Gordon Institute of Business Science
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The Role of Perceived Social Identity Leadership in Influencing Employee
Engagement

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Abstract

The working world as we know it has fundamentally been altered by accelerated digitisation and rapid globalisation. The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has fast-tracked virtual workplaces that physically increase the distance between teams and their leaders, while also threatening to increase employee burnout, further elevating the importance of employee engagement. Scholars and practitioners are at odds regarding the definition and measurement of employee engagement. At the same time, leaders continue to seek ways to improve employee engagement as evidenced by studies exploring the intersection of famous leadership styles and employee engagement. As an extension, this study sought to explore whether the practice of social identity leadership (SIL), through its four dimensions of prototypicality, advancement, entrepreneurship and impresarioship, plays a role in influencing employee engagement.

This study thus followed a qualitative research methodology, utilising semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of 14 individuals employed by companies rated as top employers in South Africa. The average duration of interviews was 46 minutes, which were then analysed, coded and arranged into themes in line with the thematic content analysis phases. Consistent with literature, findings indicate that leaders were perceived to practice SIL. Adding to literature, the study discovered new insights for the novel application of activities to practice the identity advancement, identity entrepreneurship and identity impresarioship dimensions.

Keywords

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 in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1. Research Introduction

Employee engagement simply described as "a positive motivational state at work" (Byrne, Peters, & Weston, 2016, p. 1201) has been touted as a possible mechanism to achieve outcomes that are consistent with improved organisational performance, as such, the subject has captured the attention of scholars in the human resource and psychological fields as well as business practitioner for decades (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015). The rapid globalisation and digitisation (OECD, 2020) that are exacerbated by the accelerated advancement of the fourth industrial revolution make it all the more critical for leaders to create environments that will maximise the engagement levels of staff as well as attract and retain the best talent required to maintain a competitive advantage (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). What if, to achieve improved productivity and financial performance, all leaders had to do was lead?

This research, therefore, seeks to explore, through the lived experiences of individuals employed by top rated companies in South Africa, what role the perceived practice of leadership based on the social identity approach plays in improving employee engagement.

1.2. Research Background

The context within which leadership is practiced is rapidly evolving (Chrobot-Mason, Gerbasi, & Cullen-Lester, 2016). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020) observed that the working world as we know it had been fundamentally altered by accelerated digitisation and rapid globalisation. Additionally, the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic has fast-tracked the creation of virtual workplaces as most organisations have implemented work from home arrangements for their workforces (Robinson, 2020). According to Dulebohn and Hoch (2017), virtual teams have the potential consequence of reducing trust, widening the teams' social distance and reducing employee engagement levels. An undesirable effect for business leadership endeavouring to increase competitiveness and even more so in the South African (SA) context characterised by high levels of unemployment (Statistics South Africa, 2020a). In line with the International Labour Organization (2020) estimations of the Covid-19 related working hour losses for lower income countries, SA has experienced a further two million job losses due to the pandemic (Statistics South Africa,

2020b). Operating conditions are thus set to challenge business profitability and going concern sustainability (African Development Bank, n.d.), and require leadership to distinguish itself and maximise output through the effective deployment of all its resources including employees.

According to the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, sustaining productivity levels with a reduced workforce increases the potential for burnout and thus threatens sustainability and business performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). As burnout is thought to be the opposite end of employee engagement, it is therefore an impediment to employee engagement outcomes such as innovation, productivity and, by implication, profitability (Anthony-McMann, Ellinger, Astakhova & Halbesleben, 2017). Further strengthening the case for business leadership, especially within a SA context, to understand how to influence employee engagement without an outlay of limited financial resources but through effectively practicing a specific style of leadership.

1.3. Research Problem

The more than five thousand studies published on employee engagement (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, & Fletcher., 2017) would suggest that clarity should exist regarding what actions organisations and leaders should take to improve employee engagement, hoever, as Bailey (2016) observed, contentions about its definition and construct measures remain a problem within both the academic and practitioner spheres. Amidst these contentions, the burnout-antithesis definition which considers employee engagement to be "the positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006, p. 702) appears to be the most preferred and researched as found by Bailey et al. (2017), yet strong support is still apparent for Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation of employee engagement (Anthony-McMann et al., 2017). This lack of consensus also presents a problem for organisations interested in achieving and maintaining healthy levels of engagement, as the potential for investing limited resource and yielding suboptimal results increases with this uncertainty. What can leaders do to mitigate these challenges?

Explorations of the various forms of leadership and how they intersect with employee engagement have found transformational leadership (Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti & Derks, 2016; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Tims, Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2011), authentic leadership

(Hsieh & Wang, 2015; Wei, Li, Zhang, & Liu, 2018), charismatic leadership (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010), ethical leadership (Demirtas, Hannah, Gok, Arslan, Capar & Hannah, 2017) and servant leadership (Bao, Li, & Zhao, 2018) to be antecedents to employee engagement. Noticeably, similar explorations for leadership based on the social identity approach have been limited. Extant literature that has explored social identity leadership (SIL) has however been found to be mostly skewed towards the dimension of identity prototypicality with lessor attention afforded to the remaining three dimensions of identity entrepreneurship, identity advancement and identity impresarioship (Steffens et al., 2014).

1.4. Research Objectives

It is the intention of this study to redirect the focus from identity prototypicality and qualitatively explore whether all four dimensions of the SIL approach play a role in influencing employee engagement. Bailey et al. (2017) highlighted the need for qualitative studies to unearth deep insights into the contextual aspects of engagement as most of the studies on the topic have been quantitative, additionally; they advocated for the application of engagement frameworks in context specific settings. Thus the focus of the qualitative methodology adopted for the study to explore individuals' lived experiences in the context-specific setting of companies rated as top employers in SA. The research objectives are thus to explore:

i. Whether leaders are perceived to be practicing SIL
ii. What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced
iii. Whether the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influences employee engagement?

1.5. Benefits of the Research

The insights gleaned through the exploration of individual lived experiences firstly, provide an alternative view of how SIL is practiced in a developing country context, adding to the current academic body of work on the subject, and secondly provide understanding of whether and how it influences employee engagement. The qualitative nature of the research also addresses the current gap is studies resulting from the experimental, quantitative focus of current engagement studies. Furthermore, leadership studies will also benefit from the

exploration employee engagement with a leadership style other than the traditional transformational leadership. The focus on all four dimensions of SIL, also respond to the call to focus on the other equally important activities of SIL contained in the advancement, entrepreneurship and impresarioship dimensions.

The findings of real-life experiences and practical insights also provide insights that will aid in guiding business and leaders efforts on how to structure workplace interactions between leaders and followers to extract the value provided by engaging in SIL. Additionally, considering the current constrained business operating environment, SA business would benefit from practical insights of what activities leaders in top-rated companies have adopted to create conducive environments and no-cost alternatives which could be pursued to improve employee engagement. Where organisations do invest financial resources into leadership development, findings from the study could help realign training efforts to include an improved focus on SIL principles.

1.6. Conclusion

In order to achieve the set objectives of the research, Chapter 2 will present the employee engagement and leadership literature reviewed for the study. Chapter 3 outlines the research questions derived from the literature, following which, Chapter 4 details the methodology that the study followed. The output from the execution of the methodology is presented as results in Chapter 5 and synthesised as findings in Chapter 6. In conclusion, Chapter 7 will consolidate the key findings and recommendations flowing from the research.

For ease of reference, in this study the term social identity leadership (SIL) will be used to refer to the social identity approach to leadership, whereas team and group will have the same meaning, and team members and group members will also mean the same thing.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The research problem in Chapter 1 has highlighted that notwithstanding the extensive literature exploring the subject of employee engagement, there still exists some contentions regarding its definition and measurement within the scholar and practitioner communities (Bailey et al., 2017; Byrne et al., 2016; Shuck, Osam, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2017). As Byrne et al. (2016) observed, this pervasive uncertainty extends to conclusions and by implication any related action stemming from them. A highly undesirable state given the keen interest that organisations and leadership practitioners have in employee engagement's highly published benefits such as higher productivity, improved performance and organizational success (Knight, Patterson, & Dawson, 2017).

The following sections will thus highlight details of the literature review performed to understand key developments in the study of employee engagement and SIL across the psychology, human resource (HR), and management fields. The review will first look at employee engagement and cover definitions and theories, types of engagement, the positioning of engagement, and drivers and outcomes of employee engagement. Secondly, the review will focus on the four dimensions of SIL.

At its initial conceptualisation, employee engagement was first defined by Kahn (1990) as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active full role performances" (p. 700). Definition extensions and diversion have since occurred under the various schools of thought categorised into the "Needs-Satisfaction Framework" (p. 166), the "Burnout Antithesis Framework" (p. 167), the "Job Satisfaction Framework" (p. 168) and the "Multidimensional Framework" (p. 168). (Anthony-McMann et al., 2017). In parallel, and also aligned to the aim of the current research, scholars explored and discovered what drives employee engagement and what its associated outcomes could be (Bailey et al., 2017; Saks, 2019). Leadership, as one of the identified drivers of employee engagement, is the second focus of this study.

According to Chrobot-Mason et al. (2016), the traditional image of leadership is transitioning from the command and control type that prized seniority and hierarchies to a collectivist, collaborative and shared type of leadership. The one leader-many-followers model is thus being rendered obsolete in the current dynamic, knowledge-based and collaborative business context (Turner & Chacon-Rivera, 2019). The SIL approach premised on the ideologies of the social identity theory (Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979) and the self-categorisation theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, & Reicher , 1987) provides one such shared type of leadership. SIL holds that when leaders are seen to be prototypical, that is, representative of the groups they lead, the more influence they have which can be wielded to better direct group activities towards the achievement of organisational objectives (Barreto & Hogg, 2017; Hogg, 2001). The interest of this study is whether leaders can direct this influence towards improving employee engagement and thus unlock its related benefits.

2.2. Employee Engagement Definitions and Theories

2.2.1. The Needs-Satisfaction Framework

The seminal definition of employee engagement as the complete immersion and expression of one's cognitive, emotional and physical self at work Kahn (1990), established the needs-satisfaction sect of scholars (Anthony-McMann et al., 2017). According to Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation, employee engagement centres around meaningfulness, psychological safety and availability from work, where meaningfulness is a reward for investing in doing the job, psychological safety is concerned with the trust and security of the working climate and availability relates to access to work resources (Knight et al., 2017). Rich, Lepine & Crawford (2010) built on this and defined "how engagement represents the simultaneous investment of cognitive, affective, and physical energies into role performance" (p. 617). In addition to being lauded as an authentic operationalisation of Kahn's (1990) initial ideas (Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2012), the job engagement scale (JES) revealed employee engagement to be a mediator between value congruence, perceived organisational support, and core self-evaluations as antecedents and the outcomes of task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour (Rich et al., 2010).

A further contribution to this school of thought was provided by (Soane, Truss, C., Alfes, Shantz, Rees, & Gatenby, 2012) through the introduction of a model, named for its components of intellectual, social and affective engagement (ISA), with the social component, however, aligned to the central idea of psychological safety in Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation. The ISA indicated that employee engagement was positively related to task performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, and turnover intentions. Notwithstanding, the JES remains the only valid measurement scale for employee engagement as conceptualised by Kahn (1990) (Byrne et al., 2016) while the studies utilising the ISA have to date been limited (Shuck, Osam, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2017). The main criticism of the needs satisfaction frameworks is the time lapse between Kahn's (1990) seminal work and its first operationalization, which essentially saw the rise and popularity of the burnout antithesis frameworks instead (Anthony-McMann et al., 2017; Bailey et al., 2017).

2.2.2. The Burnout Antithesis Framework

Another prominent sect comprises proponents of the burnout antithesis framework, an approach that considers engagement through the lens of burnout a paradigm that is vastly different from the adopted by the needs-satisfaction fraternity. Earlier studies under this approach positioned engagement as the opposite of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy; therefore, high energy, involvement and efficacy engagement and measured it through the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Lee & Ashforth, 1990). However, in disagreement with this view, Schaufeli, Salanova, González-romá, & Bakker (2002) considered engagement to be distinct from burnout hence worthy of a measure distinct from simply the inverse of its antithesis. Their definition thus adopted a more positive frame as evident in the definition of employee engagement being "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (p. 74), with its measure being the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Bailey et al., 2017). However, as highlighted by Byrne et al. (2016) current scholarly debates question its construct validity which Byrne et al. (2016) found to measure engagement to measure engagement and overlap with other related job attitudes., thus making it more suited to use in practical contexts seeking to gather wide-ranging views.

2.2.3. The Multidimensional Framework

Saks's (2006) study forms the basis of the multidimensional approaches as it extended both definitions by Kahn (1990) and Schaufeli et al. (2002) to separate employee engagement into job and organisation engagement and proposed a set of drivers and outcomes of employee engagement. However, Saks (2006) did not provide a solid definition for employee engagement although the term was deconstructed into job and organisation engagement, both sub-constructs were jointly defined as "participant's psychological presence in their job and organization" (p. 608). This would seem to allude to a grounding in Kahn's (1990), however, by being vague Saks (2006) allows for flexibility and to not contrained by a specific paradigm and also suggesting that their drivers and outcomes could be applicable to any conceptualisation of engagement, with the differences possibly being in the strength of the relationship as was seen when this study was reformed by Saks (2019). The re-performed by Saks (2019) yielded a revised list of antecedents and outcomes as could be expected, considering the vast number of studies published during the elapsed decade. Additionally, the popularity of the UWES rendered the validity of findings from Saks (2006) questionable, which Saks (2019), found to still be valid and, as testament to the afore suggested flexibility, could be generalised to findings of the UWES. Accordingly, Saks (2019), found that "the same antecedents that predict job engagement predict work engagement, the UWES was related to all of the consequences, and the UWES mediated the relationships between the antecedents and the consequences as did job and organization engagement" (p. 31).

Sythetis for current study

The above categorisation would appear adequately simplistic and should provide a clear demarcation of employee engagement definitions and measures, however, this is not the case. In addition to the Anthony-McMann et al. (2017) synthesis which provided the above categorisation, recent synthetic studies also aimed at identifying definitions, theories and measures for employee engagement provided different categorisation. Bailey et al. (2017) categorised definitions into six categories; namely, personal role engagement, work task or job engagement, multidimensional engagement, engagement as a composite attitudinal and behavioural construct, and engagement as a management practice. Adopting a simpler approach akin to that followed by Anthony-McMann et al. (2017), Byrne et al. (2016) distinguished between the self-role-expression and opposite-of-burnout approach. Looking at

published studies performed in the public sector context, (Fletcher, Bailey, Alfes, Madden, Fletcher, Bailey, Alfes, & Madden, 2020) also provided two categories of work engagement and employee engagement. The varied classifications and labelling seem to emphasise the current confusion and the notion of an identity crisis around the construct of employee engagement (Knight et al., 2017). Or is engagement by any other name, still engagement?

In exploring whether SIL has a role to play in influencing employee engagement, the above synthesis would suggest that a narrow definition would not be aligned with exploration. All the frameworks and definitions reviewed were concerned with the individual and how engagement manifests as predicted by drivers that Saks (2019) has suggested. Additionally, the manifestation of engagement might be evidenced by the outcomes as Saks (2019) also suggest. The study will thus explore, with no bias towards a framework or definition, what the lived experiences of individuals are in this regard.

2.3. Types of Engagement

Shuck et al. (2017) maintain that employee engagement cannot be used as a term for all engagement and thus proposed that the best way to ensure consistent application of definitions, frameworks and measures would be through returning to history and categorising engagement according to the context or level at which the seminal introductions of the frameworks were focused, by so doing employee engagement should be distinguishable from personal engagement, work engagement, job engagement, organisational engagement, social engagement. Accordingly, Kahn (1990) focused on personal engagement, therefore any studies utilising his conceptualisation; that is, the needs satisfaction framework, should define engagement as personal engagement and utilise the appropriate related measures for exploration.

Additionally, Shuck et al. (2017) highlight that personal engagement should not be confused with employee engagement, defined by Shuck and Wollard (2010), as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes." (p. 103). Which appears to be a semantic differentiation considering that the employee is the person that that Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation of employee engagement

was focused on (Knight et al., 2017), however, the argument is then rebutted by Shuck, Adelson and Reio (2017) as employee engagement encapsulates the holistic work experience without focusing on micro aspects such as the job or work. Furthermore, Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) propose that a distinction should be made between job and work engagement. Job engagement being, a "multi-dimensional motivational concept reflecting the simultaneous investment of an individual's physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in active, full work performance" (Rich et al., 2010, p. 619) and work engagement being, the focus of the burnout antithesis scholars, identifiable through vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Moving from the individual level, Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) credit the seminal definition of organisational engagement to Saks, (2006) as "the extent to which an individual is psychologically present in a particular organizational role" (p. 604). However, as confirmed by Saks (2019), not much research has been done in this area and thus requires more exploration.

Lastly, classified as "alternative states of engagement", are the ISA, explored in section 2.2.1 above, and organisational engagement. Collective organizational engagement credited to Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright (2015), was defined as the "shared perceptions of organizational members that members of the organization are, as a whole, physically, cognitively and emotionally invested in their work" (p. 113). Their cross-sectional study, positioned collective organisational engagement as a capability that could be positively manipulated by the deployment of organisation resources such as work design, HR practices and leadership styles, to increase organisational performance. Supplementing this, Schneider, Yost, Kropp, Kind & Lam, (2018), referred to workforce engagement as "the organizational-level aggregate of individuals' engagement in work" (p. 465), found that it predicted financial and customer performance measures and also, was predicted by work attributes, supervisory support, and more so organisational practices.

2.4. The Positioning of Engagement in Research

Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) highlighted that various employee engagement studies have applied at least one of three placement choices when exploring the construct. Consequently, employee engagement has been explored as either a psychological state that drives an

outcome, as an outcome itself, or as a process (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017). As the latter has not been extensively adopted by studies (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017), the focus will only be on the two. The authors also highlight that positioning is definition or type agnostic, thus studies focusing on the respective engagement types have applied any one of the three positions.

2.4.1. Engagement as an Outcome

This refers to studies that have positioned engagement "as being predicted by, predictive of, or equated to something" (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017, p. 279). Additionally, as Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) highlighted, this view has been mainly interested in the measurement of the engagement which is useful for the practical application of the construct in other fields, for example, management and human resource, beyond the field of psychology. In Schneider et al. (2018), employee engagement was explored as an outcome in the form of improved organisational performance as well as a psychological state influenced by organisational resources.

2.4.2. Psychological State

In this positioning, engagement is viewed as being "influenced by, influenced of, or as influenceable" (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017, p. 281), therefore the interest is in the individual's holistic work experience with a focus on how employees decide to manage and invest their energies (Shuck, Osam, et al., 2017). Eldor and Harpaz (2016) explored employee engagement as influenced by an organisation's learning climate and in Conway, Fu, Monks, Alfes & Bailey (2016), it was examined as predicted by performance management and employee voice.

2.5. Drivers and Outcomes of Employee Engagement

In their meta-analysis, Bailey et al. (2017) identified several key drivers and outcomes associated with employee engagement. Drivers included individual psychological states, experienced job-design-related factors, individual perceptions of organizational and team factors, organizational interventions or activities, and perceived leadership and management. Outcomes comprised performance and morale. These are respectively reviewed below.

