiyo & Yeadon-Lee, 2016).

#### 1.3. Business Need for the Study

Employees are a key asset in an organisation. Engaged employees have higher commitment levels (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, & Fletcher, 2017a; Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009; Carter & Baghurst, 2014a; McManus & Mosca, 2015; Steelcase, 2017). Globally, under 15% of the working class are engaged in their organisations (Nada & Singh, 2016). Gallup, an organisation dedicated to employee engagement research, attributes high levels of engagement to the following organisational outcomes (Gallup, 2013, p. 2) : “customer retention, increased profitability, increased productivity, higher turnover, fewer safety incidents, less shrinkage, less absenteeism, higher quality product.” However, while the outcomes for employee engagement are clearly to retain hard-working and high performing employees, while simultaneously keeping profits high, has become increasingly difficult for leaders.

For this reason, today's organisations require a leadership model that can foster the environment needed for employee engagement to flourish. Furthermore, leaders need to move away from authoritarian forms of leadership, that focus on accumulating and exerting power, and move toward a leadership model that serves all stakeholders involved

(Spears, 1995). On completion of my research, I hope to provide valuable insight into how organisations can enhance employee engagement by utilising a servant leadership style as a tool.

#### 1.4. Purpose Statement

The quantitative study investigates the relationship between a perceived servant leadership style and its influence on employee engagement. The data will be based on a survey that describes an employee's perceptions of their manager, and the employee's self-reported engagement score. The study will not be focused on a particular industry, but rather look at perceived servant leadership styles and employee engagement across different industries to illuminate any industry nuances that exist between the relationship of investigated variables.

Furthermore, the novel aspect of this study is establishing the impact of servant relationship on employee engagement; and correlating unique dimensions of servant leadership and employee engagement.

#### 1.5. Aim of Research

The objective of the research was to garner a greater comprehension of the servant leadership dimensions, if any, that influence employee engagement.

This research aims to:

- 1.) Establish whether a perceived servant leadership style drives employee engagement
- 2.) Recognise the dimensions of servant leadership that are the most impactful on overall employee engagement.

## **2. CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### 2.1. Key Sources

Seminal literature on servant leadership and employee engagement originates pre-2014. For this reason, a combination of current literature, as well as, older literature has been utilised in this literature review.

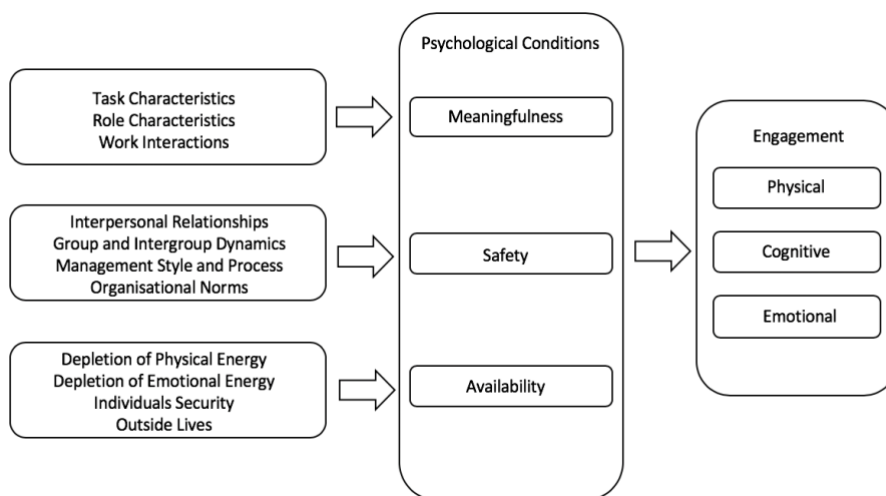
### 2.2. Employee Engagement (EE)

#### 2.2.1. Defining Employee Engagement

Defining employee engagement is often difficult because it is often confused with other notions such as of job involvement or job satisfaction. Engagement differs from other notions as it is focussed on the emotions and behaviours one actively displays while performing a job role/job task (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). Employee engagement theory has been founded on Kahn's work (1990) who describes engagement as an employee that is: "physically, emotionally, and cognitively engrossed..." (p.692) in their job role/job task due to certain psychological conditions being met- See Appendix C. The psychological conditions faced at one's job impacts their level of engagement. Attridge (2009) links engagement to passion, enthusiasm, and commitment an employee exhibits when performing a job role/job task. The Gallup organisation, an organisation dedicated to researching employee engagement defines engagement

Kahn (1990) argues that one's employee engagement fluctuates due to the fact they do not immerse their full 'selves' (Kahn, 1990, p. 701) in their job role/job task. In this way employees who are engaged can be seen to find a sense of self expression in their job roles/job tasks. May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) further argue that apart from self-expression, employee engagement is closely associated with the flourishing of the human spirit. When employees do not express their 'selves' in the job role/job task disengagement occurs- and the employee extracts their personal energy from the job role/job task (Ferrer, 2005; Kahn, 1990; Sarit Prava Das & Parna S Mishra, 2014; Xu & Thomas, 2011). Kahn

(1990) describes the psychological conditions that he believes fosters engagement as meaningfulness, safety, and availability. See Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Model of Employee Engagement. Adapted from “*Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work (p.705)*, from by W. A. Kahn, 1990, *Academy of Management Journal*. Copyright 1990 Academy of Management Journal”**

## 2.2.2. Preconditions for Employee Engagement

### 2.2.2.1. Psychological meaningfulness

Psychological meaningfulness is recognised as a critical precondition to employee engagement (Imandin, Bisschoff, & Botha, 2017; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Nada & Singh, 2016; Wanare, 2014). Essentially employees thrive if they find meaning in their jobs. However, if this is not the case, employees become more apathetic and robotic in their roles (Imandin, Bisschoff, & Botha, 2017; Nada & Singh, 2016; Wanare, 2014). The below is related to meaningfulness:

- Task characteristics and role characteristics either add value or extract value from the enrichment and meaningfulness one gets from their job role. An employee is motivated and finds meaning and value in a role that is challenging, a role with growth and development potential, and a role where the job role and their ‘self’ are not in conflict.



- Work interactions/Co-worker relations are imperative for the employee to find some sort of meaning in their role. An employee finds meaning in their role if their contributions are valued and appreciated by their co-workers.

#### 2.2.2.2. Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is related to an employee being able to be themselves while performing their job role/job task (Kahn, 1990). Psychological safety can be ascribed to one fully understanding what their job role/task requires, and fully valuing the organisational culture, and what behaviours are acceptable in their job role/task. In terms of co-worker relations, psychological safety is when employees trust their colleagues/teams and are able safely communicate with one another without being fearful of the other person's reaction (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Sen & Rajkamal, 2018; Nada & Singh, 2016).

#### 2.2.2.3. Psychological Availability

Psychological availability is related to employees being able to absorb their 'selves' in their job role/task due as a result of: being given the necessary resources and support to perform their job adequately, adequate reward incentives and being motivated by their job role/job task (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Sen & Rajkamal, 2018; Nada & Singh, 2016).

#### 2.2.3. Employee Engagement and Organisational Performance

The literature (Bin, 2015; Chaudhary, 2019; Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Xu & Thomas, 2011; Young, Glerum, Wang, & Joseph, 2018) sees employee engagement leading to improved performance, customer loyalty, and overall financial gains for the organisation. Furthermore, employee engagement can also be seen to be linked to a more harmonious working environment, lesser absenteeism, and higher levels of employee loyalty (Bin, 2015; Chaudhary, 2019; Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Xu & Thomas, 2011; Young et al., 2018). Essentially, an engaged employee is an employee that is enthusiastic about the work they do and are

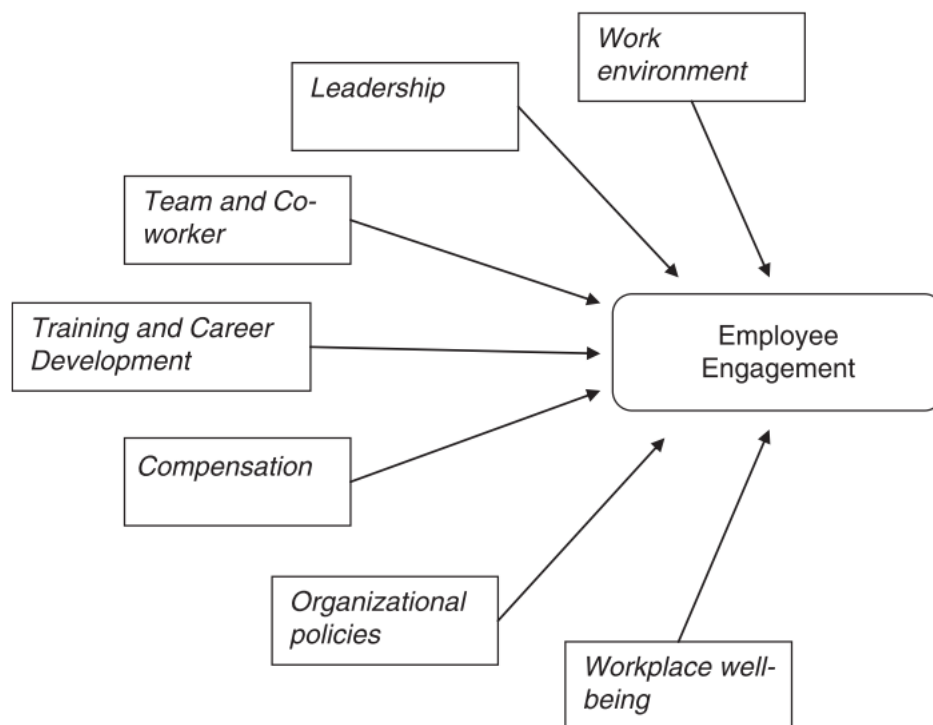
willing to go above and beyond for the organisation, fully committing to the success of the organisation (Bin, 2015; González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006; Young et al., 2018).

#### 2.2.4. Current Theoretical Perspectives on Employee Engagement

Unlike Kahn, the Utrecht and the Gallup group move away from describing employee engagement as a behavioural concept, but rather, describes engagement as a state of mind (Bailey et al., 2017a; Carter & Baghurst, 2014a; Nada & Singh, 2016; Sulea, Beek, Sarbescu, Virga, & Wilmar B. Schaufeli, 2015). Literature describes the conditions that impact engaged employees as employees who understand their key performance indicators, and have the necessary resources available do their job, ample opportunity to develop and grow themselves further in their position, are motivated by their work, value their company culture and company, and have good and trusting relations with co-workers and manager (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013; Anitha, 2014; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014; Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014; Nada & Singh, 2016; Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Sulea et al., 2015; Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). González-Romá et al (2006), describes 'burnout' as the opposite of employee engagement.

Harter et al. (2002), posits that happy, and fulfilling job experiences that are defined by 'vigour, absorption and dedication' can be related to engagement, while burnout is characterised by the opposite, namely 'cynicism, exhaustion and lack of efficacy' (Petrou, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2015; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, 2010; Sulea, Beek, Sarbescu, Virga, & Wilmar B. Schaufeli, 2015). Vigour refers to the output of energy associated to one's performance in their job role/job task, dedication is related to fulfilment and satisfaction the employee feels while performing job task, and absorption is related to the way an employee engrosses themselves in their job role/job task (Petrou et al., 2015; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, 2010; Sulea et al., 2015; Sen & Rajkamal, 2018). Nada & Singh (2016), propose a framework for employee engagement that describes leadership as a central factor for fostering employee engagement through employee motivation. Anitha (2014, p. 5) posits seven factors that have an impact on employee engagement (see

Figure 2). Anitha (2014) found these factors to be statistically valid determinants of employee engagement.



**Figure 2: Determinants of Employee Engagement.** Adapted from “*Determinants of Employee Engagement and their Impact on Employee Performance (p.5)*”, by J. Anitha, 2014, *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*. Copyright 2014 *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*”

There are numerous research instruments that have been put forward to measure engagement (Anitha, 2014; Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014; Kahn, 1990; Nada & Singh, 2016; Gallup, 2013; González-Romá et al., 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, 2010). Even though this is so, what cultivates employee engagement is still very much an enigma. For this reason, this study proposes a new three dimensional framework for employee engagement that extends factors contributing to Kahn’s (1990) preconditions of employee engagement: “Psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability” by adding additional employee engagement determinants from the literature- see Table 1.

<b>Recognition and Commitment  (Meaningfulness)</b>	<b>Team Culture and Growth  (Safety)</b>	<b>Reward and Organisational Support  (Availability)</b>
Work Environment (Anitha, 2014) (Imandin et al., 2017)	Leadership relations (Anitha, 2014) (Nada & Singh, 2016) (May et al., 2004) (Imandin et al., 2017)	Reward incentives (Nada & Singh, 2016) (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013) (Robertson & Cooper, 2010) (Anitha, 2014)
Recognition (Nada & Singh, 2016) (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013)	Team and Co-worker Anitha, 2014) (May et al., 2004)	Employee performance (Anitha, 2014; Kahn, 1990; Mishra et al., 2014; Nada & Singh, 2016; Nienaber & Martins, 2014)
Feeling valued and involved (Imandin et al., 2017)	Training and Career Development Anitha, 2014)	Employee motivation (Anitha, 2014; Kahn, 1990; Mishra et al., 2014; Nada & Singh, 2016; Nienaber & Martins, 2014)
	Understand their key performance indicators (May et al., 2004)	Employee happiness (Anitha, 2014; Nada & Singh, 2016)
	Opportunities to develop and grow themselves (May et al., 2004) (Imandin et al., 2017)	Job resources, personal resources (Nada & Singh, 2016) (Robertson & Cooper, 2010)

	Value their company culture and company(May et al., 2004)	Organisational policies (Anitha, 2014)
	Trusting relations with co-workers and manager(May et al., 2004) (Nada & Singh, 2016) (May et al., 2004)	Work-life balance (Robertson & Cooper, 2010)
	Employee development (Nada & Singh, 2016)	
	Manager support (Mishra et al., 2014)	

Table 1: Proposed EE Dimensions and Factors

The new dimensions will be named: **Recognition and Organisational Commitment**, **Reward and Organisational Support** and **Team, Culture and Growth** and the following factors will fall under each dimension- see Table 2.

