

**STRENGTHENING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THROUGH INTERNAL
COMMUNICATION PRACTICES: A SINGLE CASE STUDY**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Louise van der Hoven, hereby declare that this is my own and personal work, except where the work(s) or publications of others have been acknowledged by means of reference techniques.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software. The result summary is attached.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work or part of it for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is a phenomenon that has gained increasingly more attention in organisational communication studies and also in the postmodern organisational context. In the postmodern organisational environment, employee engagement focuses more on building relationships with employees than on individual performance. However, the value of internal communication practices to enhance employee engagement within a postmodern organisation has still not fully been explored. The study thus investigated, in accordance with what the literature suggests, a single case to test which internal communication practices are perceived as strengthening employee engagement within a postmodern organisation. Consequently, the study adopted a mixed method research approach utilising three research methods, namely a survey, a focus group and semi-structured interviews, to establish which internal communication practices the management of the organisation must adopt to strengthen employee engagement. The worldview adopted for this study was both the positivist and interpretivist research paradigms.

Findings indicate that because the organisation's employees' views are heard, responded to and even form part of the solution, employees become more engaged. In addition, having too many internal communication tools and implementing them without a strategy in place can lead to employees becoming less engaged. Overall, the findings indicate that having a supportive management style, meeting employees' needs and providing enough opportunities for employees to participate in problem-solving are deemed important for employee engagement. Interestingly, the findings show no correlation between the importance of establishing a good organisational culture and enhancing employee engagement in the organisation. Although the findings cannot be generalised to the larger population, the insight gained could serve as a heuristic for similar organisations to strengthen their employee engagement.

Keywords: employee engagement, internal communication, internal communication practices, organisational communication, strategic communication.

ABSTRAK

Werknemerbetrokkenheid is 'n verskynsel wat al hoe meer aandag kry in organisatoriese kommunikasiestudies en ook in die postmoderne organisatoriese konteks. In laasgenoemde konteks word daar meer met werknemerbetrokkenheid gefokus op die bou van verhoudings met werknemers as op individuele prestasie. Die waarde van interne kommunikasiepraktyke om werknemerbetrokkenheid binne 'n postmoderne organisasie te bevorder, is nog steeds nie ten volle ondersoek nie. Daar is dus in die studie, in ooreenstemming met wat die literatuur suggereer, 'n enkele gevallestudie ondersoek om te bepaal watter interne kommunikasiepraktyke beskou word as praktyke wat werknemerbetrokkenheid binne 'n postmoderne organisasie bevorder. Gevolglik is daar in die studie 'n gemengdemetode-navorsingsbenadering aangeneem wat drie navorsingsmetodes insluit, naamlik 'n opname, fokusgroep en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude, met die doel om vas te stel watter interne kommunikasiepraktyke die bestuur van die organisasie moet aanneem om werknemerbetrokkenheid te bevorder. Die wêreldbeskouing wat vir hierdie studie aangeneem is, is sowel die positivistiese as vertolkende navorsingsparadigmas.

Bevindinge dui daarop dat omrede die werknemers van die organisasie se sienings aangehoor word, daarop gereageer word en dit selfs deel van die oplossing uitmaak, werknemers meer betrokke raak. Daarbenewens kan te veel interne kommunikasie-middels en die implementering daarvan sonder 'n strategie daartoe lei dat werknemers minder betrokke raak. Oor die algemeen dui die bevindinge daarop dat 'n ondersteunende bestuurstyl, voldoening aan werknemers se behoeftes en die verskaffing van genoegsame geleentheid vir werknemers om aan probleemoplossing deel te neem, as belangrik geag word vir werknemerbetrokkenheid. Interessant genoeg wys die bevindinge geen korrelasie tussen die belangrikheid daarvan om 'n goeie organisatoriese kultuur te vestig en om werknemerbetrokkenheid in die organisasie te bevorder nie. Hoewel die bevindinge nie veralgemeen kan word om die groter bevolking in te sluit nie, kan die insig wat verkry word as 'n leerproses gebruik word vir soortgelyke organisasies om hulle werknemerbetrokkenheid te bevorder.

Sleutelwoorde: werknemerbetrokkenheid, interne kommunikasie, interne kommunikasiepraktyke, organisatoriese kommunikasie, strategiese kommunikasie.

KAKARETSO

Bonkakarolo ba basebetsi ke ntho e hapileng tlhokomelo e eketsehileng dithutong tsa puisano tsa mekgatlo hape le maemong a morao-rao a mekgatlo. Tikolohong ya morao-rao ya mekgatlo, bonkakarolo ba basebetsi bo shebana haholo le ho haha dikamano le basebetsi ho fapana le tshebetso ya motho ka mong. Leha ho le jwalo, boleng ba ditlwaelo tsa puisano tsa kahare ba ho ntlafatsa bonkakarolo ba basebetsi kahara mekgatlo ya morao-rao ha bo so ka bo hlahlojwa ka botlalo. Kahoo, phuputso e fupuditse ho latela seo dingodilweng di se supang, tlhahlobisiso e le nngwe ya ho lekola hore na ke mekgwa efe ya puisano ya kahare e nkuwang e matlafatsa bonkakarolo ba basebetsi kahara mokgatlo wa kamora nako ya morao-rao. Ka lebaka leo, phuputso e ile ya sebedisa mokgwa o tswakilweng wa dipatlisiso o sebedisang mekgwa e meraro ya dipatlisiso, e leng phuputso, sehlopha seo ho shebanweng le sona le dipuisano tse batlang di hlophisitswe hantle, ho sheba hore na ke mekgwa efe ya puisano ya kahare eo tsamaiso e lokelang ho e amohela ho matlafatsa bonkakarolo ba basebetsi. Maikutlo a lefatshe a amohetsweng phuputsong ena e ne e le a dipatlisiso a bontshang hore tlhokomelo le lebaka ke mekgwa ya kutlwisiso ya boitshwaro ba batho le a dipatlisiso tsa botoloki.

Diphumano di bontsha hore hobane maikutlo a basebetsi ba mokgatlo a utluwa, a arabelwa ebile a etsa karolo ya tharollo, basebetsi ba ikakgela ka setotswana le hofeta. Ntle le moo, ho ba le disebediswa tse ngata haholo tsa puisano tsa kahare le ho di kenya tshebetso ntle le leano ho ka etsa hore basebetsi ba se ke ba sebetsa hantle. Ka kakaretso, diphumano di bontsha hore ho ba le mokgwa wa botsamaisi o tshehetsang, ho fihlela ditlhoko tsa basebetsi le ho fana ka menyetla e lekaneng ho basebetsi ya ho nka karolo tharolong ya mathata ho nkuwa ho le bohlokwa bakeng sa ho nka karolo ha basebetsi. Ho kgahlisang ke hore diphumano ha di bontshe kamano dipakeng tsa bohlokwa ba ho theha setso se hantle sa mokgatlo le ho matlafatsa bonkakarolo ba basebetsi mokgatlong. Leha diphumano e ke ke ya ba tse akaretsang ho batho ba bangata, temohisiso e fumanweng e ka sebetsa e le leano la mekgatlo e tshwanang ho matlafatsa bonkakarolo ba basebetsi ba yona.

Mantswe a sehlooho: bonkakarolo ba basebetsi, puisano ya kahare, mekgwa ya puisano ya kahare, puisano ya mokgatlo, tshebediso e nang le sepheo ya puisano

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND MOTIVATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The role of internal communication in employee engagement is well-documented in the literature (see Chapters 2 and 3). This is also evident in the numerous studies that were conducted linking internal communication as an underlying aspect associated with employee engagement (see, for example, Bridger, 2015:5; Cowan, 2017:75; Karanges, Beatson, Johnston & Lings, 2014; Ragusa, 2010:17; Ruck, 2015:32). Internal communication is thus considered as a part of the organisational context in which employee engagement occurs. In addition, internal communication practices equate to a high level of employee engagement (Hayase, 2009; Ragusa, 2010:17; Ruck, 2015:32).

Despite several studies on the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, there is still a paucity of research that focuses on which internal communication practices are most useful to enhance employee engagement within a postmodern organisation, which this study attempts to address. This was achieved by adopting three research methods, namely a survey, a focus group and semi-structured interviews to establish which internal communication practices are deemed important as well as which practices the management of the organisation must preferably adopt to strengthen employee engagement. This study adds to the body of knowledge in the organisational communication field by presenting theoretical guidelines with practical implications for internal communication practices and employee engagement which similar organisations can use and adapt.

Chapter 1 addresses research questions 1, 2 and 3 and is structured as follows: first, the context of the study is explained, followed by defining the study's key concepts. Thereafter, the goal and objectives of the study are discussed, followed by an overview of the research problem. The research methodology is then explained, as well as the ethical considerations that were taken for this study. Lastly, the demarcation of the

study is illustrated in table format followed by a summary of the chapter.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In this section, the purpose, relevance and background of the study are explained. This is followed by a discussion on the relationship of the topic to the discipline of communication and ends with a summary of other prominent research that was conducted in the field.

1.2.1 Purpose of the study

This study's main purpose is to investigate, in accordance with what the literature suggests, a single case to test which internal communication practices are perceived as important to strengthen employee engagement within a postmodern organisation. JvR Safety was chosen as a case because the researcher followed an information-oriented selection process to study a particular phenomenon in depth, namely internal communication practices and employee engagement. Furthermore, the organisation has adopted a postmodern approach which is in line with the theoretical point of departure of this study (see the detailed discussion in Chapters 2 and 3).

1.2.2 Background of the study

Postmodern organisations today entail new managerial practices to warrant that business processes are meaningful to organisations (Lacan, 2019:1). Different to the modern era, which focused on economic competency and output, the postmodern environment values creativity in the organisation, emotional connection between employees and between employees and management, and a balance in personal and work life. In the postmodern organisation, managers must adapt their approach to employee expectations, and focus more on the management of relationships rather than on employee performance control.

Instead of exercising the power that comes with their position, managers need to utilise their authority to build happiness by creating a work space where trust and caring are involved. In this manner, managers have to use the appropriate internal communi-

cation practices to convey information in a meaningful way in order to regulate working relationships and to serve as leaders (Lacan, 2019:1). Against this background, the study not only proposes but also tests internal communication practices deemed important for employee engagement in the context of a postmodern organisation.

1.2.3 Relevance of the study

This study is relevant because the topic remains contemporary and requires further investigation. This is especially important pertaining to how organisations could adopt useful internal communication practices to better address employees' needs in order to improve their employee engagement and to ensure the organisation's success. Also, although the findings cannot be generalised to the larger population, the findings can guide similar organisations on which internal communication practices should receive more attention in the organisation to strengthen employee engagement. In addition, the study opens up opportunities for further research and debate.

1.2.4 Relationship of the topic to the discipline of communication

This research problem is relevant to the communication science discipline as this study deals with internal communication as the main focus, along with employee engagement, which are specialised areas within the field of organisational communication. This study adds to the body of existing knowledge in the organisational communication field since it isolates internal communication practices deemed important for employee engagement in a postmodern organisational setting, which similar organisations could use and adapt.

1.5.2 Other research in the field

A search in UNISA's Nexus and Sabinet databases indicates that while there are numerous studies on the topic of the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement, there is a paucity of research concentrating specifically on which internal communication practices can be associated with enhancing employee engagement within a postmodern organisation. Other prominent research in the field includes the well-cited study by Hayase (2009) which sought to investigate whether

there is a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. The results indicated that there is a positive relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. Another recent study conducted in this field of research is the study of Grant (2019) which explored strategies that business leaders could use in order to achieve employee engagement. While the study focused on employee engagement, it did not include the topic of internal communication practices.

This topic is thus not over-researched as most existing literature refers to employee engagement within organisations in terms of the communication implications, the influence of management on employee engagement and employee satisfaction. In the next section, the main concepts are defined to contextualise the study.

1.3 DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS

In this section, the main concepts relevant to this study are conceptualised, namely employee engagement, internal communication, internal communication practices, organisational communication, postmodernism, and strategic communication.

1.3.1 Employee engagement

According to Cook (2008:3), employee engagement is embodied by the fervour and energy employees have to offer to the organisation in order to serve the consumer. It is all about the capability and willingness of employees to give continued unrestricted effort to assist the organisation in succeeding (Cook, 2008:3). Ruck (2015:32) explains that internal communication has been identified as an underlying aspect associated with employee engagement, since it is part of the organisational context in which employee engagement occurs. Lastly, the view that employees have of how effective internal communication is within an organisation links to the level of those employees' engagement; in other words, the better the internal communication, the higher the level of engagement (Ragusa, 2010:17).

1.3.2 Internal communication

Malan and Smit (2001:205) states that internal communication is “any form of communication that occurs within an organisation; it can be formal as in the circumstance of ethical statements or it can be informal as in casual dialogue, or even information communicated through the organisation in the form of gossip”. Also, Ragusa (2010:17) ties internal communication to employee engagement, arguing that a more symmetrical communication process within an organisation assists in developing employees as a part of the organisation’s corporate service brand, thus enhancing employees’ sense of meaning within an organisation and increasing their engagement. Ragusa (2010:17) further adds that the level of organisational communication, as perceived by employees, links to employees’ level of engagement; the better the communication, the higher the level of engagement. Ragusa’s arguments are supported in this study because of the clear link that is being made between internal communication and employee engagement.

1.3.3 Internal communication practices

Internal communication practices refer to all communication efforts that occur within an organisation between management and employees (Lee, 2014:147). It is proposed that some of the core internal communication practices that must be in place to strengthen employee engagement are evident in the following seven constructs:

- An effective internal communication strategy;
- Having the right engagement tools available;
- Having a supportive management style within the organisation;
- Adhering to employees’ needs within the organisation;
- Having opportunities available for employees to participate in problem-solving;
- Establishing a good organisational culture.

1.3.4 Organisational communication

Angelopulo and Barker (2013:14) argue that there is a separation in the definition of

organisational communication; on the one side it can be seen as the distribution of meaning and information throughout the organisation and the scenery that surrounds the organisation; on the other side it can be defined as the process of participation through which the meaning and knowledge of the organisation are shaped, sustained, conducted and changed. As is evident, there are numerous perspectives on what organisational communication entails and should be. For this particular study, the view of Angelopulo and Barker (2013) is supported because it highlights the fact that there is a separation in the definition between meaning creation and collaboration. Both these concepts of communication science indicate how employees within the organisation engage with one another in the form of communication.

1.3.5 Strategic communication

Stanton (2017:71) defines strategic communication “as communicating decisively to develop the organisation’s mission”. Strategic communication also suggests that employees are engaged in careful communication practices on behalf of organisations, causes and social movements. Strategic communication is also defined as “the practice of careful and purposive communication that a communication agent endorses in a public domain on behalf of a communicative unit to reach set goals” (Scott & Lewis, 2017:2251).

1.3.6 Theoretical position adopted for the study

The theoretical point of departure for this study is anchored in postmodern theory. Postmodern theory challenges the dominant assumptions of how organisations are supposed to operate in the world. It explains that organisational communication is a means by which the discourses of an organisation’s different interests are tested (Shmitz, 2012). In doing so, some organisational discourses dictate while others are disregarded (Shmitz, 2012). In this regard, Diefenbach (2013:176) argues that there is rather some hope that these postmodern, team-centred or even family-like manners of organising work would bring new methods of employee engagement, commitment and motivation.

1.4 THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal and objectives of the study are as follows:

1.4.1 Goal of the study

The goal of the study is applied communication research which can be viewed as an ongoing cycle of six interrelated sets of research activities, starting with problem identification as the first stage, conceptualisation the second stage, stage three, operationalisation, stage four, measurement, stage five, data analysis, and lastly, stage six, recommendation (O'Hair & Kreps, 2013).

1.4.2 Objectives

According to Rios and del Campo (2013:41), a research objective is defined as a "declaration of purpose for which the study is to be conducted". It is a declaration of purpose because this is the guide to be mastered by the researcher in conducting his/her research project. This study will be exploratory in that it is directed to investigate the topic or issue in order to develop insight and ideas about its fundamental nature (McNabb, 2010:96). It will also be descriptive in that it will focus on providing a precise description or picture of the status or features of a certain state (Johnson & Christensen, 2012:366). The objectives of this study are as follows:

Objective 1: To describe how to strengthen employee engagement with internal communication practices to help a postmodern organisation succeed.

Objective 2: To explore perceptions of how employee engagement should be dealt with by management through internal communication practices at JvR Safety.