2.5.1. Drivers of Engagement

The five categories of factors considered to be positive drivers of employee engagement (Bailey et al., 2017) will be reviewed below.

2.5.1.1 Individual psychological states

Intrinsic beliefs espoused by individuals about their strengths and capabilities have been positively associated with employee engagement (Bailey et al., 2017). Examples include self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience and optimism (Knight et al., 2017), which could assist organisations to decide who to recruit into the organisation (Young et al., 2018). Cautiously, Strauss et al. (2017), determined that proactivity as a personal resource could lead to job strain if controlled motivation levels exceed autonomous motivation levels and thus following the job resources and job demands rationale, could negatively impact employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). However, notwithstanding the caution, Buil et al. (2019) still foung proactivity to moderate the strength of effect between transformational leadership and work engagement.

2.5.1.2 Experienced job-design-related factors

Bailey et al. (2017) identified job-design-related factors to be the top focus of most studies exploring the drivers of employee engagement which aligned with the popular use of the job demands and resources (JD-R) framework in engagement related studies. According to the JD-R theory each job consist of demands and resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), with demands being the "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs" (p. 274) and resources including "those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, or stimulate personal growth, learning, and development" (p. 274). Accordingly, the availability of job resources has been found to reduce the negative impact of job demands and increase work engagement and commitment to the organisation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Further confirmed by Saks (2019), job resources; autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task significance, feedback from others and feedback from the job were "significantly positively correlated to job engagement" (p. 23).

2.5.1.3 Individual perceptions of organizational and team factors

The second most explored category of factors in employee engagement studies (Bailey et al., 2017), include perceived organizational support (POS), psychological contract, psychosocial safety climate, organizational identification, perceptions of human resource management practices, person-organization fit, value congruence, communication, remuneration, and organizational trust and voice (Bailey et al., 2017). Zhong et al. (2016) found a direct relationship between job engagement and HR practices.

2.5.1.4 Organizational interventions or activities

Bailey et al. (2017) included in this category, interventions to improve engagement and training and development activities. Eldor and Harpaz (2016) established that a conducive learning environment that provided employees with opportunities to obtain and share knowledge was beneficial to the employee, while Knight et al. (2017) in their study found a positive relationship between workplace engagement interventions and work engagement.

2.5.1.5 Perceived leadership and management

Last, yet not least, leadership is also considered a driver of employee engagement (Saks, 2019). As the objective of this study focuses on exploring leadership and employee engagement, related literature is explored in more depth. Adopting a general approach and using five samples, aimed at verifying whether the UWES and JES were measuring the same construct of employee engagement, Byrne et al. (2016) also found that perceived supervisor support was positively related to engagement. Examining a specific leadership style, Breevaart et al. (2016) explored the interplay of transformational leadership and employee self-leadership in influencing employee engagement during periods of high and low transformational leadership behaviour using weekly diary surveys. Their findings indicate that respectively, transformational leadership and an employee's self-leadership were positively related to employee engagement when leaders engaged in transformation leadership activities and when employees engaged in self-leadership.

Departing from the focus on a specific leadership style, Gutermann, Lehmann-willenbrock, Boer, Born & Voelpel (2017), employed field surveys and studied the influence of leader engagement on employee's work engagement based on cross-over theory; and leader-

member exchange as the process of influence. Their findings suggested that leaders' engagement positively influences followers' engagement, and employee engagement was directly related to job performance and negatively related to turnover intentions. Adding to the focus on leadership styles examined ethical leadership and posited that meaningfulness had the potential to positively influence employees' work engagement, 440 aviation maintenance company employees were surveyed to determine if ethical leadership could improve meaningfulness for followers and through meaningfulness, impact employee engagement. The results indicated that through meaningfulness, ethical leadership does have a positive direct influence on employees' work engagement. As opposed to studying the interaction between leadership and work engagement, Wei et al. (2018) positioned work engagement as a mediator of the relationship between authentic leadership and job performance which relationship they proposed would be moderated by leaders' perceived competence levels. Their findings proved their presupposition true and indicated that authentic leaders who were perceived to be more competent had a higher impact on followers' job performance when employees were engaged.

Breevaart & Bakker, (2018) returning to the exploration of transformational leadership with a sample of elementary school teachers, positioned transformational leaderships as a resource in the JD-R theory and argued that leader transformational behaviour would improve employees work engagement if faced with challenging work demands and would moderate the impact of hindering demands. Study results indicated, as hypothesised, that transformational leadership behaviour had a boosting effect on work engagement when faced with challenging job demands, and a buffering effect on work engagement when faced with role conflict as a hindering demand. Using two sample groups, Bao et al., (2018) explored the impact of servant leadership on work engagement and found that "leadership is an antecedent of work engagement, and this effect is primarily through the social exchange process" (p.415).

2.5.2. Outcomes of Engagement

Performance and morale were the two core groups of employee engagement outcomes produced by Bailey et al. (2017).

2.5.2.1 Performance

The performance category comprised two sub-categories of higher-level performance outcomes, which according to Bailey et al. (2017), refers to outcomes that benefit the organisation, such as increased customer loyalty and positive customer feedback; and individual-level outcomes which could be divided into in- and extra-role behaviours (Bailey et al., 2017). Considering the context of the study, individual level outcomes are explored further below.

Bailey et al. (2017) define in-role behaviours as those contracted to in the employment contract, wheras extra-role behaviors are effected at the volition of the employee. Most prominent amongs the exrta-role behaviours are organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) which Babcock-Roberson and Strickland (2010) explored in relation to the charismatic component of transformational leadership. Their study confirmed that the charisma in transformational leadership was positively related to employee engagement and OCB. However, Babcock-Roberson and Strickland's (2010) study used university students did not specify the industries that the sample was drawn from even though the students were employed, therefore making it challenging to determine whether the study results could be transferable to other industries. Furthermore, the study was performed in an American context.

More recently Buil et al. (2019) performed a similar study and although it yielded similar results to Babcock-Roberson and Strickland (2010), their study differed because the sample for this study comprised 323 individuals from 323 Spanish hotels, the leadership style explored was transformational leadership, without a specific focus on charisma. Additionaly, although both studies were focused on the interplay between leadership, employee engagement, and orgnisational citizenship behaviours, Buil et al. (2019) included organisational identity to mediate between the leadership style and employee engagement as well as. Proactive personality was also introduces as a moderator. Zhang et al. (2017), similar to Buil et al. (2019) positioned the study within the hospitality industry, however, with a larger and yet less dispersed sample of 360 participants from 2 Chinese hotels thus also changing the geographical and cultural context.

The bias of the three studies towards transfomational leadership as well as the Western and Eastern context that they were completed in supports the need for the current study, in order

focus on exploring a different type of leadership and employee engagement which the studies have postively linked to OCB.

2.5.2.2 Morale

This grouping covers factors of wellbeing and health perceptions, and work-related attitudes (Bailey et al., 2017). Under well-being and health: Byrne et al. (2016) found a negative relationship between engagement and burnout. Additionally, the job demands from to the JD-R theory, common examples being "time and work pressure, role conflicts, or quantitative workload" (p. 77) if not mediated by the requisite job resources, could reduce work engagement, lead to stress and burn-out and intentions to quit (Lesener, Gusy & Wolter, 2019).

2.6. Social Identity Leadership

Further to the aim of the study to understand the role of the SIL approach in improving employee engagement, its theoretical basis is explored next.

2.6.1. Theoretical Basis

Similar to employee engagement, the idea of leadership premised on a shared social identity has received much focus in management and organisational studies (van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016). This fundamental idea of social identity theory is that people tend to anchor their identities in their uniqueness as individuals as well as on the characteristics of groups that they are affiliated with, thus shared social identity (Epitropaki, Kark, Mainemelis & Lord, 2017). Accordingly, SIL asserts that leaders, as influential members of the group are in a position to define an identity for their followers from which followers' thoughts, feelings and actions consequently advance when they identify with the group (Barreto & Hogg, 2017). In turn, evaluations of leaders' effectiveness are influenced by how followers perceive them to be representative, or prototypical of that group identity (van Dick et al., 2018).

Developments in the study of SIL have led to an expanded focus from prototypicality to reinforce leadership as a "recursive, multi-dimensional process that centres on leaders' capacities to represent, advance, create, and embed a shared sense of identity for group members" (Steffens et al., 2014, p. 1002). Accordingly, SIL suggests that beyond embodying teams' characteristics (identity prototypicality), leaders must also create the identity (identity entrepreneurship), promote it (identity advancement) and finally embed it as group members' lived experiences (identity impresarioship) (Epitropaki et al., 2017).

2.6.2. Identity Prototypicality

The evolution of theory to the SIL approach begun with the introduction of the Social Identity Model of Leadership (SIMOL) (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003). SIMOL recognises that leadership does not involve the leader in isolation but instead occurs in a collective, specific group context such as a team or an organisation making leaders members of those teams (van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016), binding leaders and followers to the same group identity (Epitropaki et al., 2017). Of which identity encompasses "the shared social reality of the group:

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shared norms, beliefs, and values, as well as shared aspirations, ambitions, and goals" (
Steffens, Munt, van Knippenberg, Platow & Haslam, 2020, p. 5). Accordingly, leaders' ability
to influence followers is enhanced when they are perceived to be prototypical, that is when
they represent the ideal group characteristics of the group they lead (Barreto & Hogg, 2017),
which said influence is enhanced by the tendency of individuals to be positively biased
towards those they consider to be members of their in-group (Prayag, Mills, Lee & Soscia
2020). Therefore "when leaders embody 'who we are' to their followers, they are able to inspire
and attract followers to follow them" Epitropaki et al. (2017, p. 116), as followers trust
perceived prototypical leaders to be more effective (Barreto & Hogg, 2017). Most recently
(Steffens et al., 2020) found that the effects of leader prototypicality may be affected by the
duration of the social groups as perceptions of group prototypicality are mentally solidified
over time further implying that the same would be applicable for group members based on
their tenure with the groups.

As the central idea for social identity theory, identity prototypicality has been the most explored
tenet by research performed on social identity theory (Steffens et al., 2020) notwithstanding
the additional dimensions that were conceptualised to transition from SIMOL to what is now
the SIL approach (van Dick et al., 2018) comprised of three additional dimensions; namely,
identity advancement, identity entrepreneurship and identity impresarioship (van Dick &
Kerschreiter, 2016). To facilitate the expansion of research performed, the Identity Leadership
Inventory (ILI) was introduced as a measurement scale to support the quantitative
assessment of all four dimensions of the SIL approach (van Dick et al., 2018). The four
dimensions, depicted in Figure 1, reinforce the recursive process as noted by Steffens et al.
(2014) that before representing embodying a team characteristics (identity prototypicality),
leaders musty first create the identity (identity entrepreneurship), promote it (identity
advancement) and finally embed it as group members' lived experiences (identity
impresarioship).
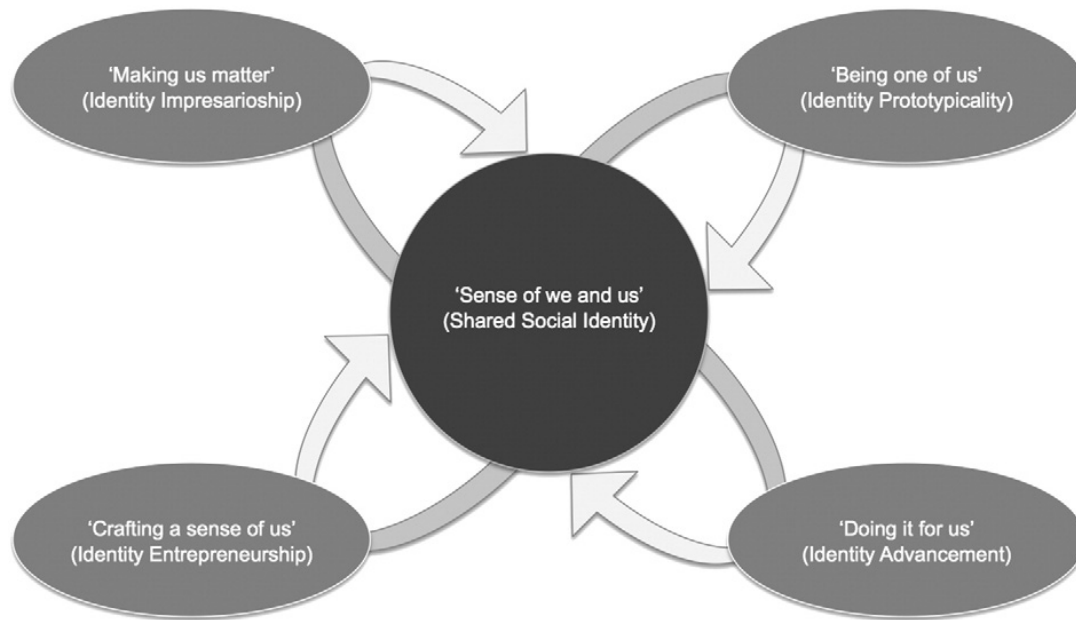
Figure 1: The four dimensional SIL model (Steffens et al., 2014, p. 1003)

2.6.3. Identity Advancement

Identity advancement is concerned with "advancing and promoting core interests of the group. Standing up for, and if threatened defending, group interests (and not personal interests or those of other groups). Championing concerns and ambitions that are key to the group as a whole. Contributing to the realization of group goals. Acting to prevent group failures and to overcome obstacles to the achievement of group objectives" (Steffens et al., 2014, p. 1004). According to (van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016) identity advancement could be demonstrable through applying fairness in group processes without abusing the power stemming from the role of leadership. Additionally leaders could practice subordinating their interests in favour of those of the group, further emphasising that identity advancement is "the extent to which the leader's interests focus on the group" (van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016, p. 373).

In one of the few studies focused on identity advancement, Steffens, Mols, Haslam & Okimoto (2016) found that leaders who prioritised groups' interests were perceive to be more authentic leaders and had the potential to realise increased follower inspiration. It is however key to note that leaders who are prototypical of the group might not always advance interests of the group and for leaders to advance the interests of the group, prototypicality, although

advantageous, is not a prerequisite (Steffens et al., 2016). As Steffens et al. (2020) note, followers' willingness to be led and influenced is driven by the expectation that the leaders' actions will be in the best interest of the group. Prototypicality thus serves to amplify the expectation of identity advancement and the effect of the leaders' influence.

2.6.4. Identity Entrepreneurship

Identity entrepreneurship is defined as "bringing people together by creating a shared sense of 'we' and 'us' within the group. Making different people all feel that they are part of the same group and increasing cohesion and inclusiveness within the group. Clarifying people's understanding of what the group stands for (and what it does not stand for) by defining core values, norms, and ideals" (van Dick et al., 2018, p. 701). Studies on this dimension of SIL have been limited as highlighted; however, Steffens, Haslam, Ryan & Kessler (2013) found that perceptions of leaders' performance and being seen as part of the group enhances the potential to be identity entrepreneurs.

2.6.5. Identity Impresarioship

Further to identity advancement and identity entrepreneurship, this dimension has been afforded even lesser research coverage. According to van Dick & Kerschreiter (2016), an identity is useless if it can't be a lived reality or if no efforts are made to embed it. Accordingly van Dick et al. (2018) suggest that identity impresariorship entails developing and promoting activities or events for group membership to become a lived reality, thus allowing group identity to be embedded in the group and to be visible outside the group.

2.7. Conclusion

It is apparent from exploring the drivers and outcomes of employee engagement in section 2.5 that leadership, whether as a study or in practice is interested in maximising the benefits that engaged employees hold for organisations (Barrick et al., 2015; Schneider et al., 2018), however current studies have mainly focused on the conventional types of leadership, such as transformational leadership (Gutermann et al., 2017). Considering that the context for business and leadership today is rapidly evolving (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2016; OECD, 2020), the exploration of how alternative styles of leadership interact with employee engagement is

warranted. Further to that, exploring the SIL inclusive of all four dimensions addresses the current bias of studies towards identity prototypicality.

The current debates around the construct definition, theory and measures of employee engagement prove that opportunities for wide exploration remain which a qualitative study provides adequate space to execute without restrictions of specific measures and theories as the inductive process facilitates emergence (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The focus of this study is to thus explore whether SIL plays a role in influencing employee engagement, therefore the relevant positioning as identified by Shuck, Osam, et al. (2017) will be at the individual employee level. Additionally, the study addresses the need for qualitative studies, as highlighted by Bailey et al. (2017), to unearth deep insights into the contextual aspects of engagement as most of the studies on the topic have been quantitative. The process to unearth these insights will be guided by research questions detailed next in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study focuses on answering one main research question which is supported by a further three sub-questions.

3.1. Research Questions

The primary research question: What is the role of perceived social identity leadership (SIL) is in influencing employee engagement.

The primary research question is aimed at establishing whether the perceived practice of SIL influences employee engagement levels. Following the observations by Gutermann et al. (2017) on the coverage of transformational leadership in engagement studies as well as the opportunity to advance exploration of alternative leadership styles for the current business and leadership context (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2016).

To aid in answering the main research question, three supporting research questions were developed.

Supporting question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL?

This question aims to first establish whether SIL is perceived to the practiced as a form of leadership style (Epitropaki et al., 2017; van Dick et al., 2018; van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016). This question will thus establish whether the four dimensions of SIL; identity prototypically, identity advancement, identity entrepreneurship, and identity impresarioship, are perceived to be practiced by leaders.

Supporting question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

This question follows on the supporting question 1 and seeks to establish how SIL is perceived and experienced in practice across the four dimensions (Epitropaki et al., 2017; Steffens et al., 2020; van Dick et al., 2018; van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016).

Supporting question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

The research question aims to establish whether the perceived practice of the four SIL dimensions plays a role in influencing employee engagement (Bailey et al., 2017; Saks, 2019).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that was selected and followed for this study. Ensuing from the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the qualitative methodology was considered to be best suited to aid in addressing the primary and secondary research questions identified in Chapter 3. The study was thus exploratory with the research design, sampling approach, data collection and data analysis techniques aligned to the purpose of qualitative research to understand a human or social problem from research subjects' point of view (O'Brien et al., 2014).

4.2. Choice of Methodology and Design

According to Ponterotto (2005) "qualitative methods refer to a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting" (p. 128). In addition to producing new insights, qualitative research aims to "produce knowledge that is practically relevant – which means relevant for producing or promoting solutions to practical problems" (Flick, 2007).

The study sought to gain new insights into the practice of all four SIL dimensions and how this form of leadership is perceived to influence employee engagement. Furthermore, the study aimed to discover and contribute practical knowledge of how this form of leadership had been practiced through the exploration of individuals' lived experiences. Given these objectives, the exploratory and inductive nature of qualitative research design proved to be the best aligned approach as it facilitated the required in-depth exploration of research participants' authentic experiences (Cresswell, 2003). The researcher was thus moved inductively from specific theoretical observations of SIL and employee engagement and got a broader picture based on individuals' lived experiences which were well supported by the flexibility of the inductive approach (Saunders & Lewis, 2012).

