

How leadership communication drives employee engagement: The moderating role  
of psychological safety

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## **ABSTRACT**

Employee engagement is steadily decreasing worldwide. As the contributions and engagement of employees are valuable resources for an organisation, the impact of disengaged employees can lead to unnecessary costs and the potential loss of valuable skills that are difficult to replace. Disengagement does not only affect the organisation but it can also have negative consequences for employees.

Effective leader communication and psychological safety are resources that can influence employee engagement. This study uses these resources in line with the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) theory to examine whether it influences employee engagement. Psychological safety was used as both a predictor and as a moderator to determine whether it strengthens the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement.

The data for this quantitative cross-sectional research study were collected via an online survey. Of the 205 responses, only 145 were suitable for this research study. The data were coded and analysed using single- and multiple linear regression.

The results suggest that effective leader communication and psychological safety individually contribute to an increase in employee engagement. With the introduction of psychological safety as a moderator, there was no significant impact on the relationship between communication and engagement.

**Keywords:** Effective leader communication, psychological safety, employee engagement, job demand-resource theory

## **PLAGIARISM DECLARATION**

I declare that this research 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: DEFINITION OF PROBLEM AND PURPOSE**

### **1.1 Problem Selection**

The contributions that employees make to an organisation are extremely valuable and a vital resource that can be utilised by the organisation (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). This can be maximised through the engagement of employees at work and their various relationships that are created in an organisation (Lesener et al., 2020). Therefore, to maximise the benefits for the employees of an organisation, various interactions will occur between the management and its employees. The primary means of interaction between the organisation and employees will be through communication, so the effectiveness of the communication is an extremely important resource, which can be exploited and has an effect on every part of the organisation (Arif et al., 2023).

Internal communication has a significant effect on an organisation, enabling it to maximise its competitive advantage. The internal communication between all levels of the organisation is extremely important, as this will inform the workforce about what is expected of them (Arif et al., 2023). Therefore, leaders play an integral part in conveying these messages to their teams (Liu et al., 2023). However, one of the pitfalls is that several leaders cannot communicate effectively with their employees or define clearly what is expected of them. The manner in which these leaders communicate the information or give instructions to their teams will determine how the information or instructions will be received and interpreted by the employees (Liu et al., 2023). It is therefore essential that communication from the leader to the employee is clear and understandable to enable the employees to create value for the organisation (Arif et al., 2023).

Through clear and engaging communication and by participating actively in dialogue, one can influence employee engagement significantly (Verčič & Men, 2023). The active dialogue makes employees feel respected. This effective communication will initiate an exchange relationship, which can be explained by social exchange theory, where the employee will reciprocate and can increase their engagement in the organisation, in return for the resources that the employees receives (Verčič & Men, 2023).

However, certain organisations assume that employees are merely a resource to be managed and exploited for the benefit of the organisation. Consequently, employees

are not being seen as human beings, but as a manageable resource that impacts the organisation's bottom line (Lemon & Boman, 2022). This can affect the psychological safety of employees significantly (Zhang et al., 2021). Because employee engagement is dynamic, treating employees as a resource can affect their overall well-being negatively and ultimately reduce engagement (Boccoli et al., 2023).

Psychological safety is built on trust and has the ability to increase the engagement of employees (Men et al., 2020) because trust is built upon open communication and support between co-workers. It allows individuals to be themselves without the risk of being punished or judged (Men et al., 2020). As a result, trust creates a sense of belonging in an organisation, which enables individuals to express themselves more freely (Zhang et al., 2021). This can all contribute to an increase in employee engagement (Lin et al., 2020).

Given that communication is interwoven across various leadership styles, scholars have recently focused on leader communication as a construct in its own right. Liu et al. (2023) discovered, through the review of 260 articles published over 50 years, that leader communication was never clearly defined. This surprised the authors, as the significance of leader communication is a key aspect in various core leadership theories. Liu et al. (2023) addressed this issue by defining leader communication based on their analysis of previous scholarly articles. This provided the basis for conceptualising leader communication as a distinct construct.

## **1.2 Business Need for the Study**

The level of engagement is relevant to the organisation, as Barreiro and Treglown (2020) indicates that a study undertaken in 2017 estimated the cost of disengaged employees working for companies in the United States of America (USA) to be approximately \$350 billion. Globally, employee engagement declined to 21% in 2024 from 23% (Gallup Inc., 2025). The primary reason for the decline is the disengagement of management. According to the same report, employee engagement in South Africa is 23%, slightly higher than the global average. In comparison, employee engagement for the USA was 32%, for China, 20% and a staggering 10% for the United Kingdom (Gallup, 2025).

With open communication between leaders and employees, the outcome of effective leader communication can create mutual respect between them. This increases the

trust levels and ultimately improves employee engagement (Men et al., 2020). The effect of an engaged leader can increase employee engagement by up to 70% (Berwick, 2025). This can be achieved by communicating expectations for employees clearly and by having regular, meaningful one-on-one conversations (Berwick, 2025). However, if a feeling of distrust and disengagement is experienced, stress levels can increase, contributing to burnout and leading employees to leave the organisation (Gallo, 2023).

If long-term employees resign, the organisation loses valuable skills and knowledge that will be difficult and expensive to replace (Labro & Omartian, 2025). The cost is not only associated with replacing the employee, but also with the costs incurred during the time it takes to hire and train a suitable replacement. According to a study published by Old Mutual (2025), the direct cost of replacing an employee can range from 30% to 60% of the employee's annual salary. In addition to the direct cost of replacing an employee, other costs, such as lost production and recruitment expenses, can increase the range to between 90% and 200%.

Therefore, the business need for the study is to determine the impact of effective leader communication on employee engagement, as well as how psychological safety can contribute to strengthening the relationship. With open and effective communication channels, organisations can identify influences on employee engagement and understand how to improve it. Consequently, a decrease in employee engagement or disengagement could contribute to a reduction in effort and emotional attachment to their work, predict employee turnover or increase work stressors, which will be negative for employee health (Afrahi et al., 2022). In contrast, it could be temporary for employees to be disengaged for a short period to cope with any stressors they are experiencing. Therefore, the importance of effective communication enables management to determine the level of employee engagement and factors that contribute to it (Afrahi et al., 2022)

### **1.3 Theoretical Need for the Study**

The theory most closely associated with this research is the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory. The theory is extremely useful for analysing various relationships related to employee engagement. (Boccoli et al., 2023). With no particular job characteristic in mind, the theory is flexible in its application, providing an opportunity to explore various constructs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). Whether it is used to analyse the relationship between employee engagement and its

antecedents or outcomes, the versatility of the theory makes it a popular framework that various academics have employed (Boccoli et al., 2023). The application of social exchange theory (SET) offers further support for the JD-R theory, suggesting that effective leader communication and psychological safety serve as social resources built on reciprocal exchanges, thereby contributing to employee engagement (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023).

The theory would be used to analyse employee engagement as an outcome. Effective leader communication and psychological safety would be positioned as job and personal resources, respectively, as the inputs to the theory. However, psychological safety is not only used as a resource for the theory, but also as a moderator in the analysis. As open communication can increase psychological safety (Men et al., 2020), psychological safety can be used to test whether it strengthens the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement.

The contribution of the study is to extend knowledge of the JD-R theory in two ways. First, with leader communication only recently being described by Liu et al. (2023), there are various possibilities to explore the impact that effective leader communication as a job resource can have on employee engagement through the application of the JD-R theory. Second, since Edmondson (1999) presented psychological safety, it was mainly used as a predictor. However, numerous academics have also started utilising psychological safety as a moderator (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). Utilising psychological safety as a moderator can help to test whether it strengthens the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement using the JD-R theory.

#### **1.4 Report Outline**

The balance of the report will follow the structure, as indicated, to achieve the objective of answering the research question:

Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review: This chapter provides an overview of high-quality literature on the research topic. It provides valuable information on what still has to be researched and where contributions can be made.

Chapter 3: Research Question and Hypotheses: In this chapter, the research question and hypotheses are outlined, along with relevant details, to enable the researcher to answer the research question.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology: This chapter provides details on the methodology to be used in this research study. It outlines the process for collecting and measuring the data. The chapter also describes the statistical tests used and the reasoning behind their application in the analysis.

Chapter 5: Results: The collected data are analysed, and the results are presented. This will include the tests for validity and reliability. The findings per construct are presented with the relevant tables and figures.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Results: The results are organised and presented in relation to the various hypotheses. It includes an in-depth discussion of the results of each hypothesis and compares them with the findings of other literature, as outlined in Chapter 2.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations: This chapter concludes the research project. The results and discussions in Chapters 5 and 6 are ultimately used to answer the research question. Limitations are identified, and recommendations are provided for future research studies.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the current body of knowledge are explored to allow the researcher to position the research question: ***To what extent does effective leader communication enhance employee engagement with varying levels of psychological safety?*** Employee engagement and its effect are essential resources for any organisation (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). The JD-R theory, as described by Bakker and Demerouti (2024) provides the overarching framework for this research study. The JD-R model explains how employee engagement outcomes can be balanced with organisational demands and available resources, such as communication and psychological safety.

Within this framework, the focus is on the effect of resources, effective leader communication and psychological safety on employee engagement outcomes. Leadership makes a significant contribution to employee engagement through the various relationships (Lesener et al., 2020). These relationships are built on effective communication through transparency, clarity and active listening by providing guidance and assistance to decrease the demands that can arise in an organisation (Liu et al., 2023). Effective leader communication is a valuable job resource for an employee (Boccoli et al., 2023).

Psychological safety is a personal resource available to the employee (Boccoli et al., 2023). This is the interpersonal risk taking of an employee (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson & Bransby, 2023) in an organisation. It allows employees to experiment and take risks, without fear of any negative consequences, in a safe working environment (Deng et al., 2019).

Therefore, applying the JD-R theory, the study examines the effect of effective leader communication on employee engagement. Psychological safety can be utilised as both an independent variable and as a moderator in relation to the outcome of employee engagement. This will provide leaders with valuable feedback and insight into whether building trust and mutual respect through open communication and increased psychological safety can enhance employee engagement.

## **2.2 Theoretical Frameworks**

### **2.2.1 Job Demands-Resource Theory**

The overarching theory identified for this research study is the job demand-resource (JD-R) theory. The theory consists of two main parts: job resources and job demands. Job resources are the physical, social and organisational aspects enabling employees to achieve their objectives (Boccoli et al., 2023). These resources can influence the physical and psychological well-being, learning and growth of an employee positively (Kwon & Kim, 2020). However, job resources can be divided further into two categories: internal and external resources (Boccoli et al., 2023).

Internal resources, also referred to as personal resources, encompass all the resources that an employee has control over personally (Boccoli et al., 2023). This includes the ability of an individual to have sense and mental capability, enabling the individual to control the effect of various circumstances successfully (Kwon & Kim, 2020). These personal resources contribute to the employee's psychological capital that can be utilised to buffer against negative effects, such as burnout (Kwon & Kim, 2020).

External resources or job resources are those resources that are outside the employee's control (Boccoli et al., 2023). These resources include resources from the organisation, such as prospects of promotions, as well as task-related resources (Han et al., 2020). Task-related resources are related directly to resources received from management, such as constructive feedback, and the physical resources necessary to complete the requested task (Han et al., 2020).

Job demand refers to the physical and psychological costs that employees incur to achieve the necessary objectives. A high level of demand could reduce employee engagement (Boccoli et al., 2023). However, the demand does not only affect the employee's engagement, but could also cause significant health issues (Mäkikangas et al., 2021). The stress factors that create demand on the employee are highly dependent on each individual, their circumstances and the industry in which they worked (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). Time constraints and excessive workload are the primary sources of stress. Therefore, the effect of continuous job demands will ultimately result in employee burnout (Mäkikangas et al., 2021).

As job or personal resources and demands are antecedents of employee engagement, numerous academics have used the JD-R theory in their research to

model it (Boccoli et al., 2023; Kwon & Kim, 2020). Bakker and Demerouti (2024) indicate that the JD-R theory explains various aspects of the social and physical environment, including resources and demands, which influence the contributions of employees and their well-being. As the JD-R theory lacks specific job characteristics that would influence an employee's well-being or performance, it offers flexibility in its application (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024).

With the flexibility in the JD-R theory, it is essential to note that different employees responded differently to the demands placed upon them or the resources they received. These employees reacted either proactively or reactively (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). Job demands were not only seen as obstacles, but could also be viewed as a challenge or hindrance. For example, an employee could encounter a challenge, learn from it and be proactive so that the demand would be navigated better (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). On the other hand, the demand could be a hindrance, where the employee had to react to mitigate a situation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024)

Therefore, the JD-R theory will be applied in order to answer the research question: ***To what extent does effective leader communication enhance employee engagement with varying levels of psychological safety?*** The application would be as follows: effective leader communication as a job resource, psychological safety as a personal resource, and employee engagement as the output of the JD-R theory.

### ***2.2.2 Social Exchange Theory as a Supporting Framework***

A supporting theory to the JD-R theory is the social exchange theory (SET). It is the reciprocity in exchange between different parties that is set within cultural norms (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023). Kwon and Kim (2020) suggest that when an employee receives the necessary resources from an organisation, they will feel obligated to reciprocate by increasing their level of engagement. However, the impact of high demands and reduced resources does have the opposite effect. It will reduce the psychological safety of an employee, and they will stay in a safe zone (Kwon & Kim, 2020). With the lack of resources, the expected exchange deteriorated, and employees become disengaged, which has a significant impact on the organisation (Boccoli et al., 2023).

## **2.3 Psychological Safety**

### **2.3.1 Concept of Psychological Safety**

Psychological safety, as described in a foundational article by Edmondson (1999), is “a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking” (p. 354). Therefore, the primary focus of psychological safety is to minimise any interpersonal harm to employees in an organisation (Eldor et al., 2023), which could affect the social image of the employee negatively (Deng et al., 2019). This would be made possible by creating an environment where the employee could feel comfortable. It provides employees with the confidence to discuss any errors that were made openly, without fear of punishment and to learn from those errors to prevent making the same mistakes in the future (Gallo, 2023). Learning from these mistakes will result in various positive outcomes, which are beneficial to both the organisation and to the employee’s development (Eldor et al., 2023). However, this is highly dependent on the relationship they have with the leader and their leadership style (Gallo, 2023).

Psychological safety was built on the foundation of respectful and reciprocal relationships, and strengthened through interactions with co-workers (Lin et al., 2020). These relationships contribute to a feeling of being respected and building trust, creating a feeling of belonging in the organisation (Zhang et al., 2021); therefore, providing the opportunity to take calculated risks within the boundaries of the organisation. This can lead to an increase in the learning behaviour and creative performance of employees (Deng et al., 2019). Psychological safety facilitates the role that reduces the fear of failure, as there is no guarantee of knowing whether the result of the taken risk would be successful (Deng et al., 2019). Increasing the psychological safety of an individual could result in their investing more of themselves in the organisation and in the work they are doing (Lin et al., 2020).

### **2.3.2 Psychological Safety and Engagement**

Psychological safety can be interpreted as an internal resource in the JD-R theory, as discussed in section 2.2.1. This relates to an employee’s ability to manage the impact of circumstances, creating a buffer against job demands and thus improving the employee’s health, in turn reducing the likelihood of burnout (Boccoli et al., 2023; Mäkikangas et al., 2021). Consequently, the resource would not only serve as a buffer against job demands, but it would also provide employees with the confidence to contribute to the organisation and to their team (Lin et al., 2020). This enhances

the employee's self-worth significantly and enables them to contribute more through greater engagement and performance (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

Psychological safety allows the focus to be on how the team feels and not on what their thoughts are (Sacramento et al., 2024). An employee will be more invested and will increase their contributions to the team (Lin et al., 2020). This enables the team members to learn from one another, thereby enhancing their performance. However, this could only be beneficial if the team were able to meet, interact and reflect on their tasks regularly (Sacramento et al., 2024). Learning from each other, the psychological safety that employees experience is vital to unleashing their creativity and potential (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). Through collaboration, the team members will build a respectful and reciprocal relationship (Lin et al., 2020).

The interaction between team members will enable the transfer of knowledge between individuals and groups, creating a safe working environment (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). Deng et al. (2019) argued that a safe working environment would encourage employees to take more risks. Through risk taking, employees acquire new skills that enable them to complete their tasks more effectively (Eldor et al., 2023). These skills will also contribute to their confidence in asking questions and in speaking up when it is necessary to do so (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). It is critical for employees to feel comfortable in their environment (Gallo, 2023). Therefore, vulnerability could be a significant contributor to increasing psychological safety in a team, as this will increase trust and lead to greater collaboration and engagement (Lee Cunningham et al., 2021).

However, there are also instances where psychological safety could have a negative impact on the team and employee engagement (Eldor et al., 2023). This can be exacerbated by having less diverse gender teams. Tang et al. (2021) indicated that the balance between males and females would bring different dimensions in a team, which could balance the psychological safety in the team. Males have the tendency to be more challenging, whereas females tend to be more socially sensitive to situations in a team (Tang et al., 2023)

Although high psychological safety encourages employees to feel safe in learning new skills, Eldor et al. (2023) argues that if an employee has significantly high psychological safety, there is a possibility that it could have a negative effect on the performance of routine tasks. This could be a result of the complex work relationships relating to routine tasks (Lin et al., 2020). With the focus on learning new skills,

employees might become distracted and not complete the tasks they were initially employed to do (Eldor et al., 2023). According to Higgins et al. (2022), this could be due to a lack of accountability for routine tasks, leading to their attention being misdirected.

Misdirected attention could result in employees starting to experiment with their tried and tested routine tasks, which could be counterproductive (Eldor et al., 2023). This could be due to unclear targets or expectations from management. A possible outcome could result in team members defaulting into a zone where they feel comfortable, which could convert into a zone where they will start complaining (Higgins et al., 2022). It is therefore imperative to have clear performance standards that were set by management on routine tasks, which would provide employees with the resources to complete all their required tasks effectively (Lin et al., 2020).

## **2.4 Effective Leader Communication**

### ***2.4.1 Defining Effective Leader Communication***

Communication in an organisation, particularly from management downward, is the cornerstone of any successful organisation (Liu et al., 2023). This includes everything from giving instructions to employees to identifying what has gone wrong or motivating individuals. (Liu et al., 2023). The leader determines what and how much information must be communicated. The importance is to find the balance between over- and under-communicating a matter. (Flynn & Lide, 2023). Therefore, leader communication is critical to making things happen and getting tasks done (Liu et al., 2023).

Communication is deeply integrated into the various leadership styles. Liu et al. (2023) reviewed 260 studies spanning 50 years, to discover that leader communication was not clearly defined, despite the importance of leader communication. After reviewing the empirical literature, Liu et al. (2023) described leader communication as “the textual, verbal and embodied signals that leaders deliver to others, both purposefully and unintentionally, with the power to reveal aspects of leaders themselves, predict leadership outcomes and affect others” (p. 2).

Leadership communication should not be compared to intercompany communication, despite their shared similarities. As defined by Liu et al. (2023), leader communication refers to the authority a leader uses to convey a message with an intended meaning. Intercompany communications enable various departments to

connect with one another (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020). It focuses on employees' engagement practices at the organisational level. Because employees are seen as stakeholders in an organisation, their awareness, goals and commitments must be communicated effectively (Wittenberg et al., 2024). This is made possible by the various channels available to the organisation to share information. It must be noted that the message, as well as the distribution format for delivering these messages, must be convenient to the employees (Verčič & Špoljarić, 2020)

#### **2.4.2 Dimensions of Effective Communication**

The quality of the information shared between a leader and an employee is extremely important. This would ensure that the intended message is delivered clearly and accurately (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). Therefore, the decision made by the leader to determine how much information to share also contributes to the understanding of what is expected of an employee (Flynn & Lide, 2023). Some key aspects of effective communication that can remove any possibility of misunderstanding include transparency (Schnackenberg et al., 2021) and active listening (Arif et al., 2023).

##### **2.4.2.1 Transparency**

Flynn and Lide (2023) state that the information shared with employees depends on the leader and on how much or little information needs to be communicated. The attitude of employees would be determined by the communication that was shared with them (Verčič & Men, 2023). Therefore, transparency enhances communication effectiveness significantly. Through shared communication, transparency affects the quality of the shared information between a leader and their employees (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). According to Schnackenberg et al. (2021), transparency can be separated into three dimensions: disclosure, clarity and accuracy.