Objective 3: To explore the ways in which employee engagement can be strengthened with the application of a postmodern approach.

1.5 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Jonker and Penink (2010:13) describe a research problem as the result of a thought process conducted by the researcher to interpret the phenomenon to be studied into

a scientific, researchable, and relevant research problem.

1.5.1 Research problem statement

The research problem statement for the study is as follows:

To investigate by means of a mixed method cross-sectional single case study approach how to strengthen employee engagement with internal communication practices in order to enhance a postmodern organisation's success.

1.5.2 Research questions

A research question establishes exactly what needs to be observed, why it needs to be observed, and under what settings it should take place (Kolb, 2008:70). The central research questions for this study are depicted below, followed by the study's sub-questions:

Central research question: Which internal communication practices are deemed important for employee engagement in a postmodern organisation?

Sub-question 1: How can employee engagement be strengthened with internal communication practices to help a postmodern organisation succeed?

Sub-question 2: What are the perceptions of how management should deal with employee engagement through internal communication practices at JvR Safety?

Sub-question 3: In which way can employee engagement be strengthened with the application of a postmodern approach?

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a single case study approach which included following several case study protocols. A single case study can be defined as "in-depth, detailed studies of a single object or a small quantity of objects" (Irwin, Pannbacker & Lass, 2014:187). The object can be a family, individual, group, organisation, social unit or community. For this study, the object was an organisation named JvR Safety.

The case study protocol is discussed in detail in 5, but includes providing an overview

of the case study project explaining field measures provided such as the use of various sources of information and access arrangements to these sources (Rowley, 2002:22). Lastly, the study's research questions (see section 1.5.2) were kept in mind while collecting data (Rowley, 2002:22).

1.6.1 Research paradigm adopted for this study

The worldview (research paradigm) adopted for this study is both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms (as discussed in detail in Chapter 5, section 5.2.1). Firstly, according to Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2011:39), scholars who adopt the positivist research paradigm argue that the world occurs autonomously of people's perceptions of it and that science utilises objective methods to determine what occurs in the world. The positivist worldview is anchored in the quantitative part of the study (the survey).

Secondly, scholars who adopt the interpretivist research paradigm observe social reality as having an objective element and as ascending out of the formation and exchange of social meanings during the course of social interaction. The worldview of the interpretivist research paradigm focuses on qualitative research methods in an effort to obtain access to personal, subjective experiences of participants (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The interpretivist worldview is anchored in the qualitative part of the study (the interviews and focus group).

1.6.2 Research approach

This study adopts the mixed method research approach. According to Creswell and Clark (2011:4), mixed method research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers merge elements of qualitative and quantitative research methods (for example utilisation of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, and analysis inference techniques) for the purpose of breadth and depth of comprehension and association (see the detailed discussion in Chapter 5, section 5.2.2).

1.6.3 Research methods

The three methods that were used for this single case study are surveys, semi-structured interviews and a focus group (see section 5.6.2 in Chapter 5).

1.6.3.1 Survey research

Survey research is one of the most imperative parts of measurement in applied social research. The broad area of survey research encompasses any measurement events that include asking questions of respondents. A “survey” can vary from a short paper-and-pencil feedback form to a rigorous one-on-one in-depth interview (Rossi, Wright & Anderson, 2010:69).

1.6.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

O’Hara, Carter, Dewis, Kay and Wainwright (2011:169) explain that an interview can be defined as “a type of dialogue that is introduced by the interviewer in order to acquire research relevant information”. Interviews are usually conducted on a one-to-one basis in which the interviewer gathers information from the interviewee. Interviews can take place telephonically or face to face. Interviews can also be conducted via non-real-time methods such as email, but in such cases function like a questionnaire. Interviews are useful for gaining in-depth information that is hard to gather through approaches such as looking at background information and attempting to work on general principles alone (King & Horrocks, 2010:42).

1.6.3.3 Focus group

Davis (2017:1) suggests that a focus group can be defined as “group discussions focused on a particular situation or topic”. A focus group allows researchers to assess how people communicate about or interact about a topic of interest in a group environment. It is important to clarify the difference between a focus group and other types of interviews. Unlike individual interviews, the participant’s individual view is not the key focus but the group’s collective views are recorded, which is an important

distinction. A focus group comprises small groups, ranging anywhere from six to 12 participants, who come together for an in-depth conversation on a particular topic. A focus group is traditionally conducted face-to-face, but nowadays is often also conducted via telephone, Skype or other electronic means such as Google Hangouts (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013:93).

1.6.4 Population

A population is all those units (individuals, organisations, things, proceedings etc.) that are the emphasis of interest of the research or evaluation study. The population is defined by the research question and/or hypothesis (Wallace & Van Fleet, 2012:145). In this study, the population is all employees at organisations similar to the JvR Africa Group.

1.6.4.1 Target population

According to McBride (2012:136), the target population is the population that the researcher wants to simplify the results of the sample study to. The target population for this particular study is all the employees at JvR Safety.

1.6.4.2 Accessible population

Furthermore, an accessible population refers to the population to which the researcher has access to use as the sample pool (McBride, 2012:136). The accessible population for the survey was a census of 20 respondents (all employees), six participants for the interviews and six participants for one focus group. Considering how many employees work at the organisation (JvR Safety), all employees, including both managers and employees, were used for the survey, interviews and focus group. Statistical correlations and any value out of the data gathered are thus only applicable to JvR Safety (Ruel, Wagner & Gillespie, 2016:17).

JvR Safety, a division of the JvR Africa Group, was chosen as a case because the researcher followed an information-oriented selection process to study a particular

phenomenon in depth, namely internal communication practices and employee engagement (see Widdowson, 2011). In addition, the researcher also has access to the organisation, which means that the researcher could form a holistic argument based on the facts that the researcher could attain (see Chapter 4, section 4.2).

It should be noted that, due to restructuring of the organisation during the course of the study, the accessible population was much smaller than initially anticipated but nevertheless provides rich information to address the study's research questions.

1.6.5 Sample method and unit of analysis

The sampling method that was used for the six interviews and one focus group was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is defined by Davis and Pecar (2013:191) as “a sampling method in which individuals are chosen based on the purpose of the study”. As with other non-probability sampling methods, purposive sampling does not give a sample that represents a larger population, but it can be precisely what is required in some instances, such as the study of an organisation (Davis & Pecar, 2013:191). However, for the survey, a census of all employees was used.

Furthermore, Tight (2016:112) refers to a unit of analysis as that which is studied, which could be an individual, community, family, organisation, a state, or even a nation. The unit of analysis for this particular study is the employees at JvR Safety and thus individuals. These individuals include both managers and employees at this organisation.

1.6.6 Data collection

A cross-sectional time frame was appropriate for this study as it was not necessary to collect data over several periods of time. The data collection techniques that were used for this single case study included a self-administered online questionnaire, interview schedule for semi-structured interviews and a moderator's guide for one focus group. These data collection techniques were deemed suitable for this study because the quantitative approach objectively tested employees' and managers' perceptions while the qualitative approach allowed for rich information to triangulate

the data to answer the study's research questions. In addition, the mixed-method research approach not only strengthened but also clarified the results. See the detailed steps of the data collection process as explained in Chapter 5, section 5.6.3.

1.6.7 Data analysis

As discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.9.2), the data for the questionnaire were analysed by means of descriptive statistics as well as a bivariate analysis. Pearson's product-movement correlation coefficient was first calculated to test the strength of the relationship between the variable employee engagement and the different internal communication practices variables that became evident in the literature. This was followed by a multiple regression analysis to test which of the internal communication variables predict employee engagement. It was important to determine which internal communication practices increase employee engagement.

The data for the interviews and focus group were analysed by following a hybrid approach for a qualitative thematic analysis using the ATLAS.ti software. This means that coding was first done deductively by considering the proposed theoretical guidelines in section 3.3 in Chapter 3, and then inductively to uncover any additional underlying ideas (see Braun & Clarke, 2006).

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following ethical considerations were attended to in this study:

1.7.1 Confidentiality

The researcher declares to have read and understood the ethical principles set out in UNISA's policy on research ethics, and applied for ethical clearance. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the promise of confidentiality is the agreement on methods to prevent others from accessing any data that might identify them. Thus, the researcher handled this matter with care by informing, before the study was conducted, all respondents completing the questionnaires and all participants partaking in the interviews and focus group that they did not need to reveal their identities at any point

during the research as it is strictly confidential and that they would stay totally anonymous. The researcher will maintain the confidentiality of all data collected from the research participants.

1.7.2 Informed consent

Informed consent is an ethical principle inferring a responsibility on the part of the researcher to strive to ensure that those individuals involved in the research not only agree and consent to participate in the research of their own free choice, without being forced or influenced, but also that they are fully informed about what it is that they are consenting to. For this study, the researcher ensured that she had the informed consent of all the individuals prior to participating in the study.

1.7.3 Ethical clearance

The study received ethical clearance from UNISA’s College of Human Sciences’ Ethics Committee on 26 November 2018 (see Addendum D).

1.8 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

The dissertation is structured as follows to address the study’s research questions:

CHAPTER	RESEARCH QUESTION ADDRESSED
CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND MOTIVATION Explaining the context, goals and objectives of the study.	Sub questions 1, 2 and 3
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUALISING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION The literature review where the study’s position on internal communication and some important concepts related to internal communication are discussed.	Sub-question 1
CHAPTER 3: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	Sub-questions 1 and 2

<p>This chapter elaborates on the context of the study, with a strong focus on employee engagement.</p>	
<p>CHAPTER 4: THE CASE STUDY: EXPLAINING THE SELECTED ORGANISATION</p> <p>Explains why the organisation was selected for the case followed by a discussion of how JvR Safety fits into the hierarchical structure of the JvR Africa Group.</p>	<p>Sub-question 3</p>
<p>CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND OPERATIONALISATION</p> <p>Discusses the study's research design and operationalisation as well as explaining the single case as the chosen research methodology</p>	<p>Sub-question 1</p>
<p>CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS</p> <p>Focuses on the reporting and interpretation of the qualitative and quantitative findings.</p>	<p>Sub-questions 1, 2 and 3</p>
<p>CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>Discusses the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study's research questions are also answered based on the overall triangulated findings including the solution to the research problem that was posed.</p>	<p>Sub-questions 1, 2 and 3</p>

1.9 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter discussed the context of the study and defined the key concepts. The goal and objectives of the study were deliberated with a focus on the research problem and statement. The research methodology that was used for this study was explained, as well as the ethical considerations that were attended to in this study. Lastly, a summary of the demarcation of this study was illustrated in table format

to provide clarification on how the study's research questions were addressed. In the next chapter, Chapter 2, the concept of internal communication is contextualised.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALISING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the study's position on internal communication and some important concepts related to internal communication are discussed. Firstly, the different perspectives of internal communication are reviewed. Then, it is clarified why internal communication is seen as part of strategic communication and which definition of internal communication is adopted for this study. The literature review also includes a discussion on the importance of the internal stakeholders in internal communication. Furthermore, the different directions of communication flow within an organisation are explained, as well as the difference between formal and informal communication. The significance of an internal communication strategy is discussed and the three main internal communication strategies are highlighted. The internal communication tools that exist for more engagement, as well as how internal communication tools have been affected and changed since the rise of technology, are explained and a comparison is illustrated between traditional communication tools and online communication tools. Lastly, postmodern theory, which is the theoretical position that is adopted for this study, is examined, as well as the theoretical foundation which will be used within postmodern theory called the social exchange theory. This chapter addresses Sub-question 1.

2.2 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

There are various perspectives on where internal communication is located in the communication science discipline, of which the most prominent are organisational communication, strategic public relations, strategic communication and corporate communication. These perspectives first need to be explained to contextualise the study's point of departure in terms of internal communication.

The first perspective of internal communication is that it resembles but is not identical to intra-organisational communication within the field of organisational communication. Organisational communication can be defined as “a complex and continuous procedure through which members in an organisation produce, sustain and alter the organisation”. Verma (2013:155) explains that intra-organisational communication can be defined as “the dimension of communication that is utilised to distribute information, in written or verbal format within the organisation”. Sharma and Mohan (2011:77) add that intra-organisational communication is the communication that an organisation has with its internal shareholders such as employees, directors and managers, board members, associates and sponsors. It may be executed in written, verbal, audio or video method in various forms such as through presentation, e-mail, document, memorandum, poster, SMS, teleconferencing, videoconferencing, podcast and webcast. Intra-organisational communication systems utilising the written word are exemplified by magazines, newsletters, bulletins and notice-boards, email and websites (Verma, 2015:17). The aim should be to make sensible use of a number of channels to ensure that the messages get delivered; email in particular should be controlled with care because it can be utilised as legal documentation (Verma, 2015:17). However, in this study, the researcher will refer to internal communication instead of intra-organisational communication because intra-organisational communication focuses more on the organisation (top management) getting a message across to the rest of the organisation/employees. On the other hand, internal communication focuses more on the communication between employees as well as the communication between management and employees and the other way around. Internal communication is thus a better fit for this study as it has a closer link with employees and how it affects their engagement than intra-organisational communication does.

The second perspective is called strategic public relations. It is suggested by Austin and Pinkleton (2015:1) that strategic public relations planning and research methods have grown into the most influential tools accessible to public relations experts, such as methods that make use of the internet and computer programmes that aid data entry and analysis. For this reason, campaign success obliges experts to exhibit in a quantifiable manner how the results from the public relations initiatives are of value to their organisations. Experts well equipped to utilise the tools obtainable to them, such

as online communication tools, social media and data capturing tools, can have bigger budgets, more independence in decision-making, and better support from management. On the other hand, managers who depend on a spontaneous model of public relations based on their knowledge of media markets and well-developed network of connections have less reliability, less autonomy, obtain lower priority, and suffer bigger risk of cost cutting that intimidates job security. One of the most important reasons why internal communication forms part of strategic public relations is that employees are among those groups that are vital to an organisation. Thus, depending on employees' view of the organisation, employees will communicate either positive or negative messages to other imperative groups of the organisations, such as members of the community, stakeholders or even consumers (Austin & Pinkleton, 2015:1).

The third perspective is corporate communication, which is an instrument for evolving and managing a set of relationships with external shareholders who could have an effect on the general performance of the organisation. These relationships should be regarded in a long-term strategic manner. Corporate communication can be regarded as a management function that is accountable for supervising and organising the work done by communication practitioners in various specialist disciplines such as public relations and internal communication (Cornelissen, 2016:55).

The last perspective of internal communication is called strategic communication, which, according to Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2015:4), can be defined in its widest sense as "communicating decisively to develop an organisation's mission". They also explain that strategic communication suggests that individuals will be engaged in intentional communication practices on behalf of organisations, causes and social activities.

The position of internal communication that is adopted for this study is that internal communication is part of strategic communication, since the focus is more on the communication between employees within the organisation and how they deliberately communicate with one another in order to engage with the goal of developing an organisation's mission. Consequently, the concept of strategic communication is explained in the next section.

2.3 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Stanton (2017:71) defines strategic communication “as communicating decisively to develop the organisation’s mission”. Strategic communication also suggests that employees are engaged in careful communication practices on behalf of organisations, causes and social movements. Strategic communication is further defined as “the practice of careful and purposive communication that a communication agent endorses in a public domain on behalf of a communicative unit to reach set goals” (Scott & Lewis, 2017:2251).

Consequently, it can be argued that being strategic does not automatically mean being calculating, because communication practitioners often come to the decision that being all-encompassing and co-operative will be more strategic and efficient than upholding attitudes and influencing the behaviours towards issues, products or services, which remains the key outcome for strategic communication (Scott & Lewis, 2017:2251).

Allan (2017:1679) expands on this by stating that for communication to be seen as strategic, firstly, the envisioned goal of the communication should be carefully defined. The goal must address who will be reached by the communication, what the employees of the organisation presently think or how the employees presently act, and how the employees may change when receiving the communication. Internal communication is thus a very important part of strategic communication and should be a consideration for the way in which the strategy will be executed with the use of internal communication efforts (Rogala & Bialowas, 2016:153).

Also, another vital part of strategic communication is micro corporate social responsibility which focuses on employee wellbeing. Micro corporate social responsibility can be defined as “the combination of several responsibilities organisations has to society” (Rupp & Mallory 2015). It was found that employees who worked for organisations engaged in corporate social responsibility acknowledged an increased number of positive attitudes, which included increased organisational and job commitment, work satisfaction and organisational identification (Rupp & Mallory 2015).