The study was performed, within a singular predefined and limited space of time, by conducting virtual semi-structured interviews with the participants selected from the population. According to Salkind (2010), this study was cross-sectional as it "examines one small group of individuals at only one point in time". This was ideally suited for the MBA

research project schedule due to the limited time and financial resources as well as the simplicity of the study design when compared to longitudinal studies (Salkind, 2010).

4.3. Population

According to Taylor (2008), a population is a group of people or other units that the research centres around and is defined by a common inherent characteristic. The population for this study is defined by a common inherent characteristic of being individuals employed by organisations rated as top employers in South Africa. The Top Employers Institute publishes on its website, a publically accessible list of companies that have been rated as top employers across the globe.

The researcher selected this population based on the rating criteria applied in selecting the top employers which considers human resource concepts that have been positively linked to employee engagement (Bailey et al., 2017). These items include amongst others workforce planning, talent management strategy, organisational learning and development, leadership development and compensation benefits (Top Employers Institute, n.d.). It is therefore expected that interactions between leaders and followers in organisations rated as top employers should provide a unique social setting to explore whether SIL is practiced and if so, how it is perceived to impact employee engagement.

4.4. Sampling Method and Size

Purposive non-probability sampling was utilised in selecting a sample for the study. According to Guest and Johnson (2006), purposive sampling involves the selection of research participants "according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective" (p. 61). Furthermore, according to Saunders and Lewis (2012), non-probability sampling is suitable where the researcher is unable to access the entire population and is consequently unable to determine the probability of each member of the population being selected. Individuals employed by top employers in South Africa were identified through the researcher's network and snowball sampling was further used to reach the final sample size of fourteen participants. According to Guest and Johnson (2006), a sample size of twelve would be appropriate for studies aimed at understanding the experiences of a homogenous

group of people. Thus the study's sample of fourteen is fitting to the research objective as detailed in Chapter 1.

The fourteen participants were full-time employees and members of teams in their respective companies rated as top employers. The top employer rated companies were spread across four sectors including mobile communications, automotive, information technology and aviation. Due to the unpredictable nature of non-probability sampling and the use of snowballing to identify additional participants (Saunders & Townsend, 2018), even distribution across companies was not achieved. Details of the final distribution are contained in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Sample Industry Distribution

	Industry	**Number of Participants**
1.	Automotive	5
2.	Aviation	4
3.	Information Technology	2
4.	Mobile Communications	3
		14

4.5. The Unit of Analysis

The study was interested in the perceptions of personal lived experiences as narrated by research participants, thus individuals were the unit of analysis for the study. This was aligned to the study's objective, as detailed in Chapter 1, to explore through the lived experiences of individuals whether leaders are perceived to be practicing SIL and whether this leadership style plays a role in employee engagement.

4.6. Research Instrument

Creswell, Hanson & Clark (2007) identified interviews to be a suitable instrument for collecting data from the narration of individuals' stories. Additionally, Prasad and Prasad (2002) posited that semi-structured interviews are a better suited instrument to understand participants' lived experiences which cannot be quantified but can be verbally expressed through responding to questions. Fourteen individual interviews were thus conducted with the identified research participants. Due to the social distancing rules that were introduced following the spread of

the COVID-19 pandemic, face to face interviews were not feasible. As an alternative, virtual interviews were conducted through Zoom or the Microsoft Teams platforms.

According to Persaud (2012, p. 635), "interviews rely on…an interview guide [which] is a relatively unstructured list of general topics to be covered" and is carried out over the phases that include, preparation, identification and execution. The interview guide, attached as Appendix 3, was used the preparation phase for pilots and in the execution phase, to guide the interview conversations. This was based on the ILI referenced in Chapter 2 which was used to formulate the interview questions, in line with the research questions highlighted in Chapter 3. The mapping of the interview questions to the research questions is also provided in Appendix 4. The interview guide contained semi-structured interview questions centred on obtaining "descriptions of the lifeworld of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2019, p. 58) of SIL and whether it was perceived to influence employee engagement.

The two pilots provided a neutral opportunity for the researcher to test both interviewing skills and the functionality of the interview guide (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). These also assisted in estimating the potential duration of the interviews. At 45 minutes, the pilots' duration was a minute less than the actual average of 46 minutes, indicating that the planned hour was adequate for the semi-structured discussion. Furthermore, the pilots revealed that some of the questions were too long and thus resulted in interviewees requesting them to be repeated. As this had the potential of compromising the quality of information collected, the specific questions were revised before facilitating the actual interviews with the targeted sample for the study. Linked to this, the researcher also realised that the interviewees perceived some of the questions to be repetitive as there was no transition indicated across the four sections of the interview that focused on the four dimensions of SIL. The interview guide was thus also amended to indicate the introduction, a transition across sections and the closing, as can be seen in Appendix 3. Accordingly, this marked the preparation phase of the interview steps (Persaud, 2012).

4.7. Data Collection

Data for this study was gathered through conducting individual, semi-structured, virtual interviews with the 14 identified participants who made up the study's sample. According to Persaud (2012), interviews are a dialogue between two people, conducted to gather data on a specific subject.

In the identification phase of the interviews (Persaud, 2012), the research participants, identified through the researcher's network and snowballing, were contacted before the actual interviews to establish their availability and arrange a convenient date and time for the interview sessions. In line with ethical requirements, signed informed consent forms were obtained from all the participants that were interviewed, an example is attached in Appendix 1. The forms were sent to participants electronically before scheduling interviews to provide an introductory overview of the research, an example of the email is attached as Appendix 2. Interviews were only scheduled once participants provided confirmation of their consent.

The Zoom platform was used for the first six interviews and upon request from subsequent participants, Microsoft Teams became the preferred platform to use as most participants used their work laptops which prohibited the use of Zoom. Jacob and Furgerson (2012) recommend that a reasonable interview duration be set to improve the willingness of identified interviewees to participate and ensure that quality insights can be extracted from the engagement. Considering this, interviews were scheduled for an hour, but in some instances lasted shorter or longer than the scheduled time. The longest interview recorded lasted for 1 hour and 48 minutes whereas the shortest one recorded 27 minutes. The overall average duration was 46 minutes. To create rapport and improve the quality of the engagement, the interviews were conducted with videos turned on. There were however two cases where videos were not on due to technical challenges. All the sessions were recorded after obtaining consent from the participants.

In the execution phase, interviews followed the interview guide. Following Jacob and Furgerson (2012), the guide included a script for the opening and the conclusion of the interview. This assisted with clarifying the research objective and provided interviewees with an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions before delving into the interview questions. After introductions were completed, the interview guide transitioned the conversation into the four

sections that contained the interview questions for each dimension of the SIL. The interviewees were reminded to respond to the questions based on their experience with their current team and leader. The order of the questions was maintained where practical, however, in some instances, participants' responses addressed some of the questions before they were asked. In those instances, the questions were either not asked or the interviewees were prompted to elaborate on the responses they had provided. Furthermore, in keeping with the exploratory nature of the research, the interviewer asked additional probing or clarification questions as necessary to tease out deeper insights that appeared to be below the surface (Guest & Johnson, 2006).

4.8. Analysis Approach

Data collected from interviews was analysed following the constant comparison analysis approach described by Braun & Clarke (2008) or coding according to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007). An adaptation of the thematic analysis steps followed is described below:

i.   Step 1 - Data familiarisation

Before commencing with the coding, the interview recordings were converted to text utilising transcription software and were validated for accuracy. This provided the researcher with an opportunity for further immersion in the interviews and to augment the initial high-level field notes. No attempt was made by the researcher to analyse the data during the interviewing phase, therefore analysis only occurred once all interviews had been completed.

ii.   Step 2 - Initial coding

In the second phase, the researcher uploaded soft copies of the transcripts to Atlas.ti software, subsequently each transcript hardcopy was reviewed and assigned codes which were then captured on Atlas.ti. The coding process was iterative as transcripts were reviewed more than once as additional codes emerged or initial ones evolved (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

iii.   Step 3 and Step 4 - Identification and review of themes

Following the generation of codes, data was exported to Excel, where codes that showed some commonality or were referring to similar concepts were grouped into themes, creating

categories for similar ideas (Williams & Moser, 2019). This process proved to also be cyclical as some themes got consolidated or additional ones became apparent.

    iv.   Step 5 - Naming themes

Once the themes were created, they were assigned labels based, in part, on insights gathered from the literature review and the research's interpretation of the data in line with the associated research and interview questions (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

    v.   Step 6 - Reporting the results

Chapter 5 will present the results which comprise the output of the themes and extracts of associated quotations produced from the analysis steps above.

4.9. Quality Controls

In line with recommendations by O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed and Cook (2014), the researcher followed the semi-structured interview guide during the interviews, utilised checking with participants where required, and maintained an audit trail of interview recordings and transcriptions as ways to improve the trustworthiness of the data collected.

4.10. Limitations

The fundamental limitation of qualitative studies stems from the subjectivity and bias introduced by the central role of the researcher in the process (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Therefore, the quality of data collected and analysed was influenced by the researcher's novice interviewing and data analysis skills (Halldórsson & Aastrup, 2003). Limiting the study to a sample of companies rated as top employers in SA makes the findings of the study unlikely to be transferable to all other companies (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Additionally, the non-probability sampling method and snowballing utilised to identify research participants limited the sample to four sectors further reducing the generalisability of the finding to all other companies. Furthermore, the added disadvantage of snowball sampling is the inclusion of participants from the same network which as noted by Byrne et al. (2016), could result in some bias. Lastly, individuals selected as part of the sample belonged to varied teams as such, the

study may have benefited from stricter criteria of selecting leaders and followers in the same team to enhance the triangulation of perspectives obtained.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the research. The information will be provided for the research questions as contained in Chapter 3 which were concerned with whether leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL, how or which activities they were engaging in as well as whether the perceived practice of SIL had a role to play in employee engagement. The results will thus follow the structure of the interview guide used for the semi-structured interviews and will address the research question within the four dimensions of SIL respectively.

5.2. Description of the Sample

Purposive non-probability sampling was adopted to select the sample utilised for this research. Furthermore, snowball referrals were used to attain the final sample size of fourteen participants who were all employed by companies rated as top employers in 2019 by the Top Employers Institute and were members of a team. As the research was concerned with the perceived practice of SIL and what role it played in influencing employee engagement, the seniority of participants was thus not a key consideration for selection. Additional information about the sample is presented in Table 2 below in the order that participants were interviewed.

Table 2: Research Sample Details

No	Industry	Gender	Company Tenure (Years)	Team Tenure (Years)	Direct Reports	Team Size
1.	Information Technology	Female	7	3	No	7
2.	Automotive	Male	4	4	No	5
3.	Automotive	Female	8	6	Yes	5
4.	Automotive	Female	15	2	Yes	5
5.	Automotive	Female	5	3	Yes	5
6.	Information Technology	Female	4	2	No	12
7.	Aviation	Male	4	4	Yes	4
8.	Mobile Communications	Female	0.4	0.4	Yes	3
9.	Mobile Communications	Male	4	4	Yes	2
10.	Automotive	Female	11	1.5	Yes	5
11.	Aviation	Female	3	3	Yes	7
12.	Aviation	Male	2	2	No	4
13.	Aviation	Male	3	3	No	4
14.	Mobile Communications	Male	5	2	No	5

5.3. Results for Identity Prototypicality

Results for Research Question 1
Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership?

Interview questions 1 to 6 were concerned with addressing the research questions as they related to identity prototypicality. Interview questions 1 and 2 were used to create context. Question 1 allowed the participants to reflect on what makes their team's different and unique from others and question 2 prompted thinking around a role model for the team before exploring the same regarding the leader. Questions 3 to 6 then provided the required insights for the research questions. The most important interview question for addressing research question 1 for the prototypicality dimension, in line with the question representing prototypicality in the short ILI questions (van Dick et al., 2018), was questions 5: "Now if we look at the team role model you described, does your leader fit that description? Please elaborate on how?"

Table 3: Leader Role Model Count

Rank	Leader Role Model	Frequency
1.	Yes	10
2.	No	3
3.	Not explicitly addressed	1

Most of the participants interviewed, responded affirmatively to their leader fitting the described characteristics of the team's role model as depicted in Table 3. There were however some participants who responded in the negative indicating that their leaders did not fit the described characteristics of the team's role model. The reasons provided for the negative responses included age as one participant remarked that "… "No, not really…not currently I'd say…but then there (is) I think maybe another thing which might kind of offset that, is that the way the team dynamics are set up".

Research question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

Prototypicality is unique to the specific context that it is being examined within, therefore, each team and each leader would have unique characteristics and traits that constitute

prototypicality for their context. Factors that were perceived to be practical representations of prototypicality were expectedly varied as can be seen in Table 4. The results provided a total of 77 individual codes that were grouped into the final seven themes as captured in Table 4. The top four themes will be explored below.

Table 4: Leader Identity Prototypically Factors

Rank	Identity Prototypicality Factor	Sub Factor	Frequency
1.	Accessibility and support	Accessible	5
		Support	3
		Protecting	2
		Empowering	2
		Coaching	2
Total			**14**
2.	Personality traits	Confidence	4
		Excellence	4
		General	4
Total			**12**
3.	Management style	Casual Leadership	5
		Authentic	2
		Adaptive	2
		Output driven	1
Total			**10**
4.	Knowledge and experience	Role insight	4
		Well networked	3
		Extensive knowledge	2
Total			**9**
5.	Intellectual capability	Analytical	3
		Intelligent	3
		Critical thinking	1
		Innovative	1
Total			**8**
	Strategic	Strategic direction	3
		Communication	3
Total			**6**

Remarking about accessibility and support, participants considered this to be the prototype most displayed by leaders. This category comprises four sub-factors of support, accessibility, empowerment, coaching and protection. Remarking about support, one participant stated

that"… "I think he makes it possible, he gives you the platform, gives you the knowledge gives you the support". Another participant noted that "he's got very high standards…very high standards and but I just like how supportive he can be." Another succinctly offered "he's quite like as I've already mentioned, supportive as well". Remarking on accessibility, a participant mentioned that "...he (is) willing to have even the most basic conversations with people". Another highlighted that "…interaction with the team, because it (is) very important, to keep on interacting with them. It must (not) be a thing that you [are] that person, that monster person they don't want to talk to. Yeah, when you come around, and they run." Remarking on coaching, a participant noted "I think that (is) actually a very important part about, even a characteristic part, my boss is good at teaching, and he does it very weirdly, so you could completely be left court or completely wrong in your-- or you could have missed the data point…You could have missed something…and, and so he is, able to self-correct the ship without it being insulting or degrading or calling you stupid. So he (is) very good at that." Another mentioned that "the thing I like about it most is the coaching part, he coaches along the way". Another felt that "she's very involved with the team and our growth within the organisation". Finally two other participants commenting on protection stated that "he promotes safety in others. He doesn't need crucify you to win" and "someone who protects us in front of people".

Personality traits most cited by participants as being espoused by prototypical leaders included leaders' confidence, pragmatism, empathy integrity, drive for excellence, as well as their ability to balance their work and life demands. One noted that "so my current leader, I think firstly he is personally confident. There's a strong sense of self". Another observed that "he is able to take his own path stubbornly and confidently". Another mentioned that "they represent artifacts of success". Another noted that "she's motivated she's hardworking". A further participant stated "She is so driven". Another had noted that "I find them to be quite, you know, pragmatic, whereas another noted that "Another thing that you know maybe I am starting to like more is that, you know, the self-awareness of actually being able to know the things that you as a leader are lacking."

Ranking third, was management style. The sub-categories under management style included macro-managing, authenticity and leader adaptability. Participants commented that "he is quiet and people in leadership sometimes look at the word laid back as a bad thing or as a

bad trait to have…he (is) quite a good observer". Another noted "he is willing to be vulnerable and by that he (is) willing to sometimes say in a meeting to say sorry guys I'm late at the meeting I had to fetch my daughter". A further participant highlighted that "So he's not that person who tells you to do this, and this, and that he actually shows you how it's done. So he (is) that person who can, in fact, when push comes to shove and he can actually do the job that is needed he doesn't command. So he leads you throughout the process until the last step is finalised". Another mention that "someone who is flexible" and that "he's also more or less have the same characteristics that I have. He (is) not the screaming type of person"

Leaders' level of knowledge was also highly rated by participants. A participant noted that "he has a lot of knowledge. I think even not just with the work that we do but the business in general". Another noted that "I think the most amazing thing is her level of knowledge". A further participant highlighted that "what sets us apart is the fact that we have a leader who [has] been there from the time that she was still fresh out of university to all the way until she became senior management. So she (has) gone from being just a grad assistant manager senior manager. So, there's that range of also, I know what you are going through within, that band, level that you are in so she can coach you from that level, and then she can also say at that level this is what's expected of you". Another mentioned that "she [has] been in the role before many moons ago obviously before she became a regional vice presidents so she has a good grip, in terms of the challenges that we deal with". Another participant noted that "she has a great networking, especially in terms of within the different areas that support our team as well". An additional participant stated that "so I think the advantage is that from a management standpoint, she knows what she's talking about because been there, she has put on the hat, it's not like it was an outsider that was brought into the role, and she knows the product very well because she worked in that function".

Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

Research question 3 serves as the lynchpin for the aim of the research as the results obtained here provide insight into whether SIL is perceived to play a role in employee engagement. As a leadership style, SIL could be an antecedent to employee engagement (Saks, 2019), additionally, some of the activities that leaders engage in from the results of research question 2 might also lead to outcomes consistent with those of employee engagement (Bailey et al.,

2017). To establish whether prototypicality played a role in employee engagement, participants were asked how their leaders' perceived prototypicality had an effect on how they worked, how they showed up at work and how they felt about work (question 4 and question 6). Information collected from participants was classified into either driving or outcome factors identified in the literature. Table 5 provides the main themes identified.