<b>Dimension 1: Recognition and Organisational Commitment  (Meaningfulness)</b>	<b>Dimension 2: Reward and Organisational Support  (Safety)</b>	<b>Dimension 3: Team, Culture, and Growth  (Availability)</b>
Work Environment	Reward Incentives	Clear Key Performance Indicators
Recognition and Feeling Valued	Resources	Work Environment

Attitude Towards Organisation	Attitude Towards Job Task	Supportive leadership
	Organisational Policies	Organisational Culture
	Work-life balance	Supportive Teams
		Growth and Development

**Table 2: Proposed Dimensions and Factors of EE**

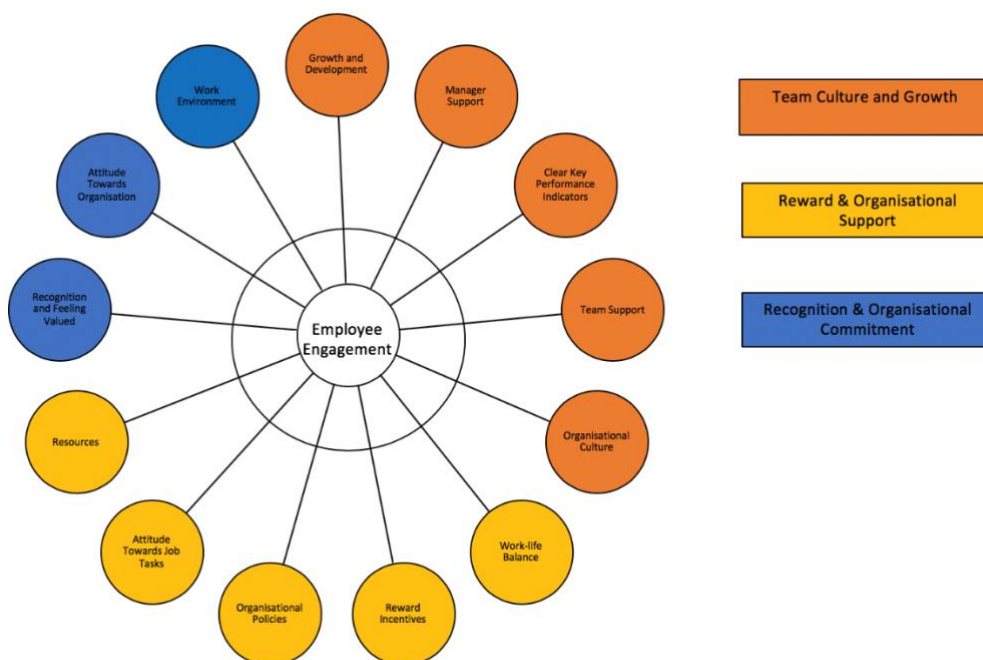
#### 2.2.5. Leadership and Employee Engagement

The previous section indicates that leadership plays a central part in employee engagement. In a world flooded by uncertainty, rapid change, and increasing complexity, it is imperative that leadership view their employees as somewhat of a strategic asset to their organisation. Hawley (1993) posits that leaders should be more concerned with nurturing the human spirit of their employees than focusing purely on the day to day tasks of the organisation.

Leadership is seen to play an intricate part in facilitating employee engagement, and influences a variety of variables that the literature shows impacts engagement, such as: providing adequate resources to employees' resources, impacting organisational culture, providing organisational support and development opportunities to employees, motivating high performance in employees, clearly communicating key performance indicators to employees, providing a trusting and safe atmosphere for staff, taking accountability and recognising employees' achievements, encouraging employees to find purpose and self-expression in their role, and emotionally supporting employees (Anitha, 2014; Bailey et al., 2017; Chaudhary, 2019; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; McManus & Mosca, 2015; Nada & Singh, 2016; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Sen & Rajkamal, 2018; Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011; Truss et al., 2013; Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009).

## 2.2.6. Conclusion

Employee engagement is an intricate and complicated construct to define and measure (Nienaber & Martins, 2014). The literature discussed (Anitha, 2014; Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014; Kahn, 1990; Nada & Singh, 2016; Bin, 2015; Chaudhary, 2019; Young et al., 2018) establish a relationship between increased organisational performance and employee engagement, and assert that organisations should look towards a means of increasing employee engagement, in order to achieve greater organisational performance. This study defines engagement as consisting of three dimensions, namely: **Recognition and Organisational Commitment**, **Reward and Organisational Support** and **Team, Culture, and Growth**- see Figure 3.



**Figure 3: Proposed Theoretical Framework for Employee Engagement**

## 2.4. Servant Leadership (SL)

### 2.4.1. Defining Servant Leadership

Greenleaf categorised a servant leader as an individual with an inherent affinity to serve others, and who then intentionally seeks to serve in a leadership role (Greenleaf, 1977). A servant leader's intent is to nurture, grow, and develop their employees (Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leadership emerges from an attitude of serving others, and a belief that others (followers) and their needs should come before the needs of the Self (leader) (Frick & James W. Sipe, 2015; Greenleaf, 1977; Russell et al., 2002; Seto & Sarros, 2016; Spears, 2010; Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2004a; Timiyo & Yeadon-Lee, 2016; Wong, 2003; De Clercq et al., 2014; Jit et al., 2016; Reinke, 2004; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Choudhary et al., 2013; Carter & Baghurst, 2014).

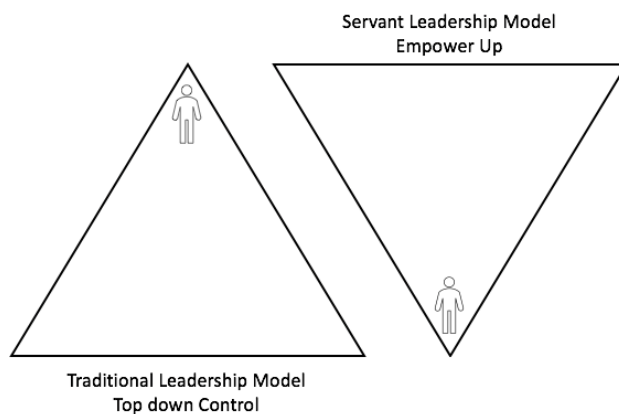
Servant leadership encourages an inclusive decision making process between leader and follower and is rooted in ethical behaviour (Spears, 2010). Servant leaders cultivate an environment where followers are encouraged to grow and are not afraid to fail. This encourages the follower to grow and be more innovative and creative in their role (van Dierendonck & Rook, 2010). Servant leaders also lead by flattening the organisational hierarchy and making everyone feel like equal partners in the organisation. With the removal of hierarchy and power, followers feel psychologically safe voicing their grievances and ideas, and engaging and communicating openly across the organisation (Green, Rodriguez, Wheeler, & Baggerly-Hinojosa, 2015; Linda et al., 2013; L. C. Spears, 2010; Jit et al., 2016; Reinke, 2004; Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Choudhary et al., 2013).

### 2.4.2. Historical Overview

Greenleaf (1977) put forward Servant leadership as a framework to holistically elevate the moral and ethical development of leaders (Greenleaf, 1970). Greenleaf (1970) writes: "The servant-leader is a servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first." Greenleaf (1977, p. 77) felt there was a "the leadership crisis" where tertiary institutes were not effectively preparing students to become responsible leaders



(Russell et al., 2002). Therefore, Greenleaf (1978) believed servant leadership theory is crucial in educating individuals on what it takes to be a responsible leader. Stone, Russell, & Patterson (2004) argue that the servant leader holds the belief that achievement of the goals of the organisation will only occur in the long term if first the needs of the followers/employees are nurtured.



**Figure 4: Servant Leadership vs. Traditional Leadership (constructed by the author)**

In the more traditional models, the leader was perceived to be the conductor at the top of an organisation that leads through top-down styles. Servant leadership views the leader as a figure positioned to serve the needs of their followers, and therefore the organisation, through service and commitment to their priorities. See Figure 4. Servant leaders gain influence in service to their followers and carry it out through a genuine interest and trust in their abilities (Stone et al., 2004b). According to Seto and Sarros (2016), servant leadership encourages a quality relationship between a leader and follower (employee), which improves organisational performance, and create greater confidence in employees — essentially creating a symbiotic relationship for leader and follower. Spears (1998) felt essentially servant leaders will create more caring and empathetic organisations. However, Spears (1998) argues that the characteristics that are apparent in Servant Leadership cannot be cultivated in individuals, but it is rather a natural occurrence that can be intensified through practice.

### 2.4.3. Servant Leader Attributes

Greenleaf's earlier writings provide the basis for Spear's (1996) list of servant leaders characteristics which include (Greenleaf, 1977; L. Spears, 1996; L. C. Spears, 2010):

**Listening:** Servant leaders are more interested in listening and understanding than being compelled to put their view across.

**Empathy:** When you lead empathetically, you carry the aspirations and longings of your followers/employees. You will not be able to accurately determine what losses you are asking people to sustain if you are not a compassionate and empathetic leader (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

**Healing:** Servant leaders have a symbiotic relationship with their followers/employees. By attempting to make their followers/employees whole, they heal themselves

**Awareness:** Servant leaders display an awareness of their own power and influence on others.

**Persuasion:** Servant leaders need to be charismatic leaders and inspire and persuade their followers/leaders to act a certain way, without relying on their authoritative power.

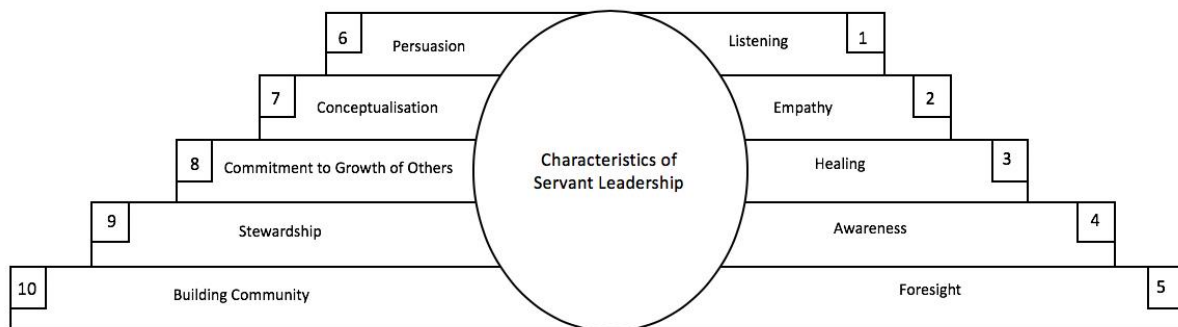
**Conceptualisation:** Servant leaders need to be focussed on the bigger picture, and conceptualise an enticing future vision for their followers/leaders., and conceptualise a reality

**Foresight:** Servant leaders lead with intuition and use foresight to predict likely outcomes of decisions made that will affect the future.

**Stewardship:** Servant leaders are focussed on serving others while leading.

**Commitment to the growth of people:** Servant leaders are concerned with the growth and development of their followers/employees.

**Building Community:** Servant leaders lead by empowering their followers/leaders to become decision makers and build a community where followers/employees take an equal part in contributing to the success of the organisation.



**Figure 5: Characteristics of Servant Leaders (Constructed by Author)**

In addition to Spears (1998), the seminal research done in the areas of servant leadership is summarised in Table 3.

<b>Author:</b>	<b>Dimensions and/or Characteristics</b>
(L. Spears, 1996) (Greenleaf, 1977)	"Listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth of people, building community..."
(Laub, 1999)	"Building community, developing people, displaying authenticity, providing leadership, sharing leadership, valuing people..."

(Buchen, 1998)	“Capacity for reciprocity, relationship building, pre-occupation with the future, self-identity...”
(Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999)	“Behavioural components: Vision, service. Relational components: Trust, influence, credibility...”
	<p>“<i>Functional attributes</i>: Vision, honesty integrity, trust, service, modelling, pioneering, appreciation of others, empowerment.</p> <p><i>Accompanying attributes</i>: Communication, credibility, competence, stewardship, visibility, influence, persuasion, listening, encouragement, teaching, delegation...”</p>
(Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006)	“Altruistic calling, wisdom, emotional healing, organisational stewardship, persuasive mapping...”
(Wong & Page, 2003)	<p>“<i>Character orientation</i>: integrity, humility, servanthood</p> <p><i>People orientation</i>: Caring for others, empowering others, developing others</p> <p><i>Task orientation</i>: Vision, goal setting, leading</p> <p><i>Process orientation</i>: Modelling, team building, shared decision making...”</p>
(Sendjaya, Sarros, & Santora, 2008)	<p>“<i>Voluntary subordination</i>: Being a servant, acts of service</p> <p><i>Authentic Self</i>: Humility, integrity, accountability, security, vulnerability</p> <p><i>Covenantal Relationship</i>: Acceptance, availability, equality, collaboration</p>

	<p><i>Responsible Morality:</i> Moral reasoning, moral purpose  <i>Transcendental Spirituality:</i> Transcendental beliefs, interconnectedness, sense of mission, wholeness  <i>Transforming influence:</i> Empowerment, modelling, mentoring, trust...”</p>
(Nuijten & Dierendonck, 2011)	<p>“Empowerment, standing back, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, accountability, humility, courage, stewardship...”</p>

Table 3: Seminal Studies on Servant Leadership

#### 2.4.4. Dimensions of Servant Leaders

The study’s main focus is on the servant leadership model Senjaya, Sarros and Santora (2008) put forward. Senjaya, Sarros, and Santora (2008) put forward a servant leadership model (see Appendix A) that extends the work of the original servant leadership model and incorporates a spiritual dimension. According to Senjaya, Sarros, and Santora (2008), servant leadership consists of 6 dimensions:

**Authentic Self:** Requires leaders to demonstrate that they are okay with not being in the spotlight and taking all the credit, but are able to rather work quietly and humbly ‘behind the scenes’ in a way that doesn’t draw attention to themselves

**Covenantal Relationship:** Having genuine relationships with others for who they are and not for what one can get from them

**Responsible Morality:** Using a moral and ethical high ground in every decision one makes

**Transcendental Spirituality:** Having a higher and more spiritual calling in serving others and one's decision making process.

**Transforming Influence:** Having a positive influence on those around you and transforming others

**Voluntary Subordination:** A willingness to serve if needs be. Servant leaders remove pride and ego from their position

#### 2.4.5. Servant Leadership and Organisational Performance

Furthermore, research shows that servant leadership encourages employees to go the extra mile, and demonstrate a greater organisational outcomes (Seto & Sarros, 2016; Anitha, 2014; Bailey et al., 2017; Chaudhary, 2019; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; McManus & Mosca, 2015; Nada & Singh, 2016; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Sen & Rajkamal, 2018; Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011; Truss et al., 2013). Servant leadership is shown to be closely linked to: greater financial outcomes for the organisation, better customer relations, improved employee performance and loyalty, and an overall better work environment (Seto & Sarros, 2016; Anitha, 2014; Bailey et al., 2017; Chaudhary, 2019; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; McManus & Mosca, 2015; Nada & Singh, 2016; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Sen & Rajkamal, 2018; Shuck, Reio, & Rocco, 2011; Truss et al., 2013).