Disclosure by the leaders creates the perception that the information that was communicated to employees was relevant to them (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). Therefore, the leaders decided what information had to be shared and what information had to be concealed (Joullié et al., 2021). However, the leader's decision about what information to share had to be consistent with their behaviour. It is therefore vital that their action does not contradict the shared message (Joullié et al., 2021). This consistency contributes to the creation of a level of trust and respect between the leader and employees (Verčič & Men, 2023).

Leaders had to confirm whether the messages they shared with their employees were received, accurately interpreted and appropriately evaluated by employees (Teng et al., 2020). Thus, the second dimension of transparency outlined by Schnackenberg et al. (2021) can be applied. Clarity is determined by the ease with which the information in the leader's message is understood (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). By conveying the message clearly, effective communication enables the employee to apply critical thinking (Joullié et al., 2021). Critical thinking provides the employee with the opportunity to engage in an active dialogue with their leader to clarify any misunderstandings (Lemon & Boman, 2022).

The last dimension described in transparency by Schnackenberg et al. (2021) is accuracy. The relationship between a leader and an employee influences the perception of the information shared (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). The credibility of the leader who delivers the message is critical (Joullié et al., 2021). Through ineffective under-communication, the message could be biased or essential information omitted, not enabling the employee to complete the required task fully (Flynn & Lide, 2023). This raises the possibility that an employee felt a lack of empathy and that the leader did not consider their thoughts or input (Flynn & Lide, 2023).

#### *2.4.2.2 Active Listening*

With communication being an important part of leadership, the way something was communicated could affect significantly how it would be received (Liu et al., 2023). Effective leader communication would be ineffective if it were not supported by active listening or if the intended message were misunderstood by the individual who received the message (Arif et al., 2023). Communication, as an integral part of any organisation, must not be seen as a one-way street, where communication flows only in one direction (Lemon & Boman, 2022). There has to be an active dialogue between the leader and the employee that is beneficial for both. The interaction through communication between the leader and the employee contributes either to creating or to avoiding any situations that could be problematic (Lemon & Boman, 2022).

These situations could be avoided by creating proper feedback loops. Feedback loops would enhance the dialogue between the leader and the employee and increase the effectiveness of the communication through giving and receiving proper feedback (Verčič & Men, 2023). This would be highly beneficial as supervisors can under-communicate information, which can make an employee feel undervalued and

then not engage in active listening (Flynn & Lide, 2023). Feedback loops enable the supervisor to determine whether the message or information shared was received correctly, interpreted and properly evaluated (Teng et al., 2020).

### **2.4.3 Communication as a Job Resource**

Effective leader communication can influence the development of employees significantly (Arif et al., 2023). By sharing either formal or informal information, a leader provides the employee with the necessary resource to complete the requested task (Teng et al., 2020). This is also highly dependent on the amount of information shared with the employee (Flynn & Lide, 2023). The more information a leader shares, the more employees will feel valued, in turn having an impact on their admiration and respect for their leaders (Flynn & Lide, 2023). Employees will then feel empowered and, in return, they will reciprocate by increasing their engagement (Arif et al., 2023)

The amount of information available to the employee would provide the resource to buffer against the adverse effects of demands (Teng et al., 2020). By having the proper resources to mitigate the demands (Teng et al., 2020), and with resources being an antecedent to employee engagement (Kwon & Kim, 2020), effective leader communication has been found to influence employee engagement (Arif et al., 2023).

### **2.4.4 Communication and Psychological Safety**

Open communication provides supervisors and employees with the opportunity to increase the quality of their relationship, resulting in mutual respect, trust and psychological safety (Men et al., 2020). Therefore, psychological safety would be an essential motivation for engaging in effective communication (Men et al., 2020). According to Gallo (2023), employees should feel comfortable in their environment, which could be achieved through meaningful interactions between the leader and the employee. This would then contribute to the focus on psychological safety, which aims to reduce any interpersonal harm (Eldor et al., 2023).

However, the dialogue between a leader and an employee would be ineffective if it were not supported by active listening (Arif et al., 2023; Lemon & Boman, 2022). This contributes to the motivation to engage in effective communication, ultimately resulting in an increase in the psychological safety of the employees (Men et al., 2020). By engaging in active dialogue, a sense of respect and belonging would be created, contributing to being valued in the organisation (Arif et al., 2023). Effective

leader communication also allows the transfer of knowledge and skills to employees, contributing to a higher level of psychological safety through trust and respect (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

## **2.5 Employee Engagement**

### ***2.5.1 Defining Employee Engagement***

The concept of employee engagement was first introduced by William A Kahn more than three decades ago. Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement as “harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance” (p. 694). This laid the foundation for future academics to build on and expand the concept of employee engagement. The foundation laid by Kahn (1990) provided a stepping stone for Schaufeli et al. (2002) to expand on the definition further with “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption” (p. 784).

These three characteristics – vigour, dedication, and absorption – can be described as follows. Vigour is the persistence in overcoming stressors, characterised by high levels of dedication to completing a task. This would be achieved through physical and psychological resilience, as well as by the additional contributions to the tasks (Neuber et al., 2022). Second, dedication would be the devotion to complete the required tasks (Neuber et al., 2022). Finally, absorption occurs when a person is so completely immersed in a task that they would not realise the quick passing of time. With the immense focus on completing the task, detaching oneself from the task would be extremely difficult (Neuber et al., 2022). Therefore, the physical and psychological well-being of an individual affects the engagement of an employee in the work environment (Kwon & Kim, 2020).

According to Boccoli et al. (2023), employee engagement is dynamic. It is a process built on various interactions. These interactions are not only related to the organisation, but also to the interactions that the employee experiences in their personal lives (Lemon & Boman, 2022). This suggests that various factors can influence engagement, such as positive emotions and psychological safety. It can further be stated that high employee engagement provides a safe work environment for employees and has the potential to reduce employee turnover and to increase overall employee engagement (Boccoli et al., 2023). Therefore, as employee

engagement is dynamic (Boccoli et al., 2023) and shaped through various interactions, dialogue can be considered a precursor to employee engagement (Lemon & Boman, 2022).

### **2.5.2 Antecedents of Employee Engagement**

Given the dynamic nature of employee engagement, a literature review was conducted by Boccoli et al. (2023) on its evolution and various antecedents. These antecedents were categorised into four groups: “personal resources, job characteristics, organisational factors and social context” (Boccoli et al., 2023, p. 83). By focusing on resources such as communication, trust, and support, employee engagement was improved (Boccoli et al., 2023).

Active communication, as an external or physical resource between employees across all levels of the organisation, plays a significant role in employee engagement (Lemon & Boman, 2022). It contributes to maintaining and enhancing the engagement of employees in their work environment (Arif et al., 2023). It is important to ensure that all the respondents understand the message that is being delivered (Lemon & Boman, 2022). It may be necessary to repeat the message several times. However, it also allows the respondent time to hear, reflect and react actively to the communication that was shared (Lemon & Boman, 2022). If this is done effectively, then it will encourage participation in the organisation (Lemon & Boman, 2022). Therefore, effective leader communication may play a roll in influencing employee engagement, as indicated by empirical studies. This antecedent is beyond the employee’s control.

An internal or psychological resource is a resource over which the employee does have control. The emotional intelligence of the employee has the ability to predict their engagement (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). Through emotional intelligence, the employee is capable of allocating their psychological resources in order to maximise their engagement (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). However, in the absence of sufficient psychological resources, employees would not be able to counteract the demands that would be placed on them (Gallo, 2023). This would not only result in the disengagement of the employee, but could have a significant negative impact on the employee, for example, burnout (Gallo, 2023).

### **2.5.3 Employee Engagement and Psychological Safety**

Psychological safety has a significant impact on employee performance (Eldor et al., 2023). Xu et al. (2019) argue that higher psychological safety can be achieved when a supervisor's preferences align with that of an employee. Having higher psychological safety allows employees to experiment with and learn new tasks (Eldor et al., 2023). Psychological safety can lead to positive outcomes for employees, including learning opportunities, increased creativity, and the sharing of ideas (Eldor et al., 2023). Through this, psychological safety can improve their sense of belonging, creating closer connections with the organisation. The employee, in turn, will reciprocate by increasing their level of engagement owing to their enhanced psychological safety (Fida et al., 2022). Therefore, higher psychological safety can encourage open and authentic behaviours in an organisation, leading to increased employee engagement (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

## **2.6 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Development**

By applying the JD-R theory, specific inputs, resources to demand, provide a certain output (Boccoli et al., 2023). The focus of this research study is on the job resources from effective leader communication, psychological safety as a personal resource, and establishing an outcome of employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). Therefore, this research study aims to investigate whether the two resources have an impact on the outcome, as well as whether psychological safety enhances the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement. According to Bakker and Demerouti (2024), resources do not function in isolation; instead, they interconnect to produce a particular outcome. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses to evaluate and answer the research question:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Effective leader communication has a positive effect on employee engagement.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** High psychological safety has a positive effect on employee engagement.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Psychological safety moderates the relationship between effective leadership communication and employee engagement.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

The available literature has been examined to determine the relationship between effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement, and the JD-R theory has been identified as an overarching framework to test the

hypotheses. The framework provides the lens that is used to frame effective leader communication as an external resource and psychological safety as an internal resource (Boccoli et al., 2023). As a complementary theory, SET was introduced to explain employees' outcomes through emphasising reciprocity (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023).

Given the dynamic nature of employee engagement, the construct can be influenced by personal, social and organisational factors (Boccoli et al., 2023). According to the JD-R theory, the constructs of effective leader communication and psychological safety are essential for maintaining employee engagement (Lemon & Boman, 2022).

Considering all the insights from the literature, the conceptual model and hypotheses do not only investigate the direct impact on employees but also examine whether psychological safety can strengthen the relationship between the constructs. The results from the research will extend the application of the JD-R theory and SET in leadership communication and employee engagement. They will also provide management with feedback on the implications of effective leader communication and psychological safety for employee engagement.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this research is to answer the following question: ***To what extent does effective leader communication enhance employee engagement through increased psychological safety?***

Upon reviewing the literature, we propose the following hypotheses to answer the research question:

Communication is an essential element in an organisation (Liu et al., 2023). It enhances interaction between a leader and an employee significantly by enabling the exchange of instructions and guidance. Previous studies founded that effective leader communication has been found to influence employee engagement (Arif et al., 2023). It is valuable to re-examine the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement, due to the changes in business environments and leader engagement, in order to validate the current findings. Therefore, the first hypothesis is:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Effective leader communication has a positive effect on employee engagement.

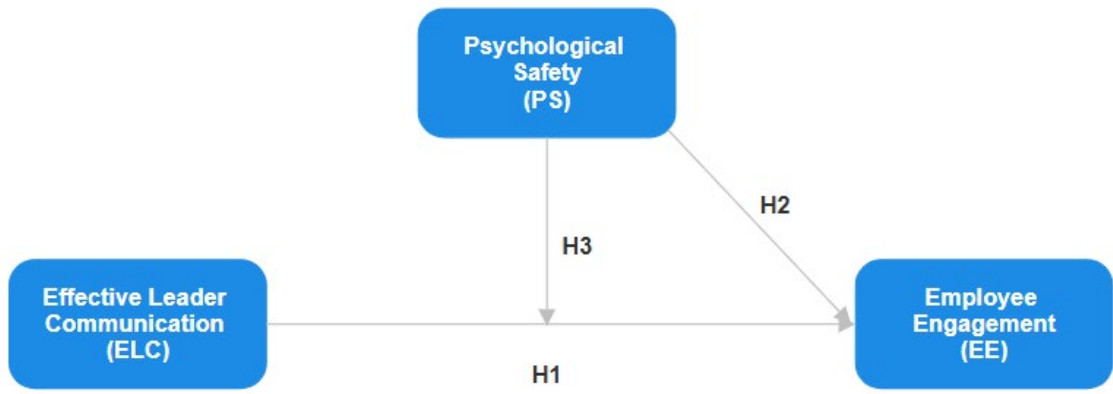
Psychological safety is associated with positive outcomes, such as creativity and meaningful learning, and employees can provide feedback, creating the opportunity to increase the level of employee engagement (Eldor et al., 2023). Higher psychological safety encourages open and authentic behaviours in an organisation, which leads to an increase in employee engagement (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). Thus, the next hypothesis is:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** High psychological safety has a positive effect on employee engagement.

Psychological safety as a moderator can explain the strength in the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement. Hence, the last hypothesis is:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Psychological safety moderates the relationship between effective leadership communication and employee engagement.

The conceptual model is visualised in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model**

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a detailed methodology for answering the research question through testing the hypotheses stated in Chapter 3. This was achieved through a quantitative research study. The research was designed to analyse the relationship between the constructs of effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement. This chapter provides details about the populations and the data collection method. The measures to ensure data validity and reliability are also described, enabling the researcher to rely on the results. The importance of ethical compliance and the reality of limitations are acknowledged. The methodology chapter provides the basis for how the study was conducted and transparency for the presentation of the results in Chapter 5.

### **4.2 Choice of Research Design**

#### ***4.2.1 Purpose of Research Design***

A road map was designed for this quantitative explanatory research, which provided the opportunity to answer the research question by either confirming or disproving the hypotheses (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

#### ***4.2.2 Philosophy***

A positivist philosophy was used in the research project, enabling the researcher to analyse the relationships among the various constructs. (Nyein et al., 2020). Positivism provided the opportunity to determine what is known (Nyein et al., 2020), as well as gathering data which would be unbiased or influenced by human interpretation (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). For this reason, a quantitative research study provided the opportunity to statistically measure the outcomes objectively (Nyein et al., 2020). The positivist philosophy was therefore appropriate, as the relationships among effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement were tested using the JD-R theory as the overarching framework for this research study.

#### ***4.2.3 Approach Selected***

After reviewing the available literature, the current literature was consulted to formulate the hypotheses (Faems, 2020). The necessary data were collected and

analysed. The results from the analysis were then scrutinised and reflected upon to understand the implications for the existing theory and framework (Faems, 2020). For this purpose, a deductive research approach was appropriate for testing a theoretical proposition (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

#### **4.2.4 Methodological Choice**

The researcher employed a monomethod quantitative research design owing to time constraints. As described in Saunders and Lewis (2018), it would involve a single method of data collection, such as a survey questionnaire, structured observations, or semi-structured interviews.

#### **4.2.5 Time Horizon**

A cross-sectional research study was conducted using surveys to collect the primary data. This provided a snapshot of the data at a specific point in time, allowing the researcher to examine the collected data (Maier et al., 2023). It allowed the researcher to analyse the collected data effectively to determine the cause-and-effect relationships between the constructs (Maier et al., 2023).

### **4.3 Proposed Research Methodology**

#### **4.3.1 Population**

Lundberg et al. (2021) describe a target population as “the set of theoretical units over which the unit-specific quality is aggregated” (pp. 538-539). This is why it was especially important to ensure that the population identified for the study would be appropriate to enable the researcher to answer the research question (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The target population for this research study included employees in lower, middle and senior management, who were in a leader–subordinate work relationship. The reason for selecting this target population is that these employees must complete their work under the guidance of a manager, who would be one level above their management level. Therefore, their engagement was affected directly by effective leader communication.

#### **4.3.2 Unit and Level of Analysis**

The unit of analysis for this research study was individuals. To support effective leader communication and employee engagement, a micro-level analysis approach was adopted, focusing on individuals. The reason for employment engagement being

at a micro-level is that each employee experiences vigour, dedication and absorption in themselves (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). However, as psychological safety is measured through individual questions, as per Edmondson (1999), it was intended to measure the original concept at the team level, and therefore, a meso-level analysis needed to be adopted. Instead, the questionnaire was at an individual level to understand their personal views.

### **4.3.3 Sampling Method and Size**

It was not possible to have access to the information of the entire population. Therefore, the researcher made use of non-probability sampling techniques (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). However, owing to technological advances in data collection, the researcher was able to gather rich information from the target population (Yang et al., 2020). The researcher employed purposive sampling to collect data from the target group. The target population was asked to complete the questionnaire and forward it to their network, creating a snowball effect. This increased the number of potential respondents who could complete the questionnaire (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

In total, 205 responses were received during the period when the questionnaire was active, gathering data. After reviewing the replies, only 149 responses met the criteria for this research study. This will be discussed in more detail in section 4.4.1.

### **4.3.4 Measurement Instrument**

A survey questionnaire was used to gather the primary data (Appendix A). A series of items was structured in a particular order and distributed to potential respondents for data collection (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The use of a survey allowed the researcher to collect data from 205 respondents. The design and layout of the survey were critical as they engaged the respondent to complete the questionnaire (Cernat et al., 2024). Therefore, the survey questionnaire was created using information from existing questionnaires used in previous research to collect relevant data. The questionnaire consisted of 31 items, grouped into four sections. Those sections were demographics, effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement. A 5-point Likert scale was used for all measurement scales.

#### *4.3.4.1 Demographics*

This section contained seven items to gather descriptive information relating to the respondents. Questions such as age, race and gender were included. This allowed the researcher to identify the diversity of the respondents.

#### *4.3.4.2 Effective Leader Communication*

In this section, eight items were used to measure effective leader communication. The scales was obtained from Lu et al. (2022), who had adapted it from the original creator, Madlock (2008). This measured the interaction between a leader and an employee, such as the ease of communicating with a leader and the clarity of their communication (Lu et al., 2022).

#### *4.3.4.3 Psychological Safety*

In this section, seven items were used to measure psychological safety. It was introduced as a construct by Edmondson (1999). This measures one of the personal resources that employees utilise in their work environment. These measurement scales were also used in studies by Barros et al. (2024), Jean et al. (2024) and Xie et al. (2021).

#### *4.3.4.4 Employee Engagement*

In this section, nine items were used to measure employee engagement. The original questionnaire, which contained 17 items, was developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). With the use of confirmatory factor analysis, Schaufeli et al. (2006) reduced the items in the measuring scale from 17 to nine, which was still highly correlated to the original scale. Owing to the high correlation between the long and short versions, the short version was used in this research study.

### **4.4 Data Gathering Process**

A request was made for individuals to complete the Google Form questionnaire and to share it with their networks. This resulted in snowball sampling, which, Saunders and Lewis (2018) describe as a subsequent member who volunteers to complete the questionnaire.

The researcher shared the survey questionnaire link via WhatsApp in their current network and posted it as their WhatsApp status on various occasions. A request was also added to share the link in the respondent's network. The link to the survey

questionnaire was also posted on multiple social media platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Various respondents also shared the link on their various social platforms. The survey was active from 28 July 2025, to 5 September 2025.

#### **4.4.1 Data Preparation and Coding**

The data were exported from Google Forms into a Microsoft Excel file. From there, the data were scrutinised to determine whether any information was missing or whether sections were incomplete. These responses were removed, along with those that did not pertain to the research study. Of the 205 responses received, 149 were deemed viable for this research study.

Data codes (Appendix B) were allocated to the various items on the questionnaire. Question Q1.5 included an open-ended section regarding the industries in which the respondents worked. The researcher reviewed these answers and identified common themes for each industry, subsequently assigning a code to each. Following this, the researcher assigned the codes to the respondents and updated the dataset.

Three items in the psychological safety section (PS1, PS3 and PS5) of the questionnaire were reverse-coded. These were negatively worded items.

#### **4.4.2 Quality Control**

Ghasemaghaei et al. (2018) described that the data quality of the primary information collected provides the researcher with the ability to reflect the various characteristics of events or entities. Therefore, the quality of the data would be the main obstacle to completing a reliable analysis (Ghasemaghaei et al., 2018). Validity and reliability provide the conditions for a researcher to interpret the results (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020). All the measuring scales that were used to collect data had to satisfy the two conditions to enable the researcher to measure the constructs correctly (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020).

##### **4.4.2.1 Validity**

Validity testing was undertaken to determine whether the collected data were accurate and dependable, and whether the results from the measuring scales could be relied upon (Crawford & Kelder, 2019). Various factors could affect validity, such as subject selection, history and the causal direction (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). According to Crawford and Kelder (2019), validity consists of various forms, such as external validity, internal validity and construct validity. The focus for validity testing

was on construct validity. For this research, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the validity of each construct (Crawford & Kelder, 2019).

The total item score for each construct was calculated and included in the dataset. Using the Pearson correlation coefficient, each construct – effective leader communication, psychological safety, and employee engagement – showed a significant correlation with a p-value of less than 0.05. This indicated that the items in the various measuring instruments were valid (Appendix C).