Table 5: Employee Engagement Factors Linked to Prototypicality

Rank	Employee Engagement Factors	Frequency
Employee Engagement Drivers		
1.	Perceived leadership and management	15
2.	Individual perceptions of organisational and team factors	6
Employee Engagement Outcomes		
1.	Individual performance outcomes	10

Participants indicated that leaders' perceived prototypicality affected how they worked, how they showed up at work, and how they felt about work. Remarking on the factors classified as drivers, a participant noted that "it can't not affect me personally, like you spend [the] majority of your day at work with these people…so, personally, it just makes you… look at yourself introspect, and then envision like in two years' time in three years' time when I also arrive at her age, how do I establish myself to be in that manner?". An additional participant remarked that "…she knows her stuff, she (is) someone that I look up... in terms of, If I get appointed, this is how I'll do things. If I get that kind of position, that is how I (will) do things. So I'm learning a lot from her". Another participant felt that "…it forces you to want to embody like work towards… enhancing your skill set, so that you are also in a position to embody that and become better…" Another participant stated that "I never want to disappoint him…because I feel like what you want? What more do I need?" Another felt that "I know I'm supported she knows me personally…she knows my family". She further added that "at a personal level…you could say it gives me peace of mind…in the sense that if she is involved, then she (is) able to influence she (is) able to calm the situation down she (is) able to provide steering guidance and she (s) supportive…she gets the whole family dynamic she gets the fact that you [are a] mom she (is) a mom as well, she (is) a woman." Another participant stated that "I honestly think all the traits that he has…but on most days I actually look forward to talking to him. I look forward to going to work. I think the work drives me crazy…but he (is) probably the reason

why I still show up." Another mentioned that "I've been fortunate that I had to work with him because we [are] so much alike. The management style, the flexibility, the openness, the interaction with the team". An additional participant observed that "it actually encourages team work because even though the work that we do separately…needs to be submitted as one". Another participant stated that "I feel secure that I'm doing my best, she (is) doing her best and if I'm not…she (is) there to pick it up and make sure things move along". Another participant highlighted that "I think it gives me a certain level of comfort that she would be transparent to me as well. If there's certain things that you know could potentially impact me." Another mentioned that "but it (has) taught us to be resilient…you need to know what weapons you have". Another highlighted that "…I really like that. And it really works for me. So I think that's it…you don't have to be right. I really like that you don't have to be right". Another participant noted that "so if you think about what innovation is it acquires one's ability to explore what has not been done, it requires [one] to be willing to be wrong…that's what psychological [safety] achieves it says, I have an idea. I may not have thought of everything, but let me put it down". While most participants associated their leader's protypicality with positive factors, one participant noted that "…he is more on the young side. It makes me feel unsettled at work".

Remarking on outcomes a participant felt "prepared. You have to be prepared." A further participant also felt that "Whenever I meet him I know I need to be prepared…so I understand… what kind of things he (is) looking for and just to have that prepared…so to avoid follow ups". Another felt declared that "so, someone is willing to go to war for me you know I appreciate that…so it (has) made me feel safe at work and it (has) allowed me to be vulnerable to allow me to apply myself". Another highlighted that "it forces you to also be on the ball to not give like work that is substandard [or] subpar". Agreeing, another stated "I have to be on the ball" Another stated that "I think how he is has made me want to even do more". An additional participant noted that "…he (is) able to help me pick those…skills, so I think in terms of growing me as [an] analyst"

5.4. Results for Identity Advancement

Similar to the approach followed for the identity prototypicality section, interview questions were structured to allow participants to reflect on their teams' core interests and goals being

the central focus of identity advancement (van Dick et al., 2018) before exploring what participants had practically experienced or perceived. Therefore interview questions 8 and 9 on the interview schedule were there context creating questions, whereas insights regarding activities that leaders were perceived to be practicing were gleaned from subsequent questions.

Results for Research Question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership?

Insights for this question were gathered from responses to question 9,11 and 13 which in line with the ILI scale (van Dick et al., 2018) explored whether leaders were perceived to be acting to promote the interests and goals of their teams, to prevent group failures and overcome obstacles to group objectives and whether they prioritise their teams' interests above theirs and all others. The majority of participants indicated that they had perceived their leaders to be advancing the interest of the team through responding affirmatively to the questions enquiring whether they had perceived their leaders to promote the team's interest (question 9) and whether they prioritised the team's interests (question 13). Although in the minority, there were however participants who did not perceive their leaders to promote or prioritise their teams' interests. The summary of this is presented in Table 6.

Table 6:Leader Interest Priorities

Rank	Leader Interest Priorities	Frequency
1.	Promotes team interests	12
2.	Prioritises team interests	8
3.	Prioritises other interest	2
4.	Prioritises own interests	1
5.	Prioritises other interest - Uncertain	2
6.	Team interests not protected	1

Participants who indicated that leaders were perceived to promote, protect and prioritise teams' interests stated that: "I think she would defend her team's interest, because also her KPI…because her performance management is also measured according to her team's performance". "I think I would rule out him taking like his personal interests". "I think they would prioritise personal interest [and] by saying personal interest I think framing it as our team interest…she (is) someone who (is)…not silo minded". "It (is) to her best interest as success

is a team sport". "…he is not like what you call these kind of managers, he doesn't follow you around". "To be honest, this, this particular leader I think he has the integrity and the safety to actually say I don't really need to do this". "I think he (will) choose the team, he always [chooses] the team, he always supports the team… whether we [are] right or wrong, he supports his team that's the good thing about him". "I think he does. I think we (are) in a unique position because the team was in fact, built by our leader". "The safest answer is that he would protect the team. Because he (is) so interwoven into the team. He doesn't, he doesn't see himself separate from the people and the work that's a good thing". "It will be the team's interest because he has made it possible that we are not individuals within the team, we (are) a team all of us. So, whatever interest he pursues it (is) the team interests.

Participants who indicated that leaders were not perceived to promote, protect and prioritise teams' interests stated that: "I don't think that they do…I feel like we get caught up in situations where…you would feel like, you know, if we are being defended and our interests are being promoted, we wouldn't be in this situation". "I mean, so far, his personality, he (is) very outspoken. He talks about himself quite a bit. He (is) very proud of his achievements from previous roles…but then again, I think a lot of his personal ambitions connect with the company because he is the brand I promise you, He is all about that company, he will sell it". "If it was possible for them to get…a best of both worlds type of setup. That would be their first [prize] …I do think that second prize would actually be…the interests of the other team and I say that because one of the key languages that you often hear in my company is how you are promoting yourself in the
organization… so I do think that that type of language does create a culture where people, especially leaders who still have ambitions of upward mobility would fall into this trap of overly trying to please people across the organization in the guise of promoting themselves in the organization".

Results for Research Question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?

Following on the indication of participants that leaders were perceived to be advancing the interest of their teams, Table 7 provides a summary of themes for the activities that leaders were perceived to be engaged in as part of identity advancement.

Table 7: Leader Perceived Advancement Actions

Rank	Activity	Sub Activity	Frequency
1.	Deploy positional power	Pull Rank and advocate for the team	7
		Confronting blockers	6
		Protects team	4
		Supports team	3
		Empowering team/followers	3
		Creates access for team	2
		Leader not a filter	1
		Leader established team	1
Total			**27**
2.	Clarify team objectives	Clarifying team role/objectives	6
		Provide Strategic Direction	2
Total			**8**
3.	Monitor performance	Tracking team activities/performance	**7**
4.	Communication	Promote information sharing	**5**
5.	Brand advocate	Brand advocate	**1**

The majority of participants felt that their leaders were acting to promote, protect and priorities their team's interests. Results for the top three factors in Table 7 will be explored below.

Remarking on the deployment of positional power, one participant noted that "so in cases where I'm not winning then I bring her and…with [her] influence…in certain cases, tough cases it hasn't helped, and where it hasn't helped then she's had to have a very real conversation with her manager as well". Another stated that "she (is) a straight shooter so she will confront the managers". An additional participant stated that "…we also use her presence obviously in country to put her in front of customers so that we can influence". Another participant remarked that "I think he's good at taking the bigger picture into mind…once we (have) done our analysis and presentation that we take it to the relevant teams that we get everyone involved where we need to". Another noted that "if we raise it with her, [she will] go and take it up with him". Another participant stated that "I think he sees his role as primarily that. And it helps right, and sometimes you actually rely on him to do that, it's very weird. You rely on him even in meetings, and when you do presentations to business, you would give the presentation but most of the time he takes questions". A further participant state that "she said listen guys. My

team is sick and tired of seeing the email after email, you need to support us here you need to implement it within your teams. So she actively and proactively also addresses it" and that "she has rank…she will pull rank because we are not as high…" Another participant relayed the actions of her leader that "she has to go to our GM and let them know that you know we wanted to go and present this to the CEO first week of October. However, for this reason my team cannot…and she (will)…defend us in that way so that you don't feel like you failed because you couldn't meet a deadline". Another observed their leader: "That's when…one of the team members [was] going to be like reshuffled, and they went and spoke to her on some "I don't want to go"…and she was able to motivate for that person to stay". Another participant highlighted that "he is available... We question him a lot". An additional participant stated that "You must remember, if everything goes well, with the team, it will serve her personal interest, hmm. But if she's just looking at her personal interest, it might not necessarily go down to the team. So what she does is to make sure that, you know, she has an open door policy... So she gets involved up to that level where she understands exactly what you are…delivering and how she can be of assistance". Another participant highlighted that "there (is) never a time where you have to go [and] hang dry alone… because [there is] no sacrificial lamb. No, we don't do that". Adding to this, another participant state that "you know, to juggle if you drop a glass ball. Yes, you (are) (going to) face the consequences, but you're (going to) face it together. You know, you want to know that everybody (is) accountable…the fact that there is psychological safety…you know that you have a sniper every time you step out into the battlefield". Another participant stated that "you must remember, if everything goes well, with the team, it will serve her personal interest…but if she (is) just looking at her personal interest, it might not necessarily go down to the team". Another participant noted that "because she has relationships with the leaders, the leaders would then give her access then to her people. And she (has) been able to give us access to those people as well". Another participant added that "he follows the chain of command, he goes to the executive, and the executive will schedule the relevant meeting with whoever needs to be in that session…so I think the message [does] go across to the right people".

In commenting on the clarification of team objectives a participant observed the leader "explaining to the sales managers and some sales people that…we (are) not just there to pull reports, we are there as a strategic advisor" and also stated that "this is our value in this company". Another participant experienced their leader being "able to say, this is the overall

company strategy as per our CEO address. So, in this section, please ensure that we bring that out more". Another participant was it as "her responsibility… [to] explain the role of what we're trying to do." The participant also felt that "this is a person that would have a strategic outlook…somebody that is mindful of all activities that are going on…, and somebody that has a longer term outlook, and that is invested…" Another participant stated that "…what he does very well [is] that we present to the other functional areas of the business about our results, and especially in relation to how they're supporting it". A final participant state that "it (is) about positioning the work properly".

Participants remarking about performance monitoring stated that "she'll say we need to do 123 by this time", "we now have continuous performance management", "[we have] weekly meetings where we monitor the status of each project and next action steps" and "[we have] bi-weekly check ins with her where…we first of all have a check in in terms of how we're doing the challenges that we're having a customer etc.", "he always oversees everything", "I think he does with daily follow", "she (is) always about communication and understanding and she always…wants to know exactly what is happening so that she can protect you if need be".

Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

Similar to identity prototypicality, participants were asked whether their leaders' perceived identity advancement efforts had an effect on how they worked, how they showed up at work and how they felt about work (questions 10, 12 and question 6). Information collected from participants was also classified into factors either driving or outcomes of employee engagement identified in literature. Table 8 provides the main themes identified.

Table 8: Employee Engagement Factors Linked to Identity Advancement

Rank	Employee Engagement Factors	Frequency
Employee Engagement Drivers		
1.	Perceived leadership and management	20
2.	Individual perceptions of organisational and team factors	8
3.	Experienced job-design-related factors	2
Employee Engagement Outcomes		
1.	Individual Performance Outcomes	17

| 2. | Work-related attitudes | 5 |

Starting with the drivers, on perceived leadership and management, a participant noted that ", I'm super proud, super proud. And like I said this ties into her also being a woman in the workplace that I look up to….and I admire that". Another participant stated that "it make me feel great that I have a senior manager, leader of the team who…would do that for me". An additional participant indicated that "you (a)re not going to slack because you know someone is going to assist you but you just feel supported". Adding to that, another participant noted that "when she know(s) that we can't move a certain deadline. Like when you know, it has to go, she will take over and make sure that it's finished. And you, you won't feel like you failed". Another noted that "I was happy that you (a)re able to do something because sometimes you work in a corporate, you could feel like you're like a small person …being able to go [and] defend that person to say no they don't want to move…you made us all happy like you fought the big fight and now the person staying". Another participant stated that "it (i)s very straightforward. You know that this is what he expects I mean, because he does it as well". An additional participant mentioned that "it makes me feel hopeful. It makes me recognise that I've got like a long way to go, that I'm quite an infant in the role". Another participant commented that "so I think it's it (s) been quite positive in the way that I do my work and [a] positive spin off…so that all boils down to the attributes that she has, the direction, energy and effort that she (is) putting in". Another participant added that "putting energy in giving you real feedback so that you could take that and analyse it…I'm grateful because she'll tell you speak to so and so, but she won't tell you what to say [or] what to ask because she (is) teaching you how to fish for yourself so in future….you are able to not walk, but run by yourself". Another participant highlighted that "She (is) always reachable right so you don't necessarily even have to wait for [the] one to one. So if you want to reach her you can reach her… Her hands on management style helps, it eases the workload because you're not seen to be carrying the burden on your own". Another participant remarked that "Knowing that a leader goes to war for me makes me want to go for war for a person." Another participant sate that "I think…it's good for the team, it keeps the team more engaged. And because you don't want to demotivate a person by taking their work and then present it, you rather tell them that you did the work, you put in the energy come, come and present the work and explain". In addition to the positive views, some participants had less positive perceptions of their leaders with one remarking that "sometimes you feel like she can give you some space…she might

be heading the [division], but you are the one, you are the specialist … So sometimes you feel like maybe she can listen, she doesn't need to go into the details of the works. She should be more on a strategic level of your work". Another felt that "I feel that the leadership should be able to "say, alright, I recognise your request. My team is currently x percentage capacity…can we explore a different deadline".

In addition, participants had this to say about organisational and team factors: "for me it makes me feel like…I work with friends like people who I have made lifelong friendships with, so it doesn't feel like we're working …when we would be at the office for long hours, it wouldn't feel like I'm in this environment that is just…taxing me there (is) always a laugh, "I don't know if safe is the right word to use when you talk about a professional environment but yeah, I feel like I'm working with someone that knows what they are doing", "learning that this is not about one person this is about the success of the team. And it also gives me…comfort and peace…that we are all working towards the same goal and there [are] no individual achievements", "It (is) a big company so there's enough room for mistakes and improvement…you feel more comfortable because you have some leniency", "you want to know that you (are) valued", "You want to know that you (are)…[not] going to be exposed. Every day, you (are) juggling balls, juggling glass balls and plastic balls, and you need to know that, hey, you got the support…if you drop a glass ball, yes, you're (going to) face the consequences, but you (are) (going to) face it together", "so a leader that (is) willing to go to war for you, makes you just as willing to go for to war for them" and "it impacts it positively it keeps us engaged, because as team members we are able to know what this one is busy with, and we can ask questions, and the fact that we (are) speaking in one voice, it means that we have a clear [view] once a report leaves, once a consolidated report leaves our desk, all of us have a clear understanding of what is happening in that report".

Views on experienced job-design-related factors included "it is challenging but in a in a good way. It (is) exciting" and "it actually encourages me to actually go to work, because I know that the work that I'm doing is making an impact…It's actually encouraging to wake up every day knowing that you are doing something impactful, you (are) not only just earning a salary".

Responses that addressed the outcomes of employee engagement included "the fact that she (has) sort of balanced giving direction, but at the same time, allowing me to fall off…seek answers for myself, go and consult with people. And so that I build this thing of building a

network… within my work, it's held a positive spin off", "Last week, I did a media launch for the very first time she wasn't even around and I had to do it, and someone having that level of confidence in you and trusting you…", "it really requires me to sort of be agile, to sort of be flexible to improve my communication", "her giving that support and direction in terms of …the projects we need to manage it just forces me to take stock", "it makes me feel like I'm in quite a complex role", "It makes me realise that there is some independence that I'm (going to) have to… learn, [I] have to learn and to trust what I present more", "but also just to get to bring out quality and to double check", "you must [have] done proper research, proper everything. So when you go to the executives to present your proposal, then you have everything", "how she impacts the way that I work is that you don't want to disappoint her…she is one of those people that you don't want to disappoint", "I think just to be ready and prepared so in like, you never know what the day is (going to) entail so if you [never] know [what] is going to happen, rather be prepared to face that", and lastly, "the fact that you know that your work is going into an EXCO or executive level discussion…the way you even think through the work becomes different… there's that bit of weight, but the argument is that you want to be sure that you are right, that's it…the margin of error is very small…the fact that literally people are basing possible future developments based on the work you produce, they can't be found wrong…"

In addition to these, a participant highlighted some negative outcomes stating that "the most important things for me is precedent…create a precedent, it eventually becomes [a] culture…so people will just expect you to do things that are outside the scope of what you do and solely because the people that are responsible for defending and promoting your interest are not doing that function" having detrimental consequences such that "the overarching impact is in the time taken away from your core function" and "the quality that is expected from that, obviously dips".

5.5. Results for Identity Entrepreneurship

Results for Research Question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership

In gathering insights for research question 1, the dimension of identity entrepreneurship is concerned with how leaders bring followers together by creation a shared sense of

togetherness in the group. As such, the interview questions 15 to 21 were derived from the definition of identity entrepreneurship (van Dick et al., 2018). The questions sought to gather from participants what they perceived their leaders' roles to be in creating an understanding of what it means to be a member of your team, whether leaders shaped their perceptions of what the teams' values and principles are and whether the leaders made them and their fellow team members feel that they were part of the same team.

Participants responded affirmatively to all three questions indicating that leaders were perceived to be creating a sense of cohesion within their teams and thus engaging in identity entrepreneurship. As contained in Table 9 below, the role leaders were perceived to play in creating an understanding of what it means to be a team member and shaping followers' perceptions included communicating and modeling teams' values and principles.

Table 9: Identity Entrepreneurship – Leaders' perceived roles

Rank	Leaders' Perceived Roles	Frequency
1.	Model values	15
2.	Communicates values	8

Participants felt that the tone for values, principles and rituals was set by leaders and thus their role was to model the values and communicate them to team member in order to facilitate a common understanding. Regarding modelling the values, a participant stated that "as the leader, he (is) the one who enables such type of a team spirit, because …without a leader who enables that environment everyone will do as they please. So if a leader considers division for example, the unit will be divided. But if the leader fosters that culture of [a] team spirit, we will actually follow his line of command. So the leader is an enabler." Another participant added that "he drives that he will drive that and as a result, because we see ourselves is, most of our team, we see ourselves as extensions of our work, we see our work as extensions of ourselves." Another stated that "you know how people always say that…people don't, don't leave companies they leave managers… I'm a very firm believer in that and I'm a very firm believer in the fact that, whatever I might say about company culture, team dynamics, it stems from the relationship that I have with my leader". Another participant offered that "He (is) very direct. He (is) very transparent. He lives out his, his values and …what he believes about the brand." Another participant state that "the perception that he sets, because he lives it, like you can't miss that. This is how he wants you…obviously not to

change you as a person...but in order for the team to work, these are the kind of behaviors, these are the kind of traits that you need in this team. I think he sets a very good perception." Another stated that "just how she does the job…she portrays excellen(ce)." Another participant citing professional affiliation mentioned that "I think it (is) because we have the same understanding of how things work in the project world…we share the same vision we read the same book, we have the same career not just jobs." Following the actions, participants' comments on communication included "from the get go, I've been pushed to know that this is a high performing team and there [are] no excuses or anything of that sort." Another participant state that "she provides guidance on how she expects her team to function." Another participant added that "he [has] tasked me to communicate with the other team leaders." Another highlighted that "her role in terms of making sure that she creates an understanding, it (is) supporting you, it (is) her being able to give you guidance in terms of how certain things work, people that [are new] will not always know the lay of the land, and I think it (is) her responsibility then to educate you if she sees a developmental gap or that you were culturally being insensitive to another group." Another participant stated that "It's constantly reiterated in our…team meetings."