A case in point is Walker (2015:317) who identified 16 crucial strategic communication practices within organisations that link with internal communication. These practices are clustered into three categories, namely strategy, implementation, and support and alignment. Strategy includes the essential tasks of communication planning and strategy development. Implementation includes practices most communal to an organisation with a dynamic communication function. Support and alignment include non-communication practices within the organisation that assist in ensuring that the communication function succeeds. The strategic communication practices for each category are as follows. Firstly, the strategic communication practices for the strategy category are: to recognise the vision, select the goals and consequences, choose a target audience, create messages, identify reliable messengers, select communication channels and media, identify the setting and opposition. Secondly, the strategic communication practices for the implantation category are to develop efficient resources, build respected relationships, educate the messengers, conduct a stable outreach and monitor and assess. Lastly, the strategic communication practices for the support and integration category are to support communication at the management level, allocate adequate resources, integrate communication effectively throughout the organisation and improve employees at all levels.

2.3.1 How strategic communication addresses the postmodern approach

As mentioned in section 1.3.6 the theoretical point of departure for this study is anchored in postmodern theory. Stuart (2013) explains that organisations are seen as social establishments rather than money-oriented ones, therefore, the postmodern theory challenges the supposition of fundamental organisational authority and the power relationships that goes with it (which are generally patriarchal in nature). The postmodern theory argues that it is a decent thing when power is spread throughout the organisation rather than dominated by top management (Stuart, 2013). This links to how communication should strategically be spread evenly throughout the organisation, to each and every employee without exclusions.

Likewise, with the postmodern approach, new forms of pluralistic or non-hierarchical organisations are now possible (Crowther, 2018).

2.4 ADOPTING A DEFINITION OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Apart from where internal communication is located in communication science, there are numerous views of what internal communication (also often referred to as employee communication and internal marketing) entails and what it should be. These diverse views are evident in existing definitions. Lee (2014:147) defines internal communication as “any form of communication that occurs within an organisation; it can be formal as in the circumstance of ethical statements or it can be informal as in casual dialogue, or even information communicated through the organisation in the form of gossip”.

FitzPatrick and Valskov (2014:7) suggest that internal communication is all about the distribution of information, developing understanding, generating enthusiasm and devotion and preferably attaining a desirable outcome. Their general academic definition states that internal communication is “the strategic use of communication activities to analytically effect the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of existing employees (FitzPatrick & Valskov, 2014:7). According to FitzPatrick and Valskov (2014:7), the main aspects that became evident when writing a definition is that internal communication is:

- Planned – this is not a random or unintentional procedure.
- Systematic – it is a procedure that applies some science and regulation.
- About influence – employees cannot always be obligated to do things; they have a decision about what they do and how well they do it, so this means that they have to be convinced.
- More than ‘telling’ – even though awareness is a vital starting point for any communications campaign, organisations should also be concerned with altering attitudes and behaviours. It is crucial to win over the heads and hearts of employees, so that they are committed to the change that will take place. These are the fundamentals of communication planning, resembling the common belief that professional communication professionals are not in the business of making rackets for the sake of it.
- Multidisciplinary – it is difficult to evade the fact that information alone is not a

solid driver of behaviour in the organisation. Managers should expect to work closely with employees across the organisation to guarantee that employees are skilled, rewarded, driven and resourced to do the job being required of them.

Additionally, the practice of internal communication can better an organisation's culture by endorsing engagement through open communication. For example, McLoughlin (2014:98) explains that open communication refers to the aptitude of any employee in equivalent circumstances to have access to and share communication resources on one level in order to offer value-added facilities on another level in a layered communication scheme. McLoughlin (2014:98) emphasises that internal communication that allows for open communication enables organisational trust, which is built mainly on the way that a leader advances the culture of communication.

Similarly, Lee (2014:148) argues that efficient internal communication can generate trust between employees and management within an organisation. In one study that was conducted at an organisation, employees recognised a need for more internal communications; this includes face-to-face appointments, an increase in directness, better listening, improved communication when it comes to sending emails, an increased appreciation from managers' side for the work that employees do, and coaching in communication in order to empower and engage employees (Lee 2014:148). Employees' view of how effective internal communication is within an organisation links to the level of those employees' engagement; in other words, the better the internal communication, the higher the level of engagement (Ragusa 2010:17). This links to management's role in employee engagement within the organisation in that managers should learn to show, through internal communication efforts, more appreciation for what employees do for the good of the organisation (see section 2.6 for a more detailed discussion of employee engagement).

The definition by FitzPatrick and Valskov (2014:7) is adopted for this study because not only does it put forward internal communication as being strategic, but it also underscores employee engagement.

2.5 FUNCTIONS AND ROLES OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

It is acknowledged that internal communication is seen as strategic for this study, but it is also argued that internal communication functions include the roles and/or tasks that communication practitioners and key employees in the organisation perform to assist strategic communication objectives. In this regard, Bugdol and Jedynak (2015:11) suggest that some of the internal communication functions are to issue and elucidate measures and guidelines to employees, notify management of progress, support new products and services, encourage employees or management to make change developments, organise activities, and assess and reward employees. Barton (2014:18) adds to this with the list of roles of internal communication. Firstly, some of the most important activities are to assimilate all communication activities such as integrating significant organisational strategies into all organisation-wide communications. Secondly, structuring processes for efficient communication, such as producing written communication strategies and comprehensive action plans, assessing their efficiency and endlessly refining them are required. Lastly, internal communication activities consist of affiliating with the organisation's leadership and other functional areas to deliver a wide range of communication services, such as meeting frequently with organisational leaders to recognise what drives the general organisation and what is significant to different departments (Barton, 2014:18).

Steers (2017:22) points out that internal communication functions can add substantial value to organisations in a number of different ways. Especially when it comes to employee engagement, most organisations are now beginning to identify the link between bottom-line profit and high employee engagement. This is a tremendously encouraging development of internal communications as it can initiate the 'positioning' debate, for example: aligning one's internal communication functions with the organisation's strategy rather than utilising it as a delivery device. Kruse (2012:118) elaborates by stating that the practice of internal communication can improve organisational culture by endorsing employee engagement through internal communication.

Internal communication has thus been recognised as being essential for attaining employee engagement, and organisations that communicate efficiently within their organisations are four times more likely to experience high levels of employee

engagement than organisations that communicate less efficiently (Kruse, 2012:118). Table 2.1 below summarises the functions and roles of internal communication in an organisation.

Table 2.1: Functions and roles of internal communication

Internal communication function/role	Responsible for function/role
To issue and elucidate measures and guidelines to employees	Communication practitioner
Notify management of progress	Key employees
Support new products and services	Key employees
Encourage employees or management to make change developments	Communication practitioner
Organise activities in order to elicit change	Key employees
Assess and reward employees	Communication practitioner
Assimilate all communication activities such as integrating significant organisational strategies into all organisation-wide communications	Communication practitioner / Key employees
Structuring processes for efficient communication (such as producing written communication strategies and comprehensive action plans)	Communication practitioner
Affiliating with the organisation's leadership and other functional areas to deliver a wide range of communication services	Communication practitioner / Key employees

Sources: Bugdol & Jedynak (2015:11) and Barton (2014:18)

In the next section, the internal publics or stakeholders in internal communication are discussed.

2.6 INTERNAL PUBLICS OR STAKEHOLDERS IN INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal communication is focused on internal publics who are often also referred to as internal stakeholders. Bjorkquist (2011:30) defines internal stakeholders as “the full-time employees who utilise their voice, those employees stimulated with making decisions and taking the actions on a long-term, regular basis; it is those who define the results, which express the goals pursued by the organisation”. Brown, Gaudin and Moran (2013:50) define the internal stakeholders of an organisation as the employees of the organisation who are in essence the most significant of all its publics, the reason for this being that the organisation can simply not exist without them. The internal stakeholders are thus the ‘heartbeat’ of the organisation and are what makes the organisation function as a whole, be successful and be profitable. Without the internal stakeholders, organisations will cease to exist. Because all the organisation’s communication that is focused on this stakeholder group occurs inside the organisation, every employee who works for the organisation is viewed as fitting to its internal publics. Winch (2010:75) adds that internal stakeholders can be defined as “groups of individuals who are members of a specific organisation, such as employees, middle management, top management and other internal stakeholders”.

The definition adopted for this study is that of Brown, Gaudin and Moran (2013:50), because the definition highlights not only the position of internal stakeholders within an organisation but also the significance of internal stakeholders and that an organisation simply cannot function without them. This study henceforth refers to internal stakeholders and not internal publics. In the next section, communication flow in an organisation is discussed.

2.7 COMMUNICATION FLOW

According to McKee, Kemp and Spence (2013:117), communication passes in all sorts of directions in an organisation: up, down, across and back again. Downward communication is the flow of information from upper levels of an organisational hierarchy to lower levels. Downward communication within an organisation is thus management providing guidance, more information, or feedback to employees. Upward communication, on the other hand, is the flow of information from lower levels of an organisation to higher levels. An example of upward communication is an

employee reporting to a manager on a task that needed to be done. Upward communication can be destructive when individuals start to filter information while it is moving up the hierarchy. Filtering is the deliberate miscommunication of information, which can comprise changing, eradicating or enhancing certain parts of a message. Occasionally, messages are filtered by telling individuals what they want to hear, misrepresenting the information to make it more appealing. Filtering is problematic because it weakens the quality of information accessible to the organisation for decision making (Downs & Adrian, 2012:5).

Organisations also rely on horizontal communication which is the flow of information between individuals at the same time or at similar levels of an organisational hierarchy. Horizontal communication is not limited to lower-level employees, because managers also rely on horizontal communication to organise projects, share work or consult with colleagues (McKee, Kemp & Spence, 2013:118). Another form of communication flow is that of diagonal communication. Communication used by the divisions in different parts of the organisation without utilising hierarchical channels is called diagonal communication. Diagonal communication is significant in terms of eradicating the disadvantages of intricate and long vertical communication and to build an effective collaboration (Unsar, 2014:50).

Similarly, organisations rely on formal and informal communication. The structure of an organisation and its communication network frequently define how formal communication should take place – who talks to whom about what, when, where and how. Formal communication is communication ruled by distinct and identified rules about who can communicate with whom and how they should go about doing it. Formal communication is typically linked to the formalised authority relationship within the hierarchy. Informal communication is communication that passes through channels other than those that have been clearly defined within an organisation. Informal communication is generally linked to social networks separate from the formal organisational structure (McKee, Kemp & Spence 2013:119). In the next section, an internal communication strategy is explained.

2.8 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

An internal communication strategy is a joint effort that embraces communication to all internal stakeholders in an organisation with a variety of job functions across different hierarchical levels. An internal communication strategy is important for internal communication as internal communication efforts will not be executed successfully if there is no strategy in place on how to do so (Eid, 2012:273). An aspect that both Leshan (2009:21) and Tavana and Puranam (2015:152) agree upon is that an internal communication strategy is of great importance as it informs the best way to establish effective communication in an organisation. Leshan (2009:21) suggests that there are two sides to an internal communication strategy, which includes the organisation's strategy and a strategy of its own. Firstly, the organisation's strategy is what the organisation wishes to achieve and how it plans to go about achieving it. For example, the processes that are introduced to reach the goal usually consider the delivery and successful implementation by means of effective internal communications. Secondly, a strategy of its own should be leveraged as more than a simple plan of tactical interventions in support of business communication activities (Leshan, 2009:22).

According to Wright (2016:23), there are three main strategies for internal communication that are commonly developed within an organisation, which are discussed in the next sections:

2.8.1 Information openness

Information openness is a tried-and-tested strategy based on Jack Gibb's well-known study on the five managerial information-sharing practices (Wright, 2016:23). If executed properly, it can be a very influential approach to internal communication as it emphasises interpreting and illustrating information around the organisation. However, it does encourage a mainstream approach to communication, in other words, an expression to many of what has already been decided by the few, which makes this approach less relevant in today's more transparent organisation (Wright, 2016:23).

2.8.2 The supportive climate

Carbonara (2013) explains that managers have the power to either inspire teamwork or smother innovation within an organisation, all depending on what they say, the language they use, and the conjugation they put into their voices. The role of communication practitioners within the strategy is to support managers to be improved communicators, rather than the communication practitioner doing it themselves (Wright, 2016:23). Such a strategy can be viewed as being in place and successful when the message sent is received, responded to, has influenced the target audience, is making the target audience display desired behaviours and, lastly, is making the target audience take the anticipated actions (Wright, 20016:23).

2.8.3 Performance-based communication

Wright (2016:24) explains that in this strategy, “the communication department is not solely responsible for communication”. Thus, communication does not belong to only one department or function within an organisation, but to all of them. Therefore, the strategy of the communication department should be to go out into the organisation and discover areas that need better communications and, after identifying these areas, can present better communication practices together with these specific elements of the business (Wright, 2016:24).

In addition, Moss and DeSanto (2011:293) state that an organisation can also develop a rewards and acknowledgement plan to encourage growth in employees’ sense of ownership when it comes to developing their own communication skills, through setting goals and receiving incentives based on their performance. Coupled with these views of an internal communication strategy, Camilleri (2016:269) argues that as a strategic process, internal communication can inspire and empower an organisation’s employees. For example, when employees are unaware of what their organisation’s goals are, they are not part of reaching these goals, and if they do not receive feedback about the work they are doing, they may lose enthusiasm and passion for the organisation. As a result, the success of the organisation may also be detrimentally affected (Camilleri, 2016:269). Moreover, Cowan (2017:75) expresses that in the 21st century, organisational democracy can assist in making organisations more successful, because it can create a workplace in which employees are respected, involved and consulted. This means that in an organisation where employees’ views

are heard, answered to, and even form part of the solution, employees can become more engaged. More openness supported by internal communication is thus the actual power of the postmodern organisation. It is only through open dialogue rather than hierarchical communication that managers can release the power within their organisations. Accomplishing this requires listening to employees about what is meaningful to them in different departments of the organisation – which can only be done by understanding the needs of internal stakeholders (Cowan, 2017:75).

With attention to the importance of an internal communication strategy, Talal (2014) mentions that such a strategy should be treated as the ‘first frontier’ in the fight for the consumer. When an internal communication strategy is created by considering strong organisational values, internal communication can assist in transforming key employees into employees that contribute to the organisation and delivers the organisation’s promise. Thus, those organisations that focus on refining employee engagement are benefiting from employees who are dedicated to the organisation’s culture and who are willing to go above and beyond the necessities of their roles in the organisation. Subsequently, Korrapati (2014:45) illustrates that there are certain steps that should ideally be taken in an internal communication strategy. The steps are as follows:

- **Step 1: Determine the goal**

During step 1, it is important to classify what the main goal of the internal communication strategy is. The outcome of this step should answer the question: “What do you want the organisation to look like in the future?”

- **Step 2: Define the objectives**

During step 2, the objectives of the strategy are defined. The objectives vary from the goal in that they are more precise and quantifiable and should all support the goal. In choosing the objectives, great care should be taken when it comes to the limitations in the internal communications that were recognised in the organisation.

- **Step 3: Identify key messages**

During step 3, all key messages for the strategy are defined. Only a few vital messages should ideally be communicated. However, these messages do not need to be intricate and obvious in every piece of communication. Rather the setting, medium and regularity of the communication should infer the message.

- **Step 4: Define the audience**

During step 4, the audience is defined. It is imperative to have a very precise picture of the communication needs of internal stakeholders. For example, understanding whether the internal stakeholders are permanent or temporary, paid employees or helpers, situated in a central office or spread around the globe, have access to internet or email on a regular basis, among others, will have an influence on the tools and tactics that can be utilised to communicate with them.

- **Step 5: Identify tools and tactics**

It is during step 5 that it is truly classified how the organisation will communicate with the internal stakeholders by identifying suitable tools and tactics. A tool is a medium of communication and the instrument that can be utilised to reach an internal stakeholder, while a tactic is the way in which to utilise the tool.

- **Step 6: Develop an implementation plan**

During step 6, an implementation plan is developed that stipulates in much detail who

is going to do what and when. For each selected tool and tactic, it needs to be clarified who is responsible and accountable as well as a timeframe for completion.

- **Step 7: Finalise the strategy**

Once these six steps have been finalised and a comprehensive internal communication strategy is compiled, the last step is to gather feedback from internal stakeholders in the organisation and to finalise the strategy.

Although there are different views about the different steps of an internal communication strategy, Korrapati's (2014:45) view provides some good insight into which steps are important.