#### *4.4.2.2 Reliability*

For the collected data to be reliable, it should be possible for other researchers to reproduce the results (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Various factors would affect the reliability of the research findings, such as subject error, subject bias, observer error and observer bias (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Therefore, each measuring scales must have a level of stability that can be relied upon (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020).

For this reason, each construct was tested to ensure that the measuring scales was reliable and accurate. Cronbach's alpha was used as the instrument to determine the consistency and reliability of the measuring scales (Crawford & Kelder, 2019). According to Hair et al. (2020), a factor of at least 0.7 was an acceptable indicator that the measuring instruments could be relied upon.

#### *4.4.2.3 Factor Analysis*

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) can be used in statistical analysis (Crawford & Kelder, 2019; Hair et al., 2020). The researcher used EFA as a reduction method. It allowed multiple items to be presented as a single factor. Therefore, the factor analysis was done per construct (Hair et al., 2020).

The tests used to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis is the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO). The test enabled the researcher to determine the number of factors that needed to be extracted from the collected data. Should the results be between 1.0 and 0.5, the data would be adequate for factor analysis. However, should the results be below 0.5, then factor analysis would not be possible (Shrestha, 2021).

The analysis was conducted using the three measuring scales, and all three yielded results above 0.5. Effective leader communication was 0.898, psychological safety was 0.854, and employee engagement was 0.883 (Appendix E). The Bartlett's test

of sphericity also showed a p-value less than 0.05 for all three measuring scales. Therefore, it was possible to apply an exploratory factor analysis (Shrestha, 2021). After examining the total variance explained, it was possible to combine all the items from each measuring instrument into one factor (Pallant, 2016)

#### **4.5 Analysis Approach**

The statistical software used in the research study was IBM SPSS Statistics Software version 30.0.0.0 (172) (SPSS). The final data were prepared and imported into SPSS. It was possible to perform all the statistical analyses to report on both the descriptive and inferential analyses.

##### **4.5.1 Descriptive Statistics**

The descriptive analysis provided information regarding the diversity of the respondents. It allowed the researcher to gather a better indication of the target population through organising and summarising the data (Wegner, 2020). Descriptive statistics provided limited statistical measures, including frequency and variability.

##### **4.5.2 Inferential Statistics**

The researcher used inferential statistics to confirm or disprove the hypotheses. This enabled them to answer the research question (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Therefore, the relationships between the various constructs were analysed. With the use of correlation and regression analysis, it was possible to determine the relationships as well as the strength between the constructs (Wegner, 2020).

###### **4.5.2.1 Simple Linear Regression Analysis**

With the use of a simple linear regression analysis (SLRA), it was determined whether there was a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Wegner, 2020). The regression analysis was also used to test Hypotheses One and Two ( $H_1$  and  $H_2$ ), which provided the ability to predict the relationship between the two constructs (Fein et al., 2022). Various assumptions for an SLRA had to be confirmed before the analysis could be done. These assumptions were:

1. The independent and dependent variables must be using a continuous scale;
2. The independent and dependent variables must be in a linear relationship;

3. No specious outliers;
4. The data must be normally or close to normally distributed (Fein et al., 2022).

#### 4.5.2.2 *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis*

A multiple linear regression analysis (MLRA) is similar to an SLRA, with the exception that an MLRA makes use of multiple independent variables (Wegner, 2020). As Hypothesis Three (H<sub>3</sub>) contained a moderator, a variation of the MLRA was used to test the hypothesis. Therefore, the hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis (HMLRA) was used. This allowed the researcher to introduce the variables in different blocks (Fein et al., 2022). It allowed the researcher to observe the change in the relationship by including a different variable. The statistical change in the relationship determined whether the moderator had any impact on the relationship (Fein et al., 2022).

Although the MLRA and the HMLRA have different applications, their assumptions are the same. These assumptions are:

1. The dependent variable must be measured on a continuous scale;
2. There must be two or more independent variables, which were either measured on a categorical or a continuous scale;
3. There must be three or more linear relationships, which could be evaluated on a scatter plot;
4. The data should have homoscedasticity;
5. There should not be two or more independent variables which were highly correlated with each other;
6. No spurious outliers should be included in the data set; and
7. All the residuals should be normally distributed or close to normally distributed (Fein et al., 2022).

To be able to test the moderating impact of psychological safety, the independent variable (effective leader communication) and the moderator (psychological safety) had to be centralised (Sürücü et al., 2023). This was achieved by subtracting the mean for the two instruments from the factor analysis results. Thereafter, an interactive variable was created by multiplying the newly created centralised variables. This allowed the researcher to determine whether psychological safety has an impact as a moderator between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Sürücü et al., 2023).

## **4.6 Research Ethics**

It was a requirement to obtain the necessary ethical clearance before collecting any primary data. It would not be possible to distribute the survey questionnaire without the ethical clearance, as the collected data would be invalid. An ethical clearance application was submitted and approved by the Masters Research Ethics Committee (MREC) of the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) on 14 July 2025.

The opening section of the questionnaire (Appendix A) contained a statement indicating that the necessary ethical clearance had been received to conduct the study, along with a brief description of the purpose of the study. It brought to the attention of the respondents that completing the questionnaire was voluntary and that they could terminate the questionnaire at any time (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The opening statement also indicated that by completing the questionnaire, the respondent provided consent for their information to be collected. Information can not be collected from minors. Therefore, the first question would be an elimination question. If a respondent indicated that they are under the age of 18, the questionnaire would be terminated automatically.

According to the research manual of the University of Pretoria, the personal information of the respondents must be protected (Senior Director: Department of Research and Innovation Support, 2024). The questionnaire that was used did not require the collection of any personal information, such as names or contact details. Therefore, all questionnaires were completed anonymously.

The collected primary data would be stored for a period of not less than ten years, as recommended by the University of Pretoria (Senior Director: Department of Research and Innovation Support, 2024). A copy of the primary data would also be stored on the password-protected cloud drive provided by the University of Pretoria and on the cloud storage of the researcher. All necessary precautions were taken to safeguard the primary data.

## **4.7 Limitations**

Various factors can affect any research study; therefore, no research study is perfect. Acknowledging the possible limitations provides insight into the difficulty of conducting a research study. Some of the limitations are discussed below.

The constraint on available resources (time, expenses, etc.) played a part in the research study, as valuable information could have been missed.

A longitudinal study was not necessary to answer the research question. Consequently, a cross-sectional research study was used, and data were collected from respondents at a specific point in time. If it were possible to conduct the same survey over a period with the same respondents, the researcher would gain a deeper understanding of how effective leader communication affects employee engagement.

An incomplete section in the questionnaire could be due to time constraints or to the potential respondent losing interest in completing it. In addition, the number of responses received may not be sufficient to analyse the data, making it extremely difficult to answer the research question.

Since the researcher employed non-probability sampling, only results related to the collected data were reported. Given the sampling strategy, assuming the results will be applicable to the broader population must be done with caution. This was a result of the primary data, which could not have been collected at random from the whole population (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the detailed methodological approach and process used to determine the relationship between the constructs have been discussed. The data gathering process was planned and executed, from when and how the data were collected. Cleaning and coding of the data contributed significantly to determining the validity and reliability of the results. This also provided the foundation for evaluating and selecting the appropriate statistical tests to test the hypotheses. In the next chapter, the results of the analyses conducted using this methodology are presented.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the results from the statistical analysis used to test the hypotheses proposed in Chapter 3 are presented. The findings are presented, beginning with the descriptive statistics, followed by the results of validity and reliability testing. The assumptions for the inferential statistics are evaluated to ensure that the correct statistical analyses were identified to test the hypotheses. The results from the simple linear regression analysis and multiple linear regression analysis are presented. This study aims to investigate the relationship between effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement. The purpose of this chapter is only to present the results without any discussion. This provides the foundation for the discussion in Chapter 6.

### **5.2 Descriptive Statistics**

In total, 205 responses were received. Nine of the responses were incomplete and were removed from the collected data. The target population consists of individuals in lower, middle, and senior management. Therefore, responses that were not part of the target population were removed from the collected data. Q1.7 had an option for the respondents to provide an answer if none of the options applied to them. These answers were reviewed to determine whether they could be included in the target population. The researcher used their judgement, and none of the responses was included in the collected data, as they did not adhere to the criteria for this research study. Therefore, of the 205 responses received, only 149 applied to this research study.

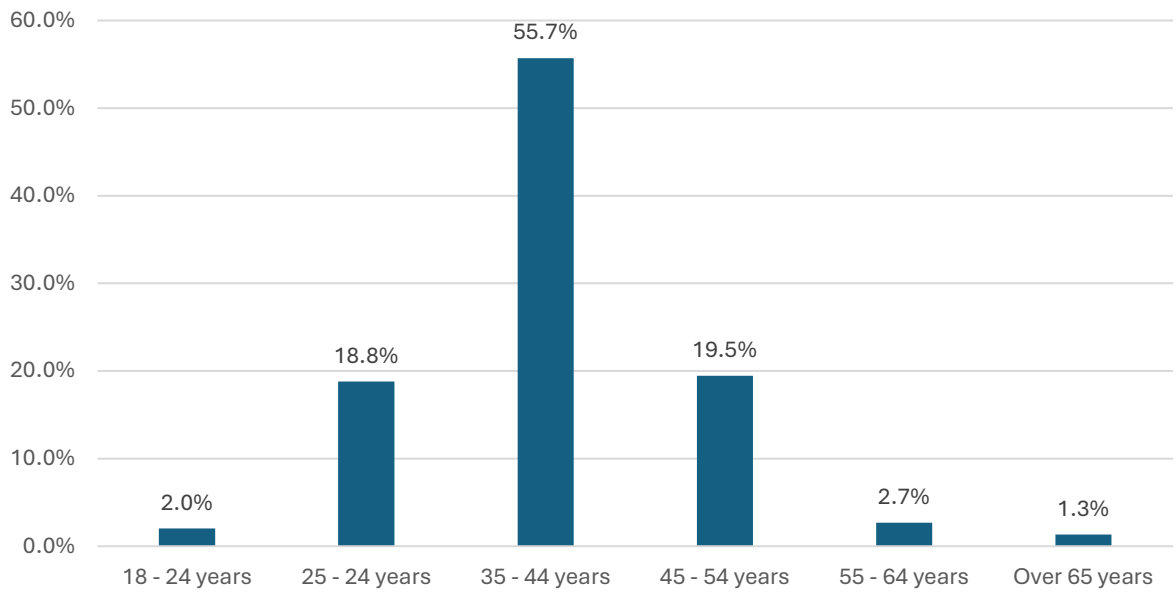
Taking the above into consideration, the researcher only reports the descriptive statistics on the collected data that were relevant to the target population. The information was collected from the first section and included seven questions (Appendix A). This provided the researcher with information regarding the demographics of the respondents.

#### **5.2.1 Age, Gender, Race and Education**

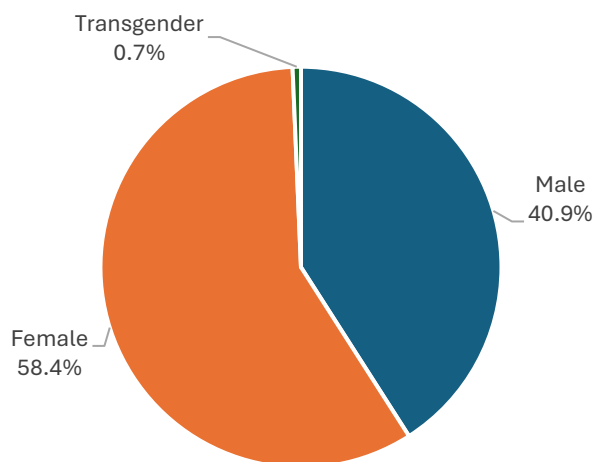
It is clear from the distributions of the respondents (N = 149), as per Figure 2, that the majority of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 44 years (55.7%), followed by 19.5% between the ages of 45 and 54 years and then 18.8% between

the ages of 25 and 34 years. These three categories represented 94.0% of the total respondents.

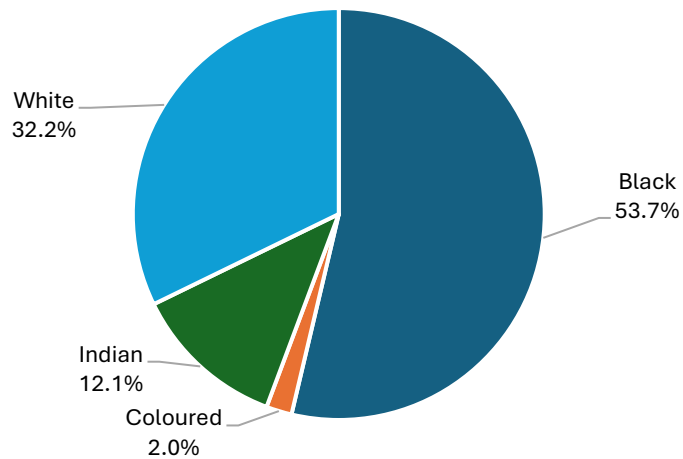
Furthermore, 81 of the respondents identified as female (58.7%), and 61 respondents identified as male (40.9%). One respondent identified as transgender, which represented 0.7% of the respondents. In addition, four race groups completed the questionnaire (Figure 4). The majority of respondents were black and white (53.7% and 32.2%, respectively), followed by Indians (12.1%), and coloured individuals (2.0%).



**Figure 2: Age Range of Respondents**

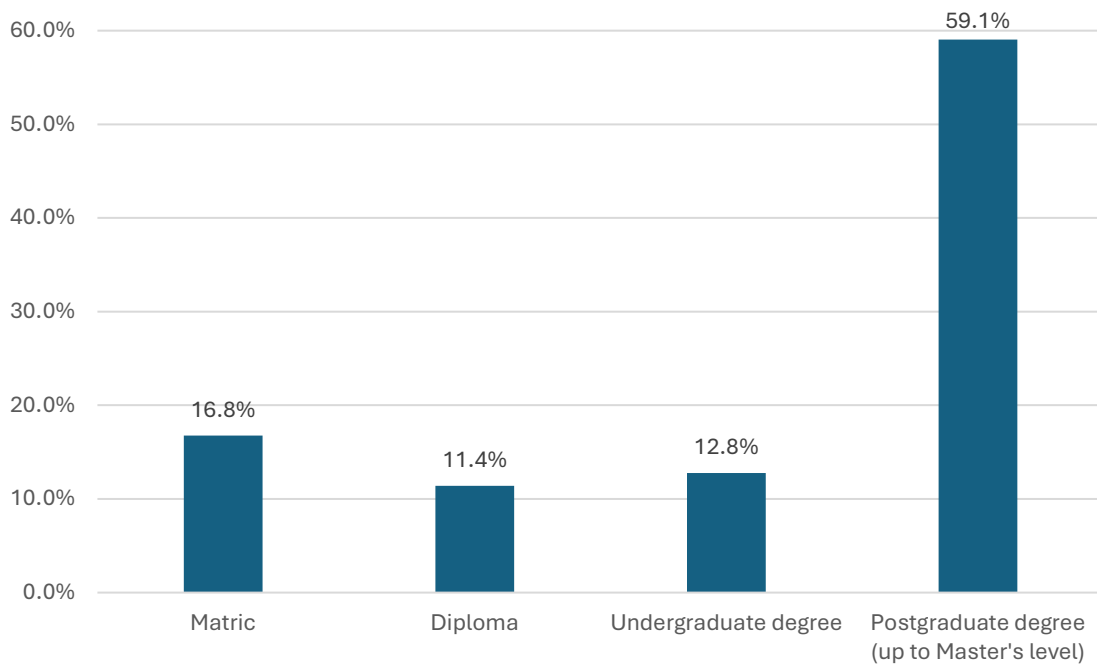


**Figure 3: Gender of Respondents**



**Figure 4: Race of Respondents**

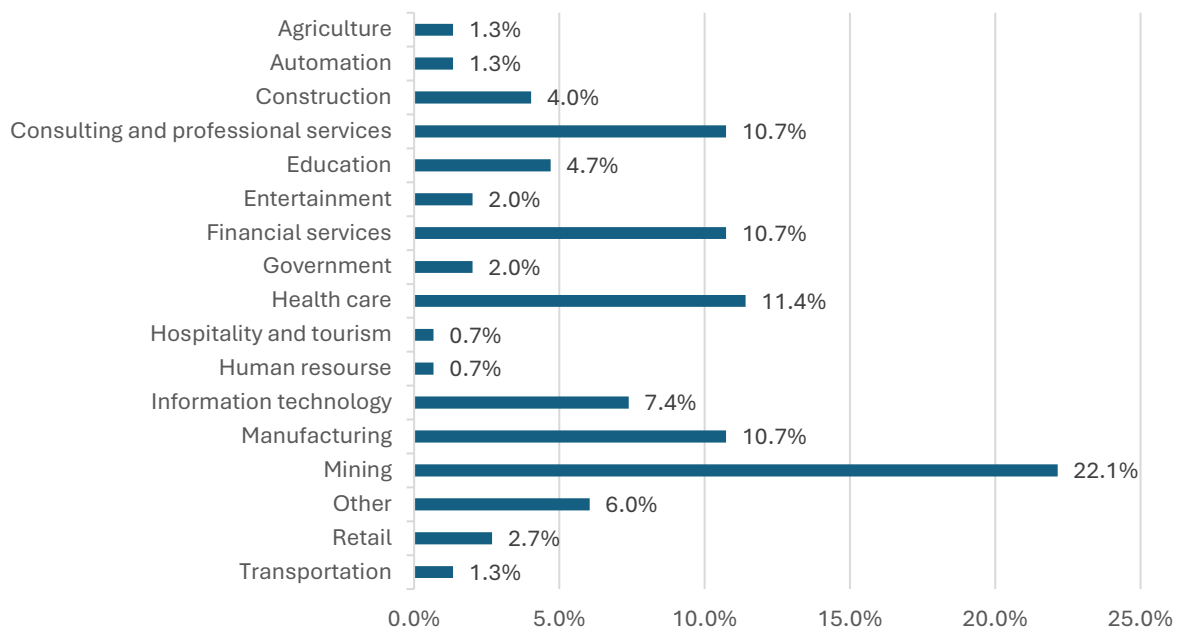
There were five possible answers for the respondents to select from, relating to the highest level of education. None of the respondents had a doctoral degree. At least 71.9% of the respondents had a post-matric qualification. This is represented by 59.1% having a postgraduate degree (up to Master's level) and 12.8% having an undergraduate degree. It was not possible to determine from the collected data whether the diploma received by the respondents were related to a post-matric qualification. As a result, it was not included in the 71.9% indicated in Figure 5.



**Figure 5: Respondents' Highest Level of Education**

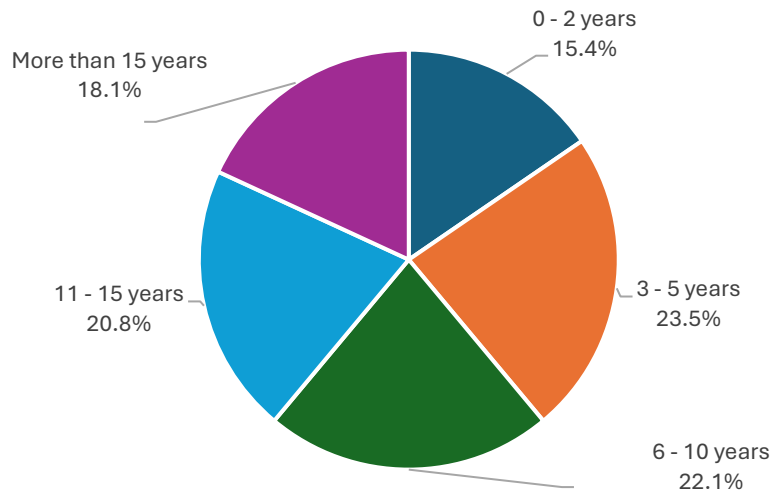
### 5.2.2 Industry, Tenure and Management Level

Responses were received from individuals working in various industries (Figure 6). The majority of the respondents were in the mining industry (22.1%), followed by the health industry (11.4%). Other notable industries represented included consulting and professional services, financial services and manufacturing, each with 10.7%.