Results for Research question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

The activities through which leaders were perceived to be practicing identity entrepreneurship are contained in Table 10 below. Team social activities, objective setting, communication and how the leaders relate to their teams are what participants identified as activities through which leaders were perceived to practice identity entrepreneurship. The first two will be explored next.

Table 10: Identity Entrepreneurship Activities

Rank	Activity	Sub Activity	Frequency
1.	Team social activities	Team social activities	5
2.		Team meetings	2
3.		Team gifts	1
Total			**8**
4.	Objective setting	Uniform expectations	4
		Strategic direction	2
		Fairness	1

Total			**7**
5.	Communication	Inclusive communication	**3**
6.	Leader team relation	Not obsessed with hierachy	1
		Shared understanding	1
Total			**2**

Team social activities, which included team meetings, were ranked at the top of activities perceived to "create a shared sense of 'we' and 'us'" within their teams. One participant noted that "she makes us feel we are part of the same…she (will) take us out she'll … [to] go have lunch outside of the office." Similarly another participant mentioned that "she (has) taken us out to McDonald's for lunch sometimes." Another participant stated that "end of the year, she (will) all give us gift vouchers…so there is (not) that level of whereby you feel like I'm treated differently from another team member." Another participant stated that "the whole [video] call things, and the WhatsApp stuff, so she (has) really tried to make sure that she fosters a team spirit." Another participant highlighted that "we (will) have team meetings and even now during COVID we have like a midweek check in, so maybe Mondays we check in to say that what we working on this week." Another participant note that "we go to lunches together…we have … meeting …once a month as well, we just come and talk and catch up with each other." Another participant mentioned that "[we have] monthly meeting sessions just to catch up and … we (will) also do a team event and get out, get lunch."

Objective setting, in a very close second spot, was also perceived by participants to be a key activity for creating a cohesive environment for team members. Participants felt that it was important to know what the team objectives were and how they were expected to contribute to these. One participant stated that "his role is to both make us or help us understand our individual tasks and contributions to the team, as well as how we interconnect… how we should work together to make the team efforts have results." Another participant expected their leader to be "able to articulate individual contribution", while another stated that "he has told us what he expects of us." In addition, participants felt that fairness in objective setting and expectation was important as one participant noted that "[he is] quite neutral and quite fair in how he deals with the separate different teams." Another participant stated that "she ensures that we all work as a team, again, and it's got to do with KPIs based on those [are] important [to] drive behaviors, now by putting KPIs in place that make sure that we work together as a team, instead of one individual." An additional participant stated that "he does

(not) have a different set of expectations for the one team that he doesn't have for the other irrespective of how different the portfolio [or] the project that you're working on...I think his word…is high standards and good quality work and I feel like he expects that from everyone".

Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

In the same way that participants were participants were asked to reflect on whether their leader's perceived identity protoypicality efforts and identity advancement efforts had an effect on how they worked, how they showed up at work and how they felt about work, the same was done for identity entrepreneurship (interview questions 17, 19 and 21). The responses provided by participants were then reviewed and grouped into the themes depicted in Table 11 below, in line with employee engagement factors identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Table 11: Employee Engagement Factors Linked to Identity Entrepreneurship

Rank	Employee Engagement Factors	Frequency
Employee Engagement Drivers		
1.	Perceived leadership and management	10
2.	Individual perceptions of organisational and team factors	4
Employee Engagement Outcomes		
1.	Individual performance outcomes	11
2.	Work-related attitudes	3
3.	Wellbeing and health perceptions	1

Consistent with the factors identified for the previous two dimensions, perceived leadership and management, and individual perceptions of organisational and team factors ranked top of the employee engagement drivers, with individual performance outcomes being ranked top of the outcomes. Continuing to demonstrate the perceived importance of leadership and teams in the overall work experience. The top two factors in drivers and outcomes will be explored below.

Remarking on perceived leadership and management a participant stated that "It (is) motivating…he also acknowledges individual hard work." Another participant stated that "it makes me feel like I'm led". Another participant stated that "he's quite thorough and he has

very high standards… am I ever going to get to that level…of being thorough and…having like a clear mind, and knowing exactly what I want". Another participant stated that "I can see that I have a senior manager who's quite interested in my growth, who (is) quite interested in giving me constructive feedback who (is) quite interested in [calling] things out". Another stated that "I know I'm supported. I know I'm heard"; "I feel supported I won't lie. I feel supported", echoed another participant. Sharing similar sentiments another participant stated that "she makes it easy …for us to do our work and to appreciate what we are doing because at least you have somebody who understands, when you come to her for advice, and she looks at her own previous experiences" and "she (is) one of those people you look at and you want to be exactly like her". Appreciating recognition, another participant stated "when things get hectic, or you need to deliver, I think it … makes it okay in my mind that it (is) fine that I can do this because I know that I will be rewarded or I will be [commended]".

Commenting on organisational and team factors, a participant stated that "they do (not) make it awkward or anything. They just accommodate, it (is) really nice to see that they did that." Another felt that the team "puts me more at ease". Another [participant shared that "'I'm more open and free to…pick my colleagues brains…set up a quick session with anyone in the team". Another felt that "you feel like you are part of the family which is very nice".

Individual-level outcomes consisted of in-role and extra-role factors, with extra-role factors being cited the most by participants (8 out of 11). One participant state that "I also want to be on that level… he has given me that platform, he has given me the tools, he has given me a good, and pleasant environment to work in. So all I have to do is deliver". Another participant stated that "it helped me also be able to feel empowered. At the same time, it (has) helped me to build my strategic analysis and planning". Another participant added that "at the same time, it's helped me to build my strategic analysis and planning, and then I know…the document that I do at the end of the day, needs to be approved by the board, and obviously it needs to reflect 10 years' worth of experience, for the document to reflect that I need to take my 15 months of experience [and] present a document that showcases that I (have) learned". An additional participant stated that "that level of shared responsibility, accountability, and knowing what role and goals that we have within our company. And her embodying that has sort of instilled that in me and impacted me to sort of work with the level of thinking holistically…and not also becoming a person who just sits at her desk and they hope answers

would come to me but rather". Another one mentioned that "if you (are) engaged as an individual or an employee you feel like you are supported. You have the tools that are required for you to be able to do the job. And, from a learning and development standpoint, you (are) afforded opportunities…that makes you want to show up because you do know that you are provided the support you need to be able to succeed". Another participant simply declared that ""how I show up at work, I show up 100%". Another participant indicated that "I feel like I've gained fluency in my role". Another participant felt that "I think it helps me prioritise what (is) important. So… I (will) have my normal workload whatever I need to do for a month, then if anything comes up, by now I know how to prioritize and plan…so I think it (has) just helped me prioritise and planning has helped". A further participant stated that "I think one of the key things from there is basically just being able to have extended resources…sometime down the way you, you (are) experiencing a challenge but you are aware that the team is actually going through the same thing. So I can actually use them as a resource to help navigate, whatever challenge I'm going through".

A second category of outcome factors was clustered under turnover intentions as participants expressed that leader's entrepreneurship efforts translate to "nobody ever wants to leave [the] team…sometimes it will be a product reshuffle, and people are just like I don't want to go, like, I don't want to go to another team I (want to) stay in this one", even though "I was looking to move … to find something because I got a little bit comfortable, and a little bit bored. So I was twiddling my thumbs…I wasn't happy with my salary at the time, I wasn't happy with the responsibilities…she got me involved in more... so now also, I'm growing within the role" and as a result "…I am staying put in the team because of her fight for my increase, and also trusting me with added responsibilities".

5.6. Results for Identity Impresarioship

Results for Research Question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership?

As highlighted in literature covered in Chapter 2, identity impresariorship requires leaders to establish structures that facilitate a common understanding and success amongst the group, while also promoting the group externally and validating its relevance and existence (van Dick et al., 2018). Accordingly interview questions 22, 23, 24 and 26 were formulated on this basis

in order to gather from the participants whether such structures existed, and if so, what role the leaders were perceived to play in their establishment and promotion. The themes of roles that leaders were perceived to play are contained in Table 12.

Table 12: Identity Impresarioship – Leaders' perceived roles

Rank	Leaders Perceived Roles	Frequency
1.	Follower empowerment	8
2.	Facilitates the engagements	7
3.	Drives innovation	1
4.	Leased responsible for promoting structures	1
5.	Leader does not create visibility	1

The activity information that will be explored under the results for research question 2 will indicate that leaders play a very limited role in establishing most structures. As can be seen in Table 12 above, leaders were perceived to be most fulfilling empowerment and facilitation roles, accordingly one participant highlighted that "we also get time, a lot of time with the COO and the MD because [the leader] would easily trust us to present something to them, instead of us kind of building the slides and she goes and presents it. She's very much into "…you tell them what your idea is." So that gives us exposure to [the] organisation outside of [the team]". Another participant also stated that "when [there are] meetings she (will) say: "Okay, you go... you will come let me know what happened in that meeting."….versus her being the face of the team". An additional participant highlighted a shift in the culture towards "saying that…if someone asks a question in these meetings after you presented, because [leaders] usually just jump in…answer the questions for you. So, and now they are becoming more deliberate about… allowing the people that present to actually show the audience that they actually are custodians of the work that they presented and they actually have a broader understanding of the product by giving them the opportunity to be the ones that answer questions".

In addition to empowering teams, leaders were perceived to be facilitating the engagements between their teams and those that were key to the achievement of team success. A participant stated that "he (will) share the email or then ask from where it's coming from. Then, going forward, he'll make sure that I did the work so I need to talk to him, or give me an exposure that I can talk to what I did and to whoever is asking". Another participant noted that "he usually will get briefs or communication from team leads from those other teams that need

campaigns to go out and he will set up sessions with like everyone in it so that everyone is aware of what (is) happening and everyone can give inputs and it (is) not just everyone in our team it will be everyone from those people's teams, whoever they select, maybe to be part of that certain campaign". Another participant stated that "If he is aware of certain value you create certain information you have or knowledge, he will probe you to discuss it in the team. "You want to tell the team about this deal for your team, you want to explain what this means", you know, he's able to also allow the team to cross-pollinate". A participant also highlighted that for some activities, i.e. the newsletter in Table 13 below, which are not always appealing, the leaders role was seen as "she (is) very hard on us, we have to have a piece that we contribute if you don't contribute anything then you get punished". Another participant felt that the leader's role was ensuring that team's presence at structures was value adding "I think his role is making us relevant to that structure (because) we can't be serving in a structure…where we are not adding value". Another participant highlighted that the leader was redirecting the spotlight, instead of claiming recognition for herself stating that "she outright says to her boss... listen "XX came up with this idea, I want to run it by you" and I got a recognition award for it. So she's all about promoting the team". In addition to the top two, it is important to highlight number 3 and 4 as they related to new teams that were less than 5 years old. One participant felt that their leader was driving them to innovate noting that "he is all about innovative thinking. He (is) all about coming up with stuff.", whereas the other participant noted that "…for me I'm …proactive, I am one person that identifies solutions for the problem at hand, and so generally I take the control when faced with challenges" and thus rendering the leader redundant. However, seniority might also be a factor as the participant is a senior manager and leader of their own team.

Results for Research question 2: What are the activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

In line with the aim of research question 2, discussions with participants indicated that structures, events and activities to create a common understanding amongst the group members did exist. As outlined in Table 13 formal organisational structures, team meetings and informal team social outings such as lunches or after work drinks were the top three, followed by departmental meetings and cross functional meetings in the fourth and fifth place respectively.

Table 13: Identity Impresarioship – Activities, Structures and Events

Rank	Activity	Sub Activity	Frequency
1.	Formal organisational structures	Steering and Board Committees	4
		Visible by design of role	4
		Company-wide social activities	3
Total			**11**
2.	Team meetings	Team meetings	**9**
3.	Team social outings	Informal team meals/drinks/team building	**6**
4.	Departmental meetings	Departmental meetings	**4**
5.	Cross functional meetings	Cross functional meetings	**4**

Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

It is key to emphasise once more that participants were only asked to reflect on whether their leader's perceived identity impresarioship efforts had an effect on how they worked, how they showed up at work and how they felt about work (interview questions 25 and 27). Information collected from participants was thus analysed and grouped into the resultant themes, presented in Table 14 below, identified from literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Table 14: Employee Engagement Factors Linked to Identity Impresarioship

Rank	Employee Engagement Factors	Frequency
Employee Engagement Drivers		
1.	Perceived leadership and management	4
2.	Individual perceptions of organisational and team factors	3
Employee Engagement Outcomes		
4.	Individual performance outcomes	5
5.	Wellbeing and health perceptions	5

Participants were of the view that the top two activities in Table 13 played a key role in bringing team members together and keeping them abreast of developments key to the team's success. Social outings were specifically highlighted as a catalyst for improved intra-team relations that created a pleasant working environment necessary to detract from some of the high pressure stemming from work. More that the meeting or activities themselves,

participants felt that what was important was the way the interactions and engagements occurred, stemming from the leaders' roles of empowerment and facilitation as highlighted in results for research question 1 contained in Table 12. In this regard one participant noted that "that really makes us more comfortable in addressing our sales teams", one participant reflected that "that level of empowerment and control and trust in me to say you're presenting the document, all the way to the highest level you are going to present you are going to take questions that you are going to pose yourself as a product expert", "it feels good because it (is) ownership and responsibility, which is part of our values at work. So it gives you…more ownership of what you (are) doing and…when you know that you get sent off to meetings and…that (is) really nice" noted another participant. An additional participant stated that "I feel…trusted and that I like as I say to be able to present like at a board level…it's also a reminder that you acknowledge me, you recognize me, you see me, you see my value, you see my input and you trust it". Commenting about the team relations one participant stated that "those little lunches…the hour lunch and time out from work…just kind of breaks that monotony…definitely…it (has) made us definitely stronger as a team, workwise." Another participant highlighted that "I go back to this sort of psychological safety where I'm willing to acquire new areas or get into a conversation about something that I may have limited knowledge and about the understanding that I want to be only put on the path to be exposed to it and to learn about it." A further participant also note that "that in itself helps foster some sense of team collaboration...you get to see people obviously if there were new hires, it's the first time you would be seeing some of them, and so it's great in that regard."

In addition to the leadership related factors, participants expressed that the identified structures and activities had some positive impacts on the way that they did the actual work and how they generally felt about it. The visibility that the structures created, as well as the perceived high expectations from leaders who had empowered them influenced the way that participants felt about and did the work. A participant highlighted that "[I] think we (are) always in agreement and understanding what the priorities for either the month, the quarter, the year". Another remarked that "I think it also makes me want to do more, and…be as creative as possible put the team first and make sure that we are not only about work…there are some other things that happen outside work that actually build teams, you know, and build people's characters and personalities." Another highlighted that "you know that there (is) a broader audience that (is) waiting to see your work, what it is that you are tasked to do. So you put

more thought into it, you put more time, you want to give quality. Another participant highlighted that "knowing that…my work, is quite, visible in the business so I need to make sure that it (is) reflecting the standard that I want to be projected for my work…I double check some, triple check some. I make sure that I get it presented in a concise manner that is able to tell the message that needs to be told." Another noted that "what these new developments do, is that they challenge you to interrogate other elements of your work, so that you, your understanding is broader, and you are not caught off guard by a question that might be just outside the things you looked at when you were putting together your document". Commenting about factor classified as wellbeing and health related, one participant remarked that "it makes [me] feel good, and also confident, and because I think we all in our careers want to grow …I know in marketing you want to be able to speak up and present and you know come across as very well informed.". Another participant highlighted that "it makes me feel good that I can go up and tell people what I have been working on". Additional participant highlighted that ". Another participant stated that "sometimes work on these things for months, by the time you present it…knowing that there will be somebody there who (has) also walked that journey with you, while you were putting the strategy together, and will support you…it makes you feel confident and good that you can keep producing work…to a good standard." Another participant declared that "he wrote a nice motivation and then I was acknowledged and then I received an incentive…it feels good." Another participant stated that "it makes me feel important (because) it also makes me feel confident, (because) I'm also ready to answer whatever questions that they may ask".

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 6 presents the discussion of the results provided in Chapter 5. Similarly the structure of presentation followed in Chapter 5 is applied. The discussion will thus address identity prototypicality, identity advancement, identity entrepreneurship and identity impresarioship respectively, with the research question addressed within each dimension.

6.2. Discussion of Results for Identity Prototypicality

Results for research question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership?

Data for leaders' identity prototypicality was gathered from responses to interview questions 1 to 6. Instead of the researcher providing a technical explanation for identity prototypicality, participants were prompted to reflect on what made their teams and leaders special and distinct from other teams and other leaders. From the provided responses, it could be determined what core characteristics distinguish participants' teams from others, what characteristics a team role model would have, what distinguished their leaders from others, and whether their leaders were perceived to be role models for the team (Barreto & Hogg, 2017; van Dick et al., 2018). The data indicated that the majority of participants perceived their leaders to be role models for their teams. It was interesting to note that most respondents described their leaders when providing a description for a team role model even though the question posed did not refer to the leader. This aligned to Barreto and Hogg (2017), who posited that prototypical leaders more than being seen as one of the group rather represent the group's ideal or model members (Barreto & Hogg, 2017).

At the same time, the data also indicated that some leaders were not perceive to be role models of their teams. The reason provided reveals the age of the leader, difference in schools of thought or generational gap, which also alludes to age, and the distance between participant and the leader which stems from infrequent leader-follower interactions created by the level of seniority. The issue of age, in one instance, created a lack of confidence in the abilities of the leader, implying that age was associated with experience and competence from which confidence in the leader is derived. Linking into the assertion by Wei et al. (2018), that

leaders' perceived competence influences followers' willingness to be led as they might be more inclined to follow leaders who are perceived to be competent that those who are not.

In the case of infrequent leader-follower interactions, the absence of prototypicality could be explained by the lack of opportunities for a recursive leadership process to occur (Steffens et al., 2014) and to perceive whether the leader possesses salient group characteristics, therefore as posited by Steffens et al. (2020) resulting in a weaker perception of leader identity prototypicality.

The overall data indicated that most leaders were perceived to be prototypical, thus the lived experience of participants confirming that the identity prototypicality dimension of SIL was perceived as being practiced by leaders.