#### 2.4.6. Leadership Models that are Similar to Servant Leadership

##### 2.4.6.1. Transformational Leadership

The transformational leader leads from the bottom up. Transformational Leadership occurs when the leader-follower union leads to greater moral and motivational implications for one another (Batista-Taran et al., 2009).

The four dimensions of transformational leadership are:

**Idealised Influence:** Follower idolises their leader and this builds trust between leader and follower, which encourages the follower to perform better.

**Inspirational Motivation:** Charismatic leaders motivate the organisation by inspiring followers, which encourages the follower to perform better.

**Intellectual Stimulation:** Leaders that intellectually stimulate followers to perform better, and be more innovative and creative in their thinking.

**Individualised Consideration:** Leaders that demonstrate genuine care and concern for followers encourage followers to perform better.

The above transformational leadership dimensions seek to transform the follower and induce greater performance levels from the follower/employee. Transformational leaders are intent on developing the relationship with their followers/employees, and cultivating an environment of trust by listening to the needs of their followers/employees (Batista-Taran et al., 2009).

#### 2.4.6.2. Transcendental Leadership

Transcendental leadership has a spiritual dimension and it transcends and extends existing leadership theories. Transcendental Leaders concentrate on an employee's personal growth and development, thereby intrinsically motivating employees to an increased level of performance, and overall, impacting organisational success and efficiency (Freeman, 2011; Liu, 2007; McGhee & Grant, 2017).

#### 2.4.6. Conclusion

Servant Leadership transcends leadership models like transcendental leadership and transformational leadership due to servant leadership prioritising, listening to, and

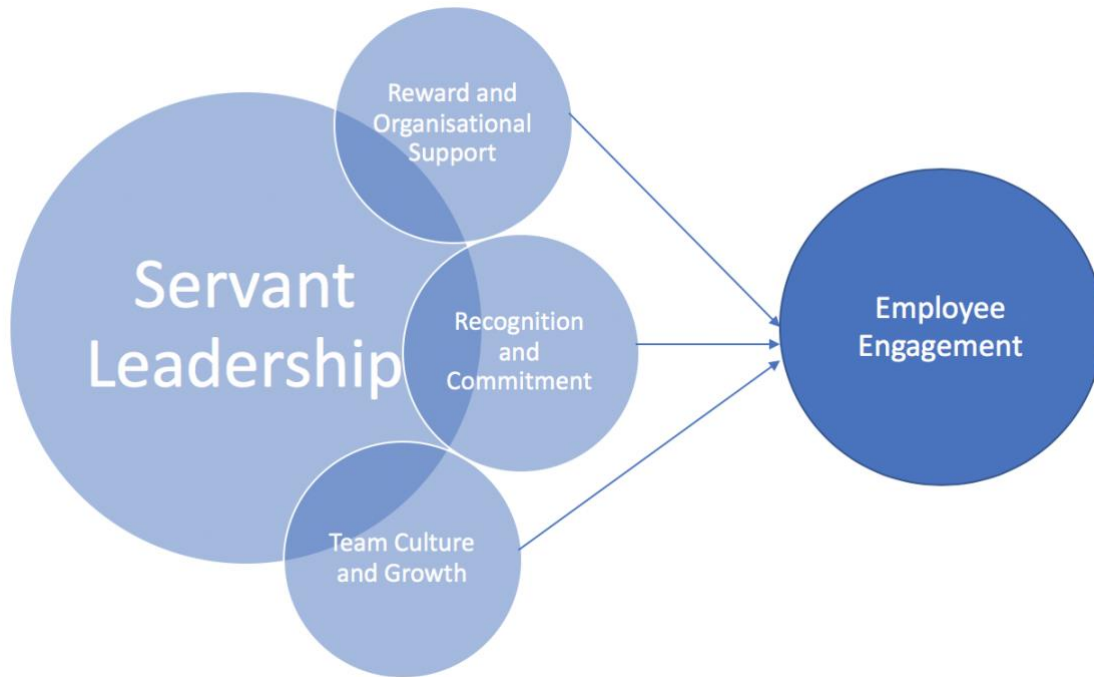
nurturing their employees. For this reason, Servant Leadership is gaining much weight due to the turbulent and uncertain times employees and leaders are facing today. Servant leaders have demonstrated a skill to attain the trust and loyalty of their employees through communicating and being authentic leaders that lead with integrity and empathy. The effect of Servant leadership on organisational performance and employee engagement outcomes cannot be denied. Servant leaders are devoted to serving the requirements of their work force, as well as empowering them and growing them into their best selves.

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

The literature indicates In order for employee engagement to thrive, there is a need for developing leaders that prioritise their followers' and employees' needs before their own (Seto & Sarros, 2016). Servant leaders understand that before the goals of the organisation, the needs of the employee must be prioritised. Doing so leads to an environment that is conducive to employee engagement. Batista et al. (2009, p. 18) argues that leaders with greater self-efficacy, like servant leaders, have a greater advantage in cultivating an environment conducive to employee engagement, thereby increasing performance and organisational commitment. For this study:

- a.) The servant leadership model that the researcher utilises in this study is an adapted version of the model Senjaya, Sarros, and Santora (2008) posit. The Senjaya, Sarros, and Santora (2008) model can be seen to encompass the best aspects of the other leadership models and mould them into one, as well as further incorporate a spiritual dimension.
- b.) The researcher proposes a new framework, based on literature, to measure employee engagement that consists of three dimensions: Recognition and Organisational Commitment, Reward and Organisational Support and Team, Culture, and Growth.





**Figure 6: Summary of Research Proposed**

While the literature indicates that employee engagement has definite benefits for an organisation in terms of performance and organisational commitment, there is no consensus on the drivers of employee engagement. It is clear that it would be more difficult for some organisations to implement a servant leadership model than others. Currently, there is little literature on the dimensional aspect of servant leadership, and its individual impact on employee engagement. For this reason, it is important to establish which dimension of servant leadership has the greatest influence on employee engagement. This will be useful for organisations that cannot effectively implement a servant leadership model all at once- these organisations can then implement the most pertinent dimensions of servant leadership to improve engagement. See figure 6 for a summary of the research proposed.

### 3. CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, QUESTION, AND HYPOTHESES

#### 3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted the areas that this study will focus, namely:

- 1.) Identifying the strength of the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement.
- 2.) The relationship of the individual dimensions of servant leadership and employee engagement

#### 3.2. Research Objective

- 1.) To determine if a relationship exists between a perceived servant leadership style exhibited by the employee's immediate line manager and the employee's engagement.
- 2.) To determine which dimension of servant leadership has the greatest influence on overall employee engagement.

#### 3.3. Hypothesised Research Model

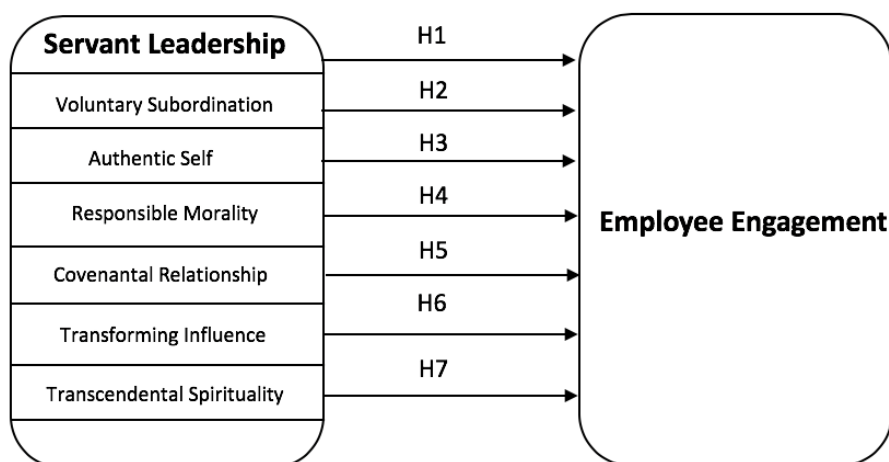


Figure 7: Conceptual Framework of Study (constructed by the author)

### 3.4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Figure 7 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

#### 3.4.1. Research Question and Hypothesis One

To determine the relationship between overall servant leadership and employee engagement.

##### 3.4.1.1. Hypothesis

**H<sub>0</sub>** – No significant relationship exists between servant leadership and employee engagement.

**H<sub>1</sub>** – A significant relationship exists between servant leadership and employee engagement.

#### 3.4.2. Research Question and Hypothesis Two

To determine the relationship between individual servant leadership dimensions and overall employee engagement.

##### 3.4.2.1. Hypotheses

1.) **H<sub>0</sub>** – No significant relationship exists between voluntary subordination and employee engagement

**H<sub>1</sub>** – There is a positive relationship between voluntary subordination and employee engagement

2.) **H<sub>0</sub>** – No significant relationship exists between Authentic self and employee engagement

**H<sub>1</sub>** – There is a positive relationship between authentic self and employee engagement

3.)  $H_0$  – No significant relationship exists between Covenantal relationship and employee engagement

$H_1$  – There is a positive relationship between Covenantal relationship and employee engagement

4.)  $H_0$  – No significant relationship exists between Responsible morality and employee engagement

$H_1$  – There is a positive relationship between Responsible morality and employee engagement

5.)  $H_0$  – No significant relationship exists between transforming influence and employee engagement

$H_1$  – There is a positive relationship between transforming influence and employee engagement

6.)  $H_0$  – No significant relationship exists between transcendental spirituality and employee engagement

$H_1$  – There is a positive relationship between transcendental spirituality and employee engagement

#### 4. CHAPTER 4: CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY

The research onion depicted in Figure 8 indicates the stages the researcher followed to construct an effective research methodology for this study.

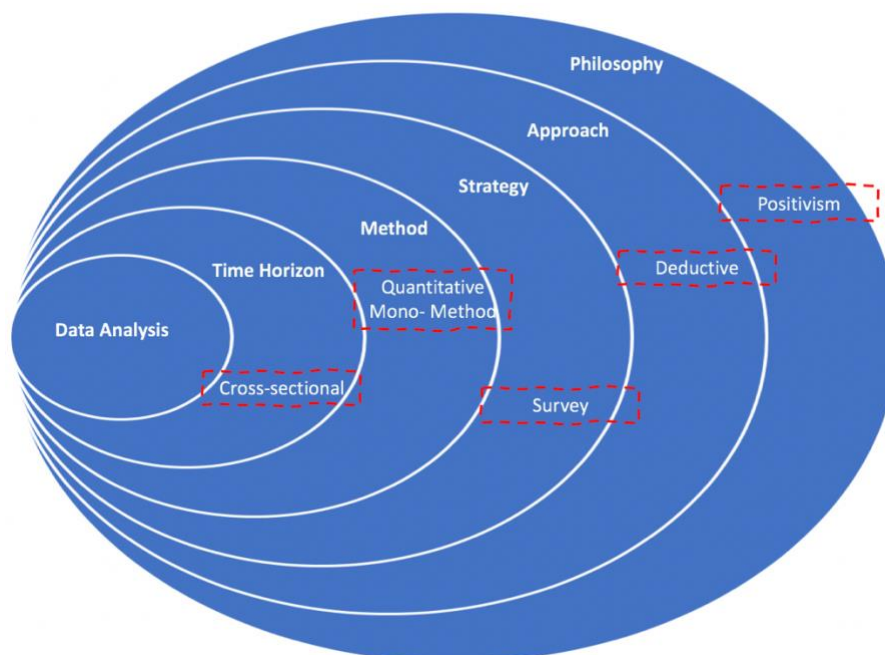


Figure 8: Research Onion. Adapted from *Doing Research in Business and Management: an essential guide to planning your project (p.105)*, by P. Lewis, M.N.K. Saunders, 2018, Pearson Education Limited. Copyright 2018 by Pearson Education Limited

##### 4.1. Philosophy

The research study forms its basis on empirical data and therefore adheres to the philosophy of **positivism**. The reason this philosophy was chosen is that true knowledge regarding employee engagement is obtained through observation and experiment (Rahi, 2017). This study will examine the influence organisational leaders, exhibiting perceived servant leadership characteristics, will have on employee engagement scores. The study will utilise a scientific method to produce data regarding the relationship between the investigated variables.

#### 4.2. Approach

A deductive reasoning methodology approach was used in this study because:

- 1.) The researcher deduced and tested hypotheses from the existing theory (Chaudhary, 2019; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Sendjaya et al., 2008)
- 2.) Examined the outcome in order to describe the relationship between the respective variables, i.e. dimensions of servant leadership and employee engagement.

The rationale behind a deductive reasoning approach was due to the fact the researcher tested a theory by acquiring new knowledge from respondents and ascertained observations by statistically analysing the new data (Rahi, 2017; Zalaghi & Khazaei, 2016). The data that was observed was based on a survey that illustrated employees' perceptions across industries of their immediate line manager, as well as the respondents describing their personal level of engagement at their current organisation.

#### 4.3. Purpose of Research Design and Time Horizon

This study will follow a **descriptive research design**, as it aims to investigate and describe the relationship and strength of association between employee engagement and servant leadership. While employee engagement is a broadly researched topic, there are very little substantive findings that show organisations the definite actions they can take to enhance either. Furthermore, this study is a cross-sectional study and cannot deduce causal relationships due to the fact this study offers a mere snapshot of a single moment in time and no consideration of the events that occurred before or after the study.

#### 4.4. Method and Strategy

A mono-quantitative method will be utilised for this study and a survey is used as the data collection tool. Questions will be adapted based on previous research. A quantitative methodology was chosen for this study due to the research having objective constructs

that are quantifiable and can be compared and correlated for data analysis purposes (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). Furthermore, previous research (Kahn, 1990; Dierendonck, 2011; Greenleaf, 1977; Robbins, Judge, & Campbell, 2017; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Spears, 2000; Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009; Wanare, 2014) done to measure the investigated constructs: employee engagement and servant leadership, have been quantitative in nature.