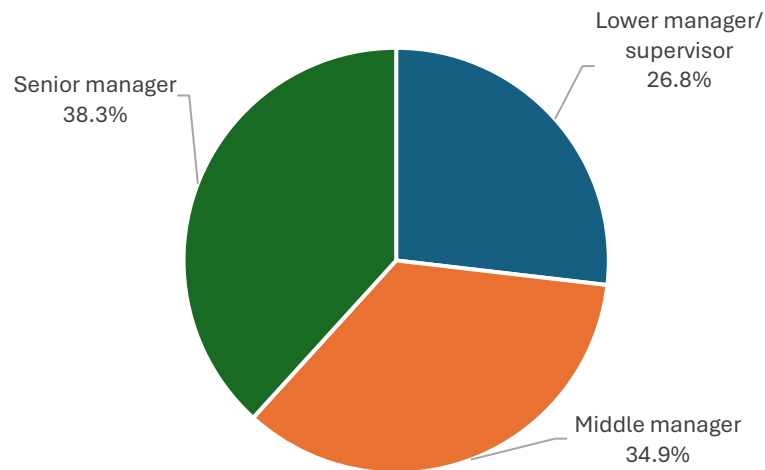
**Figure 6: Industries in which the Respondents Work**

The tenure of the respondents in their current organisation was spread relatively evenly across all five ranges. The tenure for the majority of respondents was between 3 and 5 years (23.5%), followed closely by 6 to 10 years at 22.1%, and 11 to 15 years at 20.8%. Therefore, with the number of years in the organisation, the respondents would be able to provide valuable information to answer the research question.



**Figure 7: Tenure of Respondents**

The target population of the research study consisted of senior, middle, and lower management employees. Respondents were distributed evenly across the three management levels, with the majority in senior management (38.3%), 34.9% in middle management, and 26.8% in lower management. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to gather data across all three management levels.



**Figure 8: Management Level of Respondents**

### 5.3 Validity, Reliability and Factor Analysis

The test for validity and reliability was conducted using the Pearson correlation coefficient. This allowed the researcher to rely on the results from the collected data

(Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020). In this section, a summary of the results is presented. The complete tables for the various constructs are presented in Appendix C.

### 5.3.1 Validity

Using the Pearson correlation coefficient, the validity of each measuring item, per measurement scale, was analysed against the total item score for that measurement scale. What is clear from Tables 1 through 3, is that each measuring scale – effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement – had a significant correlation with the total item score. The reason was that the 2-tailed p-value was less than 0.05 at a 95% confidence level. This indicated that each measuring item was valid for its particular measuring scale. As a result, there was no need to remove any of the measuring items from the collected data.

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation Coefficient for Effective Leader Communication**

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
EC1	0.879	<0.001
EC2	0.875	<0.001
EC3	0.730	<0.001
EC4	0.841	<0.001
EC5	0.800	<0.001
EC6	0.862	<0.001
EC7	0.767	<0.001
EC8	0.834	<0.001
EC_TOTAL	1	

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficient for Psychological Safety**

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
PS1	0.687	<0.001
PS2	0.735	<0.001
PS3	0.758	<0.001
PS4	0.693	<0.001
PS5	0.695	<0.001
PS6	0.692	<0.001
PS7	0.715	<0.001
PS_TOTAL	1	

**Table 3: Pearson Correlation Coefficient for Employee Engagement**

	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
EE1	0.864	<0.001
EE2	0.864	<0.001
EE3	0.892	<0.001
EE4	0.873	<0.001
EE5	0.865	<0.001
EE6	0.700	<0.001
EE7	0.721	<0.001
EE8	0.850	<0.001
EE9	0.691	<0.001
EE_TOTAL	1	

### **5.3.2 Reliability**

The measuring scales do not only have to be valid, but they must also be reliable. This was done with the use of Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha measures the internal consistency between the measuring items within a measurement scale (Pallant, 2016). Table 4 provides a summary of the Cronbach's alpha for each of the three constructs. As is clear, each of the three constructs had an alpha score above the 0.7 threshold. This allowed the researcher to rely on the collected data and ensured that the measuring scales would be relevant for measuring each of the three constructs (Hair et al., 2020).

**Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha**

Measuring scale	Cronbach's alpha	Number of items
Effective leader communication	0.931	8
Psychological safety	0.834	7
Employee engagement	0.937	9

### 5.3.3 Factor Analysis

EFA was used to reduce the number of measuring items per measuring scale, which will still provide a significant representation of the instrument (Pallant, 2016). Table 5 presents a summary of the data inspected for the factor analysis. Appendix E contains the detailed tables. The KMO and Bartlett's test were examined to determine whether it was possible to conduct a factor analysis on the measuring scales. First, the researcher scrutinised the correlation matrix (Appendix E) and confirmed that each measuring item had at least one value above 0.3.

Subsequently, the researcher verified that the KMO measure of sampling was above 0.5. for all three scales. As a result, the researcher could continue to the next step.

Third, the researcher verified that the p-value according to Bartlett's test of sphericity is below the p-value<0.05 at a 95% confidence level. All three measuring scales met the criteria, and the researcher was able to continue to the final step.

The final component of an EFA is to determine the number of factor components. The researcher examined the total variance explained table to determine the maximum number of factors necessary to represent the measuring scale. By applying the eigenvalue rule of 1, the number of components above 1 indicated the number of factor components that would represent the measuring scale. This indicated that the presence of one-factor component, with eigenvalues of 1 and above, explained the percentage of variance for effective leader communication, 68.1%, psychological safety, 50.7% and employee engagement, 66.8% (Pallant, 2016).

Therefore, for all three measuring scales, the measuring items could be combined into one factor for each measuring scale. The researcher calculated the average score per respondent per measuring scale to consolidate the various measuring items into a single factor per measuring scale.

**Table 5: Factor Analysis**

Measuring scale	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling	Bartlett's test of sphericity	Eigenvalues		
			Component	Total	% of variance
Effective leader communication	0.898	<0.001	1	5.448	68.103
Psychological safety	0.854	<0.001	1	3.548	50.681
Employee engagement	0.883	<0.001	1	6.014	66.827

#### **5.4 Assumptions for Inferential Statistics**

To answer the research question, inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses. The inferential statistics used were regression analysis. Certain assumptions must be considered to ensure that the results are accurate and can be relied upon. These assumptions were set out in subsections 4.4.2.1 and 4.4.2.2. These assumptions are discussed in the sections that follow.

##### **5.4.1 Continuous Scale**

To enable the researcher to conduct the analysis, the data must be on a continuous scale. Because the data were collected through a Likert scale, the data were not on a continuous scale. However, as factor analysis was done on the collected data, the average score per respondent was calculated for each measuring item. This converted the Likert scale mathematically into a continuous scale (Fein et al., 2022). Therefore, the collected data for all three measuring scales are on a continuous scale.

##### **5.4.2 Outliers**

The impact of outliers could affect the results from inferential tests (Pallant, 2016). Using boxplots (Appendix F), it was possible to identify any outliers related to the measuring scales. After reviewing the boxplots, outliers were observed for

psychological safety and employee engagement. A decision had to be made regarding the outliers and about whether those would be removed from the data. Before a decision was made on whether to remove the data, the descriptives table provided guidance on the impact of the outliers. Table 6 is an extract of the descriptives table, which focuses on the mean and 5% trimmed mean. The complete table is in Appendix F.

**Table 6: Descriptives**

Descriptives		
		Statistic
Effective communication – Factor	Mean	3.6411
	5% Trimmed Mean	3.6812
Psychological safety – Factor	Mean	3.4208
	5% Trimmed Mean	3.4456
Employee engagement – factor	Mean	3.4961
	5% Trimmed Mean	3.5357

The 5% trimmed mean is a mathematical mean that was recalculated by removing the top and bottom 5% of the cases in the dataset (Pallant, 2016). After inspection of the two variables, it was clear that the mean and 5% trimmed mean for all three measuring scales were very close to each other. Although the two means were close to each other, the decision was made to remove the outliers.

There were two outliers for psychological safety and three for employee engagement. However, there was a common outlier for both psychological safety and employee engagement. The lines that were removed were 4, 53, 76, and 123 (a common outlier). The respondents with outliers were removed from the dataset, reducing the total number of respondents for inferential statistics to 145. The revised boxplots (Appendix F) indicated that there were no outliers within the dataset.

### **5.4.3 Normality**

The data need to be normally distributed to enable the researcher to conduct various inferential statistics. The test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic. In order for the data to be normally distributed, there had to be a non-significant result, with the p-value being higher than 0.05 (Pallant, 2016). As shown in Table 7, a significant result was obtained, indicating that the data were not normally distributed.

**Table 7: Test of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Effective leader communication – Factor	0.095	145	0.003
Psychological safety – Factor	0.75	145	0.042
Employee engagement – Factor	0.081	145	0.021

Although the results from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic indicated that the data were not normally distributed, the histograms and normal Q-Q plot graphs were examined to verify the normal distribution of the data. According to the graphs in Appendix F, it was evident from the histograms and normal Q-Q plots that the data were relatively normally distributed across all measurement scales.

#### **5.4.4 Linear Relationships**

The next assumption is that the independent and dependent variables should be in a linear relationship. Therefore, the measuring scales for effective leader communication and psychological safety were explored in relation to employee engagement. This was done by scrutinising the scatterplots of the relationships. These scatterplots, as shown in Appendix F, indicate that both effective leader communication and psychological safety have a positive linear relationship with employee engagement. As the points on the scatterplot are not closely grouped together, it is possible to determine that there is a moderate relationship between the variables.

#### **5.5 Inferential Statistics**

Having taken this information into consideration, all the assumptions for the regression analyses have been confirmed. It is therefore possible to conduct the inferential analyses to either confirm or disprove the hypotheses, which will allow the researcher to answer the research question. The statistical analyses employed were

simple linear regression and hierarchical regression. The results are reported in the section that follows.

### **5.5.1 Simple Linear Regression Analysis**

An SLRA was used to understand whether the independent variables, effective leader communication and psychological safety, could predict the dependent variable, employee engagement. Therefore, the SLRA was used to test the following hypotheses:  $H_1$ : *Effective leader communication has a positive effect on employee engagement*, and  $H_2$ : *High psychological safety has a positive effect on employee engagement*.

Although the assumptions were tested at a construct level, the results obtained during the regression analysis confirmed that these assumptions were met. With the inspection of the normal P-P plot of the regression standardised residual, it is confirmed that the two constructs, effective leader communication and employee engagement, as well as the two constructs, psychological safety and employee engagement, were normally distributed.

This is confirmed by the plots being closely aligned with the diagonal line without large noticeable spaces in between. Figures 9 and 10 confirm the results of the normality testing, as displayed by the histograms and the Q-Q plots for effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement in Appendix F.

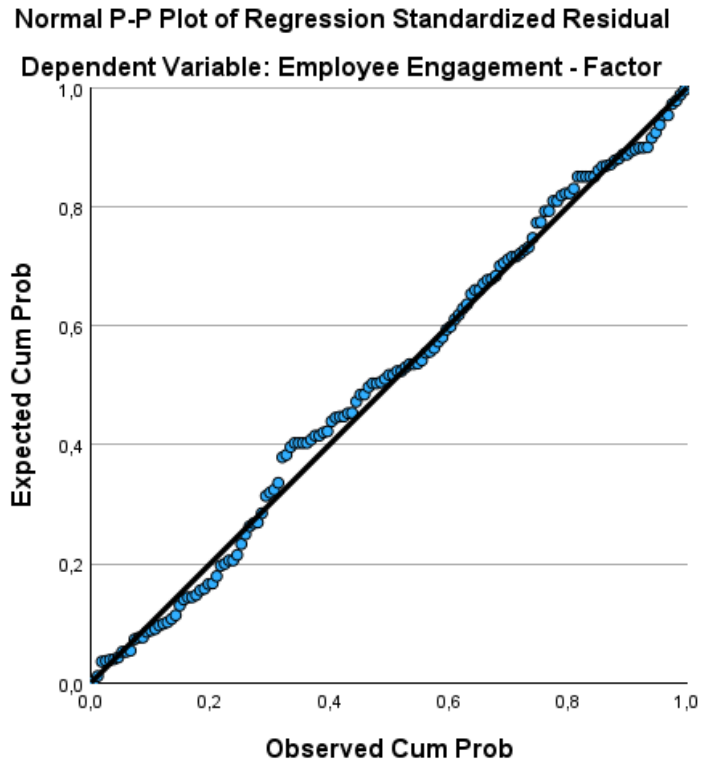


Figure 9: P-P Plot: Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement

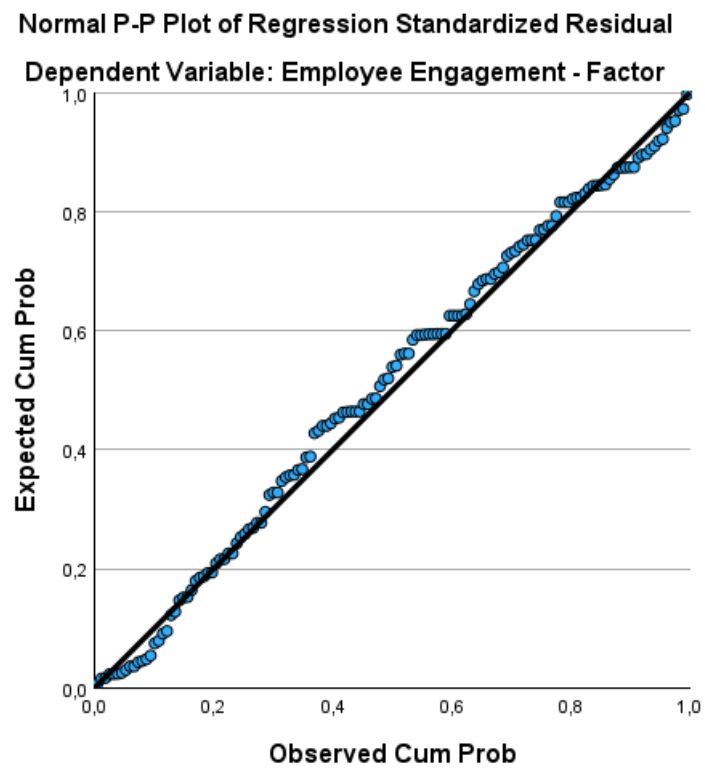


Figure 10: P-P Plot: Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement

The linear relationships between the two constructs, effective leader communication and employee engagement, as well as the relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement, were established with the scatterplots in Appendix F. The Pearson correlation coefficient confirmed the relationship between the construct, with correlations of 0.533 and 0.441, respectively. They were considered good relationships as the correlations between the various constructs were above 0.3 (Pallant, 2016).

**Table 8: Correlation: Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement**

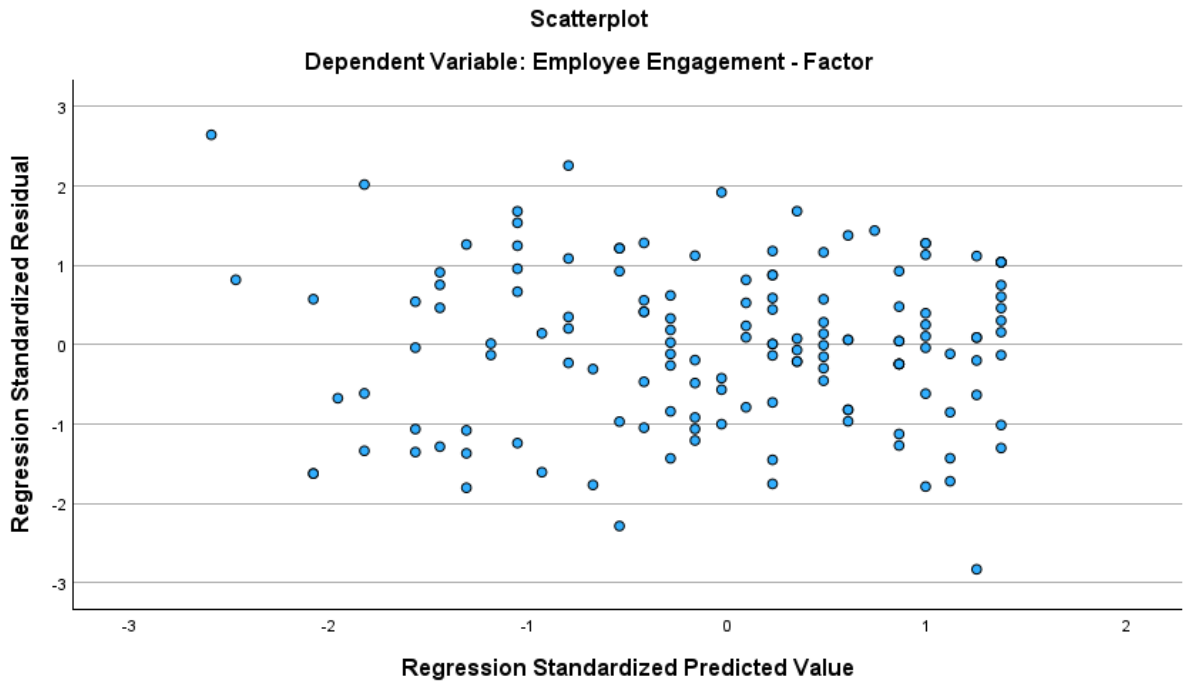
		Employee Engagement – Factor	Effective Communication – Factor
Pearson Correlation	Employee Engagement – Factor	1	0.533
	Effective Communication – Factor	0.533	1

**Table 9: Correlation: Psychological and Employee Engagement**

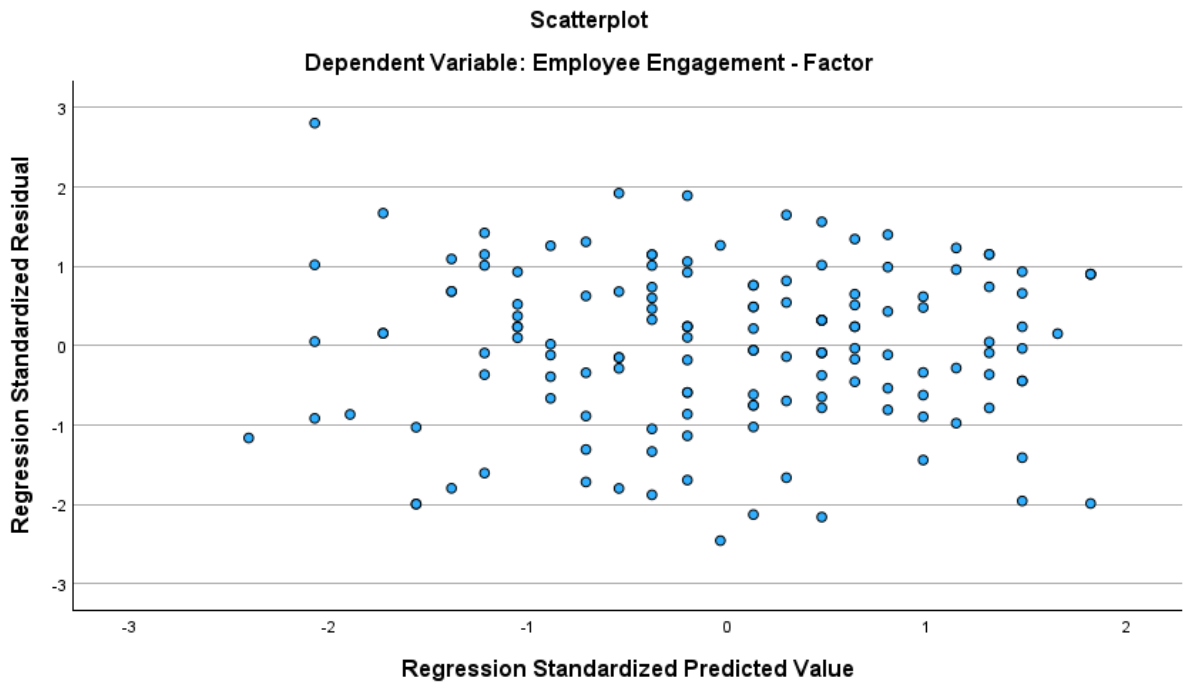
		Employee Engagement – Factor	Psychological Safety – Factor
Pearson Correlation	Employee Engagement – Factor	1	0.441
	Psychological Safety – Factor	0.441	1

According to the original boxplots, outliers were identified for psychological safety and employee engagement. These outliers were removed, and the revised boxplots indicated that there were no more outliers in the dataset. The scatterplots in Figures 11 and 12 confirmed that there were no outliers in the dataset. This was achieved by examining the scatterplots and identifying any points that were above 3 or below -3

(Pallant, 2016). As there were no outliers, the assumption was met that there were no outliers.