Results for research question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

From the data analysis, seven factors were identified, through which the identity prototypicality of leaders was experienced. Starting with the highest ranked, the factors comprised accessibility and support, personality traits, management style, knowledge and experience, intellectual capability, strategic and demographic traits. Considering that the social realities of groups are unique, it was expected that factors representing leaders identity prototypicality would be vast (Steffens et al., 2020). Given that, accessibility and support being ranked as the top theme for leaders' identity prototypicality underscores the assertion that leadership occurs in a collective space or group context (van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016) where leaders and followers are members of the same group bound by the same identity (Epitropaki et al., 2017). It could thus be viewed that the proximity of being part of the same group amplifies the perception of leaders accessibility and support for their followers, also explaining why leaders who are distanced from the group by virtue of seniority and reporting lines could be perceived as being less or not prototypical of the group. This link to the observation by van Dick & Kerschreiter (2016), stating that engaging in SIL increases the perception of leaders' being part of the group

Leaders' personality traits was the second factor identified through which identity prototypicality of leaders was experienced. The two traits that were most cited were

confidence and excellence, although in the minority self-awareness, empathy, pragmatism and interestingly stubbornness also featured. The two prominent traits reflect similarities to those described by Babcock-Roberson and Strickland (2010) for the charismatic side of transformational leadership; namely, confidence, risk taking and high performance expectations. Buil et al. (2019) also state that transformational leaders "are confident, are held in high personal regard and act as strong role models for followers" (p. 65), further linking into leaders' perceived identity prototypicality and suggesting that prototypical leaders might be engaged in transformational leadership or at least possess traits that are similar to those of transformational leaders.

In the third ranking was the management style adopted by leaders perceived to be prototypical. The data revealed a recurring emphasis on the more casual, authentic, flexible and informal style of management adopted by the leaders as opposed to the formal, rigid, authoritarian and micro-management style. This further explains the high ranking of accessibility and support as a prototypicality factor which is facilitated by the described management style adopted by leaders perceive to be identity prototypical. Therefore the casual, authentic, flexible and informal management style makes leaders more accessible to provide support to their followers. Similarities are apparent between this management style and authentic leadership which is not coercive but is driven by "relational transparency" (p. 764) creating intimacy and trust in the group (Wei et al., 2018), and conducive conditions for group members to live out their shared sense of 'we' (Steffens et al., 2020; van Dick et al., 2018; van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016). This thus introduces a second leadership style or traits of a leadership style that could be associated with leaders perceived to be prototypical.

Leaders' level of knowledge was the fourth ranked factor prominent amongst identity prototypical leaders. The most prominent theme observed was the emphasis on leaders' level of experience, thus the length of time and amount of experience that leaders perceived to be identity prototypical had amassed within the organisation was repeatedly emphasised. This was considered to enable the leaders to effectively support their followers as they had an innate appreciation for the role requirements, could navigate organisational politics and had access to an extensive network of people across various organisational functions. In other words, leaders' knowledge and experience enhanced their competency, which in Wei et al. (2018) is defined as "a combination of tacit and explicit knowledge, behavior, skills, and

abilities, which gives someone the potential for effectiveness in task performance" (p. 764) and at the same time, is considered to impact the effectiveness of the support that authentic leaders provide to followers (Wei et al., 2018). Based on the similarities between leaders perceived to be prototypical and authentic leadership, it can thus be concluded, in support of Wei et al. (2018), that the level of experience and extensive knowledge amassed by leaders perceived to be identity prototypical enhances their competence and consequently improves the effectiveness of their support to followers. Interestingly, and also to further support this conclusion, Wei et al. (2018) state examples of competency to be; amongst others, strategic planning, goal setting and problem awareness which are part of the remaining factors associated with leaders perceived to be prototypical, namely, intellectual and strategic capability.

Intellectual capability included leaders' intelligence, their capacity to be innovative, as well as critical and analytical thinking. Strategic capability included the ability to set clear direction, clarify the vision, clarify follower contribution and finally facilitate open communication. The identification of these factors from leaders perceived to be identity prototypical thus reinforces their perceived level of competency, which according to Wei et al. (2018) positively contributes to their effectiveness in supporting followers.

In summary, the leading factor through which leaders' identity prototypicality was evident was accessibility and support, followed by leader personality traits that suggest the presence of transformational and authentic leadership behaviours as evidenced by the confidence and pursuit of excellence as well as the casual, authentic, flexible and informal management style which made leaders more accessible to followers. Following which, leaders' level of experience and extensive knowledge enhanced their competency, as evidenced by their intellectual and strategic capability, therefore improving the effectiveness of the support provided to followers.

Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

Leader identity prototypicality, as discussed under the results for research question 2 above, is concerned with how leaders were perceived to role model the ideal characteristics for group members (van Dick et al., 2018). Research question 3 sought to understand how and whether

leaders' perceived identity prototypicality affected how group members worked, how they felt about work or how they showed up at work. The collected data was analysed to establish whether participants' responses could be linked to any employee engagement aspects, such as types of engagement, drivers or outcomes of engagement provided by Bailey et al. (2017) and discussed in Chapter 2. As such, two categories of drivers emerged from the data; namely, perceived leadership and management style and individual perceptions of organisational and team factors. In addition one category of outcomes, individual performance outcomes, was also identified.

Data for the perceived leadership and management factors category, ranked at the top of factors linked to employee engagement, indicated that leaders perceived to be identity prototypical elicited a sense of aspiration from group members as well as created a sense of peace, support and enablement for group members. Furthermore, group members felt a desire to work and please their leaders. And lastly, although in the minority, it is worth mentioning that for leaders not perceived to be identity prototypical, a sense of being unsettled and lacking confidence in the leader was apparent.

A closer look at the sense of aspiration reveals that it leads to behavior which could result in positive outcomes for the group, and the organization at large as group members take steps to reduce the gap between theirs and leaders' competency skills and knowledge that they aspire to. This aligns to social identity theory which, according to Zhang et al. (2017), suggests that group members are keen to achieve and preserve a favorable social identity, especially if it also results in their positive assessment from fellow group members. This explains followers's desire to work and please their leaders. In addition, it also explains the second highest concentration of themes under the individual performance outcomes since they are mainly related to group members desire to improve their skills, performance and proactivity. Additionally, this also indicates that leaders' prototypicality serves as a catalyst for personal and performance improvement therefore linking to transformational leadership which, Buil et al. (2019) suggest inspires followers to transcend self-interested pursuits and deliver performance that exceeds expectations. Further aligning to Zhang et al. (2017) this can be classified as organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), which is defined as positive employee behaviour that is discretionary and not prescribed or covered in performance contracts and yet facilitates the achievement of strategic objectives. A further link to employee

engagement is confirmed as, Bailey et al. (2017) found OCB to be one of the outcomes of employee engagement. In addition, the view by Shuck et al. (2017), also applies as the findings confirm the positioning of leaders perceived to be identity prototypical as an influence of the psychological state of employee engagement, which then drives associated behaviour, in this case OCB.

The creation of a sense of peace, support and enablement for group members links into the two main schools of thought on employee as covered in Chapter 2. According to Kahn (1990), the sense of peace and support is considered under the idea of psychological safely which, under the needs satisfaction perspective, is a core requirement for employee engagement to occur. However, if viewed from the burnout antithesis perspective, the sense of peace and support would a component of job resources, that is the "physical, social or organisational aspects of the job" (Knight et al., 2017, p. 793) that have been associated with work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Further to perceived leadership and management factors, the second ranked category was individual perceptions of organisational and team factors. Data indicated that leaders perceived to be identity prototypical facilitated teamwork, created a sense of safety and inspired group members to innovate. Again, striking similarities to transformational leadership are glaringly evident, as Breevaart et al. (2016) highlighted "transformational leaders are role models to their employees… and stimulate their employees to think out of the box and to be innovative within a safe environment" (p. 311). Furthermore, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, transformational leadership has been positively associated with employee engagement (Breevaart et al., 2016; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Buil et al., 2019) which further supports the perceived influence of SIL, through identity prototypicality, on employee engagement. The notion of safety, which links in with Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation of employee engagement manifesting on the basis of psychological safety is evidently a recurring theme.

6.3. Discussion of Results for Identity Advancement

Results for research question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership?

Similar to identity prototypicality, research question 1 was concerned with establishing whether leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL through the dimension of identity advancement. Guided by the interview questions that were grounded in the definition of identity advancement, data was collected from participants to discover whether they had perceived their leaders to be protecting, promoting and prioritising the interests of their team (van Dick et al., 2018; van Dick & Kerschreiter, 2016). Accordingly, the data analysis indicated that the majority of participants had perceived their leaders to be committed to protecting, promoting and prioritising the interests of the team as most responded affirmatively to the questions exploring that.

A common sentiment that stood out to attest to this, was the interconnectedness of group and leader interests that a participant described as "interwoven" which implies that if leaders were to neglect team interests, any undesired impacts would also jeopardise their interests which could extend to leaders performance ratings as another participant highlighted that "her performance management is also measured according to her team's performance", accordingly, another participant aptly stated that "It (is) to her best interest as success is a team sport". This therefore demonstrates what van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016) stated, that when leaders are engaged in identity advancement, leaders' interests are groups' interests. Further amplifying Epitropaki et al. (2017) observation of leaders and teams being unified by a singular identity.

In contrast to the above, some leaders were not perceived to be practicing identity advancement although they were in the minority. Data indicates that these leaders were perceived to be neglecting their role to defend their groups' interests and thus exposing followers to undue impacts, as expressed by a participant "we get caught up in situations where…if we are being defended and our interests are being promoted, we wouldn't be in this situation". Thus indicating that leaders were possibly pursuing own or other groups' interests at the expense of their own groups' interests. Interestingly, these sentiments were in respect of a leader not perceived to be prototypical in section 6.2 dealing with identity prototypicality. This also raises the question of whether there are variances in the tendency for non-prototypical leaders to promote groups interest when compared to prototypical leaders, following the observation by Steffens et al. (2016) that leader identity prototypicality does not

automatically translate to identity advancement, even though, as suggested by Epitropaki et al. (2017), it is the expectation that due to their prototypicality, own group interests would be their foremost concern. This is an area future studies could explore further.

Results for research question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

Continuing from research question 1, the intent of research question 2 was to establish how identity advancement was perceived to be practiced by leaders. From the data analysis four main categories of activities that leaders were perceived to be practicing to advance their groups' interests were evident; namely, the deployment of positional power, clarification of team objectives, monitoring performance and communication. Under the first category, deploying positional power, leaders were perceived to proactively leverage their seniority and rank to advocate for their groups, especially in situations where leaders' seniority was expected to yield improved outcomes for the group. Further to that, leaders were perceived to actively confront blockers; that is, people or situations that threaten the achievement of group objectives, with or without escalations from group members. Leaders' positional power was also used as a conduit to create access for their groups to networks that would facilitate the achievement of group objectives. The overall demonstration of how leader's power was deployed is fully aligned with the fundamentals of identity advancement as outlined by Steffens et al. (2014); therefore, leveraging seniority and rank to advocate for groups, fits with "standing up for group interests" (p. 1004), confronting blockers is aligned to defending group interests if they are threatened, whereas utilising leaders' positional power as a conduit to create access to networks for followers links into "contributing to the realisation of group objectives" (p. 1004) (Steffens et al., 2014).

Still under deploying positional power, the notion of support which was apparent under identity prototypicality resurfaces here also. Accordingly, leaders were perceived to support, protect and empower group members in pursuing team objectives, based on the premise that group success would also translate to leader success. A notion that expands van Dick and Kerschreiter's (2016) suggestion that leaders should subordinate their own interests to group interests and instead suggests aligning both interests to reduce the burden of having to assess every decisions thrice to determine which interests it addresses before acting. A notion that does align with van Dick and Kerschreiter's (2016) suggestion of self-sacrifice occurs

under the perceptions of protection. The data revealed that joint accountability for failures and successes was taken. The resounding pattern was that leaders were perceived to protect group members, as principles of "no sacrificial lambs", group members were "not hung out to dry" and "you know that you have a sniper every time you step out into the battlefield" stood out. Strongly demonstrating, as suggested by van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016), that leaders were perceived to prioritise group interests.

Holistically viewed, the detailed deployment of power evidently extends the suggestion by van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016) of how leaders could employ fairness and not abuse positional power as a way to demonstrate the advancement of team interests. These findings, therefore, provide additional practical examples for deploying the power that comes with leading groups.

The second category of findings were not evident in literature reviewed in Chapter 2 as practical activities that leaders could engage in as part of advancing group identity and thus provide new insights in this area. Grouped under clarifying team objectives, leaders were perceived to clarify, for both group member and other external stakeholders why the group existed and what its objectives were. Furthermore, leaders were perceived to provide strategic direction to facilitate the achievement of the group objectives and, in the third category, also implement monitoring processes to track the execution and achievement of said group objectives. In the fourth category leaders were perceived to facilitate information sharing, both to group members, in order to keep them abreast of organisational developments that could impact the achievement of group objectives, and then across stakeholders who were critical for the execution and achievement of group objectives. Although these findings are new in the context of advancing group interests, they are not new to the traditional competencies of leadership which according to Wei et al. (2018) include "problem awareness, strategic planning, decision making, goal setting, coordinating with subordinates, and monitoring them as they carry out a plan" (p. 766).

Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

Similar to the approach followed with the results for identity prototypicality, participants were asked to reflect on whether leaders' perceived behaviours under identity advancement impacted the way that they work, how they felt about work and how they showed up at work.

The intention was to, yet again, determine whether participants' experiences could in any way be related to employee engagement, either through drivers, outcomes or definitions. Consequently, analysis of the data indicated that employee engagement drivers and outcomes, as defined by Bailey et al. (2017) were evident. As drivers, perceived leadership and management factors ranked the highest, followed by individual perceptions of organizational and team factors, and then lastly experienced job design related factors. Employees engagement outcomes included individual performance outcomes, work related attitudes and organisational or team performance outcomes.

Examination of the supporting data for perceived leadership and management indicated that leaders were perceived to create a sense of support, safety and empowerment; evoke pride and happiness; and serve as a source of inspiration and aspiration for followers. These ideas are similar to those discussed under the results for identity prototypicality, although the prominence of followers' aspirations and desires to deliver work and please leaders has been overtaken by the sense of support, safety and empowerment. This is to be expected however, considering that the focus of this dimension is not on the "being" aspect of the leader, but it is instead on the "doing", which is also evident in the nature of activities through which the dimension was perceived to be practiced. Prototypicality, concerned with "being one of us" (van Dick et al., 2018, p. 700), was characterized by personality and behaviour traits, whereas advancement, concerned with "doing it for us" (van Dick et al., 2018, p. 700), was evidenced by practical activities. This confirms the observation by Steffens et al. (2016) that "while leaders' prototypicality and championing of collective interests will often go hand in hand, they are not the same and can also diverge" (p. 728). Even with this difference, the link to employee engagement through the support, safety and empowerment is similar. Therefore similar to leaders perceived as being identity prototypical, leaders perceived to be engaged in identity advancement facilitate support, safety and empowerment for followers which fits into the psychological safety component of Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation of employee engagement, as well as into the job resources component of the JD-R theory which have been positively associated with employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Thus, this indicates that identity advancement does play some role in influencing employee engagement.

Looking into the individual perceptions of organizational and team factors, the data indicated that group members experienced a sense of support, safety, cohesion and belonging while also feeling the desire to remain engaged, interested and to improve performance. Once more similar findings to those under identity prototypicality with the concept of support being a recurring theme. Furthermore, this also fits into the observations by Schneider et al. (2018) that the context within which work occurs is important for employees and employee engagement, as their study demonstrated that organisational and team factors, such as career opportunities, job security, supervisor and co-worker support, had a positive correlation to workforce engagement. The last category of drivers, experienced job design related factors can also be explained by job resources of the JD-R theory, as data indicated that group members were inspired to work and had a desire to develop based on the challenging and meaningful nature of the work that they performed, which, according to Bakker and Demerouti (2017), have been classified as "challenge work demands" (p. 277) and have been positively linked to work engagement.

Following on the drivers, are factors related to employee engagement outcomes. Individual performance outcomes ranked the highest, followed by work related attitudes and organisational or team performance outcomes in second and third place respectively.

Individual performance outcomes comprise in-role and extra-role outcomes, with in-role referring to technical and contracted aspects of the job, whereas extra-role refers to discretionary positive behaviours, that is OCB (Zhang et al., 2017). These we also evident in the prototypicality discussion, covered under section 6.2, and included the desire to improve performance, to develop, to deliver, to improve quality of output, and proactivity. Therefore, the presence of OCB might allude to the activation of the psychological state of employee engagement, in accordance with the suggestion by Shuck et al. (2017) that in its positioning, employee engagement could be influenced by some drivers and thus result in particular behaviour, in this case employee engagement was perceived to be influenced by leader's identity advancement efforts, which then resulted in OCB. A similar positioning is confirmed in the employee engagement model of antecedents and consequences by Saks (2019) where leadership is placed as an antecedent or driver leading to employee engagement which is evidenced by several consequences or outcomes, including OCB. Furthermore, Bailey et al. (2017), also confirm the positive link between extra-role behaviours and employee

engagement. Therefore this all adds to the perception that leaders' identity advancement efforts play a role in influencing employee engagement.

Further to the positive outcomes, some unfavourable outcomes were also highlighted and were associated with leaders who were not perceived to be advancing team interests. Accordingly, this had the impact of setting a bad precedent, wasting time with the disruptive reallocation of resources as well as a deterioration in the quality of work. These could therefore be deemed as consequences of not prioritising team interests or acting to prevent group failures, as van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016) defined identity advancement. Continuing with the positives, individual in-role outcomes indicated that group members experienced a sense of support, empowerment and ownership in executing their technical roles as well as the desire to improve the quality of their work output, alluding to the availability of job resources described by Bakker and Demerouti (2017). This also links with the consequence of task performance in the employee engagement antecedents and consequences model by Saks (2019).

The last category of performance outcomes were classified as work-related attitudes, in the form of turnover intentions. The data indicated that group members expressed a sense of belonging and happiness with their group membership and thus had intentions to stay. This also fits with the model by Saks (2019), that employee engagement may influence employees' intentions to quit or stay.

6.4. Discussion of Results for Identity Entrepreneurship

Results for research question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership?

The aim of research question 1 was to determine whether leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL through identity entrepreneurship. The results for identity entrepreneurship are a consolidation of responses to interview questions sought to establish what leaders roles were perceived to be in defining what it means to be part of the groups they lead. That definition of identity entrepreneurship, similar to the previous two dimensions, was also the basis for the interview questions. Accordingly, the core aim of identity entrepreneurship is for leaders to foster a sense of cohesion and inclusiveness for group members by defining values

that demarcate who belongs in the group (van Dick et al., 2018). The data analysis indicated that all leaders were perceived to model and communicate team values as a demonstration of being identity entrepreneurs.

It was however highly intriguing that no negative perception were expressed, given that not all leaders were perceived to be prototypical, nor advancing team interest as discussed under sections 6.2 and 6.3. This is an interesting avenue which future studies could explore: What is the propensity for non-prototypical leaders to be identity entrepreneurs? How effective and influential are they in comparison to prototypical leadears? This is particularly intriguing as Epitropaki et al. (2017) suggest that identity prototypicality affords leaders the abilty to be entrepreneurs of identity and , therefore does being less prototypical or non-prototypical affect leader's ability to be identity entrepreneurs? Although Steffens et al. (2013) did find this to be a possibility, performing this study with a field sample within and emerging markets and African context would enhance the current knowledge. In addressing research question 1, leaders were thus perceived to be practicing social identity leadership by communicating and modelling team values. This confirms the statement by Steffens et al. (2018), that leaders engaged in social identity leadership define the boundaries for "who is 'us' and who is not 'us'" (p. 375).