#### 4.5. Population

The study looks at employer-employee relations and investigates the influence of a perceived servant leadership style on employee engagement. The target population of relevance was therefore identified as all employees across various industries. Therefore, the unit of analysis for this study are individual employees. The study examines the perceptions and attitudes of employees across different industries to draw conclusions. The researcher chose to not be industry specific in order to understand any industry nuances that arise with regards to the research. Furthermore, the more participants there are, the richer and more representative the data will be.

#### 4.6. Sampling Method and Size

For this study, the researcher could not determine the size of the population and sought to obtain 200 survey respondents across various industries.

Snowball sampling (a type of non-probability sampling) will be utilised: Online surveys will be sent out to the researcher's personal networks, with a request for participants to send the survey out to their networks. (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2008; Lewis & Saunders, 2018; Zikmund et al., 2013) .

#### 4.7. Data Gathering Process

Primary data will be gathered from employees using a survey method. A survey as a research instrument was deemed as the most suitable option due to the below reasons:

- 1.) The literature indicated that a survey method was suitable to test the relationship between the identified constructs.
- 2.) A survey method allows the researcher to timeously collect a significant amount of data at one point in time.

The survey will be set up through Survey Monkey, an online survey platform. The survey monkey link will then be distributed via e-mail and social media platforms to the researcher's personal and professional networks (snowball sampling). Due to the sensitive nature of the topics addressed in the survey as regards employee attitudes towards their manager, only aggregated data will be disseminated in the dissertation. The survey will include a consent letter (Appendix E) that will indicate to the participant that participation is voluntary. Like the consent letter, the web-based e-mail (Appendix D) will include reasons for the survey, and a request to forward the survey link on to their personal and professional networks in order to enable a richer data set.

Data collected will be collated with numeric values, and no identifiers will be utilised. Therefore anonymity of company and employee information is guaranteed. A cross sectional study was used, and the survey was administered at one point in time (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). Weekly reminders were sent out to all participants to ensure completion of the survey and a high response rate. 150 surveys were gathered, and of the 150 surveys, only 115 surveys were fully completed. The sample size of this study is therefore 115 ( $n=115$ ).

Section two and three are focused on statements in relation to the respondent's perceptions towards their manager as a servant leader, and the respondent's level of engagement at their current organisation. In these sections, the survey adopted a six-point Likert scale. A Likert scale is appropriate in section 2 and 3 due to the fact the study will be analysing employee perceptions and attitudes and will be measuring how much the



respondent disagrees or agrees with a particular sentiment or statement (Revilla & Saris, 2014; Weijters, Cabooter, & Schillewaert, 2010). Furthermore, previous studies that tested the investigated constructs used a Likert<sup>2</sup> agreement scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Sendjaya et al., 2008; Senjaya & Pekerti, 2010). The scale and its ordinal code for section 2 and 3 are as follows:

- 1= Strongly Disagree
- 2= Disagree
- 3= Neither
- 4= Agree
- 5= Strongly Agree
- 0= Not Applicable

#### 4.8. Research Instrument

Employee engagement and servant leadership are both intricate and complicated constructs that consist of many different parts. The literature indicates that there are many conflicting determinants of employee engagements and servant leadership, and little clarity of a clear and concise means of measuring either construct.

Furthermore, research instruments for both servant leadership and employee engagement are copyrighted and lengthy (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002). For this reason, the researcher adapted, from previous literature, a new research instrument to measure each construct. See Appendix F. As the researcher adapted scales from previous research, Kitchenham & Pfleeger (2002) provides steps in evaluating new scale measurements, which include a pilot test. Due to the research study being cross-sectional in nature, a pilot test was not feasible due to time considerations, and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) would be used to verify the scales.

##### 4.8.1. Employee Engagement Section

From the literature, employee engagement was seen to be determined by three dimensions: **Recognition and Organisational Commitment, Team Culture and Growth, Reward and Organisational Support**. A new research instrument was constructed from previous research and used to define and measure employee engagement. Employee engagement was evaluated using an 18-item scale based on research by (Chaudhary, 2019; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004; Bailey et al., 2017; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Anitha, 2014; Nienaber & Martins, 2014)

#### 4.8.1.1. Recognition and Commitment Items (Meaningfulness)

<b>Item Related to The Dimension</b>
You feel appreciated at work
Your contributions are always valued at work
Your work gives you a sense of personal achievement
You would recommend your company as an employer
You are optimistic about the future with your company

**Table 4: Items Related to EE: Recognition and Commitment**

#### 4.8.1.2. Team Culture and Growth Items (Safety)

<b>Item Related to The Dimension</b>
You value your company culture
The company culture encourages you to voice your grievances in a safe environment
Your key performance indicators in your team are clear to you
You feel a connection with your colleagues
You feel a connection with the team you are in

You have a supportive, and good relationship with your manager/direct leader
At your company, there are many opportunities to develop and grow yourself further
Your career development within your company is clear

**Table 5: Items Related to EE: Team Culture and Growth**

#### 4.8.1.3. Reward and Organisational Support Items (Availability)

<b>Item Related to The Dimension</b>
You are happy to go to work
You get adequate support and resources from your organisation to do your job
You are happy with the reward incentives at work
You are motivated by your work
You always strive to produce high quality work

**Table 6: Items Related to EE: Reward and Organisational Support**

#### 4.8.2. Servant Leadership Section

The theoretical framework for measuring servant leadership behaviours that will be utilised for this study is adapted from Sendjaya, Sarros, and Santora's Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (*SLBS*) (Sendjaya & Sarros, 2008; Senjaya & Pekerti, 2010). The *SLBS* includes 22 values that servant leaders possess and diverges from other measures of servant leadership due to the fact it also provides greater dimensional measures than other frameworks (See Appendix A and Appendix B). While Sendjaya, Sarros, and

Santora (2008), put forward a 35 item instrument to measure servant leadership (Appendix B), this was too lengthy and copyrighted. The questionnaire was therefore adapted to the original 6 dimensions, but a 22 item instrument, that is 1 item for each servant leadership value Sendjaya, Sarros and Santora (2002) put forward.

#### 4.8.2.1. Dimension: Voluntary Subordination

<b>Values</b>	<b>Original Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS) Items</b>	<b>Adapted Item Related to The Dimension</b>
Being a servant	“Considers others’ needs and interest above my own”	Is selfless
Acts of Service	“Use power in service to others, not for my own ambition”	Is more concerned in serving others, than leading others
	“Be more conscious of my responsibilities than my rights”	
	“Serve others with no regard to background (gender, race, etc.)”	
	“Demonstrate that I care through sincere, practical deeds”	
	“Listen to others with the intent to understand”	

	“Assist others without seeking reward or acknowledgment”	
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**Table 7: SL Dimension: Voluntary Subordination**

#### 4.8.2.2. Dimension: Authentic Self

<b>Values</b>	<b>Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS) Items</b>	<b>Adapted Item Related to The Dimension</b>
Humility	“Avoids being defensive when confronted”	Admits when they make a mistake
Integrity	“When criticised focus on the message not the messenger”	Leads with integrity
Accountability	“Practice what I preach”	Takes accountability of their mistakes
Security	“Gives others the right to question my actions and decisions”	Creates a safe environment to criticise their decisions
Vulnerability	“Lets others take control of situations when appropriate”	Lets go of control, and allows employees to take charge and make mistakes
	“Be willing to say “I was wrong” to others”	

**Table 8: SL Dimension: Authentic Self**

4.8.2.3. Dimension: Covenantal Relationship

<b>Values</b>	<b>Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS) Items</b>	<b>Adapted Item Related to The Dimension</b>
Acceptance	"Affirms my trust in others"	Accepts they do not have all the answers
Availability	"Accepts others as they are, irrespective of their failures"	Does not hold grudges
Equality	"Respects others for who they are, not how they make me feel"	Treats everyone equally
Collaboration	"Spends time to build a professional relationship with others"	Believes in collaboration, and breaking down silos
	"Treats people as equal partners"	
	"Have confidence in others, even though the risk feels great"	

Table 9: SL Dimension: Covenantal Relationship

4.8.2.4. Dimension: Responsible Morality

<b>Values</b>	<b>Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS) Items</b>	<b>Adapted Item Related to The Dimension</b>
Moral reasoning	“Takes a resolute stand on moral principles”	Leads with morality
Moral purpose	“Encourage others to engage in moral reasoning”	Encourages others to do the ‘right’ thing
	“Enhance others’ capacity for moral actions”	
	“Employ morally justified means to achieve legitimate ends”	
	“Emphasise on doing what is morally right rather than looking good”	

Table 10: SL Dimension: Responsible Morality

4.8.2.5. Dimension: Transcendental Spirituality

<b>Values</b>	<b>Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS) Items</b>	<b>Adapted Item Related to The Dimension</b>
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Transcendental Beliefs	“Driven by a sense of a higher calling”	Is driven by a spiritual purpose
Interconnectedness	“Help others generate a sense of meaning out of everyday life”	Encourages others to connect with and form more meaningful relationships
Sense of Mission	“Help others to find clarity on purpose and direction”	Helps others generate a sense of clarity and purpose
Wholeness	“Promote values that transcend self-interest and material success”	Thinks beyond monetary gains

Table 11: SL Dimension: Transcendental Spirituality

#### 4.8.2.6. Dimension: Transforming Influence

<b>Values</b>	<b>Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS) Items</b>	<b>Adapted Item Related to The Dimension</b>
Vision	“Articulate a shared vision to give inspiration and meaning”	Creates a vision that inspires
Empowerment	“Minimise barriers that inhibit others’ success”	Empowers others to be their best self



Modelling	“Contribute to others’ personal and professional growth”	Encourages others to lead by serving others
Mentoring	“Lead by personal example”	Is an inspirational leader and mentor to others
Trust	“Inspire others to lead by serving”	Encourages others to make their own decisions without them fearing to fail
	“Draw the best out of others”	
	“Allow others to experiment and be creative without fear”	

**Table 12: SL Dimension: Transforming Influence**

#### 4.8.3. Demographic Section

The demographic section assessed the following areas of the sample: Gender age, Ethnicity, Occupation, Industry, Duration with the company, Years in current position and how many staff report to you in your current position.

#### 4.8.4. Reliability of the Research Instrument

Reliability is referred to as the ability to acquire consistent results from a research instrument (Blumberg et al., 2008; Lewis & Saunders, 2018). The research questionnaire

will be validated using Cronbach's alpha tests. Cronbach's alpha tests whether the scales within newly constructed or adapted research instruments are fit for purpose (Bonett & Wright, 2014; Mohamad, Sulaiman, Sern, & Salleh, 2015; Taber, 2018). Cronbach's alpha will evaluate the reliability of the 22 items of servant leadership, and eighteen items on employee engagement.

#### 4.9. Analysis Approach

The data analysis process will follow a number of steps. After the data is collected, the data will be checked and edited. Respondents with missing items will be removed from the sample. The data will be cleaned, then be coded, and then entered into SPSS Statistics software. Data will be analysed to investigate the strength of associations and correlations with various items.

##### 4.9.1 Reliability

Reliability in terms of quantitative research is defined as the consistency of a measure whereby replicability and repeatability need to be ensured (Crocker & Algina, 1986). Internal consistency reliability is concerned with sample populations consistent responses on a multi-item measurement scale (Creswell, 2012). Tavakol and Dennick (2011), further state that internal consistency provides a view on the interrelatedness of measured variables that are supposed to measure the same concept. Zikmund et al. (2012) state that the most common measure of internal reliability consistency is Cronbach's alpha tests. Tavakol and Dennick (2011) posit that Cronbach's alpha score is highly affected by the number of measured variables, dimensionality and interrelatedness of measurement items. However, acceptable scores for reporting internal reliability consistency range from 0.7 – 0.90 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). A too low score may be due to a low number of measures, poor associations between measures and heterogeneous constructs whereas a high score may indicate redundant measured variables (Cortina, 1993) Based on ensuring the research reported acceptable levels of internal reliability consistency, the researcher adopted a minimum Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7 and a maximum of 0.9.

#### 4.9.2. Validity

Validity when compared to reliability is concerned with the degree to which a measurement scale measures what is was intended to measure (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Criterion validity measures the degree of association between measured variables on a specific measurement scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Within this research this was measured by evaluating the Pearson's correlation coefficients between all measured variables to confirm convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity exists when items that measure the same underlying outcome report a high correlation with each other whereas discriminant validity tests the correlations between measured variables that do not represent the same latent constructs.

#### 4.9.3. Factor Analysis

The model fit for the research data was assessed by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Suhr (2003) defines CFA as a statistical technique that aims to verify the underlying factor structure of a set of measured variables. In other words this evaluates if latent variables are actually represented by the measured variables. The CFA model fit was evaluated through four indices. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is a relation to the residual structure of the hypothesised model and a good fit score should be less than 0.08 (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). The comparative fit index (CFI) is a measure of the discrepancy function and a good score should exceed 0.9 (Bentler & Hu, 1999). The standardises root mean square residual (SRMR) is a measure of absolute fit which measures the difference between the observed and predicted correlations and a score less than 0.08 indicated a good fit (Hair et al., 2010). As the CFA fit indices are highly sensitive to smaller sample sizes and normal distribution the CFA reported poor fit indices. The researcher then conducted a principal component analysis (PCA) following the guidelines described by Gerbing & Hamilton, (1996).

Suhr (2006) defines exploratory factor analysis (EFA) as a reduction of variables method which provides the underlying structure and measured variable structure for a set of

measured variables. The sampling adequacy was first measured by evaluating the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score which needs to exceed 0.5 (Bryant & Yarnold, 1995). Furthermore, Bartlett's test for sphericity needs to report a significance of less than 0.05 for factor analysis to be conducted. Once these were confirmed, factor analysis was conducted based on the varimax rotation method.

#### 4.9.4. Inferential Statistics

Once the data was confirmed to be reliable and valid, descriptive statistics were performed which measured the frequencies of each of the respondent's responses for each descriptive question within the self-administered survey.

As the researcher sought to test for relationships between two variables as per the hypothesis in Chapter 3, Pearson's correlation was initially sought to test these relationships. Pearson's correlation is a parametric test that measures the strength of a relationship between two variables of interest (Wegner, 2012). One of the four assumptions required to run a Pearson's correlation test is that the data must be approximately normally distributed (Hair et al., 2010). The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality reported a significance of less than 0.5, indicating that the data was not normally distributed. As such, the researcher adopted a non-parametric test known as the Spearman's correlation test. Based on the guidelines by Cohen (1988), the correlation coefficients were classified as small ( $0.1 < r < 0.3$ ), moderate ( $0.3 < r < 0.5$ ) and large ( $r > 0.5$ ).