**Figure 11: Scatterplot: Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement**



**Figure 12: Scatterplot: Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement**

### 5.5.1.1 Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement

Tables 10, 11 and 12 reflect the results either confirming or rejecting the hypothesis: *H<sub>1</sub>: Effective leader communication has a positive effect on employee engagement.* The model summary provided information on the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. As a result, the model showed a statistically significant relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement,  $F(1, 143) = 56.757$ ,  $R^2 = 0.284$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Effective leader communication explains 28.4% of the variance between the two constructs.

Therefore, effective leader communication had a significant positive impact on employee engagement, as indicated by the following results:  $B = 0.488$ ,  $SE = 0.065$ ,  $\beta = 0.533$ ,  $t = 7.534$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ . Consequently, *H<sub>1</sub>: Effective leader communication has a positive effect on employee engagement* has been supported.

**Table 10: Model Summary: Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.533	0.284	0.279	0.75998

**Table 11: ANOVA: Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	32.781	1	32.781	56.757	<0.001
	Residual	82.592	143	0.578		
	Total	115,373	144			

**Table 12: Coefficient: Effective Leader Communication and Employee Engagement**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.770	0.245		7.213	<0.001
	Effective Communication – Factor	0.488	0.065	0.533	7.534	<0.001

*5.5.1.2 Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement*

Tables 13, 14 and 15 reflect the results either confirming or rejecting the hypothesis: *H<sub>2</sub>: High psychological safety has a positive effect on employee engagement.* The model summary provided information on the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable. As a result, the model showed a statistically significant relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement,  $F(1, 143) = 34.463$ ,  $R^2 = 0.194$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Psychological safety explains 19.4% of the variance between the two constructs.

Therefore, effective leader communication had a significant positive impact on employee engagement, as indicated by the following results:  $B = 0.466$ ,  $SE = 0.079$ ,  $\beta = 0.441$ ,  $t = 5.871$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ . Consequently, *H<sub>2</sub>: High psychological safety has a positive effect on employee engagement* has been supported.

**Table 13: Model Summary: Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.441	0.194	0.189	0.80630

**Table 14: ANOVA: Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.405	1	22.405	34.463	<0.001
	Residual	92.968	143	0.65		
	Total	115,373	144			

**Table 15: Coefficient: Psychological Safety and Employee Engagement**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	1.942	0.23		6.866	<0.001
	Psychological Safety – Factor	0.466	0.079	0.441	5.871	<0.001

### 5.5.2 Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The application of an HMLRA was used to test the final hypothesis: *H<sub>3</sub>: Psychological safety moderates the relationship between effective leadership communication and employee engagement.* This will ultimately lead to answering the research question: *To what extent does effective leader communication enhance employee engagement with varying levels of psychological safety?* The assumptions for an HMLRA are similar to those of an SLRA, which was discussed in detail in section 5.6.1. The researcher accepts that all assumptions were met and they will not be repeat here.

With an HMLRA, the variables were entered into blocks to record the impact an additional variable would have. During the first step, the model for psychological safety was statistically significant and yielded the same result as described in section 5.6.1.2 above, with  $F(1, 143) = 34.463$ ,  $R^2 = 0.194$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Therefore, psychological safety has a statistically significant positive impact as a predictor ( $B = 0.466$ ,  $SE = 0.079$ ,  $\beta = 0.441$ ,  $t = 5.871$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ )

With the addition of effective leader communication, there was a significant improvement in the model fit,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.124$ ,  $F$  change (1, 142) = 25.703,  $p < 0.001$ . Accordingly, the entire model was statistically significant with  $R^2 = 0.318$ ,  $F$  (2, 142) = 33.060 and  $p < 0.001$ . This indicated that psychological safety and effective employee communication contribute 31.8% of the variance in employee engagement. Therefore, in this model, psychological safety ( $B = 0.230$ ,  $SE = 0.087$ ,  $\beta = 0.217$ ,  $t = 2.643$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and effective leader communication ( $B = 0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.075$ ,  $\beta = 0.416$ ,  $t = 5.070$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), were statistically significant predictors.

**Table 16: Hierarchical Regression Prediction Employee Engagement**

Predictor	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
Step 1					
Constant	1.912	0.283	-	6.866	<0.001
Psychological Safety	0.466	0.079	0.441	05.871	<0.001
$R^2 = 0.194$ , $F(1, 143) = 34.463$ , $p < 0.001$					
Step 2					
Constant	1.365	0.285	-	4.791	<0.001
Psychological Safety	0.230	0.087	0.217	2.643	0.009
Effective Leader Communication	0.382	0.075	0.416	5.070	<0.001
$R^2 = 0.318$ , $\Delta R^2 = 0.124$ , $F(2, 142) = 33.060$ , $p < 0.001$					

When applying psychological safety as a moderator, there is no statistically significant improvement in the model fit,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.000$ ,  $F(1, 141) = 0.037$ ,  $p = 0.848$ . It can therefore be concluded that psychological safety does not moderate the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement, as the interaction was statistically non-significant ( $p = 0.848$ ). Because of the non-significance, the hypothesis  $H_3$ : *Psychological safety moderates the relationship between effective leadership communication and employee engagement*, was not supported.

**Table 17: Hierarchical Regression Moderating Employee Engagement**

Moderator	B	SE	B	t	p
Psychological Safety	0.012	0.063	0.014	0.192	0.848
$R^2 = 0.318$ , $\Delta R^2 = 0.000$ , $F(1, 141) = 0.037$ , $p = 0.848$					

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In concluding this chapter, the results from the analysis were presented without any discussion. The results confirmed the validity and reliability of the data. It was also possible to apply a confirmatory factor analysis. Following confirmation of the validity and reliability, it was demonstrated that all statistical assumptions related to regression analysis were met. The descriptive results provided a clearer understanding of the respondents who completed the questionnaire. Along with the descriptive results, the inferential analysis provided results showing the relationships between the constructs. The results showed that Hypotheses One and Two ( $H_1$  and  $H_2$ ) was supported and Hypothesis Three ( $H_3$ ) was not supported. In Chapter 6, these findings are discussed in relation to the literature review in Chapter 2.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret and discuss the results, which were obtained from the analysis that was presented in Chapter 5. This discussion provides the necessary information to answer the research question. A comparison is made in line with the information in the literature review, as per Chapter 2. While Chapter 5 focused solely on the analysis results, Chapter 6 examines the meaning and significance of the results.

The discussion focuses on the results of the data analysis to test the three hypotheses in the research study. The first section focuses on results from descriptive statistics, followed by a discussion of inferential statistics results and the impact of effective leader communication on employee engagement. From there, the connection between psychological safety and employee engagement is explored. Finally, the impact of psychological safety as a moderator on the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement is discussed.

### **6.2 Descriptive Statistics**

The descriptive statistics provided a clearer understanding of the composition of the respondents. The majority of respondents were aged between 35 and 44 years. This indicates that the respondents are predominantly at the midpoint in their career path. It therefore suggests that these respondents will have sufficient experience to evaluate the impact of effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement effectively. Although slightly more females than males responded to the questionnaire, perspectives from both genders contributed to the research study.

Since the majority of respondents are associated with a particular ethnic group, this could bias interpretations of effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement. However, as most of the respondents hold advanced degrees and are at an advanced stage in their careers, this suggests that the bias should not affect the results.

The tenure of respondents was evenly spread across various years at their respective organisations and across different management positions. This provided the researcher with the opportunity to gather information from respondents at

different levels in an organisation. The responses from individuals across different management levels and years at an organisation provide valuable information about the organisation as well as about the various industries in which they work. As a result, different views and understandings of effective leader communication, psychological safety and employees can be inferred from the responses across various industries, management levels and years in an organisation.

### **6.3 Discussion of Hypotheses**

#### **6.3.1 *H<sub>1</sub>: Effective Leader Communication has a Positive Effect on Employee Engagement***

The first hypothesis posits that effective leader communication affects employee engagement positively in an organisation. According to the analysis of the responses, 28.4% of the variance can be explained by the impact of effective leader communication on employee engagement. The regression analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between effective leader communication and psychological safety ( $p < 0.001$ ). As a result, Hypothesis One ( $H_1$ ) has been confirmed.

Liu et al. (2023) emphasised the importance of effective leader communication as the cornerstone of any successful organisation. Therefore, the significance of determining how much information has to be communicated to an employee is largely dependent on the leader (Flynn & Lide, 2023). Consequently, the importance of active dialogue plays a significant role in effective leader communication (Lemon & Boman, 2022).

Similar studies were undertaken by Lemon and Boman (2022), and Verčič and Men (2023), to determine whether effective leader communication does affect employee engagement. The results of those studies indicated that effective leader communication was an antecedent of employee engagement (Lemon & Boman, 2022; Verčič & Men, 2023). The findings of this study were similar, also demonstrating that effective leader communication has a significant impact on employee engagement.

Since the JD-R theory is used as the primary framework for the research study, effective leader communication was positioned as a critical external resource that the organisation provides (Boccoli et al., 2023). Therefore, the results of the study are aligned closely to the JD-R theory, with effective leader communication as an

external resource providing guidance and direction for the employees to help them achieve the goals set by the organisation (Han et al., 2020). Because of the flexibility of the JD-R theory, it was possible to apply the theory to confirm Hypothesis One (H<sub>1</sub>) effectively (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024).

The results for Hypothesis One (H<sub>1</sub>) also align with the SET. With the confirmation of this hypothesis, the reciprocation of receiving a job resource from the organisation increases employee engagement. This aligns with Kwon and Kim (2020), indicating that employees will increase their engagement as they feel obligated to reciprocate in return for the job resources they received.

Therefore, the importance of structured communication strategies, such as active listening and transparency, is crucial (Arif et al., 2023). For this reason, organisations should encourage leaders to engage in effective communication and active dialogue to increase employee engagement (Verčič & Men, 2023) as well as to make use of proper feedback loops to enhance the active dialogue (Verčič & Men, 2023).

### **6.3.2 H<sub>2</sub>: High Psychological Safety has a Positive Effect on Employee Engagement**

The second hypothesis explores the possible impact of psychological safety on employee engagement. Psychological safety, as with effective leader communication in the first hypothesis, also has a significant positive relationship with employee engagement ( $p < 0.001$ ). With only 19.4% of the variance in employee engagement explained by psychological safety, it has a smaller impact than effective leader communication. However, it still influences employee engagement significantly. Therefore, Hypothesis Two (H<sub>2</sub>) has also been confirmed.

The research by Eldor et al. (2023) confirmed that psychological safety does have a positive impact on employee performance. It enhances the learning ability, creativity and sense of belonging of employees. Consequently, it contributes to employee confidence levels and, in turn, increases their psychological safety (Eldor et al., 2023). As a result, employees are encouraged to exhibit open and authentic behaviours in the organisation. This ultimately leads to an increase in employee engagement (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

The results from the studies by Eldor et al. (2023), and Edmondson and Bransby (2023), were compared with the results obtained in this research study. The analysis

and results of the inferential statistics reached the same conclusion, indicating a significant relationship between psychological safety and employee engagement.

The interpretation of psychological safety as an internal resource is the ability of an employee to have the mental capability to control the effect of various circumstances effectively (Kwon & Kim, 2020). This is a valuable internal resource relating to the JD-R theory, which ultimately leads to employee engagement (Boccoli et al., 2023). This internal resource contributes to the theory by making employees more resilient and allowing them to take risks (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). This internal resource provides the drive to increase employee engagement as an outcome.

As with effective leader communication, under SET, the trust placed in employees will be reciprocated, leading to an increase in their engagement in the organisation (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023). It creates a feeling of belonging in the organisation (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Although the  $\beta$  for effective leader communication is higher than the one for psychological safety, the effect of both on employee engagement remains significant. However, the larger  $\beta$  for effective leader communication indicates a greater contribution to influencing employee engagement than that of psychological safety (Pallant, 2016). It is therefore imperative that the preferences of employees and leadership are aligned to increase the level of psychological safety (Xu et al., 2019).

### **6.3.3 H<sub>3</sub>: Psychological Safety Moderates the Relationship between Effective Leadership Communication and Employee Engagement**

The final hypothesis proposed for the research study was that the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement would be strengthened by psychological safety. Although leader communication and psychological safety were independent, effective leader communication and psychological safety individually had a significant positive impact on employee engagement. However, when psychological safety was tested as a moderator, psychological safety did not have a significant impact on employee engagement ( $p = 0.848$ ).

As already stated, effective leader communication (job resource) and psychological safety (personal resource) are both resources that contribute to the outcome of employee engagement, using the JD-R theory (Boccoli et al., 2023). With the flexibility of the JD-R theory, the assumption was that the use of psychological safety

as a moderator would significantly affect employee engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). However, the results did not support the assumption, and Hypothesis Three (H<sub>3</sub>) has been rejected.

Various factors may have contributed to the failure to support Hypothesis Three (H<sub>3</sub>). One conclusion could be that effective leader communication already inherently embodies some aspects of psychological safety through communication transparency (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). Therefore, having meaningful interactions between a leader and an employee through engaging in an active dialogue affects the psychological safety of the employee (Arif et al., 2023; Gallo, 2023). The consistency of the communication contributes to trust and respect, also contributing to the psychological safety of an employee through effective leader communication (Verčič & Men, 2023).

Men et al. (2020) argue that open communication provides the opportunity to improve relationship quality, contributing to mutual respect, trust and psychological safety. However, psychological safety is also a motivator for leaders and employees to engage in effective communication (Men et al., 2020). Therefore, it may be more beneficial to use psychological safety as a mediator rather than as a moderator (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

## **6.4 Integration with Theoretical Frameworks**

### **6.4.1 Job Demand-Resources Theory**

The findings in this research study only partially support the application of the JD-R theory. This is because only effective leader communication and psychological safety individually contribute significantly to employee engagement, which is consistent with the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). When psychological safety was introduced as a moderator, the effect on employee engagement was not significant. This indicates that the resources do not contribute interactively to employee engagement, even with the addition of psychological safety. Therefore, the contribution to the JD-R theory is not to contradict the theory, but to refine it through this research.

### **6.4.2 Social Exchange Theory**

The interaction between leaders and employees through effective communication builds trust, respect and support (Arif et al., 2023), in turn contributing to the increase

in psychological safety (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). Therefore, the findings of this research confirm support for the SET theory, as the principles for a relationship of reciprocity were adhered to (Davlembayeva & Alamanos, 2023). The results from both Hypotheses One and Two ( $H_1$  and  $H_2$ ) are integrated firmly with SET, as both hypotheses relate to an increase in employee engagement as a reciprocity between the leader and the employee (Kwon & Kim, 2020). It is plausible that the insignificance of the moderation in relation to SET could indicate that the two independent variables operate in parallel.

## **6.5 Practical Implications**

Effective leader communication significantly affects employee engagement. It is therefore essential for organisations to train leaders to enable them to communicate what is needed of employees, clearly and accurately (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). This can be achieved by developing leadership-development programmes. Through these programmes, leaders will learn the most effective communication tools and the use of feedback loops to determine whether the message that was communicated was received as intended (Verčič & Men, 2023). This will contribute to transparent, active dialogue, which will increase employee engagement positively (Lemon & Boman, 2022).

With its supporting role as a personal resource, psychological safety enables employees to learn and develop their skills through creativity and participation (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). By creating a safe space for employees to experiment, they will be encouraged to be more authentic at work, to acknowledge when they have made mistakes without repercussions, and be empowered to express new ideas (Eldor et al., 2023). Organisational policies should be created to support initiatives to increase psychological safety. Leaders should participate in these programmes to foster safety by being open, demonstrating respect and being consistent in their communication (Men et al., 2020).

As mentioned above, with the moderation of psychological safety not affecting employee engagement significantly, it will be a good practice to develop effective communication and psychological safety programmes in parallel. The development of these programmes will assist leaders to communicate effectively, building trust, which will result in higher psychological safety (Boccoli et al., 2023). These programmes will align with the JD-R theory, as the development of the job and

personal resources affects employee engagement collectively (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024).

## **6.6 Interpretation Limitations**

With the results from the research study providing valuable insights, certain limitations have to be considered relating to the interpretation of the results. The study was a cross-sectional design with the data collected at a particular point in time. The moderator did not have a significant effect on employee engagement. Therefore, a longitudinal study might have provided a more insightful result.

All the data were collected from the respondents completing a self-reported survey. Although the validity and reliability test scores on the measuring scales were satisfactory, and anonymity was guaranteed, the self-reporting bias from the respondents could have had an impact on the results. In addition, there could be an overlap between the data collected on effective leader communication and psychological safety.

It is important to note that the results from this study do not detract from the contribution it provides to the theory. However, it does provide areas for future research. In addition, acknowledging that there are constraints improves the credibility of the results of this research.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The statistical results presented in Chapter 5 were discussed. It is clear from the findings that effective leader communication affects employee engagement significantly. It therefore confirms Hypothesis One ( $H_1$ ). This was in line with previous studies indicating the importance of being transparent, having open and consistent conversations between leaders and employees.

Furthermore, psychological safety also affects employee engagement significantly and positively. This indicates that the feeling of being safe in the work environment motivates employees to take more risks and to be more engaged at work. The results also showed that employee engagement is not impacted by the moderating effect of psychological safety on the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement.

The results also contribute to the JD-R theory, indicating that the two resources promote employee engagement independently. The results support the SET, as

employees increase their engagement in response to the reciprocity of the organisation in providing resources. Therefore, leaders must cultivate effective communication and a psychologically safe working environment.

Chapter 7 reports on the conclusions of the study, including key insights and an expansion on the limitations. This chapter also discusses the practical application of the study and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter consolidates the research study, which investigated the strength of the relationship between effective leader communication and psychological safety, and their effects on employee engagement. The main findings of the study are integrated with the theoretical frameworks JD-R theory and SET, which have both practical and theoretical implications.

In this chapter, the limitations of this research study are discussed, and recommendations for future research are provided. By consolidating all the empirical findings, the research question can be answered: ***To what extent does effective leader communication enhance employee engagement with varying levels of psychological safety?***

### 7.2 What was Studied and What is its Importance?

The aim of the study was to determine the effect of various resources on employee engagement. With the application of the JD-R theory, job and personal resources have been posited to enhance employee engagement significantly (Boccoli et al., 2023). Not only were these resources evaluated independently, but the use of psychological safety was also introduced as a moderator to determine whether it would further enhance the positive relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement. In this way, the effectiveness of leaders is evaluated to determine whether they can provide clear and understandable messages to the employees (Arif et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023).

Disengaged employees are not productive, which can result in wasteful expenditure (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). A report published by Gallup Inc. (2025) indicated extremely low engagement of employees worldwide. It is therefore imperative for leaders to increase the level of management engagement, as it can improve employee engagement significantly (Berwick, 2025). With low engagement, employees feel discouraged, which can cause health issues (Gallo, 2023). With increased disengagement, employees may consider leaving the organisation, which can lead to significant losses. These losses will not only be felt in skills that will leave the organisation, but also in the cost to replace the employee (Labro & Omartian, 2025). Therefore, with increased effective communication and psychological safety, trust and mutual respect are built between the organisation and its employees. This

will lead to increased employee engagement, employee retention and, ultimately, greater organisational profitability.

### **7.3 The Research Context and Its Importance**

The research gathered data across various industries, with a focus on employees at lower, middle, and senior management levels. The diversity of respondents across multiple industries in the country provided a clear understanding of views on effective leader communication and psychological safety. According to the descriptive statistics, the majority of respondents were between 35 and 44 years old. These individuals have several years of experience, providing them with a better understanding of evaluating effective leader communication and engagement.

Another important context is the time spent at an organisation. Every organisation has its own views on effective leader communication and psychological safety; hence, time spent in an organisation provides different perspectives on these constructs. This matters because communication cascades through the various management levels. The effect on employee engagement depends on the clarity and openness of the communication. This contributes to an increase in trust and respect and ultimately, increases the psychological safety of the employees (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023). It is therefore beneficial to understand the impact of the constructs from the perspective of experienced individuals.

### **7.4 What was Known and What was not Known?**

The study has built on the antecedents of employee engagement – effective leader communication and psychological safety. The leader needs to gauge the amount of information that must be communicated to the employee (Flynn & Lide, 2023). By communicating clearly with an employee, one can remove any possibility of miscommunication and one can achieve this through active listening (Arif et al., 2023; Schnackenberg et al., 2021). The study by Lemon and Boman (2022) determined that clear, open and transparent communication plays a significant role in employee engagement.