Results for research question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

The aim of research question 2 was to determine what activity identity entrepreneurship was practiced through, participants were asked to reflect on what their team values were, what they were perceived their leaders role to be in clarifying those values. They were further requested to elaborate on how they perceived the leader to do this. The same was repeated for how leaders were perceived to create a sense of cohesion in the group. The consolidated results show that leaders were perceived to be facilitating identity entrepreneurship, through team social activities, objective setting, communication, and general leader conduct.

Due to the highlighted limited coverage of research in this area, the identified activities were not evident in the papers reviewed for the literature in Chapter 2. Similar to results of identity advancement, these provide new insights into activities that leaders could engage in for the facilitation of identity entrepreneurship. Team social activities were viewed to create informal

conditions for team members to relate outside of the formal confines of work. This was perceived to allow team members to form stronger relationships that improved the work experience and created a sense of cohesion. This therefore links with observations by Steffens et al. (2014); 2018; van Dick et al. (2018) as well as van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016), confirming that leaders were perceived to be identity entrepreneurs through facilitating group cohesion). This was expressed as "a sense of family" and "team spirit" by research participants. Objective setting, similar to identity advancement, appears here again; however, with a different focus from preventing group failure, and instead focused on creating cohesion amongst group members. Accordingly, the data revealed that leaders were perceived to create a common understanding of why the group exists through team objectives. This communicated to the team members why the group exists, even if in a technical sense. Therefore, when each member knew what they were expected to contribute, cohesion was achieved, as all group members contributed towards the achievement of set group objectives. Furthermore, shared objectives were also perceived to better facilitate this.

Similarly, leaders were perceived to communicate what the team stands for, in order to facilitate a common understanding amongst group members. Additionally, the same information was perceived to be shared openly and equally amongst team members. General leader conduct was also perceived to be an avenue for identity entrepreneurship. Sentiments indicated that not being overly concerned with rank and titles and expressing an understanding of what the group members were experiencing were also a perceived enactment of identity advancement. These created the sense that leaders were also part of the team, further supporting the sense of cohesion. It is worth highlighting once more, that even though these activities are new in the context of identity entrepreneurship, they are not new to supervisor, manager, leader roles, as according to Wei et al. (2018), these form part of leader competencies.

Viewed holistically, results for research question 2 indicate that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL through identity entrepreneurship, with the main theme being the creation of cohesion and a common understanding of what the team stands. This therefore agrees with the definition of identity entrepreneurship which according to van Dick et al. (2018) is concerned with "crafting a sense of us" (p. 700).

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Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

The same approach followed for research question 3, under identity prototypicality and identity advancement was also followed here. Participants were thus asked to reflect on how leaders' actions described under research question 1 and research question 2 made them feel about work, how they showed up at work and how they executed the work. The data analysis revealed sentiments which could be linked to either definitions, drivers, or outcomes of employee engagement. As a result, data revealed links to drivers of employee engagement, grouped under perceived leadership and management factors and individual perceptions of organisational and team factors as defined by Bailey et al. (2017). Additionally, links to outcomes of employee engagement were also found, grouped under individual performance outcomes, work related attitudes and well-being and health perceptions.

The link to perceived leadership and management factors persist, as data revealed that group members stated that they had experienced a sense of support, motivation and safety from the leader's perceived identity entrepreneurship efforts. Adding to the psychological safety links detected under sections 6.2 and 6.3 which occur as a result of the environment leaders create for employee engagement to occur. Accordingly this links to Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation of employee engagement and supports finding by Steffens et al. (2018) that leaders identity advancement efforts have a positive impact on followers psychological health. Similarly factors under individual perceptions of organisational and team factors also allude to the atmosphere of which fosters safety, empowerment and belonging which have been positively associated with and therefore also link in with the model of employee antecedents and consequences by Saks (2019) as drivers and also with job resources under organisational and team factors of the JD-R model which confirms the positive effects of employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

6.5. Discussion of Results for Identity Impresarioship

Results for research question 1: Are leaders perceived to be practicing social identity leadership?

Research question 1 sought to establish whether leaders were perceived to be engaging in SIL through the identity impresarioship dimension which, according to van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016), is concerned with the establishment of structures to bring group membership to life. Accordingly, the data indicated that although structures did exist, the majority of leaders were perceived to mostly be fulfilling empowerment and facilitation roles. In the empowerment role, the majority of sentiments indicated that leaders were perceived to delegate representation at committees and forum to followers as a way of creating visibility, additionally this had the effect of empowering group members. Furthermore under the facilitation of engagements, leaders were perceived to incentivise group member's to maintain visibility through, for example, offering a choice between participation in structures or contend with being assigned the least desirable group task. Leaders were also perceived to provide open recognition to reinforce desirable behavior. In the minority, participant expressed sentiments of not perceiving their leader as playing an active role in creating visibility for their team. This was mitigated by the seniority of the participants, meaning that the responsibility to create visibility was a part of their job role.

Overall, data indicates that although playing a facilitation and empowering role, leaders were engaged in making their teams visible. Even with the perceived absence of efforts to develop structures, leaders' efforst to leverage existing structures and increase their teams' visibility are mostly aligned with the core ideas of identity impresarioship expressed by van Dick et al. (2018) which is to "give weight to the group's existence and allow group members to live out their membership" (p. 702).

Results for research question 2: What are the evident activities through which the perceived practice of SIL is experienced?

Research question 2 sought to establish though which activities leaders' identity impresarioship efforts were evident. The data that was analysed indicates that leaders play a very limited role in establishing most structures as these exist either by virtue of organisational governance requirements or, through the nature of the work performed by the group, which by design, makes them visible to others beyond the confines of the team. Consequently the role played by leaders transforms from one of establishing structures to one of optimising the use of those structure to effect identity impresarioship.

Accordingly, leaders were perceived to be most fulfilling empowerment and facilitation roles through formal organisational structures, team meetings, team social outings as well as departmental meetings. This is aligned to literature as according to van Dick and Kerschreiter (2016), identity impresarioship gives group members a lived experience of the group identity. This is achieved through being the face of the team when acting on delegated responsibilities and also through social interaction with team members at team social outings.

Results for Research Question 3: Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?

Research question 3, consistent with the preceding sections 6.2 to 6.4, was concerned with establishing whether actions by leaders in research question 1 and 2 had a role to play in influencing employee engagement. Once more, guidance from Bailey et al. (2017) was followed to assist in grouping the data into the identified categories of drivers and outcomes. Accordingly, the data indicated that components of drivers were evident through leadership and management factors and individual perceptions of organisational and team factors, whereas outcomes of employee engagement were evident through individual performance outcomes and well-being and health perceptions.

Sentiments expressed regarding leadership and management factors indicated that group members experienced a sense of empowerment and ownership as a result of leader's perceived identity impresarioship efforts. These finding fit with the job resource factors of the JD-R model, which according to Bakker and Demerouti (2017) suggests, amongst others, that relationships with leaders and the level of job autonomy serve as resources to reduce the potential adverse impacts of job demands and are thus positioned to facilitate employee engagement. Similarly sentiments under perceptions of organisational and team factors also fits into the social support job resource of the JD-R model, through the sense of cohesion that group members experienced (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). These findings confirm, once more, the observation by Schneider et al. (2018), that the impact of the context within which work occurs must not be underestimated in its contribution to employee engagement.

Data for performance outcomes thus confirms some of the benefits that accrue from the identified perceived drivers of employee engagement, with expressions of a desire for excellence and improved performance being prominent. Additionally, perceptions of well-

being and health were also reportedly experienced by group members. Notably, this is the first instance where well-being and health outcomes have come through prominently, sharing an equal ranking with performance outcomes. This was in response to leaders' delegation and empowerment actions which had the impact of boosting morale as group members reported feeling good, happy and confident. All outcomes were found to align to Saks's (2019) model of employee engagement antecedents and outcomes. Additionally, findings allude to the underlying trust relationship between leaders and group members, which according to Bakker and Demerouti (2017) serves as a job resource to counter the effects of job demands.

Overall, findings for research question 3 indicate that leaders' identity impresarioship efforts were perceived to play a role in influencing employee engagement.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Introduction

This study was interested to discover through the lived experiences of individuals whether SIL was perceived to be practiced by leaders, and if so, what practical activities leaders engaged in to facilitate this. Additionally, the study sought to explore whether the perceived practice of SIL played a role in infleuncing employee engagement. Following the discussion of results in Chapter 6, a consolidation of the key findings across the four dimensions of SIL will be presented next, followed by a highlight of the implications the study holds for theory and practice. Finally, the limitation of the study and recommendations for future studies will be outlined.

7.2. Consolidation of Findings

An outline of findings per SIL dimension is provided below, with a diagrammatical consolidation of all the findings provided at the end.

7.2.1. Identity Prototypicality

In consolidating the findings for identity prototypicality, it can be concluded that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL, through the dimension of identity prototypicality, as the data indicated that the majority of leaders were perceived to be role models for their followers, in line with the assertions by Barreto and Hogg (2017), that prototypicality is concerned with being the ideal group member. This, therefore, addresses research question 1. In addressing research question 2, it can also be concluded that the prominent activities through which identity prototypicality was evident comprised accessibility and support, leader personality traits, management style and leader competency which encompasses knowledge and experience, intellectual capability and strategic capability, with the evident bias towards behaviour and traits aligning to the "sense of being" (p. 700) that characterises identity prototypicality (van Dick et al., 2018).

In addressing research question 3, drivers of employee engagement and its related outcomes, as identified by Bailey et al. (2017), Saks (2019), and Bakker and Demerouti (2017), were found to be evident through the two categories of drivers identified; namely, perceived

leadership and management style and individual perceptions of organisational and team factors as well as the one category of outcomes, grouped under individual performance outcomes. These findings suggest that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL, through identity prototypicality and it was perceived to play a role in influencing employee engagement. Hence, building on the model by Steffens et al. (2014), these findings can be represented diagrammatically as follows in Figure 2.
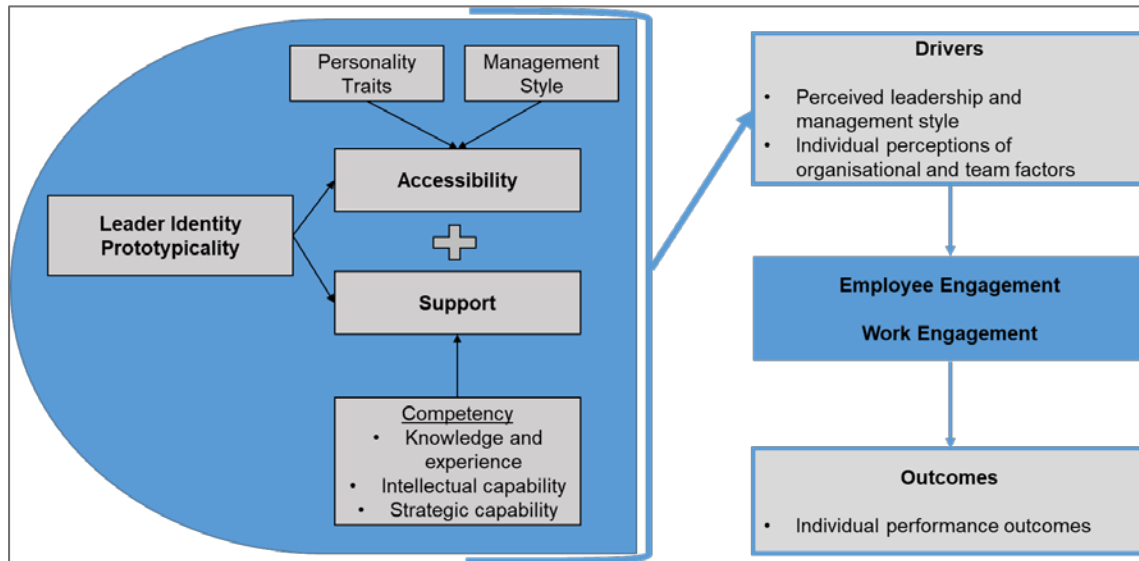

Figure 2: Identity prototypicality and employee engagement

7.2.2. Identity Advancement

A reconciliation of the findings for identity advancement, starting with research question 1, indicates that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL through the identity advancement dimension. The data indicated that the majority of leaders were perceived to be protecting promoting and prioritizing group interests, in line with the definition of identity advancement provided by van Dick et al. (2018). In addressing research question 2, it can also be concluded that the prominent activities, through which leaders' identity advancement efforts were evident comprised the deployment of positional power, clarification of team objectives, monitoring performance and communication. These activities were however not evident in the literature reviewed for identity advancement and can thus be presented in this context as new insights that were discovered. In addressing research question 3, definition components of employee engagement, as conceptualised by Kahn (1990); and work engagement, supported by Bakker

and Demerouti's (2017) JD-R theory; were evident. Additionally, drivers; as categorised by Bailey et al. (2017) and Saks (2019); that included perceived leadership and management factors, individual perceptions of organizational and team factors, and then lastly experienced job design related factors were evident. Outcomes of employee engagement, also categorised by Bailey et al. (2017) and Saks (2019), were also evident through individual performance outcomes, work-related attitudes and organisational or team performance outcomes. Put together this, therefore, suggests that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL through identity advancement. Furthermore, the practical activities through which identity advancement was practiced were identified. Lastly, through the linkages identified, SIL was perceived to play a role in influencing employee engagement. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Identity advancement and employee engagement

7.2.3. Identity Entrepreneurship

A reconciliation of the findings for identity entrepreneurship, starting with research question 1, indicates that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL through identity entrepreneurship. The data analysis indicated that leaders were perceived to be modelling and communicating team values in line with the definition provided by van Dick et al. (2018) and further confirmed by Steffens et al. (2018). In addressing research question 2, it can also be concluded that the

activities through which leaders' identity entrepreneurship efforts were evident included, team social activities, objective setting, communication, and general leader conduct. Similar to identity advancement, and as a consequence of the paucity of literature coverage in this area, echoed by Steffens et al. (2018), these activities were not evident in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and thus present new insights within this context.

In addressing research question 3, definition components of employee engagement, as conceptualised by Kahn (1990); and work engagement, supported by Bakker and Demerouti's (2017) JD-R theory; were evident. Furthermore, drivers, as categorised by Bailey et al. (2017) and Saks (2019), that included perceived leadership and management factors and individual perceptions of organisational and team factors were evident. Outcomes of employee engagement, also categorised by Bailey et al. (2017) and Saks (2019), were also evident through individual performance outcomes, work-related attitudes, and well-being and health perceptions. When viewed together this, therefore, suggests that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL, through identity entrepreneurship. Additionally, the practical activities through which this was achieved were identified. Lastly, through the linkages identified, SIL was perceived to play a role in influencing employee engagement. This can be represented diagrammatically as follows in Figure 4.
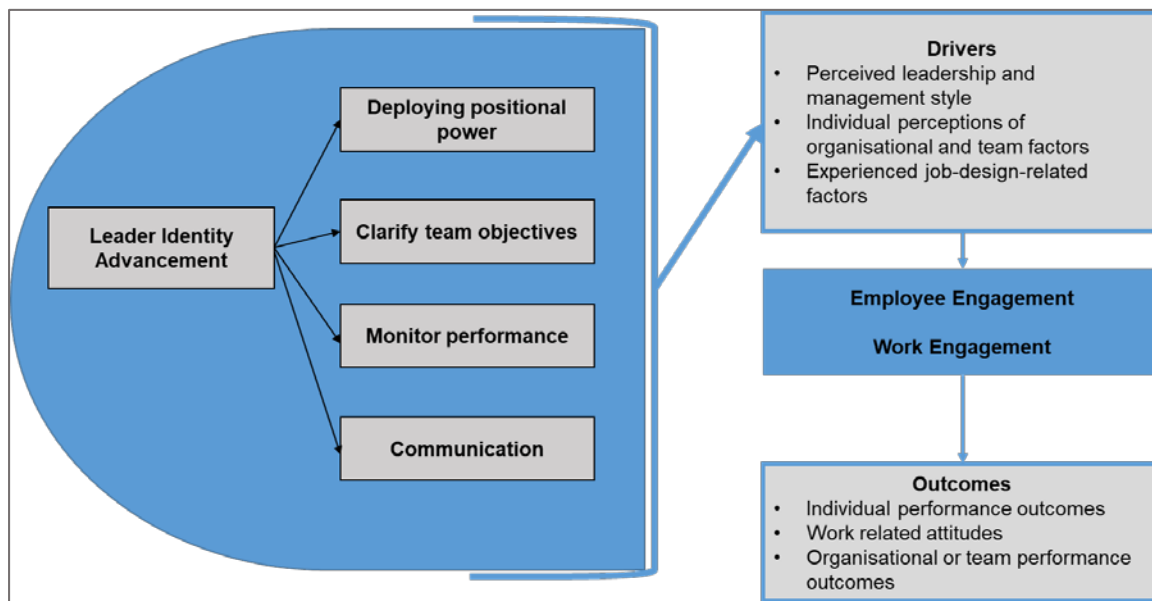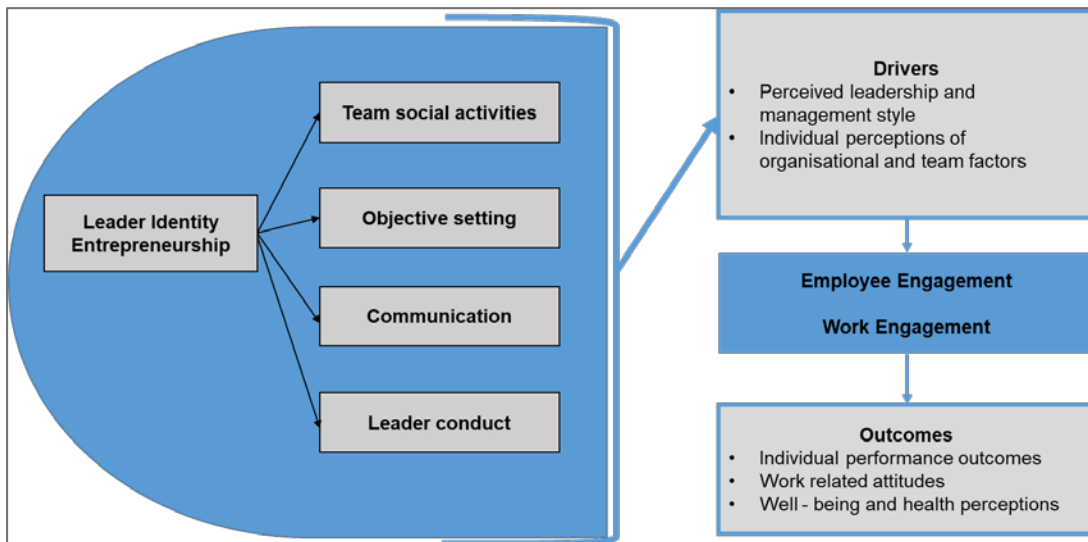

Figure 4: Identity entrepreneurship and employee engagement

7.2.4. Identity Impresarioship

A reconciliation of the findings for identity impresarioship, starting with research question 1, indicates that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL through identity impresarioship. The data analysis indicated that leaders were mostly perceived to be creating visibility for their teams, which aligns to the definition of identity impresarioship as according to van Dick et al. (2018) it relates to "developing structures, events, and activities that give weight to the group's existence and allow group members to live out their membership" (p. 702). In addressing research question 2, it can also be concluded that the activities through which leaders' identity impresarioship efforts were evident included formal organisational structures, team meetings, team social outings as well as departmental and cross-functional meetings. Similar to identity advancement and identity entrepreneurship, and as a consequence of the paucity of literature coverage in this area, also echoed by Steffens et al. (2018), these activities, except for team meetings, were not evident in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and thus present new insights within this context.