#### 4.10. Limitations of Data Collected

- Snowball sampling inflicts limitations on the study due to the non-objectivity of the sampling method utilised. The sample is limited to personal and professional networks of the respondents and the sample may not be a representative sample (Zikmund et al., 2013).
- The study is a cross sectional study that represents a moment in time and does not consider the occurrences before and after the study (Blumberg et al., 2008), therefore a cause and effect link cannot be deduced between servant leadership

and employee engagement.

- The research instrument of the study only uses a 6 point Likert scale. While this is less confusing to the respondent and may increase the response rate, reliability of the data is optimised with greater response categories (Revilla & Saris, 2014; Weijters et al., 2010).
- The research instrument is adapted from previous research, and not a confirmatory model to measure the constructs. An existing instrument was not used for this study. Using an existing research instrument guarantees the validity and reliability of the instrument. (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002). Furthermore, the research instrument was not pilot tested. This could affect the validity of each measure. Respondent comprehension of the new items may be affected which impacts the reliability and validity of the research instrument (Sousa, Matson, & Dunn Lopez, 2017).
- Using an existing research instrument offer the opportunity to the research to compare their findings with other studies using that particular instrument, for richer and comparable findings (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2002)
- The sensitive nature of the questions asked in the study may lead to response bias due to fear from the respondents that the data will not be kept confidential.
- Surveys with missing items were removed.

## **5. CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

The main aim of this research was to investigate the influence that a perceived servant leadership style has on employee engagement across industries. The previous chapter discussed the research design and approach in which the researcher sought to confirm the developed research hypotheses in Chapter 3. The purpose of this Chapter is to provide the results to the adopted methodology as well as inferential statistics that will be used to evaluate the conceptual relationships argued for in Chapter 3. This Chapter begins with an analysis of the sample population for this research as well as a descriptive analysis of the demographic questions administered in the survey design. Finally, the path to evaluating the research hypotheses is further detailed by providing inferential analysis after briefly discussing the validity and reliability of the data.

### **5.1 Research Sample**

The researcher targeted a minimum sample size of 200 as discussed in Chapter 4. The actual sample size achieved for this research was 150. 12 respondents from the raw sample were disqualified as they reported that they did not currently reside in South Africa, a further 23 respondents were removed as they failed to answer in excess of 50% of the research survey. The questionnaire for this study consisted of a 6 point Likert scale – the sixth point was a not-applicable(N/A) option. The N/A items have been omitted from this study due to the fact that inclusion of N/A items would not represent ordinal categories, but rather nominal categories, and would therefore require extensive statistical analysis. For this reason, N/A items were treated as ‘missing’ when analysing the results, and therefore removed.

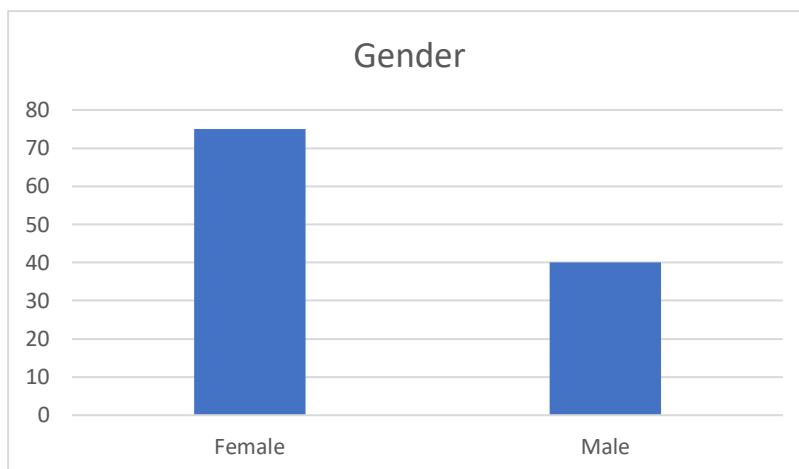
As summarised in Table 13, the final sample size reported for this research was 115 (n=115).

Attribute	Total
Raw sample size	150
Disqualified (eligibility)	12
Respondents with less than 50% completion	23
Respondents with 100% completion	115
Respondents with between 50 - 100% completion	0
<b>Final sample size</b>	<b>115</b>

**Table 13: Sample Size**

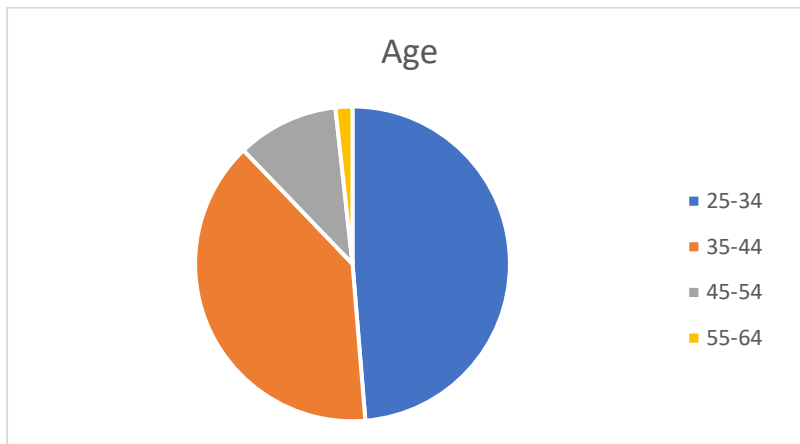
## 5.2 Descriptive Statistics of Sample

A total of 8 respondent descriptive questions were administered in the research survey. As summarised in Figure 9, 65.2% of the respondents indicated that they were female whilst 34.8% reported that they were male.



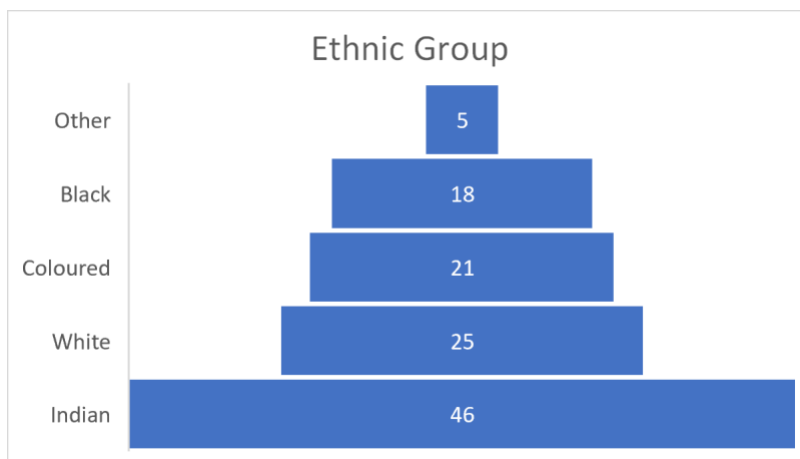
**Figure 9: Gender of Sample Respondents**

Figure 10 summarised the age categories for the sample population. 48.7% of the respondents indicated that they were between the ages 25 – 34, 39.1% reported that they were between the ages 35 – 44, whilst the remainder indicated that they were between 45 and 64 years of age.



**Figure 10: Age of Sample Respondents**

A majority of the sample respondents reported their ethnic group as being Indian (40%). This was followed by respondents who indicated their ethnic group as white (21.7%), and a further 18.3% reported their ethnic group as coloured, while 15.7% reported their ethnic group as black. Finally, 4.3% reported that their ethnic group was not specified amongst the options in the research question- See Figure 11.

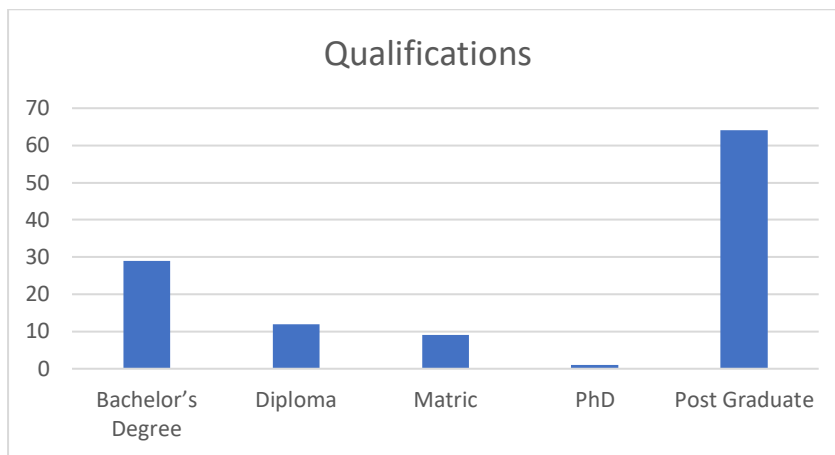


**Figure 11: Ethnicity of Sample Respondents**

Figure 12 provides a summary of the highest educational qualifications reported by the sample respondents. The majority of the respondents reported that they had higher order



educational qualifications (higher than matric level) with a post-graduate degree being the most reported (55.7%) and PhD the lowest (0.9%).



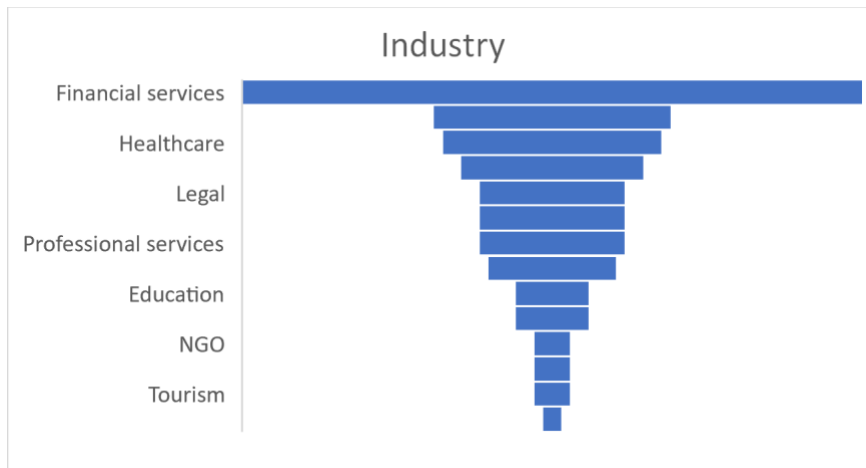
**Figure 12: Educational Status of Sample Respondents**

Table 14 provides a summary of the nationality of the sample respondents. The majority of the respondents were from South Africa -96.5% of the respondents reported their nationality as South African and the remainder reported their nationalities as American (1.7%), Mauritian (0.9%) and Zimbabwean (0.9%).

Nationality		
Country	Frequency	Percent
USA	2	1.7
Mauritius	1	0.9
Zimbabwe	1	0.9
South Africa	111	96.5
Total	115	100.0

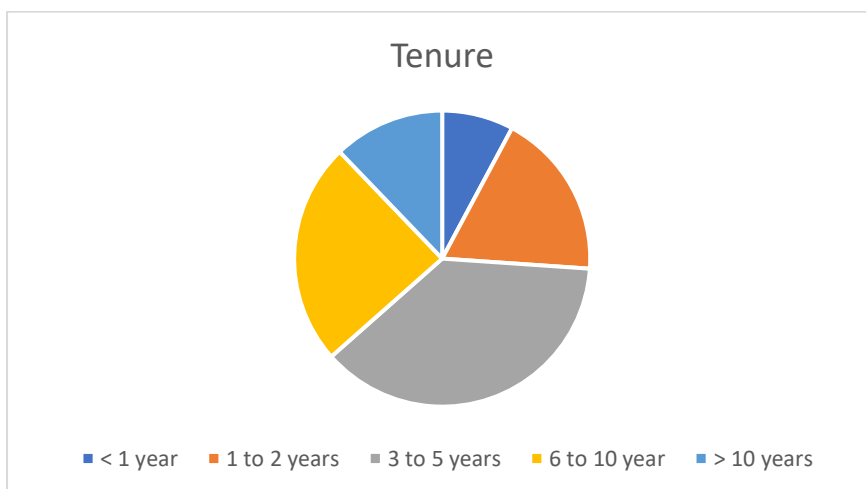
**Table 14: Nationality of Sample Respondents**

29.6% reported that they were employed within the financial services sector, 11.3% within the consumer services sector and 10.4% within the Healthcare sector. The remaining sector representation was less than 10% and is summarised in Figure 13.



**Figure 13: Sector Allocation of Sample Respondents**

Figure 14 summarises the tenure in which the sample respondents indicated they were in their current organisation. 37.4% reported that they in their current positions for 3 – 5 years, 7.8% reported that they were in their current position for less than 12 months, 18.3% reported they were in their current position for 1 to 2 years, 24.3% reported they were in their current position for between 6 to 10 years and 12.2% reported that they were in their current position of greater than 10 years.



**Figure 14: Tenure of Sample Respondents**

Subordinates		
Category	Frequency	Percent
Blank	7	6.1
> 50	3	2.6
21 to 50	5	4.3
11 to 20	9	7.8
1 to 10	56	4.3
None	35	30.4
Total	115	100.0

**Table 15: Number of Subordinates of Sample Respondents**

Finally, Table 15 summarises the number of subordinates that each of the respondents indicated that reported to them. 30.4% reported that they had no subordinates, 2.6% reported that they had over 50 reported subordinates while 12.1% reported that they had between 11 and 50 subordinates.

### 5.3 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal reliability for the research constructs was evaluated by assessing Cronbach's alpha scores. Table 16 summarises the reported Cronbach's alpha scores for the latent variables. All latent variables, except for voluntary subordination, reported Cronbach's alpha scores > 0.7. Within the servant leadership measurement scales the Transforming Influence variable reported the highest reliability score (0.91) which was closely followed by the authentic self-variable (0.90).

Due to the Voluntary Subordination variable reporting a very low reliability score (0.31), the item was removed from further analysis. Within the Employee Engagement subscales, the Team Culture and Growth and Recognition and Organisational Commitment variables reported the highest Cronbach's alpha scores of 0.82 and 0.80 respectively.