Psychological safety is the influence of a personal resource that can affect employee engagement (Edmondson, 1999). This occurs when employees feel safe in the organisation and are encouraged to take risks to achieve their goals (Deng et al., 2019). Building trust and mutual respect between leaders and employees increases employee engagement significantly. Results from studies by Eldor et al. (2023), and

Xu et al. (2019), indicate that higher psychological safety contributes to employee engagement.

However, studies showed that effective leader communication and psychological safety contributed independently to increased employee engagement (Eldor et al., 2023; Lemon & Boman, 2022; Verčič & Men, 2023). A review by Edmondson and Bransby (2023) indicates that psychological safety was used mainly as a predictor in research studies rather than as a moderator until recently. Therefore, using the JD-R theory, this research study sought to establish whether the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement would be affected significantly by utilising psychological safety as a moderator.

### **7.5 What Questions were Answered?**

The overarching research question for this study is: ***To what extent does effective leader communication enhance employee engagement with varying levels of psychological safety?*** Three hypotheses were developed from the existing literature to answer the research question. These hypotheses are:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Effective leader communication has a positive effect on employee engagement.

**H<sub>2</sub>:** High psychological safety has a positive effect on employee engagement.

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Psychological safety moderates the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement.

The flexibility of the JD-R theory provided the ability to confirm or reject these hypotheses, as the theory does not apply to specific job characteristics (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). This allowed the opportunity to determine an outcome using particular resources, starting with the view that the job resource of open and transparent communication has a direct influence on employee engagement (Boccoli et al., 2023; Schnackenberg et al., 2021). Second, a feeling of belonging and the ability to take calculated risks affects employee engagement positively (Boccoli et al., 2023; Deng et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Finally, using psychological safety should be considered as a moderator to enhance effective leader communication and affect employee engagement positively.

The results from the statistical tests first confirmed or rejected the hypotheses. Second, they provided the opportunity to answer the research question, adding to the existing literature and solve a business problem.

## **7.6 Research Methodology – How were the Questions Answered?**

The methodology was a cross-sectional, quantitative research study. After obtaining ethical approval, the data were collected via a survey to examine the relationships among effective leader communication, psychological safety and employee engagement. Of the 205 responses received, only 149 met the requirements for the target population: lower, middle, and senior level management.

With the use of non-probability sampling, various participants with organisational and leadership experience could be included in the research study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The measurement scales were adapted from previous studies to measure the items accurately. All the measuring scales used a 5-point Likert scale to evaluate the three constructs. The reliability and validity of the data were tested to ensure the information was relevant to the research study. This was achieved by using Cronbach's alpha and Pearson's correlation coefficient. An exploratory factor analysis reduced multiple items to be presented as a single factor (Hair et al., 2020).

A simple and multiple linear regression test was used to analyse the data. These regression models enabled the researcher to test the direct relationship (Hypotheses One ( $H_1$ ) and Two ( $H_2$ )) and the moderation (Hypothesis Three ( $H_3$ )). With assurances of confidentiality and voluntary participation, all ethical considerations were upheld, ensuring compliance.

## **7.7 Findings and Interpretation**

The analytical results from the inferential statistics confirmed Hypotheses One ( $H_1$ ) and Two ( $H_2$ ). On the other hand, the analytical results did not support Hypothesis Three ( $H_3$ ). For  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ , effective leader communication as a predictor affected employee engagement significantly, explaining 31.85% of its variance ( $R^2 = 0.318$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). In addition, psychological safety accounted for 19.4% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.194$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) independently. The model fit improved significantly with the addition of communication ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.124$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

When psychological safety was introduced as a moderator, the statistical results indicated that there was no significant impact on employee engagement ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.000$ ,  $p = 0.848$ ). This indicates that psychological safety does not moderate the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement. It suggests that the effects of these two constructs do not operate interactively but instead in parallel.

The study reinforces the findings of effective leader communication, which the organisation controls, as an essential job resource (Boccoli et al., 2023). Also, as important as the job resource, psychological safety is an internal or personal resource enabling employees to buffer against negative effects (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Both of these resources are vital for employee engagement. However, each one operates in isolation.

### **7.8 Answer to the Research Question**

Ultimately, the research study aims to answer the research question. As indicated, effective leader communication and psychological safety both contribute significantly but independently to employee engagement. However, when psychological safety is introduced as a moderator, there is no significant improvement in the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement. Therefore, there is no interaction between communication and safety. This indicates that the contributions by the two constructs are parallel.

As a result, the two constructs contribute individually to a significant increase in employee engagement. However, in answering the research question, psychological safety does not enhance the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement.

### **7.9 Contributions of the Research Study**

This study aims to contribute to the JD-R theory and SET. By utilising effective leader communication and psychological safety, the findings confirmed that both serve as resources that affect employee engagement. This study aims to refine the JD-R theory rather than to disprove it. The results of this study regarding H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub> already confirm that the JD-R theory is the most applicable framework for this research study. Because of the rejection of H<sub>3</sub>, this research has contributed to the JD-R theory by establishing that psychological safety cannot be used as a moderator to improve the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement.

For SET, employees feel obligated to reciprocate with the receipt of organisational resources (Kwon & Kim, 2020). This occurs when leaders engage in active dialogue with employees (Lemon & Boman, 2022) through transparent and open communication (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). Therefore, with transparency and open communication, the social responsibility of an employee to reciprocate increases their engagement.

## **7.10 Practical or Business Relevance of the Findings**

The business relevance of the findings is to understand what management can do to increase employee engagement. The findings indicate that active two-way communication and transparency can increase employee engagement (Lemon & Boman, 2022). This is also supported by recommendations from Verčič and Men (2023) that the creation of proper feedback loops by management contributes to the active dialogue. Therefore, leaders do not only have to give instructions but must also listen actively and understand in order to build higher levels of trust.

The impact of psychological safety as an independent resource also increases employee engagement significantly. Although it is not as impactful as effective leader communication, it still plays a valuable role in engagement. Leaders, therefore, have to foster a culture of belonging and create a safe environment for experimentation without fear of repercussions (Deng et al., 2019; Eldor et al., 2023). Team building is also an essential aspect of psychological safety, as it allows members to learn from one another. It is therefore important to develop intercompany programmes that focus on active listening, practical feedback sessions and the creation of emotionally safe working environments.

## **7.11 Recommendations for Future Research**

This research study included various industries. The focus could be narrowed to individuals employed in a particular sector to understand whether these phenomena play out differently within nuanced industrial contexts. This could provide a better understanding at the sector level, where population size is known, and probability sampling could be used.

In a cross-sectional study, it is not possible to explore fully the effect of psychological safety as a moderator on the relationship between effective leader communication and employee engagement. It is recommended that a mixed-methods longitudinal study be conducted, as it will provide greater insights into changes in the effect of communication and engagement, as well as whether psychological safety has a significant effect on the relationship.

Additional moderators or mediators could be introduced into the model to determine whether other elements could affect the relationship. This could include emotional intelligence, leadership styles or organisational culture. Results from these studies

could further refine theoretical models and provide guidance on developing and increasing employee engagement.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Questionnaire**

Dear Respondent,

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science, where I am completing my research in partial fulfilment of a Master's in Business Administration. I am conducting a research study on how leadership communication drives employee engagement.

You have been identified as a potential respondent to the questionnaire of this study. I believe your responses will be invaluable. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes of your time, and all records collected during this study will be treated with confidentiality. Results will be presented in a manner that ensures respondents' identities remain unidentified.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Your participation is anonymous, and only aggregated data will be reported. By completing this survey, you indicate that you voluntarily participate in this research.

The questionnaire, hosted through Google Forms, will be collected electronically. Your responses will be stored in Google Drive, a cloud-based platform, which has encryption capabilities and password protection.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. My supervisor's details are also provided below on the consent.

Thank you in advance for all your assistance in this regard.

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Section 1 – Descriptions

Q1.1 How old are you?

Under 18	18 – 24 years	25 – 34 years	35 – 44 years	45 – 54 years	55 – 64 years	Over 65 years
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Q1.2 How do you identify?

Male	Female	Non-binary	Not listed	Please list
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Q1.3 What is your highest level of education?

Matric	Diploma	Undergraduate degree	Postgraduate degree (up to Master's level)	Doctoral degree
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Q1.4 What is your racial group?

Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Please list
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Q1.5 Which industry do you work in?

Agriculture	Construction	Consulting and Professional Services	Entertainment	Financial Services	Health Care
Hospitality and Tourism	Information Technology	Manufacturing	Mining	Transportation	Not listed

Q 1.6 How long have you been working for your current organisation

0 – 2 years	3 – 5 years	6 – 10 years	11 – 15 years	More than 15 years
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Q 1.7 Which level in the organisation are you on?

Staff	Lower manager/ Supervisor	Middle manager	Senior manager	Executive	Not listed
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Section 2 – Effective Communication

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Q2.1 My senior is a good listener

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q2.2 My senior pays attention to what other people say to her/him

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q2.3 My senior typically gets right to the point

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q2.4 My senior is sensitive to others' needs of the moment

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q2.5 My senior is easy to talk to

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q2.6 My senior is easy to understand when she/he speak

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q2.7 My senior writes in a way that is easy to understand

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q2.8 My senior expresses her/his ideas clearly

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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### Section 3 – Psychological Safety

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Q3.1 If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q3.2 Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q 3.3 People on this team sometimes reject others for being different

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q3.4 It is safe to take a risk on this team

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q3.5 It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q3.6 No one on his team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q 3.7 Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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#### Section 4 – Employee Engagement

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree

Q 4.1 At my work, I feel bursting with energy

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q4.2 At my work, I feel strong and vigorous

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q4.3 I am enthusiastic about my work

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q4.4 My work inspires me

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q4.5 When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q4.6 I feel happy when I am working intensely

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
-------------------	-------------------	----------------------------	----------------	----------------

Q 4.7 I am proud of the work that I do

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q4.8 I am immersed in my work

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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Q4.9 I get carried away when I am working

Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
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## Appendix B: Data Codes

DATA CODES				
Question Nr	Question/Description	Code	Answer	Measurement Scale
Q1.1	How old are you? (AGE)	1	18 – 24 years	Ordinal
		2	25 – 34 years	
		3	35 – 44 years	
		4	45 – 54 years	
		5	55 – 64 years	
		6	Over 65 years	
Q1.2	How do you identify? (GENDER)	1	Male	Nominal
		2	Female	
		3	Non-binary	
		4	Transgender	
		5	Prefer not to reply	
		6	Other	
Q1.3	What is your highest level of education? (EDUCATION)	1	Matric	Ordinal
		2	Diploma	
		3	Undergraduate degree	
		4	Postgraduate degree (up to Master's level)	
		5	Doctoral degree	
Q1.4	What is your racial group? (RACE)	1	Black	Nominal
		2	Coloured	
		3	Indian	
		4	White	
		5	Other	
Q1.5	Which industry do you work in? (INDUSTRY)	1	Agriculture	Nominal
		2	Construction	
		3	Consulting and professional services	
		4	Entertainment	
		5	Financial services	
		6	Health care	

		7	Hospitality and tourism	
		8	Information technology	
		9	Manufacturing	
		10	Mining	
		11	Transportation	
		12	Automation	
		13	Education	
		14	Retail	
		15	Government	
		16	Human resources	
		20	Other	
Q1.6	How long have you been working for your current organisation? (TENURE)	1	0 – 2 years	Ordinal
		2	3 – 5 years	
		3	6 – 10 years	
		4	11 – 15 years	
		5	More than 15 years	
Q1.7	Which level in the organisation are you on? (MANAGEMENT)	1	Staff	Ordinal
		2	Lower manager/supervisor	
		3	Middle manager	
		4	Senior manager	
		5	Executive	
		6	Other	
Q2.1 – Q2.8	Questions relating to effective communication (EC1 – EC8)	1	Strongly disagree	Ordinal
		2	Somewhat disagree	
		3	Neither agree nor disagree	
		4	Somewhat agree	
		5	Strongly agree	

Q3.2, Q3.4, Q3.6 Q3.7	Questions relating to psychological safety (PS2, PS4, PS6, PS7)	1	Strongly disagree	Ordinal
		2	Somewhat disagree	
		3	Neither agree nor disagree	
		4	Somewhat agree	
		5	Strongly agree	
Q3.1, Q3.3, Q3.5	Questions relating to psychological safety (PS1, PS3, PS5). Response had to be reverse-coded	1	Strongly disagree	Ordinal
		2	Somewhat disagree	
		3	Neither agree nor disagree	
		4	Somewhat agree	
		5	Strongly agree	
Q4.1 – Q4.9	Questions relating to employee engagement (EE1 – EE9)	1	Strongly disagree	Ordinal
		2	Somewhat disagree	
		3	Neither agree nor disagree	
		4	Somewhat agree	
		5	Strongly agree	

## Appendix C: Validity Test

### Effective leader communication

Correlations<sup>b</sup>

		Q2.1 - My senior is a good listener	Q2.2 - My senior pays attention to what other people say to her/him	Q2.3 - My senior typically gets right to the point	Q2.4 - My senior is sensitive to others' needs of the moment	Q2.5 - My senior is easy to talk to	Q2.6 - My senior is easy to understand when she/he speak	Q2.7 - My senior writes in a way that is easy to understand	Q2.8 - My senior expresses her/his ideas clearly	Effective Communication Total
Q2.1 - My senior is a good listener	Pearson Correlation	1	,894**	,528**	,743**	,696**	,696**	,585**	,642**	,879**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q2.2 - My senior pays attention to what other people say to her/him	Pearson Correlation	,894**	1	,566**	,740**	,686**	,685**	,560**	,623**	,875**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q2.3 - My senior typically gets right to the point	Pearson Correlation	,528**	,566**	1	,559**	,414**	,605**	,471**	,666**	,730**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q2.4 - My senior is sensitive to others' needs of the moment	Pearson Correlation	,743**	,740**	,559**	1	,681**	,623**	,539**	,632**	,841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q2.5 - My senior is easy to talk to	Pearson Correlation	,696**	,686**	,414**	,681**	1	,635**	,534**	,593**	,800**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q2.6 - My senior is easy to understand when she/he speak	Pearson Correlation	,696**	,685**	,605**	,623**	,635**	1	,739**	,714**	,862**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
Q2.7 - My senior writes in a way that is easy to understand	Pearson Correlation	,585**	,560**	,471**	,539**	,534**	,739**	1	,660**	,767**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
Q2.8 - My senior expresses her/his ideas clearly	Pearson Correlation	,642**	,623**	,666**	,632**	,593**	,714**	,660**	1	,834**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Effective Communication Total	Pearson Correlation	,879**	,875**	,730**	,841**	,800**	,862**	,767**	,834**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

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

b. Listwise N=149

### Psychological safety

Correlations<sup>b</sup>

		Q3.1 - If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you	Q3.2 - Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues	Q3.3 - People on this team sometimes reject others for being different	Q3.4 - It is safe to take a risk on this team	Q3.5 - It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help	Q3.6 - No one on his team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	Q3.7 - Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised	Psychological Safety Total
Q3.1 - If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you	Pearson Correlation	1	,344**	,432**	,397**	,339**	,416**	,380**	,687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q3.2 - Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues	Pearson Correlation	,344**	1	,468**	,534**	,456**	,396**	,501**	,735**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q3.3 - People on this team sometimes reject others for being different	Pearson Correlation	,432**	,468**	1	,494**	,504**	,462**	,403**	,758**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q3.4 - It is safe to take a risk on this team	Pearson Correlation	,397**	,534**	,494**	1	,329**	,321**	,365**	,693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q3.5 - It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help	Pearson Correlation	,339**	,456**	,504**	,329**	1	,363**	,479**	,695**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
Q3.6 - No one on his team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	Pearson Correlation	,416**	,396**	,462**	,321**	,363**	1	,507**	,692**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
Q3.7 - Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised	Pearson Correlation	,380**	,501**	,403**	,365**	,479**	,507**	1	,715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Psychological Safety Total	Pearson Correlation	,687**	,735**	,758**	,693**	,695**	,692**	,715**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

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

b. Listwise N=149

# Employee engagement

Correlations<sup>b</sup>

		Q4.1 - At my work, I feel bursting with energy	Q4.2 - At my work, I feel strong and vigorous	Q4.3 - I am enthusiastic about my work	Q4.4 - My work inspires me	Q4.5 - When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	Q4.6 - I feel happy when I am working intensely	Q4.7 - I am proud of the work that I do	Q4.8 - I am immersed in my work	Q4.9 - I get carried away when I am working	Employee Engagement Total
Q4.1 - At my work, I feel bursting with energy	Pearson Correlation	1	,912**	,755**	,710**	,740**	,558**	,527**	,607**	,468**	,864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4.2 - At my work, I feel strong and vigorous	Pearson Correlation	,912**	1	,760**	,698**	,732**	,577**	,475**	,650**	,471**	,864**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4.3 - I am enthusiastic about my work	Pearson Correlation	,755**	,760**	1	,839**	,777**	,523**	,627**	,729**	,519**	,892**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4.4 - My work inspires me	Pearson Correlation	,710**	,698**	,839**	1	,747**	,565**	,609**	,718**	,509**	,873**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4.5 - When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	Pearson Correlation	,740**	,732**	,777**	,747**	1	,566**	,527**	,682**	,531**	,865**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4.6 - I feel happy when I am working intensely	Pearson Correlation	,558**	,577**	,523**	,565**	,566**	1	,364**	,492**	,460**	,700**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4.7 - I am proud of the work that I do	Pearson Correlation	,527**	,475**	,627**	,609**	,527**	,364**	1	,732**	,487**	,721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.000
Q4.8 - I am immersed in my work	Pearson Correlation	,607**	,650**	,729**	,718**	,682**	,492**	,732**	1	,665**	,850**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
Q4.9 - I get carried away when I am working	Pearson Correlation	,468**	,471**	,519**	,509**	,531**	,460**	,487**	,665**	1	,691**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000
Employee Engagement Total	Pearson Correlation	,864**	,864**	,892**	,873**	,865**	,700**	,721**	,850**	,691**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

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

b. Listwise N=149

## Appendix D: Reliability Test

Effective leader communication

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.931	0.932	8

Psychological safety

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.834	0.837	7

Employee engagement

### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.937	0.936	9

## Appendix E: Factor Analysis

### Effective leader communication

**Correlation Matrix**

		Q2.1 - My senior is a good listener	Q2.2 - My senior pays attention to what other people say to her/him	Q2.3 - My senior typically gets right to the point	Q2.4 - My senior is sensitive to others' needs of the moment	Q2.5 - My senior is easy to talk to	Q2.6 - My senior is easy to understand when she/he speak	Q2.7 - My senior writes in a way that is easy to understand	Q2.8 - My senior expresses her/his ideas clearly
Correlation	Q2.1 - My senior is a good listener	1.000	0.894	0.528	0.743	0.696	0.696	0.585	0.642
	Q2.2 - My senior pays attention to what other people say to her/him	0.894	1.000	0.566	0.740	0.686	0.685	0.560	0.623
	Q2.3 - My senior typically gets right to the point	0.528	0.566	1.000	0.559	0.414	0.605	0.471	0.666
	Q2.4 - My senior is sensitive to others' needs of the moment	0.743	0.740	0.559	1.000	0.681	0.623	0.539	0.632
	Q2.5 - My senior is easy to talk to	0.696	0.686	0.414	0.681	1.000	0.635	0.534	0.593
	Q2.6 - My senior is easy to understand when she/he speak	0.696	0.685	0.605	0.623	0.635	1.000	0.739	0.714
	Q2.7 - My senior writes in a way that is easy to understand	0.585	0.560	0.471	0.539	0.534	0.739	1.000	0.660
	Q2.8 - My senior expresses her/his ideas clearly	0.642	0.623	0.666	0.632	0.593	0.714	0.660	1.000

**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.898
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	945.265
	df	28
	Sig.	0.000

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.448	68.103	68.103	5.448	68.103	68.103
2	0.728	9.105	77.208			
3	0.577	7.214	84.422			
4	0.374	4.670	89.092			
5	0.295	3.689	92.781			
6	0.264	3.305	96.087			
7	0.210	2.630	98.717			
8	0.103	1.283	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