In addressing research question 3, components of JD-R theory explored by Bakker and Demerouti (2017) and Saks's (2019) model of antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement were evident. These could also be classified into drivers, which included perceived leadership and management factors and individual perceptions of organisational and team factors as categorised by Bailey et al. (2017) and Saks (2019). Additionally, outcomes of employee engagement, also categorised by Bailey et al. (2017) and Saks (2019), were also evident through individual performance outcomes and well-being and health perceptions. Viewed together, this suggests that leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL, through identity impresarioship, and as evidenced by the practical activities identified. Furthermore, through the linkages highlighted, SIL was perceived to play a role in influencing employee engagement. This can be represented diagrammatically as follows in Figure 5.
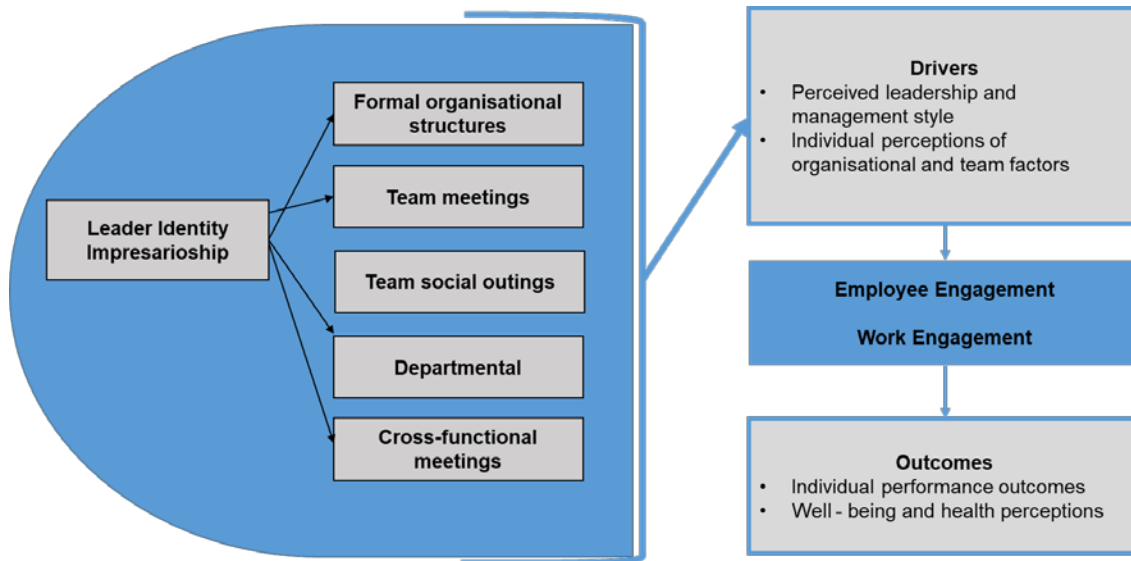
Figure 5: Identity impresarioship and employee engagement

7.3. A Consolidated Model of SIL and Employee Engagement

Overall, leaders were perceived to be practicing SIL, the primary activities through which this was done were identified and the role that SIL was perceived to play in influencing employee engagement was identified. The research objective stated in Chapter 1 has thus been achieved and the results are presented together in Figure 6.
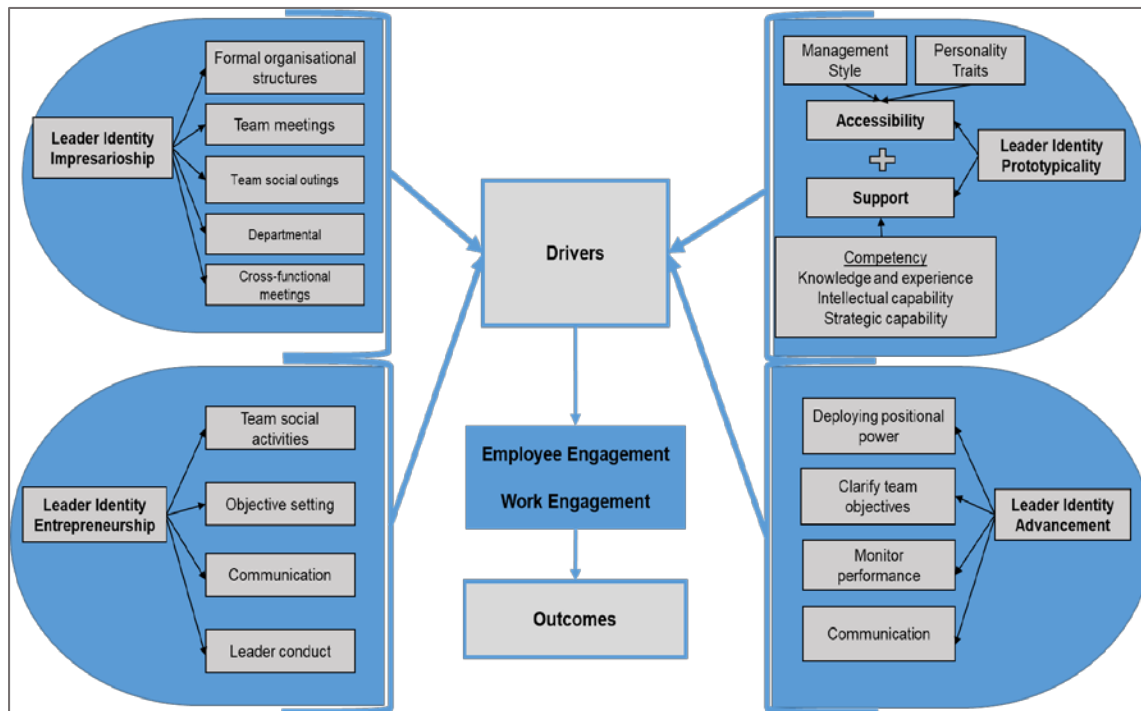
Figure 6: SIL and employee engagement

7.4. Implications for Theory and Practice

The implications for theory that are presented by this study include reducing the gap in literature where the focus of leadership and employee engagement study has been on the conventional forms of leaders (Gutermann et al., 2017), to add leadership that is concerned with group processes and social identity. The study also contributes to theory, an alternative view of how SIL is practiced in a developing country context. Additionally, the study also adds to the limited work in social identity studies that focuses on all four dimensions of SIL (Steffens et al., 2018). Furthermore, the discovery of new insights regarding practical activities presents novel applications for activities that are generally considered basic management or leader competencies (Wei et al., 2018).

Further to the implications for theory, the study also presents implications for leadership and management. Firstly SIL is demonstrated to be a powerful alternative to conventional leadership styles as it provided the opportunity to leverage group processes, fused with traits of transformational and authentic leadership to maximise the influence of employee behaviour and thus related outcomes that follow improved engagement sucu as, improved productivity

as demonstrated by Knight et al. (2017), and reduced negative health effects found by Steffens et al. (2018), which, as highlighted in Chapter 1 are particularly heightened within the current operating environment. The discovery of new applications for current management activities also presents opportunities for managers to reimagine how these are approached in order to access the benefits of SIL.

7.5. Limitations

As previously highlighted in Chapter 4, the fundamental limitation of qualitative studies stems from the subjectivity and bias introduced by the central role of the researcher in the process (Collins & Cooper, 2014). Therefore, the quality of data collected and analysed was influenced by the researcher's novice interviewing and data analysis skills (Halldórsson & Aastrup, 2003). Limiting the study to a sample of companies rated as top employers in South Africa makes the findings of the study unlikely to be transferable to all other companies (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Additionally, the non-probability sampling method and snowballing utilised to identify research participants limited the sample to four sectors further reducing the generalisability of the finding to all other companies. Furthermore, the added disadvantage of snowball sampling is the inclusion of participants from the same network which as noted by Byrne et al. (2016), could result in some bias. Lastly, individuals selected as part of the sample belonged to varied teams as such, the study may have benefited from stricter criteria of selecting leaders and followers in the same team to enhance the triangulation of perspectives obtained.

7.6. Suggestions for Future Research

The qualitative study has revealed valuable insights that are worth validating with a larger sample that would allow coverage of more industries and organisations and could also be facilitated quantitatively through the SIL measurement instrument, the ILI. Additionally, future research may benefit from stricter criteria for selecting leaders and followers in the same teams. Another interesting avenue which future studies could explore is evaluating the propensity for non-prototypical leaders to be identity entrepreneurs and how effective and influential they could be at improving employee engagement, additionally, it might also be worth exploring whether there are variances in the tendency for non-prototypical leaders to promote groups interest when compared to prototypical leaders and how these also impact

employee engagement. Furthermore, studies could also explore whether being less or not being prototypical affect leaders' ability to be identity entrepreneurs.

7.7. Conclusion

Employee engagement continues to capture the interest of scholars and management practitioners, more so the contentions around its definition and measurement instruments. The benefits associated with employee engagement for organisations and leaders explain why, especially in the current challenging business operating context. It is therefore worth exploring the potential for alternative leadership styles to facilitate optimal employee engagement, both to advance theory and practice beyond the focus on conventional leadership styles. The ojective of this study was to address this gap in literature, by exploring the potential for social identity leadership to facilitate employee engagement. Furthermore, the research sought to explore whether all the dimesions of SIL facilitate employee engagement, adding to previous study that have mainly focused on identity prototypicality.

The findings presented in this study indicate that SIL does play a role in influencing employee engagement. Additionally, new insights were discovered for the novel application of activities that leaders could implement to practice SIL and enhance the workplace experience of followers without additional outlays of contrained financial resources due to the practical nature of the findings.

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9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Letter

Gordon Institute of Business Science
University of Pretoria

Informed Consent Letter

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of an MBA.

I am conducting research on group based, social identity leadership with the aim of understanding whether this style of leadership is practiced by leaders and if so, does it influence employee engagement. The interview is expected to last about an hour and will help us understand whether group based, social identity leadership is practiced by leaders in companies rated as top employers in South Africa and whether it influences employee engagement.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be reported without identifiers. If you have any concerns, you may contact my supervisor or me. Our details are provided below.

Researcher Details	**Supervisor Details**
Tebogo Maphothoma	Jabu Maphalala
082 889 4282	071 679 2770
21202975@mygibs.co.za	jabumaphalala88@gmail.com

Participant Signature: _____

Appendix 2: Invitation to Participate in Research

Tebogo Maphothoma

From:	Tebogo Maphothoma
Sent:	16 October 2020 10:36 AM
To:	cccccccccccccccccccccccccccc
Subject:	GIBS MBA Research Interview
Attachments:	Informed Consent Letter.pdf

Good Morning cccccccc,

Thank you for your willingness to assist.

Please find the attached informed consent letter to be signed before our conversation. It also introduces the research topic.

Kindly confirm when you can spare an hour, I will then schedule a zoom or teams call for us, let me know which one works better for you.

I am comfortable to do after hours and weekends if that would be convenient also.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Regards
Tebogo

Tebogo Maphothoma

1

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Greetings –

Introduction

As communicated this is an interview to gather data for my research project, which interested in leadership – specifically leadership based on a shared group identity.

Before we start, are you comfortable for me to record the discussion? This is to assist me with data analysis at the end. I have also received you email confirmation of the informed consent letter.

About the interview - the questions are split into four sections.

In each section I am going to ask about your team, the leader of your team and how you and your work are impacted by the items we will be exploring.

Comfortable so far?

Great, let's kick off – tell me about yourself, your job, the role you play in the company – how long in the role or with the company…

Let us start with the first section – This section explores the characteristics of your team, as well as those of your leader **(Identity prototypicality)**

1. So, tell me about your team: in your opinion, what makes it special and distinct from other teams?	
2. If you had to describe a role model for your team, what would they look like?	
Now, let's look at the leader of your team –	
3. In your opinion, what makes them special and different from other leaders?	
4. When considering what you have just explained, how does it affect you personally and how you show up at work?	

5. Now if we look at the team role model you described, does your leader fit that description? Please elaborate on how?	
6. So, to the extent that your leader fits the role model you described, does it affect you on a personal or work level? Elaborate on how.	

We have concluded the first section. The next sections deals with the core interests of the team …. <mark>**(Identity Advancement)**</mark>

Again, we will focus on the team and then focus on the leader.

7. Great, so what are your team's core interests and goals, tell me about those.	
8. In your view, what are the actions you would expect from someone promoting and defending your team's interests?	
9. So, do you think that your leader acts to promote the interests and goals of your team? Please explain how or provide examples?	
10. When you reflect on your leader's actions as you have explained, how does it make you feel and how does it impact your work?	
11. In your opinion, does your leader act to prevent group failures and overcome obstacles to group objectives? Please provide examples of how.	
12. How would you say your leader's actions to prevent group failures or overcome obstacles, make you feel personally and how does it impact your work?	
13. Tell me this – if your leader had to defend your teams interests, but were faced with choosing between personal interests, other team's interests or your team's interests – which do you think they would prioritise? Can you provide examples of where this has occurred in the past?	
14. I'm curious about whether how your leader prioritizes affects you and your work. Tell me about that?	

That concludes section 2, the next section deal with how the team is brought together by creating a shared sense of 'we' and 'us' ….. **(Identity entrepreneurship)**
Again, we will explore the team and then move to the leader.

15. Please tell me about what your team stands for – i.e., what are its values, customs, and principles?	
16. What's your leader's role in creating an understanding of what it means to be a member of your team? Can you provide examples?	
17. How do your leader's actions as explained make you feel personally and how do they impact your work?	
18. Would you say that the leader of your team shapes your perception of what the team's values and principles are? Please elaborate on how they do this?	
19. Please elaborate on how your leader's actions as explained impact you personally and your work?	
20. In your view, does your leader make you and your team members feel that you are part of the same team? Please elaborate on how they do this?	
21. Do these actions by your leader impact you personally and your work? Please elaborate on how?	

That concludes section 3, the last section deals with structures, events, and activities that give validate the team's existence and allow team members to live out their membership …..
(Identity impresarioship)
Again, we will explore the team and then move to the leader.

22. Please tell me about the structures, events, and activities that are in place to facilitate and embed shared understanding, coordination, and success of the team? (formal or informal)	
23. Tell me about activities that are in place to make your team visible, not only to team members, but also to people outside the team?	

24. In your opinion, what role does your leader play in promoting structures or activities that you have just described?	
25. How do your leader's actions impact you personally and your work?	
26. So regarding establishing activities to make your team visible, what role does your leader play?	
27. How do your leader's actions impact you personally and your work?	

Is there anything else outside what we have explored that impacts you and how you work?	

That's the end of our conversation, thank you for your time and patience. You have shared valuable insights towards enriching my research. Is it okay if I contact you should I have clarifying questions?

Have a great day further!

Appendix 4: Mapping of Interview Questions to Research Questions

(van Dick et al., 2018, p. 700)

Research Question	Interview Questions
Identity prototypically	
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	28. So, tell me about your team: in your opinion, what makes it special and distinct from other teams?
	29. If you had to describe a role model for your team, what would they look like?
	the leader of your team:
	30. In your opinion, what makes them special and different from other leaders?
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	31. When considering what you have just explained, how does it affect you personally and how you show up at work?
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	32. Now if we look at the team role model you described, does your leader fit that description? Please elaborate on how?
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	33. So, to the extent that your leader fits the role model you described, does it affect you on a personal or work level? Elaborate on how.
Identity Advancement	
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	34. Great, so what are your team's core interests and goals, tell me about those.
	35. In your view, what are the actions you would expect from someone promoting and defending your team's interests?
	36. So, do you think that your leader acts to promote the interests and goals of your team? Please explain how or provide examples?

3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	37. When you reflect on your leader's actions as you have explained, how does it make you feel and how does it impact your work?
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	38. In your opinion, does your leader act to prevent group failures and overcome obstacles to group objectives? Please provide examples of how.
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	39. How would you say your leader's actions to prevent group failures or overcome obstacles, make you feel personally and how does it impact your work?
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	40. Tell me this – if your leader had to defend your teams interests, but were faced with choosing between personal interests, other team's interests or your team's interests – which do you think they would prioritise? Can you provide examples of where this has occurred in the past?
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	41. I'm curious about whether how your leader prioritizes affects you and your work. Tell me about that?
Identity entrepreneurship	
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	42. Please tell me about what your team stands for – i.e., what are its values, customs, and principles?
	43. What's your leader's role in creating an understanding of what it means to be a member of your team? Can you provide examples?
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	44. How do your leader's actions as explained make you feel personally and how do they impact your work?
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the	45. Would you say that the leader of your team shapes your perception of what the team's values and principles are? Please elaborate on how they do this?

perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	46. Please elaborate on how your leader's actions as explained impact you personally and your work?
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	47. In your view, does your leader make you and your team members feel that you are part of the same team? Please elaborate on how they do this?
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	48. Do these actions by your leader impact you personally and your work? Please elaborate on how?
Identity Impresarioship	
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	49. Please tell me about the structures, events, and activities that are in place to facilitate and embed shared understanding, coordination, and success of the team? (formal or informal)
	50. Tell me about activities that are in place to make your team visible, not only to team members, but also to people outside the team?
	51. In your opinion, what role does your leader play in promoting structures or activities that you have just described?
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	52. How do your leader's actions impact you personally and your work?
1. Are leaders perceived to be practicing SIL? 2. What are the evident leader and team activities through which the perceived practiced of SIL is experienced?	53. So regarding establishing activities to make your team visible, what role does your leader play?
3. Does the perceived practice of SIL across its four dimensions influence employee engagement?	54. How do your leader's actions impact you personally and your work?

Appendix 5: Ethical Clearance

GIBS ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION FORM 2020

G. APPROVALS FOR/OF THIS APPLICATION

When the applicant is a student of GIBS, the applicant must please ensure that the supervisor and co-supervisor

(where relevant) has signed the form before submission

STUDENT RESEARCHER/APPLICANT:

29. I affirm that all relevant information has been provided in this form and its attachments and that all statements made are correct.

Student Researcher's Name in capital letters:	TEBOGO MAPHOTHOMA
Date:	22 Aug 2020
Supervisor Name in capital letters:	JABU MAPHALALA
Date:	23 Aug 2020
Co-supervisor Name in capital letters:	
Date:	22 Aug 2020

Note: GIBS shall do everything in its power to protect the personal information supplied herein, in accordance to its company privacy policies as well the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013. Access to all of the above provided personal information is restricted, only employees who need the information to perform a specific job are granted access to this information.

FOR DOCTORAL AND FACULTY/RESEARCH ASSOCIATE/STAFF MEMBER RESEARCH ONLY

Approved
REC comments:

Goodluck

Date: 07 Sep 2020