Figure 2.1 below illustrates the seven steps of an internal communication strategy as proposed by Korrapati (2014:45):

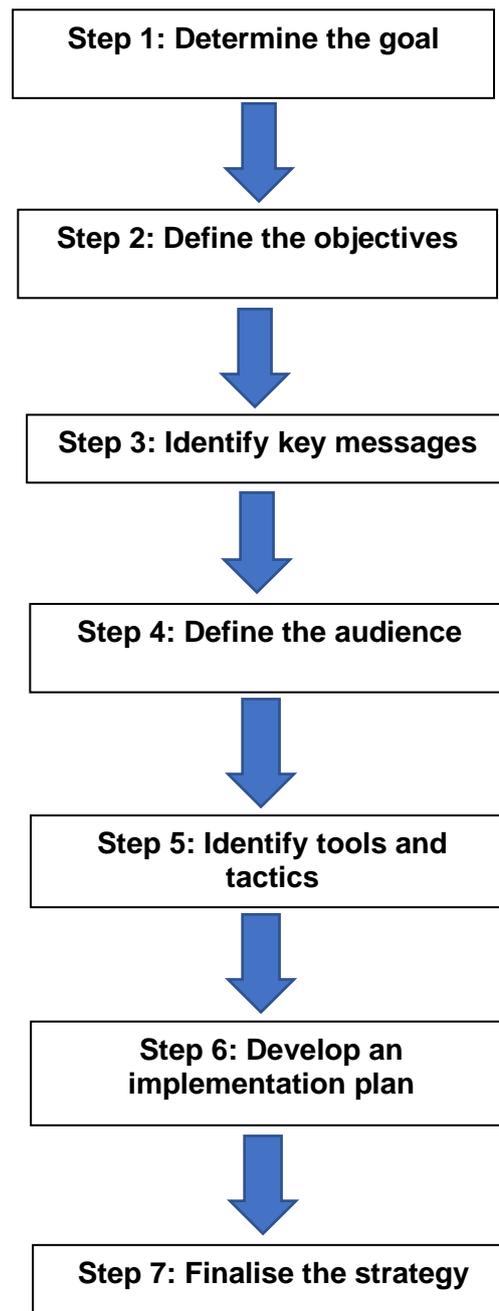


Figure 2.1: Seven steps of an internal communication strategy (adapted from Korrapati, 2014:45)

In the next section, internal communication tools for more engagement are explained.

2.9 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR MORE ENGAGEMENT

In order for employees to efficiently execute their goals of engagement, organisations

have in their possession a wide range of internal communication tools to choose from. Selecting tools and tactics is an important part of an internal communication strategy, as pointed out in section 2.8. However, the challenge does not lie in the utilisation of all possible and accessible internal communication tools, but in the selection of the most suitable ones to use. This will enable the most efficient communication in accordance with the organisational culture (Tavana & Puranam, 2015:152). Kummerow and Kirby (2016:64) define organisational culture as “a pattern of communal basic norms learned by a group of individuals as it resolved its problems of external adaptation and internal incorporation, which has operated well enough to be seen as valid and therefore, to be imparted to new members as the right way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems”. In other words, organisational culture can be described as ‘the way we do things around here’. Employees adopt a certain way of doing and thinking within an organisation based on what the norm is for how other employees that work at that particular organisation act and think.

There are two major types of internal communication tools that can be utilised by managers within an organisation in order for employees to become more engaged, namely traditional communication tools and online communication tools. Traditional communication tools include face-to-face communication, such as meetings between managers and employees, internal forums, written letters (to share confidential information as an example), wall messaging (environmental messaging to share an organisation’s vision/mission), displays and banners (messages that can be displayed anywhere in an organisation’s office space for employees to see), and internal print publications such as an employee newsletter, which is similar to a magazine but shorter, and carries relevant and important information that employees need to know. Online internal communication tools, on the other hand, include social media (using multimedia), emails, online project management tools such as Asana, videos, blogs, e-letters (which are emails with images), applications such as an HR app that allows you to check in to work even if you are off-site, podcasts, and intranets (i.e. the Internet utilised within an organisation and used to the organisation’s advantage; Clampitt 2016:42).

Tavana and Puranam (2015:161) add that most organisations make the mistake of believing that traditional communication tools should be dismissed, as print is too

expensive and face-to-face is too time-consuming, and that everything can be communicated via email or web interface instead. Tavana and Puranam (2015:161) argue that online communication tools are powerful, but they cannot do all the communication or be used in isolation. Choosing to solely use online communication tools to execute all communication means that strategic planning will be abandoned (Tavana & Puranam, 2015:162). Clampitt, (2016:42) adds to this by arguing that communication tools should never be selected based solely on how much they cost; the most important measure is how effective they are in engaging employees within an organisation. With the rise of the internet, management now has a wider variety of internal communication tools to choose from, which allows for more feedback in return. Table 2.2 below summarises traditional versus online internal communication tools.

Table 2.2: Traditional versus online internal communication tools

Traditional communication tools	Online communication tools
Face to face (one-on-one meetings)	Social media platforms, for example, Facebook
Internal forums (meeting with more/all employees present)	Email
Written letters	Online project management tools
Wall messaging	Video communication placed strategically in the workplace
Displays and banners	Blogs
Internal print publication (newsletter)	E-letters
	Mobile applications
	Podcasts
	Intranet

Sources: Tavana and Puranam (2015:161), Clampitt (2016:42)

In the next section, the effect of technology on internal communication tools is clarified.

2.9.1 Effect of technology on internal communication tools

According to Jones (2010:191), the influence that technologies have had on how

organisations communicate has become more evident over the years. Previously, internal communications comprised mostly top-down communication; however, more recently, internal communication has become more bottom-up in nature. Currently, through new online communication tools such as cutting-edge intranets, portals, social networks, and cloud software, organisations can enable more peer-to-peer communication as employees are included in more internal communications (Jones, 2010:191). A case in point is collaboration tools such as emails and intranets which can be positioned within minutes and at low cost. Interestingly, collaboration tools have become popular because employees enjoy using them (Jones, 2010:191).

New technologies in particular have enabled horizontal communication that allows employees to communicate in a distinctive and formerly impossible manner (see the discussion in section 2.7). As a result, new networks, dialogues and relationships are produced (Jones, 2010:192). Doss, Glover, Goza and Wigginton (2015:240) explain that the act of communicating horizontally occurs between equal levels or units within an organisation, and is defined as “communication within or across different departments”. It constitutes neither downward nor upward but linear communication which has significant effects on the relationships and engagement between employees and managers within the organisation. It can thus be argued that horizontal communication progressively adulterates the other channels of top-down and bottom-up communication. This allows collaboration to occur within a team, across teams, across departments and employees with management. Collaboration between these entities within an organisation allows for open communication and where there is open communication within an organisation, it allows for engagement and innovation to occur (Jones, 2010:192). With this in mind Harrin (2016:83) explains that an organisation can formulate a strategy for implementing collaboration tools with a simple four-step approach, as follows:

Step 1: Identify the problems

The goal of shifting to alternate ways of working should be to address problem areas experienced by the wider organisation or particularly by the departments. One should think of the type of collaboration issues that the employees within these departments are facing, as this will shape the kind of tools one accesses and finally selects. Some

examples are:

- individuals in department are perceived to be too slow;
- departments lack capability to work together over different time zones and far distances;
- procedures are not consistent or communal; and
- knowledge about a project is not shared, which subsequently ends up in reinvention of project solutions and prototypes that other departments have already generated.

Managers should identify problems as precisely as they can, which could include feedback, comments, or survey results from employees and the rest of the employees in the different departments within the organisation (Harrin, 2016:83).

Step 2: Identify stakeholders

Managers cannot implement a collaboration strategy without considering which and how employees will be affected by this modification in working practices, namely:

- line managers;
- senior managers who may finance any enterprises;
- the IT department who may be obligated to inspect any software items before it can be utilised;
- the legal department who may have to evaluate contracts with software retailers;
- the purchasing or finance team;
- project managers;
- project coordinators; and
- project team members.

In addition, organisations should identify any new roles that may need to be generated or roles that will change in order to take on new responsibilities for executing this strategy.

Step 3: Defining goals

Management should clearly communicate the goals for implementing the new collaboration tools, including tangible objectives for what the organisation wants to accomplish. Managers should keep objectives as SMART as possible (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, timely). An organisation's objectives should link back to problem areas that have already been recognised.

Step 4: Identify possible solutions

Identifying possible solutions might appear to be a debateable step in defining a strategy to use collaborative tools since a strategy typically sets goals and objectives, not solutions. However, the strategy assists organisations to recognise the problems that they want to resolve with collaboration tools to best select the solution. Many procedure alterations can be executed without technology, while in the case of project departments or teams, the answer will most likely be a grouping of collaboration tools, process change, and cultural change.

According to Brito (2011:161), collaboration tools are adopted either by every employee or by no one, but to succeed, many employees must be eager to adopt these tools and to be open, to share, and to communicate. Even just a single reluctant employee or disengaged individual can disrupt the whole internal communication strategy, and technology is the means by which an organisation can operationalise it (Brito, 2011:161). McHale (2013:31) adds that employees usually want to be knowledgeable about their organisations and are frequently open to enhancements in communication. Web 2.0 tools which have appeared in the last 10 years provide a possible solution to communication problems within organisations; these tools allow employees to communicate with each other in original ways, improving collaboration, knowledge, sharing, and communication, while remaining easy to access and utilise. This will allow for employees' engagement as employees will feel heard and valued (McHale, 2013:31). Having clarified the study's position on the concept of internal communication, it is also important to further elucidate the theoretical position which is adopted for this study.

2.10 THEORETICAL POSITION ADOPTED FOR THE STUDY

The form of inquiry that challenges systems and beliefs that is adopted for this study is postmodern theory. Postmodern theory challenges the dominant assumptions of how organisations are supposed to operate in the world (Shmitz, 2012). It further explains that organisational communication is a means by which the discourses of an organisation's different interests are tested (Shmitz, 2012). In doing so, some organisational discourses dictate while others are disregarded (Shmitz, 2012). Diefenbach (2013:176) argues that there is rather some hope that these postmodern, team-centred or even family-like manners of organising work would bring new methods of employee engagement, commitment, and motivation. The interactional assumption (the idea that communication is transactional) is reinforced by post-modernist thinking, only when 'transactional' suggests that meaning occurs in the procedure of communication rather than a mere passing of meaning from one to the other.

Putnam and Mumby (2014:111) explain that postmodern theory takes issues of human bias (or more specifically, subjectification: the procedure of controlling, managing, and pushing the individual through numerous debates and disciplinary efforts) as the dominant problem. Looking at how employees have globalised, economic environments are bound to accommodate, and counter organisational efforts, to shape identities in a context of amplified workplace satisfaction (Putnam & Mumby, 2014:111).

2.10.1 The social exchange theory

Since the social exchange theory is anchored within postmodern theory, this theory needs some discussion. According to Armstrong (2012:149), the social exchange theory, as put forward by Saks (2006), is a strong theoretical basis for engagement. The social exchange theory argues that "responsibilities are created through a series of interactions between individuals who are in a state of reciprocal independence" (Armstrong, 2012:149). In other words, individuals acquire responsibilities within the process of sending and receiving messages between one another. A basic principle of social exchange theory is that relationships grow over time into trusting, loyal and

mutual obligations as long as individuals follow certain rules of exchange (Armstrong & Taylor, 2012:149). Within the context of this study, this means that it is the responsibility of management to allow for open communication between managers and employees and between employees themselves, in order for relationships to be built between those individuals and thus for employees to be engaged within the organisation. These typically include mutuality or reimbursement rules such that the actions of one individual lead to the response or actions by the other individual (Armstrong & Taylor, 2012:150). Drezner and Huehls (2015:6) explain that one way for individuals to repay their organisation is through their level of engagement, in other words, employees will choose to engage themselves in varying degrees and in response to the resources they receive from their organisation. Fingerman, Berg, Smith and Antonucci (2011:458) concluded that to comprehend what actually causes engagement, and what engagement causes in return, one needs to implant the concept in a justifiable theory. The theory that is seen as most suitable is thus the social exchange theory, which “perceives feelings of loyalty, commitment and voluntary effort as all being forms of social exchanges of employees to decent employers” (Fingerman et al., 2011:458).

In addition, Crawford (2012:52) explains that social exchange theory suggests that the collaboration between the employee and the employer has a direct consequence on attaining and exceeding goals. Through the more engaged professional relationship between the individuals, they find that it is less complicated on the one hand to achieve the goals formerly agreed upon, while on the other hand, collaboration enables the attainment of goals that would not be attained without those individuals working together and being more engaged (Crawford, 2012:52). Social exchange theory is a commonly unacknowledged source in internal communication, and this theory has important implications for communication theory in general (DeLamater & Ward, 2013).

2.11 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter focused on the study’s theoretical point of departure in terms of internal communication, and some important concepts related to internal communication were discussed. Firstly, the different perspectives of internal communication

were reviewed and it was clarified why internal communication is seen as part of strategic communication and which definition of internal communication is adopted for this study. The literature review also included a discussion on the importance of the internal stakeholders in internal communication. Furthermore, the different directions of communication flow within an organisation was explained, as well as the difference between formal and informal communication. The significance of an internal communication strategy was discussed and the three main internal communication strategies were highlighted. The internal communication tools that exist for more engagement, as well as how internal communication tools have been affected and changed since the rise of technology, were explained, and a comparison was illustrated between traditional communication tools and online communication tools. Lastly, postmodern theory, which is the theoretical position that was adopted for this study, was examined, as well as the theoretical foundation within postmodern theory called the social exchange theory. Having explained the study's position on internal communication and some important concepts related to internal communication, the focus in the next chapter moves to employee engagement.

CHAPTER 3

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Having explained the study's position on internal communication and some important concepts related to internal communication, the focus in this chapter moves to employee engagement. Employee engagement as a concept can best be explained as an optimistic attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. Employee engagement is not only about the attitude that employees have toward the organisation, but also how employees that are engaged will improve their performance, and that of their co-workers, to better the welfare of the organisation. Engaged employees feel an obligation towards the organisation to give their best and to help the organisation to succeed (Sharma, Chaudhary & Singh, 2019:181). For this study, the focus on employee engagement thus lies with how internal communication practices within a particular organisation can strengthen employee engagement.

This chapter addresses Sub-question 1 and elaborates on the context of the study; employee engagement is described as a function of internal communication; the key drivers (enablers) of employee engagement are discussed and illustrated; the positive outcomes of employee engagement are also explained and illustrated; employees' needs within an organisation are depicted, as well as management's role in employee engagement. Lastly, the internal communication practices that should be in place to strengthen employee engagement in an organisation are proposed.

3.2 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The concept of employee engagement is a topic of much scholarly interest and investigation, while there are still diverse views of what it entails in an organisational context. In this section, competing concepts are first highlighted along with the reason why the concept of employee engagement is unique and more applicable to this study. Employee engagement as a concept is consequently explained and a definition of

employee engagement is adopted. Furthermore, the key drivers of employee engagement are discussed followed by the outcomes of employee engagement. This is followed by a discussion of the elements (features) of employee engagement. Lastly, a consideration of employees' needs within the organisation is given and the section is concluded with management's role in employee engagement.

3.2.1 Competing concepts

There are certain concepts that overlap with employee engagement such as organisational commitment, job involvement and organisational citizenship behaviour. These concepts first need to be explained in order to clarify the study's position on employee engagement.

Cooper and Finkelstein (2012:23) define organisational commitment as a state in which an employee identifies with a specific organisation and its goals, and desires to maintain association with the organisation. Organisational commitment can also be viewed as being more than a passive loyalty to an organisation since it involves an active relationship with the organisation. For example, individuals are willing to give something of themselves in order to contribute to the well-being of the organisation. Job involvement, on the other hand, can be defined as "a perception regarding one's psychological identification with his or her occupation, which is reliant on the individual's needs and the possibility of the job to satisfy those needs (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012:59). Lastly, Shields (2016:20) explains that organisational citizenship behaviour occurs when employees willingly and selflessly undertake special activities that surpass membership and job compliance. These special activities can include extra effort, high collaboration with others, high resourcefulness, high innovativeness, extra client service and a general inclination to make sacrifices for the good of the organisation.