Scale	Number of items after to Cronbach's alpha	Number of items prior to Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's Alpha
Voluntary Subordination*	2	2	0.31
Authentic Self	5	5	0.90
Covenantal Relationship	4	4	0.81
Responsible Morality	2	2	0.84
Transcendental Spirituality	4	4	0.80
Transforming Influence	5	5	0.91
Team Culture and Growth	7	7	0.82
Reward and Organisational Support	5	5	0.76
Recognition and Organisational Commitment	5	5	0.80

\*removed from further analysis

**Table 16: Cronbach's Alpha Scores**

#### 5.4 Factor Analysis

As discussed in the previous chapter, a CFA was conducted to evaluate the overall model fit of the research model. As summarised in Table 17, all Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values were reported acceptable (SRMR < 0.08) with the exception of the Team Culture and Growth and overall Employee Engagement scale whilst the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) values reported unacceptable indices based on the adopted upper bound limit (RMSEA < 0.08).

All Chi-Square values were found to be insignificant ( $p < 0.05$ ) except for the Transcendental Spirituality, Reward and Organisational Support and the Recognition and Organisational Commitment variables. CFI indices for all variables except for Overall Servant Leadership, Team Culture and Growth and the overall Employee Engagement reported scores > 0.9. As the CFA reported mixed results for the goodness of fit indices, the researcher interpreted the results as inadequate and conducted a PCA analysis as discussed in Chapter 4. The mixed results attributed to the poor goodness of fit indices can be related to the low sample size and the violation of normality assumption.

Scale	SRMR	RMSEA	CFI	Chi-Square
Authentic Self	0.06	0.24	0.92	0.00
Covenantal Relationship	0.06	0.22	0.93	0.00
Responsible Morality	Could not be computed			
Transcendental Spirituality	0.02	0.00	1.00	0.50
Transforming Influence	0.03	0.15	0.97	0.00
Overall Servant leadership	0.06	0.11	0.88	0.00
Team Culture and Growth	0.11	0.24	0.69	0.00
Reward and Organisational Support	0.05	0.09	0.97	0.10
Recognition and Organisational Commitment	0.05	0.11	0.97	0.05
Overall Employee Engagement	0.09	0.15	0.74	0.00

Table 17: CFA Table

Table 18 provides a summary of the EFA analysis that was conducted based on the poor goodness of fit results interpreted from the CFA. Authentic self and Transforming influence, reported KMO scores with adequacy of the correlations classified as Meritorious ( $0.8 < KMO < 0.89$ ), Covenantal relationship, Transcendental spirituality, Team Culture and Growth, Reward and Organisational Support and Recognition and Organisational Commitment reported KMO scores with adequacy of the correlations classified as Middling ( $0.7 < KMO < 0.79$ ) whilst Responsible morality reported a KMO score with adequacy of the correlations classified as Miserable ( $0.5 < KMO < 0.59$ ). The Bartlett's test for sphericity was reported significant for all latent variables ( $p < 0.05$ ). All latent variables reported one extracted component with all cumulative extractions reported  $> 50\%$ .

Construct	KMO	Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Number of Components extracted	Cumulative %
Authentic Self	0.82	0	1	72.43
Covenantal Relationship	0.74	0	1	63.08
Responsible Morality	0.50	0	1	86.34
Transcendental Spirituality	0.77	0	1	63.22
Transforming Influence	0.84	0	1	72.61
Team Culture and Growth	0.73	0	1	64.89
Reward and Organisational Support	0.73	0	1	51.92
Recognition and Organisational Commitment	0.77	0	1	55.98

Table

18: EFA Table

### 5.5 Validity

The validity of the data was assessed by evaluating the correlational matrix for all the measured variables for convergent and discriminant validity. All measured variables loaded significant on their respective latent variables ( $r > 0.3$ ), in addition the measured variables loaded higher on their latent variables. The researcher therefore concluded that both convergent and discriminant validity was confirmed.

### 5.6 Construct Descriptive Statistics

After confirming the reliability and validity of the conceptual research model, descriptive statistics were conducted to analyse the research constructs. All the means of the latent variables tended towards the positive (greater than 2.5 which was the midpoint of the 5 - point Likert scale adopted). Responsible Morality reported the highest mean at 3.77 followed by Reward and Organisational Support (3.60) and Authentic Self (3.57). Transforming Influence reported the lowest mean at 3.28. All variables were negatively skewed, indicating a large number of responses towards the positive end of the 5 – point Likert scale. See Table 19.

Latent variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Authentic Self	115	3.57	1.01	-0.71	0.23	-0.10	0.45
Covenantal Relationship	115	3.43	0.95	-0.50	0.23	-0.28	0.45
Responsible Morality	115	3.77	0.96	-0.72	0.23	-0.34	0.45
Transcendental Spirituality	115	3.32	0.92	-0.21	0.23	-0.14	0.45
Transforming Influence	115	3.28	1.01	-0.25	0.23	-0.51	0.45
Team Culture and Growth	115	3.45	0.79	-0.33	0.23	-0.05	0.45
Reward and Organisational Support	115	3.60	0.78	-0.31	0.23	-0.26	0.45
Recognition and Organisational Commitment	115	3.51	0.84	-0.08	0.23	-0.88	0.45
Servant Leadership	115	3.47	0.87	-0.51	0.23	-0.10	0.45
Employee Engagement	115	3.52	0.76	-0.13	0.23	-0.60	0.45

**Table 19: Descriptive Statistics on Research Constructs**

Furthermore, the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality reported the overall Employee Engagement, Team Culture and Growth, Reward and Organisational Support and Recognition and Organisational Commitment variables as the only variables significant for normal distribution ( $p > 0.05$ )- see Table 20

Tests of Normality			
Latent variable	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Authentic Self	0.94	115	0.00
Covenantal Relationship	0.96	115	0.00
Responsible Morality	0.91	115	0.00
Transcendental Spirituality	0.98	115	0.03
Transforming Influence	0.97	115	0.03
Team Culture and Growth	0.98	115	0.10
Reward and Organisational Support	0.98	115	0.04
Recognition and Organisational Commitment	0.97	115	0.02
Servant Leadership	0.98	115	0.03
Employee Engagement	0.99	115	0.22

**Table 20: Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality**

## 5.7 Hypothesis Testing

Prior to the statistical tests adopted herein, the assumptions for each of the statistical tests (correlational analysis) were clarified. All assumptions were confirmed as the researcher conducted a non-parametric test (Spearman's Rank order) as the data was not normally distributed. In addition, scatter plots for each of the tests reported a monotonic relationship and it was therefore confirmed that the Spearman's rank order test was suitable.

### 5.7.1. Research Question One

**There is a positive relationship between overall servant leadership and employee engagement.**

Research question one sought to establish if there was a positive relationship between the higher order variable – Servant leadership and Employee engagement which was significant at the 95% level. See Table 21.



Correlations				
			Servant Leadership	EEScore
Spearman's rho	<b>Servant Leadership</b>	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.71**
		Sig. (2- tailed)		0.000
		N	115	115
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

**Table 21: Spearman's Rank Order Test for Research Question 1**

The Spearman's rank order test reported a positive and significant relationship between Servant leadership and Employee engagement at the 95% significant level. The effect size was classified as medium ( $0.5 < r < 0.8$ ). The null hypothesis was therefore rejected, and the null hypothesis was accepted as there is a strong and positive relationship between Servant Leadership and Employee engagement at the 95% significance level.

#### 5.7.2. Research Question Two

- a.) **There is a positive relationship between voluntary subordination and employee engagement**
- b.) **There is a positive relationship between Authentic self and employee engagement**
- c.) **There is a positive relationship between Covenantal relationship and employee engagement**
- d.) **There is a positive relationship between Responsible morality and employee engagement**

- e.) There is a positive relationship between Transcendental spirituality and employee engagement
- f.) There is a positive relationship between Transforming influence and employee engagement

Research question two sought to establish if there was a significant relationship between the first-order constructs: Voluntary subordination, Authentic self, Covenantal relationship, Responsible morality, Transcendental spirituality and Transforming influence on Employee engagement. See Table 22.

Correlations								
			EEScore	Authentic Self	Covenantal Relationship	Responsible Morality	Transcendental Spirituality	Transforming Influence
Spearman's rho	EEScore	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.65**	.62**	.59**	.67**	.67**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
		N	115	115	115	115	115	115

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

Table

**22: Spearman's Rank Order Test for Research Question 2**

Hypothesis 2a was not reported as the Voluntary subordination construct was removed due to a poor reliability score ( $\alpha < 0.7$ ). The Spearman's rank order test reported a positive and significant relationship between all the remainder hypothesis 2 relationships at the 95% significant level. As summarised in Table 22, all relationships were classified as medium ( $0.5 < r < 0.8$ ), with Transcendental spirituality and Transforming Influence reporting the strongest relationship with Employee engagement ( $r = 0.67$ ). This was followed by the relationship between Authentic Self and Employee Engagement which reported  $r = 0.65$ , while Covenantal Relationship reported  $r = 0.62$ . The relationship between Responsible Morality reported the lowest association at 0.59 with Employee Engagement. The null for hypothesis 2b – f was therefore rejected and the alternative hypothesis for 2b – f was accepted as there is a positive and significant relationship between Authentic self, Covenantal relationship, Responsible morality, Transcendental

spirituality and Transforming influence with Employee engagement at the 95% significance level.

### 5.8. Post – Hoc Analysis

In addition to testing the research questions, the researcher sought to test if there were any significant relationships between the latent variables of Employee engagement and those for Servant leadership.

Correlations							
		Authentic Self	Covenantal Relationship	Responsible Morality	Transcendental Spirituality	Transforming Influence	Servant Leadership
Team Culture and Growth	Correlation Coefficient	.66**	.63**	.62**	.70**	.69**	.73**
Reward and Organisational Support	Correlation Coefficient	.57**	.54**	.50**	.59**	.58**	.62**
Recognition and Organisational Commitment	Correlation Coefficient	.60**	.59**	.53**	.61**	.61**	.66**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	115	115	115	115	115	115

Table

### 23: Post-Hoc Analysis

The Spearman's rank order test reported a significant and positive relationship between all the employee engagement latent variables and the latent variables of the servant leadership scale. Transcendental spirituality reported the strongest relationship with Team Culture and Growth ( $r = 0.70$ ), Reward and Organisational Support (0.59) and Recognition and Organisational Commitment (0.61). While Servant Leadership reported the strongest relationship with Team Culture and Growth ( $r = 0.73$ ). See Table 23.

## 5.9. Conclusion

The research aimed to confirm if there was a significant relationship between the subscales of servant leadership and employee engagement. The Spearman's rank order statistical technique reported significant and positive results for all the research hypotheses developed in Chapter 3 except for hypothesis 2a (There is no significant relationship between Voluntary subordination and Employee engagement) as the Voluntary subordination construct reported an unacceptable reliability score ( $\alpha < 0.7$ ). Transcendental spirituality reported the strongest relationship with employee engagement ( $r = 0.67$ ). In addition, the post-hoc analysis revealed a strong and significant relationship between all the first order variables of servant leadership and employee engagement with Transcendental spirituality reporting the strongest relationship with all the Employee engagement subscales. Overall, Servant Leadership reported the strongest relationship with Employee engagement subscale: Team Culture and Growth.

## 6. CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### 6.1. Introduction

The chapter summarises the results from the previous chapter and discusses them concerning each research question and the literature.

### 6.2. Research Question 1

To determine the relationship between a perceived overall servant leadership style and employee engagement.

#### 6.2.1. Data Analysis Outcome

The null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted as there is a strong and positive relationship between Servant Leadership and Employee engagement at the 95% significance level- see figure 15.

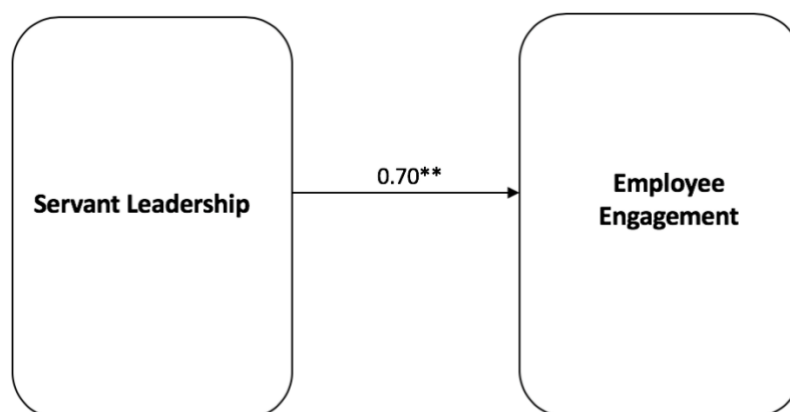


Figure 15: The Relationship Between SL and EE

Furthermore, the post-hoc analysis revealed that overall servant leadership has the strongest relationship with the employee engagement dimension: Team Culture and Growth. See Figure 16