## Psychological safety

**Correlation Matrix**

		Q3.1 - If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you	Q3.2 - Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues	Q3.3 - People on this team sometimes reject others for being different	Q3.4 - It is safe to take a risk on this team	Q3.5 - It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help	Q3.6 - No one on his team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	Q3.7 - Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised
Correlation	Q3.1 - If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you	1.000	0.344	0.432	0.397	0.339	0.416	0.380
	Q3.2 - Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues	0.344	1.000	0.468	0.534	0.456	0.396	0.501
	Q3.3 - People on this team sometimes reject others for being different	0.432	0.468	1.000	0.494	0.504	0.462	0.403
	Q3.4 - It is safe to take a risk on this team	0.397	0.534	0.494	1.000	0.329	0.321	0.365
	Q3.5 - It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help	0.339	0.456	0.504	0.329	1.000	0.363	0.479
	Q3.6 - No one on his team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts	0.416	0.396	0.462	0.321	0.363	1.000	0.507
	Q3.7 - Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilised	0.380	0.501	0.403	0.365	0.479	0.507	1.000

### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.854
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	327.726
	df	21
	Sig.	0.000

### Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.548	50.681	50.681	3.548	50.681	50.681
2	0.770	11.005	61.685			
3	0.726	10.366	72.051			
4	0.626	8.944	80.995			
5	0.545	7.792	88.787			
6	0.411	5.874	94.661			
7	0.374	5.339	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

## Employee engagement

**Correlation Matrix**

		Q4.1 - At my work, I feel bursting with energy	Q4.2 - At my work, I feel strong and vigorous	Q4.3 - I am enthusiastic about my work	Q4.4 - My work inspires me	Q4.5 - When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	Q4.6 - I feel happy when I am working intensely	Q4.7 - I am proud of the work that I do	Q4.8 - I am immersed in my work	Q4.9 - I get carried away when I am working
Correlation	Q4.1 - At my work, I feel bursting with energy	1.000	0.912	0.755	0.710	0.740	0.558	0.527	0.607	0.468
	Q4.2 - At my work, I feel strong and vigorous	0.912	1.000	0.760	0.698	0.732	0.577	0.475	0.650	0.471
	Q4.3 - I am enthusiastic about my work	0.755	0.760	1.000	0.839	0.777	0.523	0.627	0.729	0.519
	Q4.4 - My work inspires me	0.710	0.698	0.839	1.000	0.747	0.565	0.609	0.718	0.509
	Q4.5 - When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	0.740	0.732	0.777	0.747	1.000	0.566	0.527	0.682	0.531
	Q4.6 - I feel happy when I am working intensely	0.558	0.577	0.523	0.565	0.566	1.000	0.364	0.492	0.460
	Q4.7 - I am proud of the work that I do	0.527	0.475	0.627	0.609	0.527	0.364	1.000	0.732	0.487
	Q4.8 - I am immersed in my work	0.607	0.650	0.729	0.718	0.682	0.492	0.732	1.000	0.665
	Q4.9 - I get carried away when I am working	0.468	0.471	0.519	0.509	0.531	0.460	0.487	0.665	1.000

**KMO and Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of		,883
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1164886.000
	df	36
	Sig.	<.001

**Total Variance Explained**

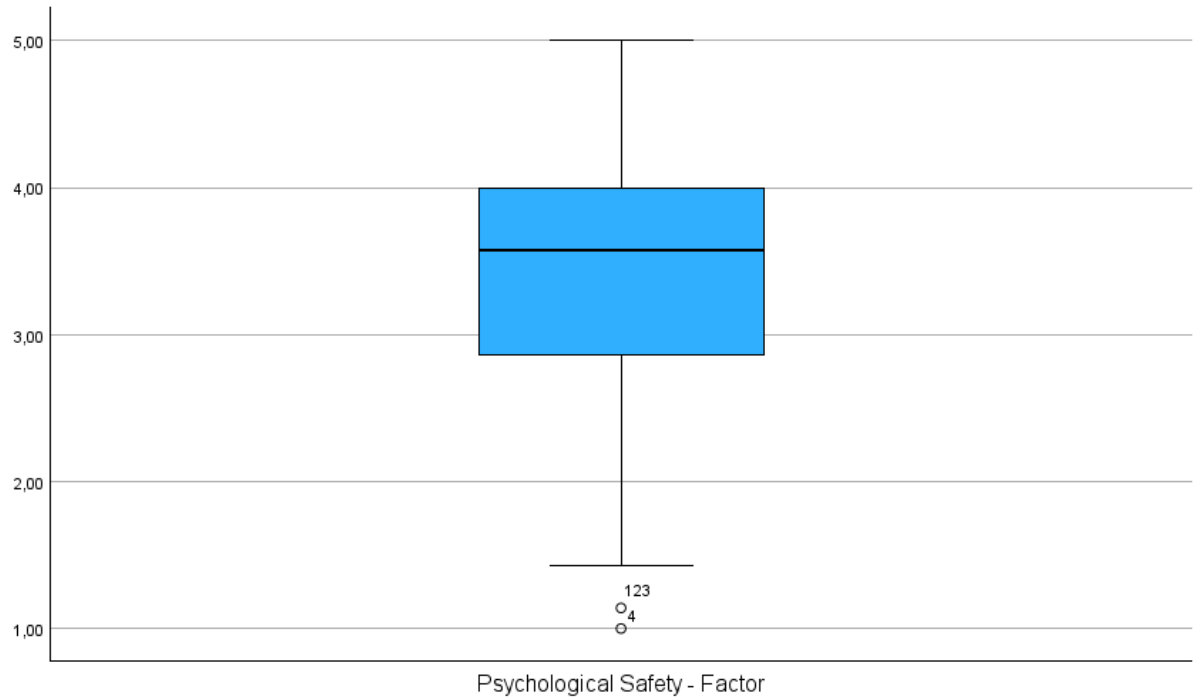
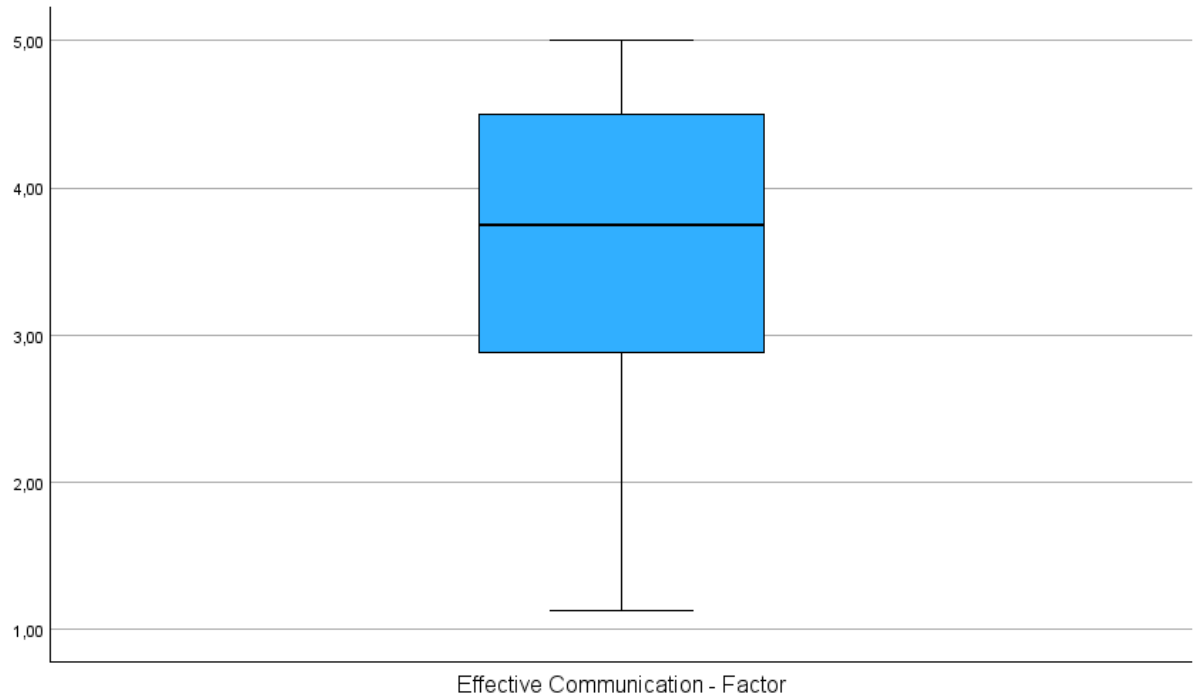
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.014	66.827	66.827	6.014	66.827	66.827
2	0.829	9.209	76.036			
3	0.645	7.166	83.202			
4	0.460	5.106	88.308			
5	0.369	4.100	92.408			
6	0.248	2.754	95.163			
7	0.214	2.375	97.538			
8	0.150	1.670	99.208			
9	0.071	0.792	100.000			

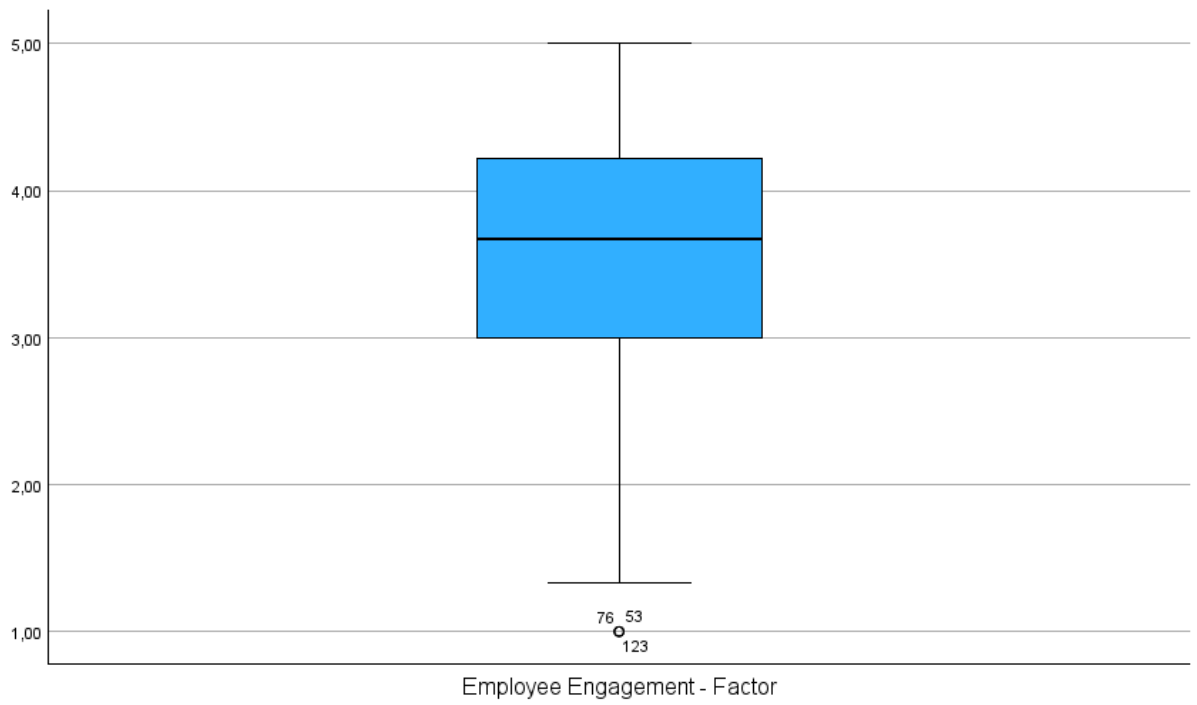
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

## Appendix F: Normality, Outliers and Linear Relationships

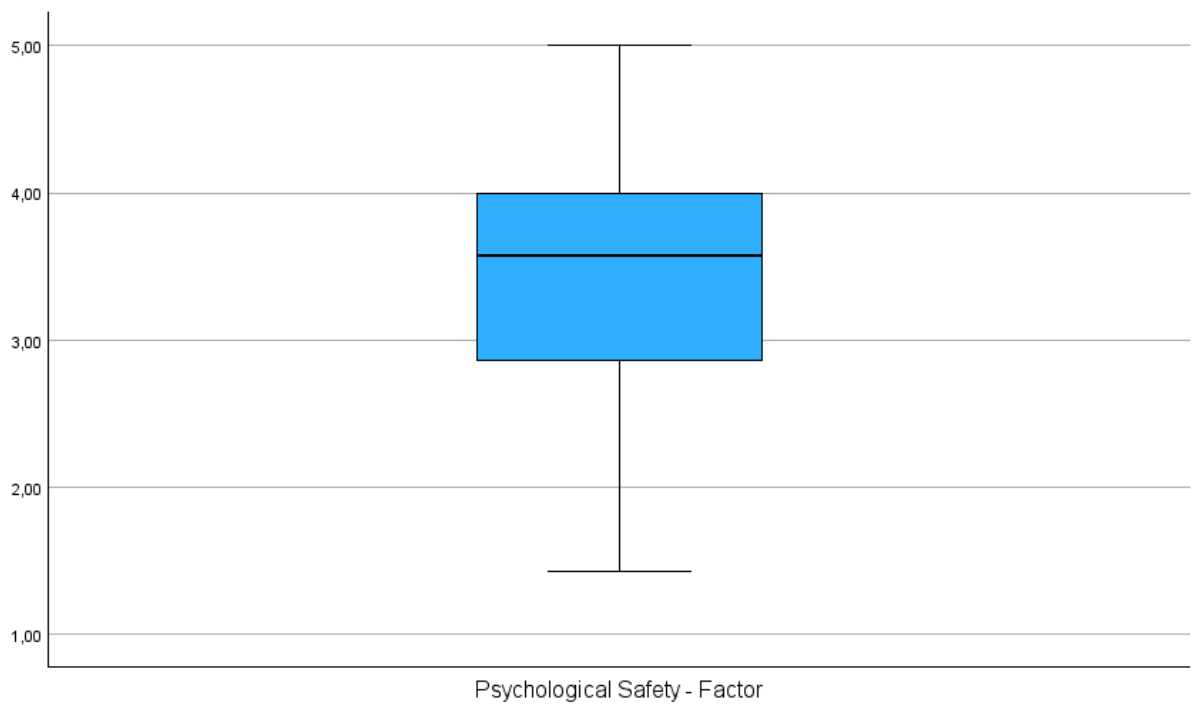
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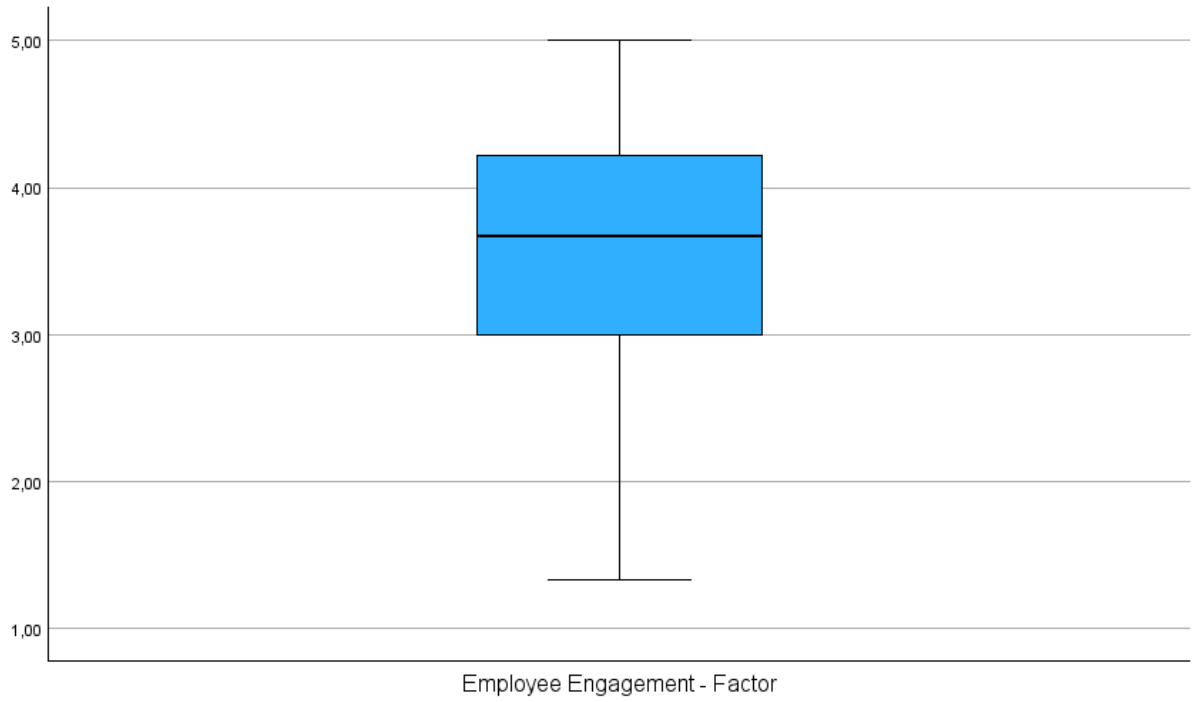
#### Original Boxplots