Erikson (2016:184) holds the view that what makes employee engagement unique is that it connects employees with their job role performance; for example, when engaged employees immerse themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during work performances. The cognitive component comprises employees' point of view about the organisation, the managers and job environment. The emotional

component comprises employees' feelings about the organisation, the employees' positive or apathetic attitudes toward the organisation and its managers. The physical component of engaged employees contains the bodily dynamisms exercised by employees to attain goals. Hence, engagement means the psychophysical presence of employees while occupying and performing an organisational role. For this study, the concept of employee engagement is thus more relevant than the competing concepts discussed above.

3.2.2 Adopting a definition of employee engagement

As mentioned, there are still diverse perspectives about the concept of employee engagement. Employee engagement as a concept can best be explained as an optimistic attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is mindful of the organisational setting and works with colleagues to advance performance within the work context for the benefit of the organisation (Sharma, Chaudhary & Singh, 2019:181).

It is argued in this study that employee engagement as a function of internal communication can be defined as “a workplace approach intended to guarantee that employees are dedicated to their organisation’s objectives and values, encouraged to contribute to organisational success, and are able at the same time to improve their own sense of well-being” (Bridger, 2015:5).

Furthermore, engagement includes a mix of attitudes (feeling positive or proud), behaviours (recommending the organisation as a place to work or working harder) and outcomes (better organisational performance); all of which can be strongly influenced by good internal communication practices (Bridger, 2015:5). In addition, Armstrong (2010:154) suggests that employee engagement can be defined as “the heightened emotional connection that employees feel for the organisation”.

The common themes that appear when researchers study engaged employees go beyond basic job satisfaction to where employees find personal meaning in the work that they do, taking pride in their work and where they do it, and knowing that their organisation values them. The greater an employee’s engagement, the more likely that the employee will go above and beyond the lowest requirements and spend discretionary effort to deliver excellent performance (Turner, 2020:15).

The definition by Sharma et al. (2019) is adopted for this study as it clearly states that employee engagement is not only about the attitude that employees have toward the organisation, but it is also about how employees that are engaged will improve their performance and that of their co-workers to better the welfare of the organisation. Engaged employees feel an obligation towards the organisation to give their best and to help the organisation to succeed. For this study, the focus on employee engagement thus lies with how internal communication practices within a particular organisation is perceived to strengthen employee engagement.

3.2.3 Explaining employee engagement as a function of internal communication

As discussed in section 1.3.2 in Chapter 1, Ragusa (2010:17) ties internal communication to employee engagement as a function of internal communication, a view which is supported in this study. In this regard Ragusa (2010) argues that internal communication assists in developing employees as a part of the organisation's corporate service brand, thereby enhancing employees' sense of meaning within an organisation and increasing their engagement. In other words, engaged employees will say positive things about the organisation internally and externally, and stay committed to being a member of the team. Engagement focuses on outcomes and something given by the employee which can benefit the organisation. Engaged employees feel a sense of attachment towards their organisation, investing themselves not only in their role, but in the organisation as a whole.

Ragusa (2010:17) also adds that the level of internal communication, as perceived by employees, links to employees' level of engagement. This means that the better the communication, the higher the level of engagement becomes. Ragusa's (2010:17) arguments are supported in this study because of the clear link that is being made between internal communication and employee engagement.

With this in mind, it can be argued that internal communication is an internal organisational procedure that delivers and shares information to generate a sense of community and trust amongst employees. Creating a sense of community and trust through internal communication includes establishing and upholding relationships between an organisation, managers, and employees (Karanges, Beatson, Johnston & Lings, 2014). Many large organisations are viewed as being impersonal and

unsympathetic; a view that is only strengthened when no upward communication occurs from employees to management. When high-level managers separate themselves physically and emotionally from other employees, efficient communication cannot occur (L'Etang, McKie, Snow & Xifra, 2016:78).

By the same token, Mazzei (2014) argues that employee engagement is embodied by the fervour and energy employees have to offer to the organisation in order to serve the consumer. It is all about the capability and willingness of employees to give continued unrestricted effort to assist the organisation in succeeding. Ruck (2015:32) explains that internal communication has been identified as an underlying aspect associated with employee engagement, since it is part of the organisational context in which employee engagement occurs. In addition to this, Ruck (2015:25) refers to Welch's (2011) model which explains that efficient internal communication is vital for successful organisations as it affects the capability of strategic managers to engage with employees and reach their objectives.

Cowan (2017:75) indicates that in the 21st century, organisational democracy can assist in making organisations more successful, because it can create a workplace in which employees are respected, involved and consulted. Thus, an organisation where employees' views are heard, answered to, and even form part of the solution, leads to employees being more engaged in the organisation. This is the actual power of the modern organisation where there is more openness. It is only through open dialogue rather than hierarchical communication that managers can release the power within their organisations.

3.2.4 Some key drivers of employee engagement

Barrette's (2012:52) and Holbeche's (2015:190) influential work identified four enablers of employee engagement. The first enabler is to present empowering leadership communication in a solid strategy for the organisation which points out where the organisation comes from, where it is going and how employees can help the organisation to get there. The second enabler is likeable managers who offer a focus for their employees and provide them with the sense of responsibility, treat them as persons, and tutor, support and improve them. The third enabler allows employees

a voice throughout the organisation to either strengthen or test existing views, and to be able to communicate them freely. Employees are thus seen as vital to defining resolutions for problems that the organisation might face. The fourth enabler should be organisational honesty, namely that the values that are communicated to employees are reflected in day-to-day behaviours. Table 3.1 below depicts the enablers of employee engagement.

Table 3.1: Enablers of employee engagement

Enabler	Meaning for employee engagement
Present empowering leadership communication	Leadership pointing out where the organisation comes from, where it is going and how employees can help the organisation to get there
Likeable managers	Managers who offer a focus for their employees and provide them with the sense of responsibility, treat them as persons, and tutor, support and improve them
Allowing employees to have a voice	Allowing employees to strengthen or test existing views, and communicate them freely
Organisational honesty	Organisational values that are communicated to employees are reflected in day-to-day behaviours

Sources: Barrette (2012:52) and Holbeche (2015:190).

In addition to the above key drivers, the literature also highlights other important drivers of employee engagement. For example, Ragusa (2010:17) explains that if employees feel like the quality of internal communication within the organisation is good, then that would lead to employees' level of engagement being higher. Another important key driver of employee engagement includes understanding organisational values. For example, if employees do not comprehend what the organisation's values really mean, they will not be able to live by them. Building relationships between

employees and their colleagues and employees with managers, and having meaningful relationships within an organisation, contribute largely to employee engagement. If employees do not have good relationships with their colleagues or managers, they will not be engaged towards the organisation. Employees are also more engaged when they are being recognised for the work that they put in (Ragusa 2010:18).

In addition, developing a healthy organisational culture is also supportive of engagement, meaning that the organisation must provide employees with some space and motivation to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation. For example, when an employee’s work makes a meaningful contribution in the organisation, it has a clear influence on their level of engagement, which is thus dependent on management (Clark, 2012:161).

Another key driver of employee engagement is an organisation’s management style: managers allowing employees to be innovative and creative and to learn and develop within the organisation. According to Magee (2015:44), an organisation’s management must direct or continue business matters in order to reach a purpose. Management also includes exercising executive, directorial and supervisory direction of business. Just as different managers utilise different forms of authority and delegation, they also have diverse personalities and management styles. Managers at any level can be gregarious and friendly, firm and to the point, or critical and detail oriented (Hess & Orthmann, 2012:8). Management style is a key driver of employee engagement as employees who have a manager with a firm or harsh management style will not be as engaged as employees who have a manager with a sociable and friendly management style (see also section 3.2.3). Table 3.2 below depicts some additional key drivers of employee engagement.

Table 3.2: Additional key drivers of employee engagement

Key Drivers	Role in Employee Engagement
Understanding organisation values	If employees really understand the meaning of the organisation’s values then they will know how to abide/live by them. However, if employees are unsure of those values, then

	they might be unsure of what the organisation stands for.
Building relationships	Building relationships between employees and their colleagues and employees with managers contributes largely to employee engagement. If employees do not have good relationships with their colleagues or managers, they will not be engaged towards the organisation.
Employees receiving recognition	Employees are more engaged when they are being recognised for the work that they put in. Receiving recognition for a job well done encourages employees to continue doing good work.
Healthy organisational culture	An organisation must provide employees with some space and motivation to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation.
Management style	Managers should allow employees to be innovative and creative and to learn and develop within the organisation.

Sources: Clark (2012:161) and Magee (2015:44).

3.2.5 Outcomes of employee engagement

There are various positive outcomes of employee engagement (as depicted in the table below) which include the following: better job satisfaction, a more constructive work environment, a less stressful workplace, collaboration throughout the workplace, better trust and happier employees (Garber, 2013:108). Organisations are interested in achieving high levels of employee engagement because there seems to be clear links with profitability, customer service levels, productivity and innovation in the workplace. This all leads to the organisation growing and achieving more success (Garber, 2013:108). Table 3.3 below depicts these positive outcomes of employee engagement and advantages for an organisation.

Table 3.3: Positive outcomes of employee engagement and advantages for an organisation.

Positive outcome	Advantage for an organisation
Job satisfaction	Engaged employees are more likely to be satisfied with their job.
Constructive work environment	A work environment with engaged employees means a work environment with motivated, content employees. This results in a work environment where employees produce good work outcomes with less/no destructive behaviours.
Less stressful workplace	If employees are engaged, they are more prone to perform well in their job resulting in fewer errors and a lucrative organisation.
Collaboration throughout the workplace	Engaged employees tend to have good relationships with their colleagues meaning that they will work well together in teams in order to achieve a goal.
Better trust and happier employees	When employees are engaged, they feel encouraged, accepted and happy. They feel that they can trust their management to lead them properly and their colleagues to assist them on team projects.
Job performance	There is a relationship between employee engagement and job performance; organisations with a higher percentage of the workforce that are engaged have a higher percentage of total return to stakeholders than organisations that have a smaller percentage of engaged workforce.

Sources: Storey, Wright and Ulrich (2016:75) and Garber (2013:108).

Moreover, Pitsis, Simpson and Dehlin (2013:87) explain that high levels of engagement also result in the following: fewer instances of absence from work and increased employee retention, an increased employee determination and output,

enhanced quality of work and fewer mistakes, augmented sales, increased profitability, increased earnings per share and increased shareholder returns, improved consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty, quicker organisational growth, and greater probability of organisational success.

3.2.6 Elements of employee engagement

It is also important to explain some elements (features) of employee engagement to illustrate the complexity of this concept. Whittington, Meskelis, Asare and Beldona (2017:23), for example, identify three distinct elements of engagement, namely: physical, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Physical engagement refers to the energy used by employees at work and the physical environment within the occupation. Emotional engagement is the level of pleasurable and eagerness that is experienced at work by employees. Finally, cognitive engagement refers to the level and intensity of focus and attention applied while performing work-related duties. All these elements play some role in how an employee connects with the organisation.

Additionally, Gilbert-Jameson (2012:33) identifies five main elements of employee engagement, namely communication, involvement, tools and resources, recognition, and trust. The first element suggests that open communication is crucial to generating and sustaining a culture of quality, as well as growing employee engagement and trust, customer loyalty, and finally, cultivating income for the organisation. The second element suggests that forming fully engaged employees who have a desire to drive excellence also includes involvement. Employees want to be involved in the strategy of tasks that affect them. The third element explains that when employees are given the correct equipment, tools, and resources to do a good job, it produces a good environment for keeping every employee liable for driving quality work. The fourth element explains that employees highly value recognition for the work that is done; it is imperative that there should be several channels of reward and recognition in order to keep employees engaged. The fifth and final element suggest that managers should trust employees by giving employees appropriate tools and resources, and constantly recognising good job performance; all these elements play some role in creating a high level of trust with both employees and managers that have a bearing on employee engagement. Table 3.4 depicts the different elements of employee

engagement.

Table 3.4: Elements of employee engagement

Element	Meaning for employee engagement
Physical engagement	The energy used by employees at work and the physical environment within the occupation.
Emotional engagement	The level of pleasurable and eagerness that is experienced at work by employees.
Cognitive engagement	The level and intensity of focus and attention applied while performing work-related duties.
Communication	Open communication is crucial to generating and sustaining a culture of quality, as well as growing employee engagement and trust, customer loyalty, and finally, cultivating bottom-line results.
Involvement	Forming fully engaged employees who have a desire to drive excellence also includes involvement. Employees want to be involved in the strategy of tasks that affects them.
Tools and resources	When employees are given the correct equipment, tools, and resources to do a good job, it produces a good environment for keeping every employee liable for driving quality work.
Recognition and trust	Managers should trust employees by giving employees appropriate tools and resources, and constantly recognising good job performance.

Source: Gilbert-Jameson (2012:33).

3.2.7 Employees' needs within an organisation

Byrne (2015:92) explains that the key to ensuring employee engagement is to align messaging with employees' needs. When considering employees' needs within the organisation, management must understand their needs, guide them and root for their success. However, the only way in which management will know what the needs of employees are is by constantly communicating with them and always allowing for an

open and free flow of information (Byrne, 2015:92).

Furthermore, Truss, Delbridge, Alfes, Shantz and Soane (2014:141) explain that allowing employees to have an input in the strategy and decision-making of the work that they are involved in may be efficient in growing employee engagement because employees are then able to enhance the connection between the employees' skills, desires, standards and the job, which may promote psychological significance. Employees' needs might also include benefits packages that the organisation provides, for instance, a retirement-savings plan, life insurance or health insurance (Aung, 2016:140).

Aside from the above arguments, Gems (2015:24) states that it is vital to fulfil basic human needs of employees if organisations wish to enhance employee engagement. For example, Abraham Maslow's well-known theory of needs points out that individuals are driven to satisfy several different types of needs, some of which are more important than others. Maslow (1943) presented these needs as a hierarchy, the first need being at the top of the hierarchy and the last need being at the bottom. Self-actualisation: this need is presented at the top of the hierarchy and is concerned with an individual attaining his/her full potential or doing the thing he/she has the most knowledge of. Esteem: this need refers to respect from others, self-respect and recognition. Belonging: this need is concerned with the feelings of association, acceptance or forming part of a group or community. Safety: this need refers to physical safety and psychological security of individuals. Lastly, psychological: this need is presented at the bottom of the hierarchy and is concerned with feelings of hunger, thirst, sex and sleep (Pichere, 2015:7).

3.2.8 Management's role in employee engagement

Trevino and Nelson (2011:292) explain that managers play an important part in employee engagement since employees look up to them. Thus, if managers fail to execute their role as leaders, it will be extremely difficult to inspire employees to be engaged and meet the organisation's goals. In this regard, Dickson (2011:49) argues that there are still many misconceptions about employee engagement, especially when it comes to the important role that management plays. Engaged employees not

only make the workplace a better and more fulfilling experience for employees, but for managers as well. It is much more satisfying to lead employees that are committed and interested in their work, compared to employees who need assistance to complete their duties (Dickson, 2011:49). Vizzuso (2015:33) emphasises that a leader's most valued commodity is his or her capability to engage employees. In particular, transformational leaders/managers endorse employee respect and commitment since employees are treated with dignity and as a result feel more involved and drawn to the organisation (Vizzuso, 2015:33). Effective internal communication efforts thus have a direct effect on employee engagement by generating opportunities for building trust between employees and management (Vizzuso, 2015:33).

Lacan (2019:8) explicates how the present era compels managers to leave behind their old (modern) mind-sets and adopt new (postmodern) attitudes. Postmodern society is not external to the organisation, and managers have to take societal viewpoints into consideration when compiling their procedures and strategies. If society is postmodern, then organisations are postmodern, and managers need to become postmodern in the way they manage employees.

As mentioned in section 3.2.4, the management style in an organisation is a key driver in employee engagement. Although there are various management styles, two management styles conducive to employee engagement are highlighted in this section. The first management style is the participative management style which Yee-Melichar, Boyle and Flores (2011:160) indicate utilises a horizontal structure with a frailer line of authority and managerial control. The management of the organisation is thus more team-oriented where collective employee input and decision-making is of importance.