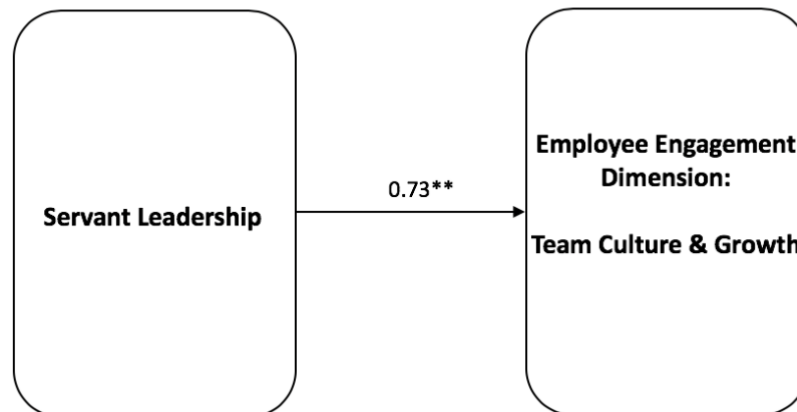


Figure 16: The Relationship Between SL and EE: Team Culture and Growth

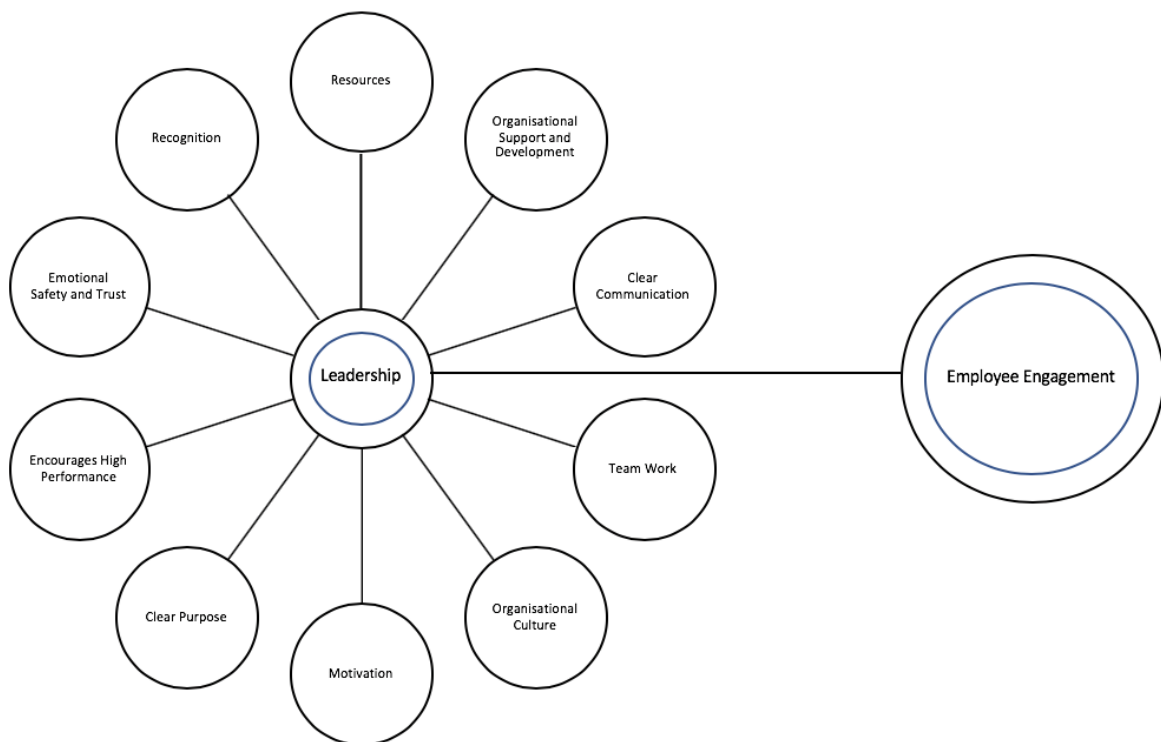
#### 6.2.2. Discussion of Research Question 1

Today's turbulent business environment calls for powerful leadership (Coetzer, Bussin, & Geldenhuys, 2017; Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2017). As discussed in chapter 2, in any organisation, strong leadership is an imperative component to have in order to achieve organisational success (Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Kaur, 2018; Kotter, 1990; Xu & Thomas, 2011), and increase employee performance and commitment (Anitha, 2014; Engelbrecht et al., 2017; Kaur, 2018; Xu & Thomas, 2011).

Wallace and Trinka (2009), further posit that the importance of the manager-employee relationship is the most crucial aspect of an organisation and facilitates a high-performance environment. Kaur (2018) posits that the formation of trust between the manager and employees, and the development of a harmonious work environment, leads the employee to feel more motivated and more confident in their job role.

From the literature we see, leadership can be considered to have serious implications for employee engagement as it impacts several factors that influence employee engagement, such as resources, organisational commitment, emotional safety, organisational culture and policies. See Figure 17. The literature indicates that employee engagement occurs when the employee's needs have been actualised in all aspects, thus motivating the employee to perform at their very best (Imandin et al., 2017; Kaur, 2018; McManus & Mosca, 2015; Nada & Singh, 2016). This increased performance from employees leads

to greater organisational benefits such as an increase in customer retention and acquisition and increase in profitability and sales.



**Figure 17: Leadership and Employee Engagement (constructed by the author)**

According to Imandin, Bisschoff & Botha (2017), there is a relationship between employee engagement and satisfying the need of the employee for growth, in the form of opportunities for learning, advancement, and making progress in their careers. Thus, an employer or leader has a responsibility to widen the employee's duties continuously, aligned to their growth, to allow them to contribute to more meaningful, complex tasks. (Sendawula, Nakyejwe Kimuli, Bananuka, & Najjemba Muganga (2018) argue that employee engagement facilitates the development of employees to align with the organisation's mission and have optimistic views of the organisation.

Based on the literature, servant leadership, like employee engagement, leads to similar organisational outcomes, by simply catering to the needs of their employees, and seeking to develop them to their greatest potential (Attridge, 2009; Carter & Baghurst, 2014a; Kaur,

2018; Senjaya & Pekerti, 2010). According to Seto and Sarros (2016), servant leadership encourages a quality relationship between a leader and follower (employee), which leads to better outcomes for the organisation, and greater confidence for employees, essentially creating a symbiotic relationship between leader and follower.

Coetzer, Bussin, and Geldenhuys (2017) further add that a Servant Leadership model is a 'meaningful way' to guarantee the best business outcomes on an organisational and individual level. Furthermore, Servant leadership incorporates many leadership theories into one, but stands out due to its benevolent and selfless characteristics, strong leadership purpose, and its holistic view on leader attributes (Carter & Baghurst, 2014a; Coetzer et al., 2017; Green et al., 2015).

Both academia and the business world have shown increased attention to the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement due to the organisational benefits that can be achieved. Coetzer et al. (2017), posits that servant leadership could lead to a more engaged workforce. Their study indicates a positive correlation between Servant Leadership and Employee Engagement (Coetzer et al., 2017; Hunter et al., 2013). Servant leadership is also thought to attract optimistic feelings from the employee towards their organisation, thereby enhancing employee engagement (D De Clercq, Bouckenooghe, Raja, & Matsyborska, 2014). Kaur (2018), through a quantitative study, proves a positive relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement, both directly; and indirectly via job satisfaction as an outcome of servant leadership, influencing employee engagement. Carter & Baghurst (2014b), also asserts that the very presence of Servant Leadership within an organisation, adjusts the work environment and culture for the better.

This study found overall Servant Leadership to have the strongest relationship with the employee engagement dimension of Team culture and growth. See Table 24 for items related to Team Culture and Growth.



Items in Survey Related to The Dimension
You value your company culture
The company culture encourages you to voice your grievances in a safe environment
Your key performance indicators in your team are clear to you
You feel a connection with your colleagues
You feel a connection with the team you are in
You have a supportive, and good relationship with your manager/direct leader
At your company, there are many opportunities to develop and grow yourself further
Your career development within your company is clear

**Table 24: Survey Items Related to EE: Team Culture and Growth**

Literature indicates that when employees feel there are a vast amount of growth prospects and opportunities for them to develop themselves in their role, it encourages their organisational commitment to expand (Anitha, 2014; D De Clercq et al., 2014; Hunter et al., 2013; Jit et al., 2016; Kaur, 2018; Nienaber & Martins, 2014). Anitha (2014), further postulates that a healthy and harmonious work culture will have a positive effect on engagement. Anitha's (2014) study found team and manager dynamics to be the most crucial factors for the development of employee engagement.

### 6.2.3. Conclusion

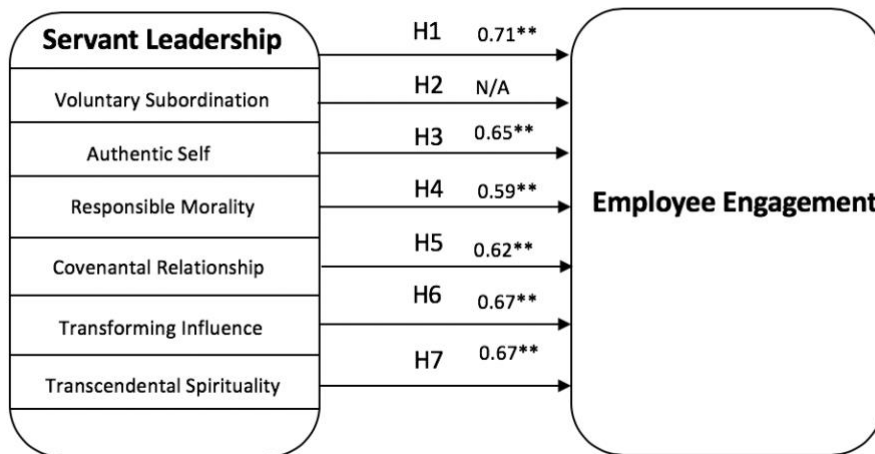
This study, with its limitations considered, contributed to the research, and indicated that servant leadership is an employee engagement driver.

### 6.3. Research Question 2

To determine the relationship between individual servant leadership dimensions and overall employee engagement.

#### 6.3.1. Data Analysis Outcome

While the Voluntary subordination construct was removed due to a poor reliability score ( $\alpha < 0.7$ ), the Spearman's rank order test reported a positive and significant relationship between all the remainder dimensions of servant leadership with overall engagement- at the 95% significant level (see Figure 18). All relationships were classified as medium ( $0.5 < r < 0.8$ )., with Transcendental spirituality reporting the strongest relationship with Employee engagement ( $r = 0.67$ ).



**Figure 18: The Relationship Between SL Dimensions and Overall EE**

#### 6.3.2. Discussion of Research Question 2

The research question sought to ascertain which dimensions within Servant Leadership have the greatest relationship with overall employee engagement. The research found Transcendental Spirituality to have the greatest relationship with overall employee engagement. Transcendental spirituality is reflected in the leaders' belief that the meaning

of life is derived from something greater than what the material world can offer them (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Senjaya & Pekerti, 2010). See Table 25 for items related to Transcendental spirituality.

Items in Survey Related to Transcendental Spirituality
Is driven by a spiritual purpose
Encourages others to connect with and form more meaningful relationships
Helps others generate a sense of clarity and purpose
Thinks beyond monetary gains

**Table 25: Survey Items Related to Transcendental Spirituality**

Spirituality in leadership predominantly finds its roots in servant leadership, and transcendental leadership. Literature indicates that spirituality within leadership theory has a significant role in that leaders' intrinsic values motivate followers which leads to greater business outcomes (Freeman, 2011; Liu, 2007; McGhee & Grant, 2017). Spirituality can be seen to encompass four aspects: religiousness, purpose, interconnectedness and wholeness (Liu, 2007). Leadership models that embrace spirituality focus on the spiritual development of leader and follower (Liu, 2007). Transcendental and Servant leadership theory have a dimension of spirituality that enhances previous leadership theories, and can be seen to be more effective at motivating employees (Arasli & Alphon, 2019). Leadership theory that incorporates spirituality leads to an organisation being founded on principles of 'altruistic love', where leaders and followers demonstrate sincere care, consideration and recognition for one another, and this wholly impacts organisational performance (Fry, 2005).

This study finds transcendental Spirituality to have a significant impact on Employee Engagement. From the literature, we see a direct link between spirituality and ethics in leadership (Adams & Tashchian, 2001; Arasli & Alphon, 2019; Liu, 2007; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Therefore, it can be argued that spiritual leaders, that are motivated by

a higher calling, are expected to embrace a greater body of ethics and values such as fair-mindedness, honesty, integrity and trust. They use these intangible values to structure inclusive and accountable institutions, leading to intuitions that demonstrate a higher level of engagement amongst their employees (Arasli & Alphon, 2019; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Liu, 2007).

### 6.3.3. Conclusion

This study, with its limitations considered, contributed to the current research, and indicated that spirituality is an aspect that plays a central role in attaining the engagement of employees.

## 7. CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1. Summary of Key Findings

The results of this study unequivocally confirmed a statistically significant relationship between a perceived servant leadership style and overall employee engagement. Also, the post-hoc analysis revealed a strong and significant relationship between all the first order variables of servant leadership and employee engagement, with Transcendental spirituality reporting the strongest relationship with all the Employee engagement subscales ( $r = 0.67$ ) within servant leadership subscales. Furthermore, overall servant leadership was revealed to have the strongest relationship with the employee engagement dimension: Team Culture and Growth. Voluntary Subordination variable reported a very low reliability score (0.31), therefore the item was removed from all analyses.

### 7.2. Implications for Leadership

This study further contributed to the body of knowledge surrounding the relationship between servant leadership and employee engagement. The literature indicates that servant leadership has positive business outcomes and a significant impact on employee performance, and overall employee engagement- servant leaders have a far reaching impact on the organisations they are in, as well as, contributing to the development and growth of the employees they lead (Carter & Baghurst, 2014a; D De Clercq et al., 2014; Freeman, 2011; Green et al., 2015; Jit et al., 2016).

Servant leadership is not an easy model of leadership for big organisations to assimilate to due to their hierarchical and bureaucratic nature. For this reason, given the insights from the literature and this study, there are practical implications for leaders to utilise and implement slow change, and to grow employee engagement in their organisation, such as:

**Work Environment:** Leaders need to create a positive work environment that is conducive to engagement. A healthy and comfortable work environment increases productivity, customer service and reduces employee absenteeism

**Resources:** To encourage a more engaged workforce, leaders need to provide the necessary resources needed for employees to flourish in their roles, and be fully absorbed

**Clear Key Performance Indicators:** Leaders should provide clear communication to employees concerning what their job requires. Employees' understanding and embracing what is required of them at work has the potential to increase their engagement levels.

**Organisational Culture:** Leaders should create a culture that promotes collaboration. To encourage a more engaged workforce, leaders need to create networks within divisions of an organisation that are interconnected and can collaborate and share knowledge and skills across the organisation.

**Supportive Teams:** Supportive teams and leadership make a huge difference in an employee's life. The support provided by the team and leadership promote a better work environment that would essentially enhance employee engagement.

**Growth and Development:** The growth and development of employees is essential for leaders to engage in as this not only adds to the organisations efficiency, but also leads to preparing and retaining employees for future prospects within the organisation.

**Recognition and Feeling Valued:** Leaders need to ensure employees are recognised for their achievements, and the organisation values each employee's contribution.

**Reward Incentives:** In order to start to improve engagement, leaders need to ensure organisational performance is linked to rewards. Furthermore, leaders need to ensure that they take care of their employees' base needs before attempting to tackle improving engagement. Rewards can be extrinsic or intrinsic. Steyn (2002), argues, that it is not extrinsic factors such as: salary, organisation benefits, working conditions, and job security... etc. which engage employees, but rather intrinsic factors such as: status, appreciation, responsibility.

### 7.3. Recommendations for Future Research

#### 7.3.1. Recommendation 1

The Servant Leadership literature and research to date (Carter & Baghurst, 2014a; Dirk De Clercq et al., 2014; Green et al., 2015; Hunter et al., 2013; Nuijten & Dierendonck, 2011; Trompenaars & Voerman, 2009) has been focussed on providing a trait analysis and definition for servant leaders, rather than scientifically examining the outcomes of engagement from organisations that practice servant leadership.