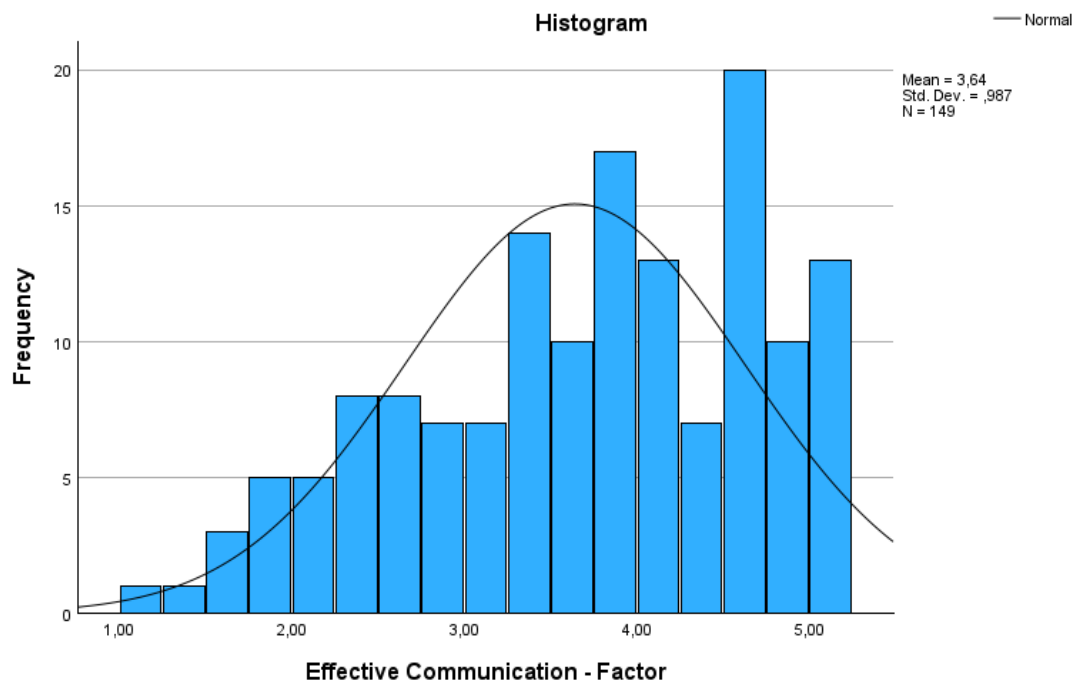


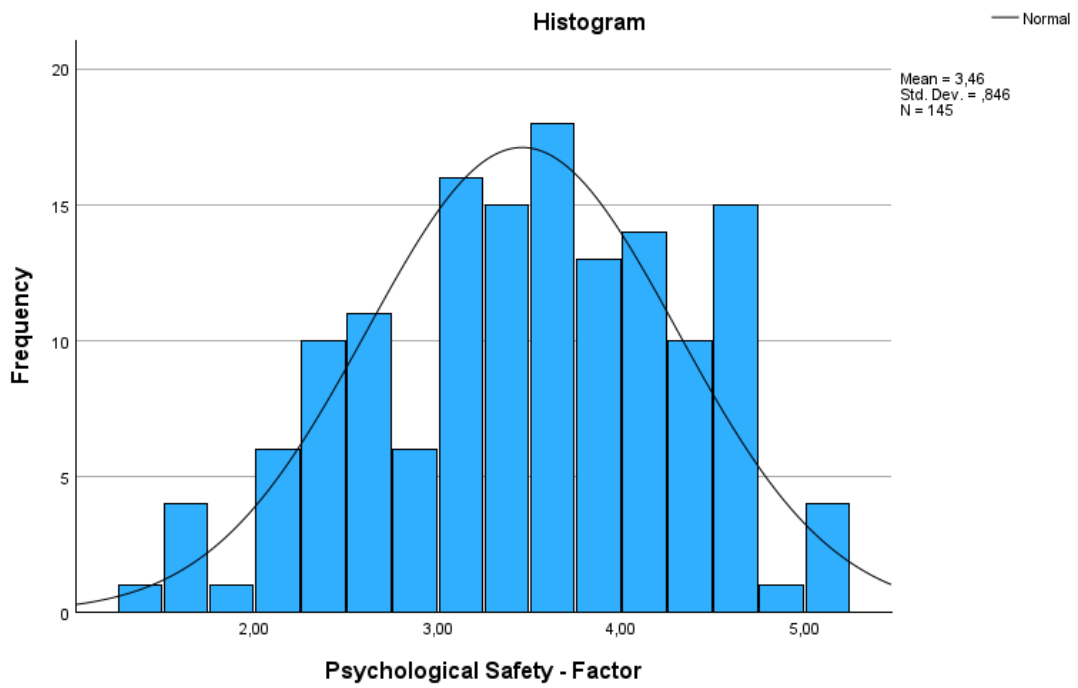
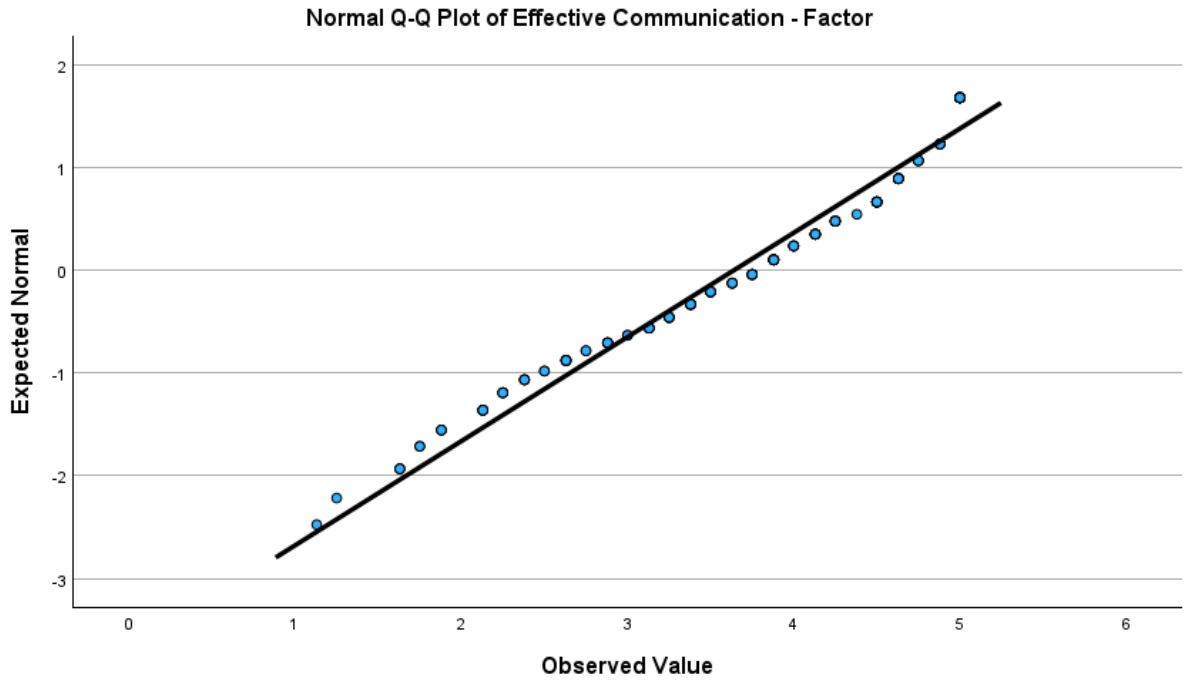
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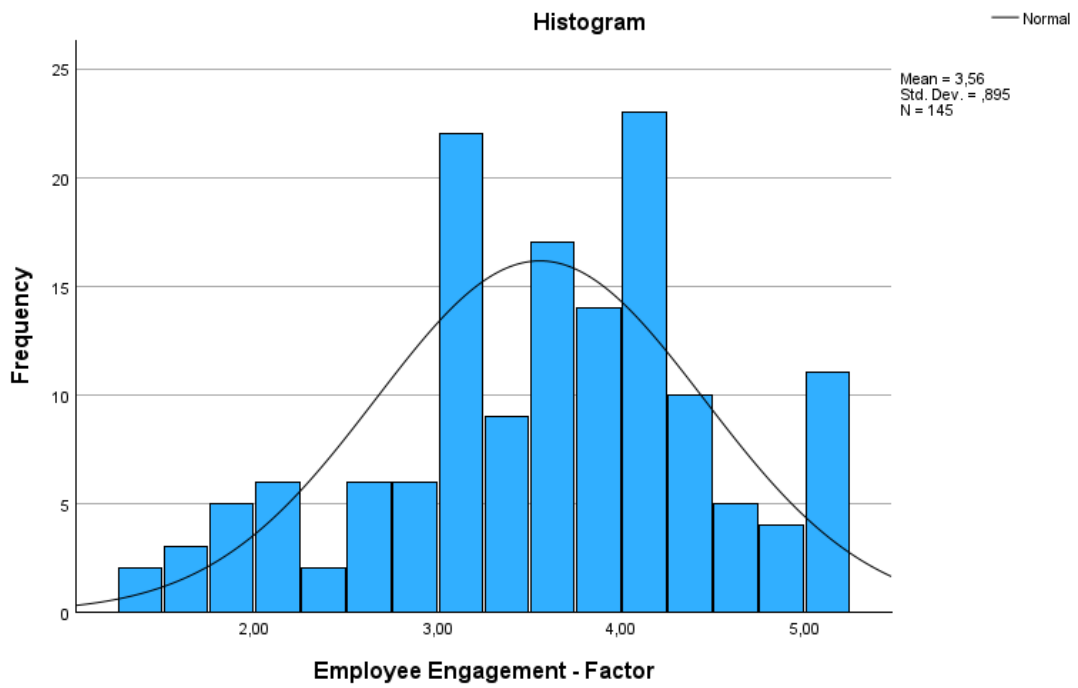
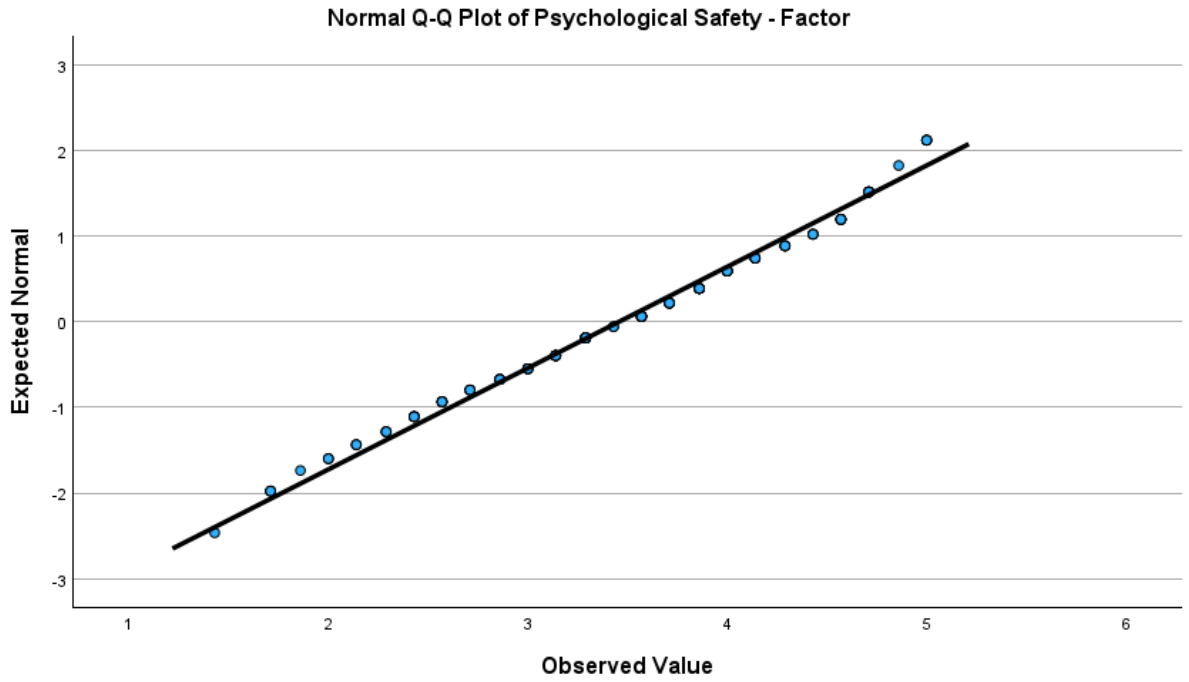


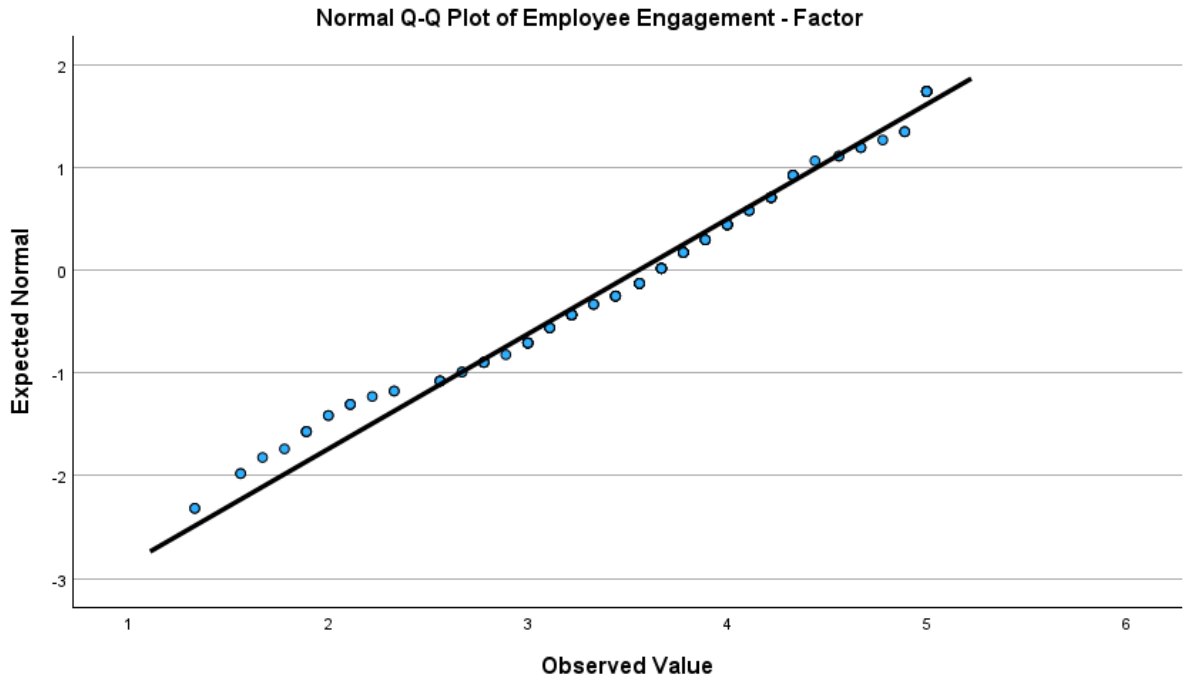


**Normality**

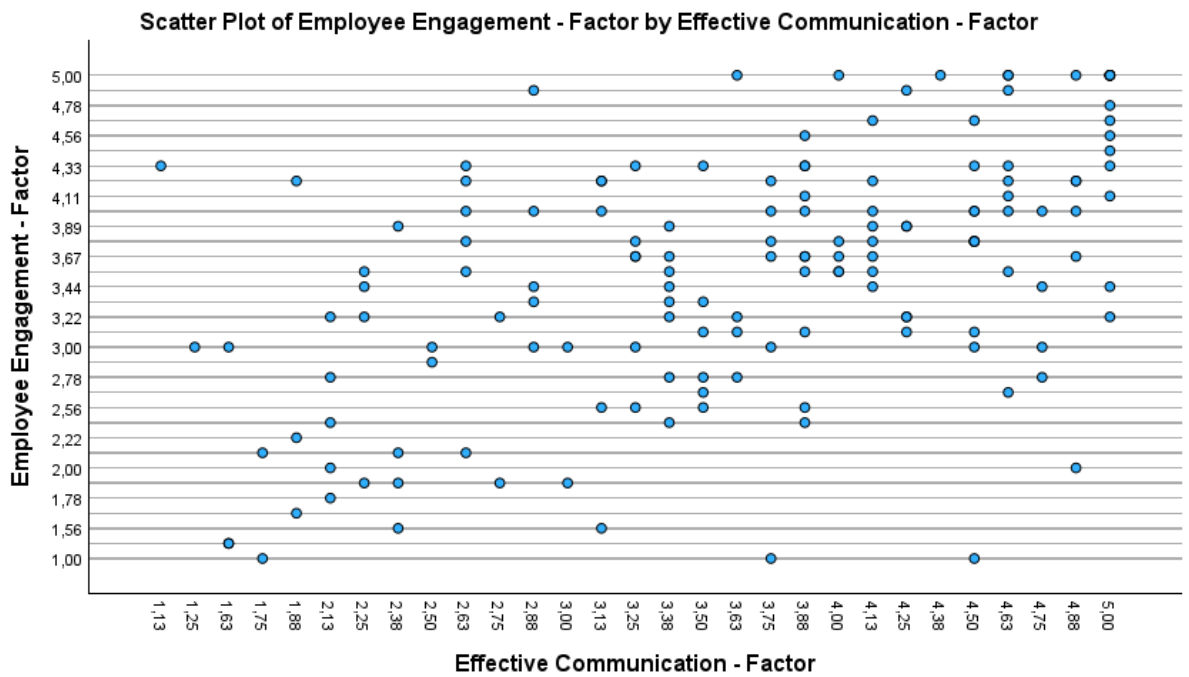




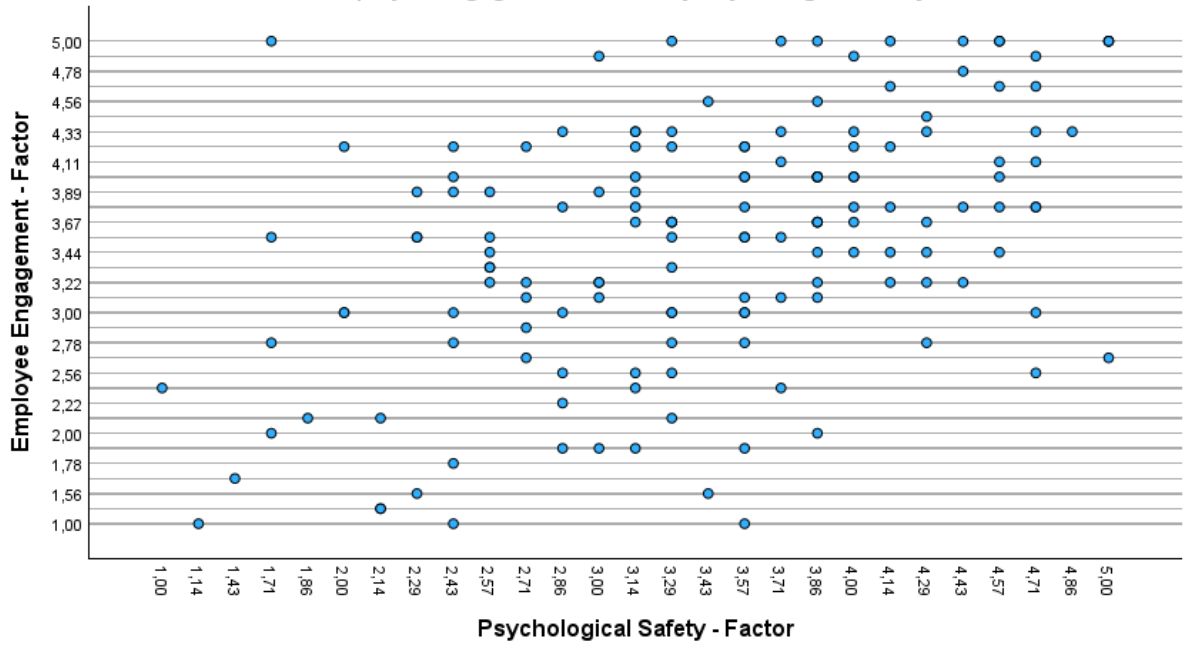




***Linear relationship***



Scatter Plot of Employee Engagement - Factor by Psychological Safety - Factor



**Descriptives**

**Descriptives**

			Statistic	Std. Error
Effective Communication – Factor	Mean		<b>3.6411</b>	<b>0.08085</b>
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	<b>3.4813</b>	
		Upper Bound	<b>3.8008</b>	
	5% Trimmed Mean		<b>3.6812</b>	
	Median		<b>3.7500</b>	
	Variance		<b>0.974</b>	
	Std. Deviation		<b>0.98688</b>	
	Minimum		<b>1.13</b>	
	Maximum		<b>5.00</b>	
	Range		<b>3.87</b>	
	Interquartile Range		<b>1.62</b>	
	Skewness		<b>-0.471</b>	<b>0.199</b>
	Kurtosis		<b>-0.678</b>	<b>0.395</b>
Psychological Safety – Factor	Mean		<b>3.4208</b>	<b>0.07229</b>
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	<b>3.2779</b>	
		Upper Bound	<b>3.5637</b>	
	5% Trimmed Mean		<b>3.4456</b>	
	Median		<b>3.5700</b>	
	Variance		<b>0.779</b>	
	Std. Deviation		<b>0.88242</b>	
	Minimum		<b>1.00</b>	
	Maximum		<b>5.00</b>	
	Range		<b>4.00</b>	
	Interquartile Range		<b>1.14</b>	
	Skewness		<b>-0.328</b>	<b>0.199</b>
	Kurtosis		<b>-0.390</b>	<b>0.395</b>
Employee Engagement – Factor	Mean		<b>3.4961</b>	<b>0.07851</b>
	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	<b>3.3410</b>	
		Upper Bound	<b>3.6513</b>	
	5% Trimmed Mean		<b>3.5357</b>	
	Median		<b>3.6700</b>	
	Variance		<b>0.919</b>	
	Std. Deviation		<b>0.95840</b>	
	Minimum		<b>1.00</b>	
	Maximum		<b>5.00</b>	
	Range		<b>4.00</b>	
	Interquartile Range		<b>1.22</b>	
	Skewness		<b>-0.558</b>	<b>0.199</b>
	Kurtosis		<b>-0.076</b>	<b>0.395</b>

## Appendix G: Ethical Clearance

**Willem Meyer**

---

**From:** Masters Research <MastersResearch@gibs.co.za>  
**Sent:** 14 July 2025 15:23  
**To:** 98061535@mygibs.co.za  
**Cc:** Masters Research  
**Subject:** Ethical Clearance Approved  
**Attachments:** EthicalClearanceReport.pdf

**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance  
Approved**

Dear Willem Meyer,

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

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

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

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.

## Appendix H: Editing Certificate

### *Ricky Woods Academic Editing Services*

#### Editing Certificate

Ricky Woods Academic Editing Services  
Cell: +27 (0)83 3126310  
Email: [rickywoods604@gmail.com](mailto:rickywoods604@gmail.com)

To Whom It May Concern  
University of Pretoria  
Editing of a Research Project


I, Marietjie Alfreda Woods, hereby certify that I have completed the editing and proofreading of the research project **How leadership communication drives employee engagement: The moderating role of psychological safety by Willem Meyer**, which was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree **Master of Business Administration** at the **University of Pretoria**. I believe that the research project meets the grammatical and linguistic requirements for a document of this nature. The following aspects were covered in the process of the editing:

- A full language edit, including grammar, spelling, concord and clumsy expression;
- Reference formatting was checked, according to the stipulated requirements of the APA7 referencing style
- Heading styles were standardised; formatting and pagination were checked;
- The Table of Contents was checked, as were the Lists of Tables and Figures.

Name of Editor: Marietjie Alfreda (Ricky) Woods

Qualifications: BA (Hons) (Wits); Copy-editing and Proofreading (UCT); Editing Principles and Practice (UP); Accredited Text Editor (English) (PEG)

24 October 2025



Ricky Woods  
Full Member  
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