Another management style that should be highlighted is the human relations management theory, which acknowledges the significance of the employee as one of the important, if not most important strategic features within the organisation. Here, it is management's duty to treat employees with respect, poise, and value in order to motivate and grow the full performance potential of employees (Bauer, 2012:5). Barrette (2012:92) adds that human relations managers, referred to as Theory Y managers, allow employees to have self-direction and participation. Theory Y managers assume that employees in the organisations have the capability to accept

responsibility and make decisions. Therefore, employees do not have to be controlled or forced to do tasks in the interest of the organisation. With this particular management style, employees have a voice in the organisation and are heard by management. Managers create opportunities for employees to learn and innovate and often include employees in decision-making, increasing job responsibilities, assigning authority, and growing employee independence, all aimed at maximising an employee's self-worth. Lussier (2016) explains that by aiming to satisfy the higher psychological needs of employees, such as the self-actualisation, esteem and belonging needs mentioned in section 3.2.7, organisations discover that employees display better performance and commitment to organisational goals and needs. Employees are thus seen as mature, self-directed individuals who will deliver high-quality work if given the opportunity. Managers are expected to avoid inflexible and invasive control approaches and to rely more on coaching, mentoring and participative styles.

In the next section, based on the literature in both Chapters 2 and 3, some best practices for employee engagement in current literature are made as to which internal communication practices must be in place in an organisation to strengthen employee engagement for the purpose of empirical testing (see Chapters 5 and 6).

3.3 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES THAT MUST BE IN PLACE TO STRENGTHEN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN AN ORGANISATION

Internal communication practices refer to all communication efforts that occur within an organisation between management and employees (Lee, 2014:147). Based on the overall arguments in the above literature review of internal communication and employee engagement, it is proposed that some of the core internal communication practices that must be in place to strengthen employee engagement are evident in the following seven constructs:

- An effective internal communication strategy;
- Having the right engagement tools available;
- Having a supportive management style within the organisation;

- Adhering to employees' needs within the organisation;
- Having opportunities available for employees to participate in problem-solving;
- Establishing a good organisational culture.

These constructs are now operationalised for the purpose of measurement (with a survey, semi-structured interviews and one focus group) by first identifying and then formulating dimensions that became obvious in the literature. Within the context of these proposed guidelines, these dimensions reflect a holistic view of key aspects (ideas) in the literature about internal communication practices to strengthen employee engagement as explained below.

3.3.1 An effective internal communication strategy

Based on the literature, it is evident that one of the first internal communication practices that should be in place to strengthen employee engagement is an effective internal communication strategy. As Tavana and Puranam (2015:152) explain, an internal communication strategy is of great importance as it will inform the best way to establish effective communication within the organisation. Effective communication within the organisation is vital as it is the only way that employees will come to trust the organisation they work for. Trust is one of the core drivers of employee engagement, thus without effective communication that fosters trust within an organisation, there will be no employee engagement. This finding is consistent with the findings of Camilleri (2016:269), Ragusa (2010:17) and Kruse (2012:118), who explain that an internal communication strategy is significant for strengthening employee engagement as the internal communication efforts can inspire and empower an organisation's employees. It is important to consider that it is not enough for an internal communication strategy only to be in place; it should also be effective in order to strengthen employee engagement (Camilleri, 2016:269).

Employees' perception of how effective or ineffective the internal communication is within an organisation also links to the level of those employees' engagement; thus, it is important that organisations always ensure that the internal communication efforts are not only effective but also in line with what is expected from the employees that

work there (Ragusa, 2010:17). Furthermore, organisations that communicate efficiently with the employees of the organisation are four times more likely to experience high levels of employee engagement than organisations that communicate less efficiently (Kruse, 2012:118). Based on these arguments, it is evident that an effective internal communication strategy is vital for strengthening employee engagement.

Based on the literature review, the researcher first identifies and then proposes the following dimensions of employee engagement that are applicable to an internal communication strategy, namely: inclusion, inspiration, joint-effort and information openness. These dimensions are explained as follows:

- **Inclusion:** According to Mor Barak (2016), “inclusion is a sense of belonging; feeling appreciated, respected for who you are; feeling a level of support and commitment from others that allows you to give your best at work”. The process of inclusion engages every employee and makes individuals feel vital to the success of the organisation.
- **Inspiration:** Camilleri (2016:269) further argues the importance of internal communication strategy by stating that as a strategic process, internal communication can inspire and empower an organisation’s employees.
- **Joint effort:** An internal communication strategy is a joint effort which involves all employees within the organisation, regardless of the department that those employees work in, job title of those employees, or where those employees fall within the hierarchy of the organisation (Eid, 2012:274).
- **Employee awareness:** If employees are unaware of what their organisation’s goals are, they are not part of reaching these goals, and if they do not receive feedback about the work that they are doing, they may lose enthusiasm and passion for the organisation. As a result, employees may become disengaged and the success of the organisation may also be detrimentally affected (Camilleri, 2016:269).

3.3.2 The right internal communication tools for engagement

The literature suggests that organisations must adopt a wide range of internal communication tools to choose from in order for management to efficiently execute their goals of engagement (Tavana & Puranam, 2015:152). It was also shown that it is important for organisations to use the right internal communication tools as this will assist in enhancing employee engagement through linear communication.

As explained in the above literature (section 3.3), there are two major types of internal communication tools that can be used by managers within an organisation in order for employees to be more engaged (Clampitt, 2016:42). This includes both traditional communication tools and online communication tools. Organisations need to remember that it is important to use both traditional and online communication tools within the organisation, as neither one cannot be used in isolation with the goal to achieve employee engagement. Employees will only be engaged if both traditional communication tools, such as face-to face meetings, and online communication tools, such as emails, are encouraged within an organisation. This finding is consistent with past studies by Jones (2010:192) explaining that this way, employees will feel confident enough to take ownership of collaboration tools, for example an intranet, where employees can communicate freely with one another and with management in a linear, non-hierarchical manner. This can result in new networks, dialogues and relationships among employees and thus an increase in engagement. Based on the above arguments, it can be concluded that organisations should include the right internal communication tools (both traditional and online) in order to achieve employee engagement.

Based on the literature review, the researcher first identifies and then proposes the following dimensions of employee engagement that are applicable to the right internal communication tools for engagement, namely: alignment of preferred communication, ownership of tools, and ease of use. These dimensions are explained as follows:

- **Alignment of preferred communication.** It is imperative for organisations to select the right internal communication tools that will align with employees' preferences. This will enable the most efficient communication in accordance

with the organisational culture and what employees prefer to use within that culture (Tavana & Puranam, 2015:152).

- **Ownership of tools.** It is important to let employees feel confident enough to take ownership of collaboration tools, for example an intranet, where employees can communicate freely with one another and with management in a linear, non-hierarchical manner. This can result in new networks, dialogues and relationships among employees and thus an increase in engagement (Jones, 2010:192).
- **Ease of use.** Internal communication tools should be easy to use in order for employees to be engaged. Collaboration tools such as emails and intranets can be positioned within minutes and at low cost beyond virtual departments; collaboration tools flourish and employees adore them, in many instances, internal communication professionals are scarcely involved in this transformation (Jones, 2010:191).

3.3.3 Supportive management style (commitment)

The biggest goal for managers to strive towards in order to create an engaged workforce is to ensure that employees are committed to the organisation. In order to achieve commitment, management must have a supportive style in which they manage employees. This can be achieved through open dialogue rather than hierarchical communication (Dickson, 2011:49). Employees need to feel that the organisation has an open-door policy and that an employee can walk into a manager's office or communicate their thoughts, ideas or concerns to managers at any time. This way, employees will learn to trust managers, which is the ultimate goal in strengthening engagement among employees. Employees will also trust managers if employees feel like management understands what the needs of employees are. The only way in which management will know what the needs of employees are is by constantly communicating with them and always allowing for an open and free flow of information (Byrne, 2015:92).

Based on the literature review, the researcher first identifies and then proposes the following dimensions of employee engagement that are applicable to a supportive

management style, namely internal communication tools such as involvement, fairness, empowering employees and recognition. These dimensions are explained as follows:

- **Involvement.** The best manner to accomplish high levels of employee engagement is to ensure that employees are involved in as many facets of the organisation as possible (Rao, 2017).
- **Fairness.** Fairness plays a significant role in the assurance of a strong level of engagement. It is thought that fairness commences at the start of the employment procedure stage. Fairness also falls under the performance management stage as employees need to be informed about what is expected of them in order for them to be able to execute their work seamlessly (Huus, 2015).
- **Empowering employees.** A manager's most valued commodity is his or her capability to engage employees. Transformational leaders/managers endorse employee respect and commitment; employees who are treated with dignity and who are empowered by management to take charge of their own line of work feel more involved and drawn to the organisation (Vizzuso, 2015:33).
- **Recognition.** Gilbert-Jameson (2012:33) explains that employees highly value recognition for the work that is done. It is imperative that there should be several channels of reward and recognition, specifically from management, in order to keep employees engaged.

3.3.4 Adhering to employees' needs within the organisation

As discussed in section 3.2.7, in order to strengthen employee engagement, managers should constantly listen to what the needs of employees are and whether those needs are already, or still need to be, met. The key to ensure that engagement happens is to align messaging around engagement by focusing the message on employees' needs (Byrne, 2015:92). It is the responsibility of organisations to constantly align all internal communication efforts with what the needs are of employees, both by listening to what the needs are as well as responding to those needs.

Another way in which organisations can ensure that all needs of employees are met is by keeping in mind what the basic needs of employees are. Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs provides a good foundation to satisfy employees' different types of needs, some of which are more important than others. For example, in order to do this, organisations should start with the physiological needs by providing simple things like clean bathrooms and a cafeteria with an appropriate food and drink selection. The next layer is safety, which for organisations means providing a fair and reasonable salary for employees with appropriate benefits, a clear comprehension of job tasks and a safe work environment. To satisfy belongingness and social needs, organisations should ensure that there is a team approach and environment which allows for open dialogue with team members and truthful feedback for the development of the employee. In order to satisfy the esteem need, organisations should challenge employees to learn new things by means of training and development programmes as well as assigning exciting and more difficult tasks for them to carry out. Lastly, organisations can satisfy self-actualisation by building on self-esteem, by continuing to push employees, allowing for creativity and rewarding excellent performance. It is organisations' responsibility to ensure that all the above needs are met in order to create and foster an engaged workforce (Walker, 2012:92).

Based on the literature review, the researcher first identifies and then proposes the following dimensions of employee engagement that are applicable to employees' needs, namely: listening to needs, open flow of communication, work-life balance and employee benefits. These dimensions are explained as follows:

- **Listening to needs.** The key to ensure that engagement happens is to align messaging around engagement by focusing the message on employees' needs. It is the responsibility of organisations to constantly align all internal communication efforts with what the needs of employees are, both by listening to what the needs are as well as responding to those needs.
- **Open flow of communication.** Employees want for management to understand their needs (including their basic needs), guide employees, and root for employees to succeed. Employees must know that management's doors are always open for them to voice any concerns or opinions that they might

have at any time (Byrne, 2015:92).

- **Work-life balance.** To most employees, a stable work-life balance is vital and also creates a stronger level of employee engagement. Employees are expected to be more engaged when they can manage to complete their work but also get enough time to spend with their families and personal lives because of their organisation's human resource policies encouraging a work-life balance (Rao, 2017).
- **Employee benefits.** Employees' needs might include benefits packages that the organisation provides them, for instance, a retirement-savings plan, life insurance or health insurance (Aung, 2016:140).

3.3.5 Opportunities for employees to participate in problem-solving

Furthermore, organisations should allow employees to have a say in the decision-making of the work that they are involved in, as it may be efficient in growing employee engagement because employees are then able to identify a better connection between the employees' skills, desires, standards and their job, which may promote psychological significance (Truss et al., 2014:141).

Based on this argument, it is evident that an organisation where employees' views are heard, answered to, and even form part of the solution leads to employees being more engaged in the organisation. If organisations provide employees with the right of having their voice heard, even if it is in situations that stretch outside of the employee's job description, then those organisations can be sure that employees will become more engaged within the organisation.

Based on the literature review, the researcher first identifies and then proposes the following dimensions of employee engagement that are applicable to opportunities for employees to participate in problem-solving, namely: involvement in decision-making, authority, openness and participation. These dimensions are explained as follows:

- **Involvement in decision-making.** Gilbert-Jameson (2012:33) suggests that forming fully engaged employees who have a desire to drive excellence also

includes involvement. Employees want to be involved in the strategy and decisions of tasks that affect them.

- **Authority.** If organisations give employees the authority of having their voice heard, even if it is in situations that stretch outside of the employee's job description, those organisations can be sure that employees will become more engaged within the organisation (Barrette, 2012:92).
- **Openness.** Organisations whose employees' views are heard, answered to, and even form part of the solution have employees that are more engaged (Cowan, 2017:75).
- **Participation.** Employee engagement can create a less stressful working environment because employees have greater participation and control over choices and problem-solving rather than thinking that they do not have an influence at work. Employees feel less like an object and more like a vital partner in the organisation and an actively participating employee (Garber, 2013:108).

3.3.6 Establishing a good organisational culture

Employees adopt a certain way of doing and thinking within an organisation based on what the norm is of how other employees employed at that particular organisation act and think. Establishing a healthy organisational culture is important for employee engagement. Because an organisation's culture establishes 'the way we do things around here' among employees, it is vital that the way things are done is in favour of both the employees and the organisation. If the organisation's culture is good, new employees entering the organisation will become easily engaged, as the existing employees are engaged (Kummerow & Kirby, 2016:64).

Based on the literature, it is evident that the practice of internal communication can improve an organisational culture (see section 3.3) by endorsing employee engagement through internal communication. If an organisation has a strong culture, the chances are good that the employees will be engaged within that particular organisation. The literature shows that organisations that focus on developing an organisational culture are supportive of engagement; this way, the organisation

provides space and motivation for employees to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation. For example, the nature of an employee's work has a clear influence on his/her level of engagement, which is also dependent on management (Clark, 2012:161).

Based on the literature review, the researcher first identifies and then proposes the following dimensions of employee engagement that are applicable to establishing a good organisational culture, namely: belonging, shared values, and internal integration. The dimensions are as follows:

- **Belonging.** To satisfy belongingness, organisations should ensure that there is a team approach and environment which allows for open dialogue with team members and truthful feedback for the development of the employee (Walker, 2012:92).
- **Shared values.** Employee engagement as a function of internal communication can be defined as “a workplace approach intended to guarantee that employees are dedicated to their organisation's values, encouraged to contribute to organisational success, and are able at the same time to improve their own sense of well-being” (Bridger, 2015).
- **Internal integration.** Employees who form part of a culture within an organisation develop common expectations of how to resolve difficulties of external adaptation and internal incorporation. If this has worked well enough to seem valid then it will be taught to new employees as the right way to act in relation to those difficulties (Palovaara, 2017:5).

Table 3.5 below summarises the proposed internal communication practices that must be in place to strengthen employee engagement in an organisation for the purpose of measurement.

Table 3.5: The proposed internal communication practices that should be in place to strengthen employee engagement in an organisation:

Internal communication practice	Contribution to employee engagement	Formulated dimensions of employee engagement	Example in the organisation
Effective internal communication strategy	The only way that employees will trust the organisation that they work for is through effective internal communication. Trust is one of the core drivers of employee engagement, thus without effective communication that fosters trust within an organisation, there will be no employee engagement (Tavana & Puranam, 2015:152).	Inclusion, inspiration, joint-effort and information openness.	When an organisation has a company-wide meeting which includes employees from all departments to decide what the best internal communication methods are to use within their organisation. Each employee then has a say and their opinions are considered when leadership makes the final decision. This will make employees feel involved in the internal communication strategy of the organisation.
The right internal communication tools for engagement	Employees will be more engaged if they have access to collaboration tools (Jones, 2010:191).	Alignment of preferred communication, ownership of tools, ease of use.	An organisation can allow the marketing department to communicate with one another via an intranet if that is their choice of communication tool, in order for them to feel like they have a say

			and can take ownership of the communication tools they prefer.
Supportive management style	The main things that employees need within the organisation is for management to understand employees, guide employees, and root for employees to succeed (Dickson, 2011:49).	Involvement, fairness, empowering employees, recognition.	Management can have monthly 'check-in' meetings with their employees where they allow employees to share feelings/ opinions about work-related issues and also have an input when managers set goals for them so that they feel involved and empowered.
Adhering to employees' needs within the organisation	The key to ensure that engagement happens is to align messaging around engagement by focusing the message on employees' needs. It is vital to fulfil basic human needs of employees if organisations wish to achieve employee engagement within the organisation (Byrne, 2015:92).	Listening to needs, open flow of communication, work-life balance, employee benefits.	An organisation can offer employees certain benefits such as medical aid and a retirement fund as part of their package in order to ensure that those needs of employees are being met and that employees feel like the organisation cares about their well-being by doing so.