#### 7.3.2. Recommendation 2

For future research, it would be useful to analyse the leaders and followers. Most of the studies done thus far have been from the point of view of employees. Future research should focus on analysing the leader as well as the employees, and draw comparisons between engagement levels, the 'employee's perceptions, and the leaders' self-reported leadership attributes.

#### 7.3.3. Recommendation 3

For future research, it would be useful to do a qualitative study instead of a quantitative study. The majority of the studies, thus far, measuring servant leadership/ engagement have been quantitative studies. A qualitative study could provide greater insight into the relationship between the constructs.

#### 7.3.4. Recommendation 4

The final recommendation for future research is to do a longitudinal study that seeks to measure the respondents' engagement level over time, as well as their perceptions of their manager. This will be useful to draw linkages between a respondent's engagement level over time, and to ascertain whether a perceived servant leader is effective in providing a consistent level of engagement over time.

#### 7.4. Limitations

Limitations of the current study include a sample that is limited demographically and sectorally, as the majority of the respondents were South African Indians and were associated with the financial sector. Furthermore, the sample was mainly female, for future research, it is advised to gain a more representative distribution of gender. The sample size of the study is also a limitation. The researcher had hoped to attain over 200 useable responses, but after removing surveys with missing items, the researcher was left with a sample of under 120. The sensitive nature of the survey could be a possible reason that discouraged potential respondents. Even though the study assured respondents' confidentiality to reduce the impact of social desirability by respondents, where respondents give a false positive impression of themselves and their manager (Clifford & Jerit, 2015; Johnson & van de Vijver, 2003), the likelihood of employees displaying genuine and honest scores regarding their manager could be called into question.

#### 7.5. Conclusion

There is no longer one person owning every channel, making every decision, and holding the success of the business – success of business decisions is made and lived by every employee. In order to stay ahead, business needs to be agile and empower employees to make decisions, take more calculated risk, and be less adverse to failure. Success in business starts with the employee. The manner in which employees are engaged in an organisation will gradually define whether an organisation will grow or continue to survive (Robbins & Judge, 2009). It is clear employees have become an organisation's most crucial asset. Furthermore, the leadership role in an organisation cannot be underestimated. Overall we see a clear link between servant leadership and employee engagement. While the outcome of this study is clear, it is not easy for a bureaucratic organisation to flatten their structure, and implement bottom up leadership. For this reason, it is useful for leaders of organisations to slowly start embedding aspects of servant leadership in the culture of the organisation.



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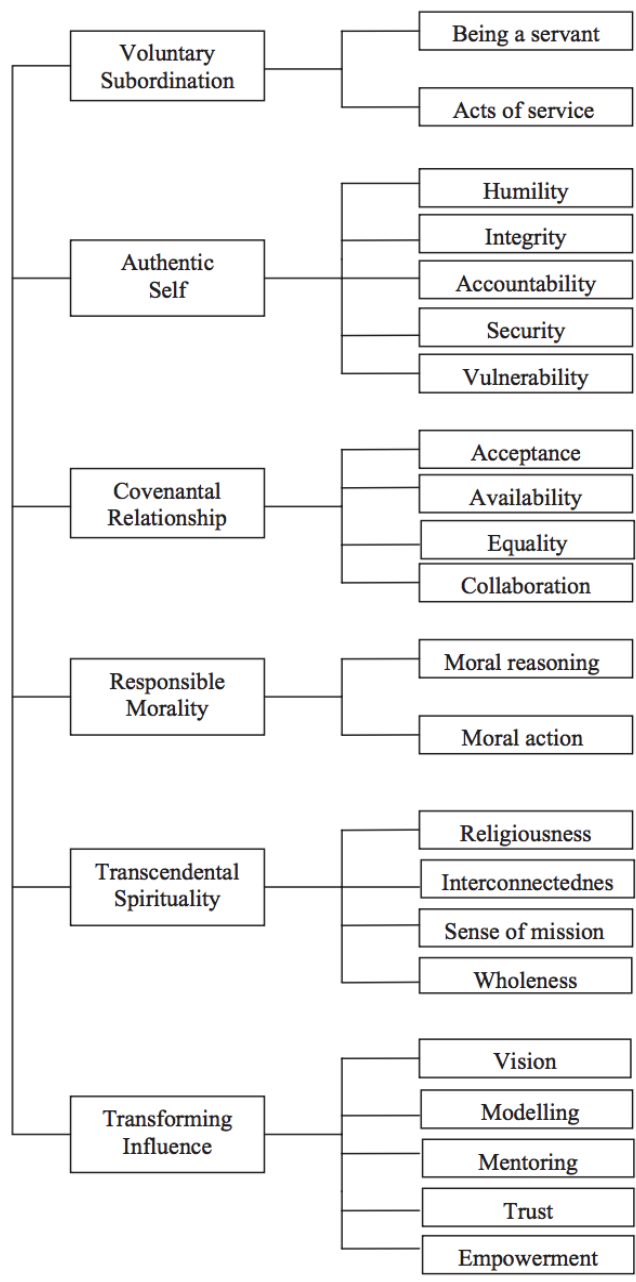
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**APPENDICES**

*Appendix A: Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale (SLBS)*



**Figure 19: Servant Leadership Behaviour Scale. From “Defining and Measuring Servant Leadership Behaviour in Organizations (p.409), by S. Senjaya, J. Sarros, and J. Santora, 2008, Journal of Management Studies. Copyright 2008 Journal of Management Studies”**

*Appendix B: Servant Leadership Research Instrument*

Dimensions	Values	Commitments
Voluntary Subordination	Being A Servant	1. Consider others' needs and interests above my own
	Acts of Service	2. Use power in service to others, not for my own ambition
		3. Be more conscious of my responsibilities than my rights
		4. Serve others with no regards of backgrounds (gender, race, etc)
		5. Demonstrate that I care through sincere, practical deeds
		6. Listen to others with intent to understand
		7. Assist others without seeking acknowledgement or compensation
Authentic Self	Humility	8. Avoid being defensive when confronted
	Integrity	9. When criticized focus on the message not the messenger
	Accountability	10. Practice what I preach
	Security	11. Give others the right to question my actions and decisions
	Vulnerability	12. Let others take control of situations when appropriate 13. Be willing to say "I was wrong" to others
Covenantal Relationship	Acceptance	14. Affirm my trust in others
	Availability	15. Accept others as they are, irrespective of their failures
	Equality	16. Respect others for who they are, not how they make me feel
		Collaboration
Responsible Morality	Moral Reasoning	20. Take a resolute stand on moral principles
	Moral Action	21. Encourage others to engage in moral reasoning
		22. Enhance others' capacity for moral actions
		23. Employ morally justified means to achieve legitimate ends 24. Emphasize on doing what is right rather than looking good
Transcendental Spirituality	Transcendental Beliefs	25. Am driven by a sense of a higher calling
	Interconnectedness	26. Help others to generate a sense of meaning out of everyday life
	Sense of Mission	27. Help others to find a clarity of purpose and direction
	Wholeness	28. Promote values that transcend self-interest and material success
Transforming Influence	Vision	29. Articulate a shared vision to give inspiration and meaning
	Empowerment	30. Minimize barriers that inhibit others' success
	Modeling	31. Contribute to others' personal and professional growth
	Mentoring	32. Lead by personal example
		Trust

**Figure 20: Servant Leadership Research Instrument. From "Defining and Measuring Servant Leadership Behaviour in Organizations, by S. Senjaya, J. Sarros, and J. Santora, 2008, Journal of Management Studies. Copyright 2008 Journal of Management Studies"**

*Appendix C: Dimensions of Psychological Engagement*

<b>Dimensions of Psychological Conditions</b>			
<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Meaningfulness</b>	<b>Safety</b>	<b>Availability</b>
Definition	Sense of return on investments of self in role performances.	Sense of being able to show and employ self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career.	Sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary for investing self in role performances.
Experiential components	Feel worthwhile, valued, valuable; feel able to give to and receive from work and others in course of work.	Feel situations are trustworthy, secure, predictable, and clear in terms of behavioral consequences.	Feel capable of driving physical, intellectual, and emotional energies into role performance.
Types of influence	Work elements that create incentives or disincentives for investments of self.	Elements of social systems that create situations that are more or less predictable, consistent, and nonthreatening.	Individual distractions that are more or less preoccupying in role performance situations.
Influences	<p>Tasks: Jobs involving more or less challenge, variety, creativity, autonomy, and clear delineation of procedures and goals.</p> <p>Roles: Formal positions that offer more or less attractive identities, through fit with a preferred self-image, and status and influence.</p> <p>Work interactions: Interpersonal interactions with more or less promotion of dignity, self-appreciation, sense of value, and the inclusion of personal as well as professional elements.</p>	<p>Interpersonal relationships: Ongoing relationships that offer more or less support, trust, openness, flexibility, and lack of threat.</p> <p>Group and intergroup dynamics: Informal, often unconscious roles that leave more or less room to safely express various parts of self: shaped by dynamics within and between groups in organizations.</p> <p>Management style and process: Leader behaviors that show more or less support, resilience, consistency, trust, and competence.</p> <p>Organizational norms: Shared system expectations about member behaviors and emotions that leave more or less room for investments of self during role performances.</p>	<p>Physical energies: Existing levels of physical resources available for investment into role performances.</p> <p>Emotional energies: Existing levels of emotional resources available for investment into role performances.</p> <p>Insecurity: Levels of confidence in own abilities and status, self-consciousness, and ambivalence about fit with social systems that leave more or less room for investments of self in role performances.</p> <p>Outside life: Issues in people's outside lives that leave them more or less available for investments of self during role performances.</p>

**Figure 21: Dimensions of Psychological Engagement.** From *“Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work.* Academy of Management Journal, by W. A. Kahn, 1990, Academy of Management Journal. Copyright 1990 Academy of Management Journal”



*Appendix D: Survey Invitation E-mail*

**Subject:** Invitation to participate in Purusha Pillay's MBA Research Study

**Title of Study:** Investigating the Influence A Perceived Servant Leadership Style Has On Employee Engagement Across Industry

Dear Participant,

I trust this email finds you well.

I am a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science, and I am completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA. For my dissertation, I am conducting research across different industries to investigate the relationship between a servant leadership style, and employee engagement.

An integral part of my research is data collection, and in pursuit thereof, I am inviting you to participate in my survey.

This survey is voluntary and you may withdraw from the process at any time, however, your responses and participation are valuable to me and I would appreciate your assistance. Kindly be advised, if you do choose to participate, I require your response within two weeks from the date of receipt of this email. The survey should take no more than 8-10 minutes to complete and your anonymity is guaranteed.

Thank you for your time and contribution to this research study. I humbly request that you forward this request to your personal and professional networks to enable a richer data set for my study.

You may begin the survey by clicking on the following link: xxx

Kind regards,

Purusha Pillay

*Appendix E: Consent Form*

Dear Participant,

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science, and I am completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA. I am conducting research across different industries to investigate the relationship between a servant leadership style, and employee engagement.

This survey is voluntary and you may withdraw from the process at any time, however, your responses and participation are valuable to me and I would appreciate your assistance. Kindly be advised that the data collected will be collated with numeric values only, full anonymity of employee information is guaranteed and I will be reporting only aggregated data.

The survey is broken down into the following sections:

- Section 1: Asks for general demographic information
- Section 2: Measures the perceived servant leadership style within your team
- Section 3: Measures your engagement as an employee

Kindly note, the survey will take approximately 8-10 minutes to complete. Thank you for your time and contribution to this research study. Please do not hesitate to address any enquiries about the questionnaire or the research study to:

***Researcher:***

Purusha Pillay

*Email:* [18377956@mygibs.co.za](mailto:18377956@mygibs.co.za)

*Phone:* +27 82 480 7829

***Supervisor:***

Professor Gavin Price

*Email:* [priceg@gibs.co.za](mailto:priceg@gibs.co.za)

*Phone:* +27 11 771 422

*Appendix F: Research Instrument*

**Section 1: Demographics**

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Industry: \_\_\_\_\_

Duration with the company: \_\_\_\_\_

Years in current position: \_\_\_\_\_

How many staff report to you in your current position: \_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2:**

Please evaluate your manager or direct leader with regard to their leadership behaviour by circling the most appropriate number in the following scale.

My manager/direct leader . . .

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	N/A 6
1.) Is selfless						
2.) Is more concerned in serving others, than leading others						
3.) Admits when they make a mistake						
4.) Leads with integrity						
5.) Takes accountability of their mistakes						
6.) Creates a safe environment to criticise their decisions						
7.) Lets go of control, and allows employees to take charge and make mistakes						
8.) Accepts they do not have all the answers						

9.) Does not hold grudges						
10.) Treats everyone equally						
11.) Believes in collaboration, and breaking down silos						
12.) Leads with morality						
13.) Encourages others to do the 'right' thing						
14.) Is driven by a spiritual purpose						
15.) Encourages others to connect with and form more meaningful relationships						
16.) Helps others generate a sense of clarity and purpose						
17.) Thinks beyond monetary gains						
18.) Creates a vision that inspires						
19.) Empowers others to be their best self						
20.) Encourages others to lead by serving others						
21.) Is an inspirational leader and mentor to others						
22.) Allows others to be innovative without them fearing failing						

**Section 3:**

Please rate the below items with regard to your attitude towards your current position and organisation

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	N/A 6
23.) You get the adequate support and resources from your organisation to do your job						
24.) The company culture encourages you to voice your grievances in a safe environment						
25.) You value your company culture						
26.) You feel a connection with your colleagues						
27.) You have a supportive, and good relationship with your line manager						
28.) You are happy to go to work						
29.) You feel a connection with the team you are in						
30.) You feel appreciated at work						
31.) Your contributions are always valued at work						
32.) You would recommend your company as an employer						
33.) You are motivated by your work						
34.) You always strive to produce high quality work						

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of Pretoria

35.) Your work gives you a sense of personal achievement						
36.) Your career development within your company is clear						
37.) At your company, there are many opportunities to develop and grow yourself further						
38.) You are happy with the reward incentives at work						
39.) Your key performance indicators are clear to you						

*Appendix G: Ethical Clearance Confirmation Letter*

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of Pretoria

15 August 2019

Pillay Purusha

Dear Purusha

*Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.*

*You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.*

*Please note that approval is granted based on the methodology and research instruments provided in the application. If there is any deviation change or addition to the research method or tools, a supplementary application for approval must be obtained*

*We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.*

*Kind Regards*

GIBS MBA Research Ethical Clearance Committee