<p>Opportunities for employees to participate in problem-solving</p>	<p>Allowing employees to have a say in the strategy of their work may be efficient in growing employee engagement because employees are then able to increase the fit between the employees' skills, desires, standards and the job which may promote psychological significance (Truss et al., 2014:141).</p>	<p>Involvement in decision-making, authority, openness, participation.</p>	<p>Organisations should give employees the authority to make decisions that will allow them to do their job effectively. Employees should also feel as if their opinions are taken into consideration when it comes to problem-solving at work.</p>
<p>Establishing a good organisation culture</p>	<p>Developing an organisational culture is also supportive of engagement; this means that the organisation thus has to provide space and motivation for employees to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation (Clark, 2012:161).</p>	<p>Belonging, shared values, and internal integration.</p>	<p>An organisation should execute/live the values and beliefs that they communicate externally. This will allow employees to have a feeling of trust towards the organisation, thus resulting in loyal, engaged employees.</p>

3.4 SUMMARY

To summarise, after explaining the study's focus on internal communication, the focus in this chapter moved to employee engagement. Employee engagement as a concept was explained as an optimistic attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. Employee engagement is not only about the attitude that employees have toward the organisation, but also how employees that are engaged will improve

their performance and that of their co-workers to better the welfare of the organisation. Engaged employees feel an obligation towards the organisation to give their best and to help the organisation to succeed. For this study, the focus on employee engagement thus lies with how internal communication practices within a particular organisation can strengthen employee engagement.

This chapter elaborated on the context of the study; employee engagement was described as a function of internal communication; the key drivers (enablers) of employee engagement were discussed and illustrated; the positive outcomes of employee engagement were also explained and illustrated; employees' needs within an organisation were depicted, as well as management's role in employee engagement. Lastly, proposals about internal communication practices that must be in place to strengthen employee engagement in an organisation were made for the purpose of measurement. In the next chapter, the selected organisation for the case study will be discussed.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE STUDY: EXPLAINING THE SELECTED ORGANISATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

An explanation of the case warrants a lengthier discussion than would have been possible in Chapter 1. In this chapter, it is first explained why the organisation was selected for the case. This is followed by a discussion of the JvR Africa Group and where JvR Safety as a division of the Group fits into the hierarchical structure. Furthermore, the organisational profile of the JvR Africa Group is discussed in terms of its mission, vision, strategic goals and objectives, and the services offered by the organisation. The organisational structure of the JvR Africa Group is also discussed. Lastly, the internal communication tools that are currently utilised by the JvR Africa Group and were extended to JvR Safety are explained. This chapter addresses Sub-question 3.

4.2 SELECTING THE CASE

As mentioned in Chapter 1, JvR Safety, a division of the JvR Africa Group, was chosen as a case because the researcher followed an information-oriented selection process to study a particular phenomenon in depth, namely the relationship between internal communication practices and employee engagement (see Widdowson, 2011).

In addition, the researcher also has access to the organisation which means that the researcher could form a holistic argument based on the facts that the researcher could attain. As Widdowson (2011:26) explains, for researchers, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its manifold wealth of details are vital regarding two aspects. Firstly, it is important for the development of a nuanced assessment of reality, which includes the view found at the lowest levels of the organisation and in much theory, that human behaviour cannot be implicitly comprehended as simply rule-governed acts. Secondly, cases are imperative for researchers' personal learning processes in developing the skills needed to do good research. If researchers thus

want to develop their own skills to a high level, then concrete, context-dependent experience is just as essential for them as professional learning of any further skills.

Furthermore, the organisation has adopted a postmodern approach which is in line with the theoretical point of departure of this study (see the discussion in section 2.10 of Chapter 2). One of the most significant postmodern features of JvR Safety is that they have a very strong focus on a family-like culture. For example, employees at JvR Safety start their day by greeting each other with a hug and enjoying their morning coffee and breakfast together, whilst partaking in informal communication and office banter. Another postmodern feature at JvR Safety is that they believe in transactional communication where every employee is heard and has a voice, irrespective of their position at the organisation. As explained by Diefenbach (2013:176), the interactional assumption (the idea that communication is transactional) is reinforced by postmodernist thinking, only when 'transactional' suggests that meaning occurs in the procedure of communication rather than a mere passing of meaning from one to the other. Postmodern management practices have to create well-being and a supportive and pleasant atmosphere at work, and let employees express emotions for more personal performance in the service of a higher joint efficacy in the interest of the organisation (Lacan, 2019:10). The case study selected for this study thus aims to obtain in-depth knowledge of internal communication practices to strengthen employee engagement.

4.3 ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

Established in 1993, the JvR Africa Group is the largest independent psychology practice in Africa and has built a network of international suppliers, business partners, and clients, with the goal to support organisations at all levels, industries and sizes with insights and interventions that facilitate the development of people. Across the JvR Africa Group, there are more than 60 employees who work hard to bring the best of what psychology offers to the market. Their clients are varied and include a range of national and international organisations working in South Africa and the rest of Africa. Clients have come to expect the JvR Africa Group to provide them with options, unique solutions, relevant research and technological sophistication. Following a successful 24-year tradition, the JvR Africa Group companies exist to delight their

clients, to collaborate with their partners and to live the ethics, values and standards of the discipline of psychology (the JvR Africa Group: 2017). The vision of the JvR Africa Group is explained in the next section.

4.3.1 Vision of the JvR Africa Group

Hill (2012:227) explains that a vision statement of an organisation should be a short, concise, and motivating statement of what the organisation aims to become at some point in the future. It is the mental image that narrates the organisation's ambitions for the future without stipulating the means to accomplish those ambitions. The JvR Africa Group's vision is "unlocking the potential in people using the science of psychology" (the JvR Africa Group, 2017). JvR Safety adheres to this vision by focusing on a tried and tested organisational development (OD) methodology that guides the organisations they work with towards a desired future state where personal ownership for safety becomes a newly entrenched mindset.

4.3.2 Mission of the JvR Africa Group

A mission statement explains the organisation's purpose, often asserting its products or services. A good mission statement needs little clarification to comprehend what the organisation does. The mission should emphasise one or two strengths which are often presented as the key products or services and the market served (Kirkpatrick, 2016:4). The mission statement of the JvR Africa Group is as follows: "We specialise in providing psychological knowledge and new insights into human behaviour by:

- sourcing and developing assessment and applications;
- project managing assessment data for clients;
- proactively generating research that drives evidence-based psychology;
- sourcing, collaborating on, delivering, and developing training and services;
- leveraging an extensive network of local and international stakeholders for people who want to make better decisions for themselves and others in all fields of endeavour (partnerships)" (the JvR Africa Group, 2017).

JvR Safety adheres to the mission of the JvR Africa Group by:

- offering a variety of safety-focused psychometric assessments across different levels and contexts;
- conducting safety research;
- offering training services that focus on empowering individuals to practice new skills. Available as standalone courses and workshops, or as part of the PDS™ implementation ‘training’ component, JvR Safety is regarded as a leading behavioural safety training provider;
- facilitating organisational development projects across a wide variety of areas;
- collaborating with organisations on strategic projects to provide advisory consultation.

4.3.3 The JvR Africa Group goals and strategic objectives

In line with its vision and mission, the JvR Africa Group has the following strategic goals and objectives (the JvR Africa Group, 2017):

- represent the best of psychology;
- proactively participate in the development of the discipline;
- span the boundaries of academic practice;
- implement psychology in a constructive, valuable and demonstrable way;
- make a positive contribution to the human condition;
- work closely with other human conditions;
- be a healthy, vibrant business;
- be modern, progressive and sustainable.

4.3.4 Organisational structure of the JvR Africa Group

From its establishment as an entrepreneurial concern 24 years ago, the JvR Africa Group (Pty) Ltd has grown to include six business entities and a variety of regional offices.

The JvR Africa Group Head Office is in Johannesburg (Gauteng) and their South African regional offices are in Cape Town (Western Cape), Potchefstroom (North

West) and Bethlehem (Free State) provinces. In the other five South African provinces, the organisation has affiliates that are able to provide services and support to clients. Figure 4.1 below illustrates the structure of the JvR Africa Group:

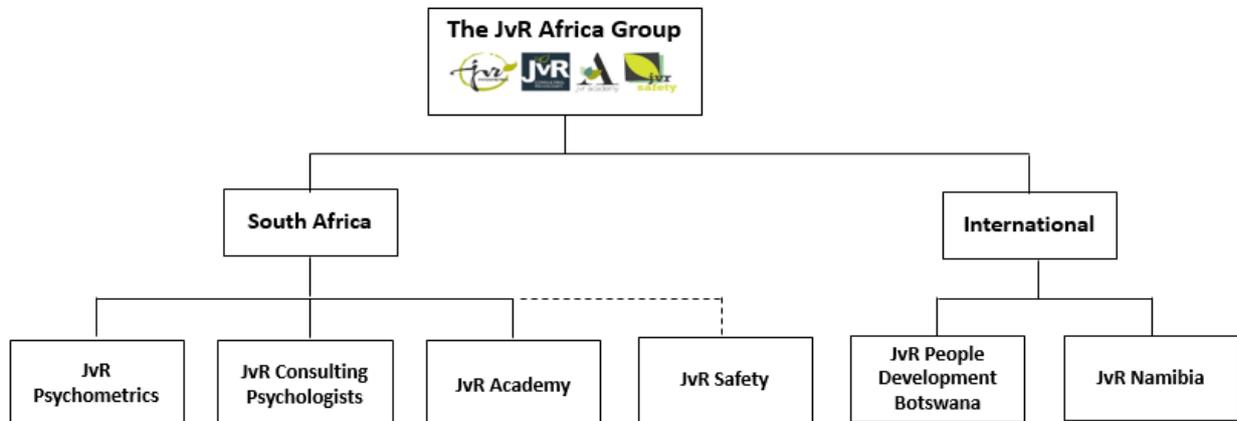


Figure 4.1: Organogram of The JvR Africa Group

Source: The JvR Africa Group (2017).

The different divisions of the Group are discussed below:

4.3.4.1 JvR Psychometrics

Established as an entrepreneurial concern in 1993, JvR Psychometrics celebrated its 24th birthday in January 2017. The vision of the company to “unlock people potential through innovative assessment solutions” fits very comfortably with the consolidated vision of the whole JvR Africa Group, which is: “scientific people solutions”. JvR Psychometrics prides itself on the quality of client relationships, the continued focus on research and the innovative solutions crafted for the African contexts.

Given the economic, social and political realities in Africa, the work done by JvR Psychometrics has been to acknowledge the impact of various levels of education and sophistication, multiple cultures, languages and political realities on the use of assessments. Validations, adaptations, standardisation, cultural perceptions, legal requirements, language proficiency or bias are issues that have to be answered every day. For this reason, the company primarily employs psychologists and psychometricists in addition to strong corporate and business-oriented people (the JvR Africa

Group, 2017).

Figure 4.2 illustrates the structure of JvR Psychometrics:

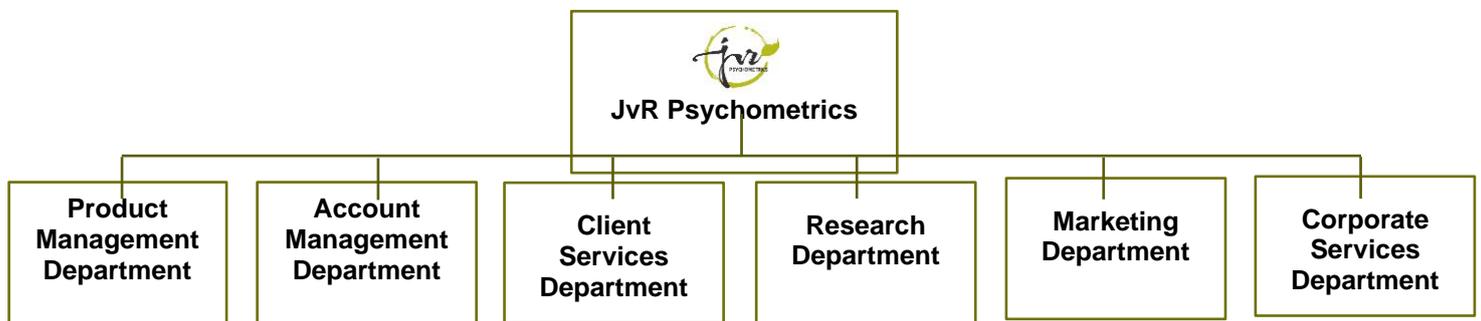


Figure 4.2: Organogram of JvR Psychometrics

Source: The JvR Africa Group (2017).

4.3.4.2 JvR Academy

As the official training and skills development service provider for the JvR Africa Group, JvR Academy facilitates socio-emotional skills and behavioural competency development of:

- psychology and human resources professionals, focusing on international and national programmes to provide accreditation in the use of psychometric assessments and CPD practitioner activities. These activities are aimed at building and maintaining expertise and providing opportunities for networking;
- individuals and groups of all ages and at all organisational levels, focusing on personal, career and team development;
- teachers, parents and students/learners across all educational levels and settings.

JvR Academy has the following to offer clients:

JvR Academy's learning programmes are well researched and grounded in psychological theory. They often incorporate relevant psychometric instruments in their skills development events to add further personal insight and enhanced return on investment. In delivering their programmes, they follow a blended learning approach. The combination of face-to-face interaction and instruction and online learning

opportunities allows for this customisation, individualisation, flexibility, and ultimately, a greater chance for learning success. Their formal training schedule is available on the JvR Academy website (the JvR Africa Group, 2017).

4.3.4.3 JvR Consulting Psychologists

JvR Consulting Psychologists exists to empower individuals, teams and organisations to thrive in their contexts. Against the current and future backdrop of constant change, organisations can only prosper if leaders are inspiring, employees are engaged and resilient, people performance at all levels is aligned and optimised, and the organisational culture is healthy. With almost 25 years of proven expertise in the JvR Africa Group, and together with their local and global network of partners and associates, they are at the forefront of providing their clients with real people solutions that are technologically adept and characterised by an innovative and creative approach.

JvR Consulting Psychologists' clients span across a range of the most important industries on the African continent with a national and global footprint, SMEs, government entities and not-for-profit organisations. JvR Consulting Psychologists are committed to:

- truly partnering with clients in order to make sense of their business needs in a wider context and keeping a big-picture perspective on people solutions;
- maintaining high standards of excellence in the processes relating to human assessment and human growth;
- contributing meaningfully to human resource development in South Africa and Africa; and
- adhering to codes of conduct that ensure integrity, fairness and respect as well as professional and academic excellence in dealing with individuals, groups and organisations (the JvR Africa Group, 2017).

4.3.4.4 JvR Safety

In Africa and beyond, many people are employed in at-risk environments. Risk in these

environments could mean loss of life, production stoppages and/or litigation, to mention but a few. Given the importance of safe behaviour in these at-risk environments, particularly in the mining, manufacturing and agricultural sectors in Africa, JvR Safety was established in March 2014.

JvR Safety is a safety research, consulting and training company with the fundamental purpose to facilitate its clients towards establishing a reputable safety culture and safety mindset, conducive to sustainable, safe, qualitative and productive workforce behaviours.

JvR Safety's competitive edge lies in its thoroughly researched and globally tested methodology known as People Driven Safety (PDS™) and has as its goal the transformation of safety culture to a level where all employees have a high level of positive self-persuasiveness towards safety and productivity (the JvR Africa Group, 2017).

This study focused solely on the JvR Safety division. The reason for selecting JvR Safety is because the organisation has adopted a postmodern approach which is in line with the theoretical point of departure of this study (as mentioned in section 4.2). Also, the researcher had access to the JvR Safety organisation and not to the other divisions. It is important to note that when the researcher started with the study, JvR Safety consisted of 51 employees in total. However, during the course of this study the organisation went through a restructuring process resulting in only 20 employees.

The managerial reporting lines are illustrated in the figure below:

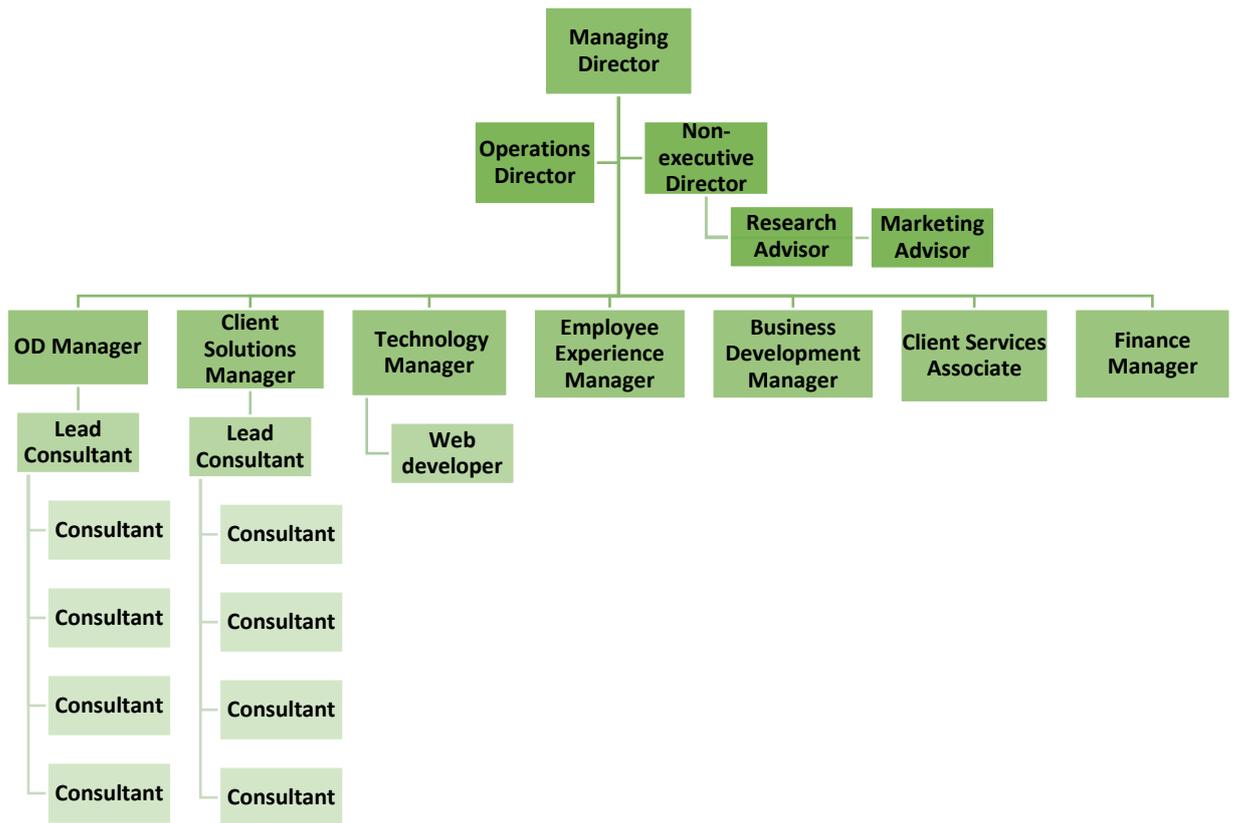


Figure 4.3: Organogram of JvR Safety's reporting lines

Source: The JvR Africa Group (2017).

4.3.4.5 JvR Namibia

The JvR Africa Group has progressively been building a business presence in Namibia for many years. These clients were managed from the JvR Cape Town regional office. In June 2016, the decision was made to establish an independent Namibian company (JvR Namibia) with the aim of being closer to existing JvR clients and to explore new business opportunities.

The initiative to establish in Namibia was warmly welcomed by existing clients and business opportunities have already become apparent. Training events have been well attended and the company has already been awarded its first government tender. They have also established a relationship with a prominent local university who seeks to participate with JvR in doing local research. The aim of JvR Namibia is to seek opportunities for business growth and development by supporting the local practitioners in their private practices, academic institutions or government (the JvR

Africa Group, 2017).

4.3.4.6 JvR People Development Botswana

JvR People Development Botswana was established towards the end of 2016. We are looking forward to building this business into a valuable resource for assessments, research, skills development and consulting services in the years ahead.

Developing human capital to drive the economic development in Botswana is reinforced with a major emphasis on investing in human resources on all levels and in all industries and institutions. JvR People Development Botswana is ideally placed to play a significant role in identifying and developing the Botswana people, not only to ensure “prosperity for all” in the country but also to ensure that Botswana is able to keep playing an important role on the continent (the JvR Africa Group, 2017). The next section offers an insight into the services rendered by the JvR Africa Group as a whole.

4.4.5 Services offered by the JvR Africa Group

Each division in the JvR Africa Group brings organisations the best of what the field of psychology can offer in a unique, focused portfolio of products and services, including the following:

- well-known international assessments validated for use in South Africa;
- affordable assessments specifically developed by South Africans for South Africans;
- an extensive range of research papers to support the assessments they distribute;
- a South African developed online assessment administration and scoring system that provides access to both national and international assessments, professional courses and events, often providing international accreditation, e-learning opportunities, skills development courses for individuals and organisations;
- a vast range of consulting services including psychometric evaluation, strategy planning, talent management and organisation development;

- dynamic websites that allow others to share in new developments nationally and internationally.

The group is divided into four different organisations called JvR Psychometrics, JvR Consulting, JvR Academy and JvR Safety (the JvR Africa Group, 2017).

4.5 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS USED AT JVR SAFETY

The JvR Africa Group utilises both traditional and online internal communication tools to connect with employees; these are also extended to JvR Safety as a division of the Group (the JvR Africa Group, 2017). For example, the online communication tools utilised by The JvR Africa Group include an intranet, where the entire organisation's information is communicated and available to employees, from the organisations values and mission and vision to the employee handbook, the company's policies and so forth. The JvR Africa Group also makes use of an internal news blog where any news regarding the organisation or employees of the organisation is communicated, for example, employee birthdays and work anniversaries. Emails are also used to communicate all relevant information regarding the organisation and employees within the organisation. The JvR Africa Group uses a web interface in order to communicate with all of the regional offices. Web interfaces such as Google Hangouts are used to include employees at regional offices in meetings that are held at the head office so that all employees of the group can be included. Employees within the JvR Africa Group also utilise Google Hangouts to have instant conversations with one another, allowing employees to talk amongst each other in a 'live' format across teams, departments and with management. The management of the JvR Africa Group also makes use of task management systems such as Nozbe and Slack (instant messaging platform) in order to easily delegate tasks to their team and allow employees to give feedback and ask questions on any relevant tasks at hand. The traditional communication tools that are utilised by the JvR Africa Group are face-to face communication in the form of informal and formal meetings between employees and managers. The JvR Africa Group also make use of internal print in the form of flyers in order to inform or remind employees of important information regarding the organisation, for example, the organisation's values are printed and distributed throughout the organisation for employees to put up in their offices as a reminder to

live those values every day in the workplace. Most of the collaboration within JvR Safety occurs with online task management systems, when employees and managers are working together on projects and collaboration via Nozbe on what to do and by when to do it. Collaboration also occurs with face-to-face or virtual meetings that take place within JvR Safety, and lastly, collaboration also occurs with the use of instant messaging platforms such as Slack (the JvR Africa Group 2017). Table 4.1 below summarises the online and traditional internal communication tools used by the JvR Africa Group.

Table 4.1: Internal communication tools utilised by the JvR Africa Group

Online internal communication tools	Traditional internal communication tools	Where collaboration occurs
Intranet	Face-to-face communication (internal meetings)	Online task management systems (Nozbe)
Internal news blog	Internal print (flyers)	Face-to-face communication (internal meetings)
Emails		Slack (instant messaging platform)
Web interface (Google Hangouts/Zoom)		
Online task management systems (Nozbe)		
Slack (instant messaging platform)		

Source: The JvR Africa Group, 2017

4.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter, an explanation of why the organisation was selected for the case was provided. This was followed by a discussion of the JvR Africa Group and where JvR Safety as a division of the Group fits into the hierarchical structure. Furthermore, the organisational profile of the JvR Africa Group was discussed in terms of its mission, vision, strategic goals and objectives and the services offered by the organisation. The organisational structure of the JvR Africa Group was also discussed. Lastly, the internal communication tools that are currently utilised by the JvR Africa Group and extended to JvR Safety were explained. In the next chapter, the research methodology and operationalisation will be discussed.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND OPERATIONALISATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the study's research design and operationalisation are discussed, which includes the worldview and research approach adopted as well as explaining the single case as the chosen research methodology. The research methodology is also discussed in terms of data collection methods, the target population and accessible population, unit of analysis and sampling method. The three data collection methods that were adopted for this study are explained as well as validity and reliability. Lastly, data analysis is explained. This chapter addresses Sub-question 1.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this study is explained in the next sections.

5.2.1 Research paradigms and approach for this study

The worldview adopted for this study is both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms, as discussed below.

5.2.1.1 The positivist research paradigm

According to Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2011:39), scholars who adopt the positivist research paradigm argue that the world occurs autonomously of people's perceptions of it and that science utilises objective methods to determine what occurs in the world. In the positivist approach, measurements should be quantified, for example, measuring the average age of a group that is female is simply an accurate manner of describing and summarising the objective reality. Individuals that adopt a positivist stance often tend to utilise certain types of research methodologies, for example they tend towards quantitative research which includes measurement of

phenomena utilising figures and amounts. The positivist worldview is anchored in the quantitative part of the study (the survey).

5.2.1.2 *The interpretivist research paradigm*

Scholars who adopt the interpretivist research paradigm observe social reality as having an subjective element and as ascending out of the formation and exchange of social meanings during the course of social interaction. Interpretivists thus argue that the objective quantitative approaches of positivism miss a significant part of human understanding: the subjective and personal connotations that individuals assign to themselves and what they do. The worldview of the interpretivist research paradigm focuses on qualitative research methods in an effort to obtain access to personal, subjective experiences of participants (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The interpretivist worldview is anchored in the qualitative part of the study (the interviews and focus group).

5.2.2 The mixed method research approach

This study adopts the mixed method research approach. According to Creswell and Clark (2011:4), mixed method research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers merge elements of qualitative and quantitative research methods (for example utilisation of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, and analysis inference techniques) for the purpose of breadth and depth of comprehension and association. In this regard, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010:364) argue that studies adopting a mixed method research approach have three key features. Firstly, a researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data (for example, the researcher might collect quantitative data by means of a questionnaire and qualitative data by utilising focus group interviews). Secondly, the researcher analyses these or more than two datasets (for example, the researcher can analyse the quantitative data for correlations and the qualitative data for themes). Thirdly, the researcher mixes the datasets in a significant manner (for example, by comparing and opposing the results of the quantitative correlation analysis with the qualitative thematic findings) and cultivates a general explanation.

The quantitative and qualitative research approaches that underlie the mixed method research approach are now also explained.

Rasinger (2013:93) defines the quantitative research approach as “clarifying phenomena by means of collecting numerical data that are analysed utilising mathematical based methods, in particular statistics”. Muijs (2011:2) states that the quantitative research approach makes use of numbers and statistical approaches. It is usually based on numerical measurements of particular aspects of phenomena; it extracts from specific occurrences to pursue a general explanation or to test causal hypotheses; it pursues measurements and analyses that are effortlessly replicable by other researchers. Quantitative researchers search for descriptions and forecasts that will generalise to other individuals and environments. Vigilant sampling strategies and experimental designs are facets of quantitative methods aimed at generating generalisable results. In quantitative research, the role of the researcher is to observe and measure, and care is taken to keep the researchers from “polluting” the data through personal participation with the research subjects. The researcher’s objectivity is of the highest importance (Muijs, 2011:2).

According to Cresswel and Poth (2018:17), the qualitative research approach can be defined as “multi method in focus, involving an informational, realistic approach to its subject matter”. This means that qualitative researchers study objects in their natural environments, trying to make sense of or understand phenomena in terms of the meaning individuals bring to them. Qualitative research includes the studied utilisation and gathering of a selection of empirical resources such as a case study, personal experience, introspective, an interview, observational, a narrative, and interactional. Luton (2010:3) explains that qualitative research approaches include vigilant preparation, respectful engagement, thorough analysis, and careful presentation. For work to be based on a qualitative research approach, it is not enough for researchers to merely witness a fascinating phenomenon, but researchers must have a conversation with individuals and write down what they thought it meant.

Both these approaches are applicable for this study because the quantitative approach will objectively test structured questions while the qualitative approach will allow for rich data to answer the research questions and, at the same time, complement the

quantitative data. This will strengthen the results of the research and will clarify the results.

5.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

The research problem statement for the study is as follows:

To investigate by means of a mixed method cross-sectional single case study approach how to strengthen employee engagement with internal communication practices in order to enhance a postmodern organisation's success.

5.4 OBJECTIVES

The study's objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: To describe how to strengthen employee engagement with internal communication practices to help a postmodern organisation succeed.

Objective 2: To explore perceptions of how employee engagement should be dealt with by management through internal communication practices at JvR Safety.

Objective 3: To explore the ways in which employee engagement can be strengthened with the application of a postmodern approach.

5.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study has one main research question and two sub-questions and are as follows:

Research question 1: How can employee engagement be strengthened with internal communication practices to help a postmodern organisation succeed?

Research question 2: What are the perceptions of how management should deal with employee engagement through internal communication practices at JvR Safety?

Research question 3: In which way can employee engagement be strengthened with the application of a postmodern approach?

5.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study's research methodology specifies how a researcher will study a phenomenon. A single case study was the most appropriate methodology for this particular study. Andrew, Pederson and McEvoy (2011:137) observe that a single case study involves an in-depth study of one case using multiple sources. The methodology often comprises a single-case study design focused on one organisation which is explained in the next section.

5.6.1 Single case study

A single case study was the most appropriate research method for this study because the researcher wanted to examine the concepts of internal communication practices and employee engagement in much depth. A case study can be defined as "in-depth, detailed studies of a single object or a small quantity of objects" (Irwin, Pannbacker & Lass, 2014:187). The object can be a family, individual, group, organisation, social unit or community. In case studies, researchers often gather both descriptive and exploratory data. For example, the researcher might observe relationships amongst various phenomena, tendencies over time as well as explore perceptions about a topic. Case study researchers attempt to comprehend and analyse matters that are significant to times past, growth or conditions of the entity under study.

Typically, a main component of case study methodology is the combined research strategy which combines research methodologies and can be viewed as a meta-methodology. This can be seen as a form of triangulation on a meta-level: methodology triangulation (Lawrence, Turgut & Kellett, 2012:53). It is evident from the above definition that a single case study focuses on obtaining in-depth and detailed explanation of phenomena within its larger context using information from various data sources.

A single case study can be valuable but also challenging when it comes to reporting results. Gerring and Christenson (2017:154), for example, argue that case studies commonly have stronger claims to internal validity than to external validity. A case in point is that it is challenging to claim representativeness across a greater population

when a sample entails only a single case or a handful of cases. However, it should be noted that it was not the aim of this study to generalise the findings to the larger population.

Additionally, case study research is commonly more valuable at a primary stage of analysis, where a study serves an exploratory role; possibly finding a new outcome or a new causal aspect of interest. Whitley and Kite (2013:356) elaborate that case studies are particularly useful in providing in-depth information because it often considers the environmental, social, and historical settings of the behaviour being studied and utilises data sources such as records, documents and interviews, not frequently incorporated in other types of research. Single cases can also display the limitations of theories by highlighting cases that dispute general theoretical suggestions. Finally, even uncontrolled case studies can offer hypotheses for testing in more controlled research strategies and can highlight formerly undiscovered phenomena. In the next section, the three research methods used for the single case study are discussed.

5.6.2 Research Methods

The three methods that were used for this single case study are a survey, semi-structured interviews and a focus group.

5.6.2.1 Survey research

Survey research is one of the most imperative parts of measurement in applied social science research. The broad area of survey research encompasses any measurement events that include asking questions of respondents. A survey can vary from adopting a short paper-and-pencil feedback to a rigorous one-on-one in-depth interview (Rossi, Wright & Anderson, 2010:69).

There are different ways of administering a survey. Fielding, Lee and Blank (2017:145) argue that surveys can be administered as self-administered questionnaires that are emailed or delivered to individuals at their homes or offices with detailed instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and how to return the questionnaire. Self-administered questionnaires entail respondents completing the questionnaire alone

without any assistance and returning the questionnaire to the researcher. The survey can, however, also be group-administered. Developments in computer technologies and growing access to the internet make it increasingly possible to distribute self-administered questionnaires via email or internet sites. This type of survey is generally called an internet or online survey. Both the self-administered questionnaire and internet survey necessitate that the respondents are literate. Internet surveys also require that individuals have access to computers and the internet (Robinson & Leonard, 2018). For this study, self-administered questionnaires were sent to respondents via email.

The survey was administered online in accordance with guidelines as put forward by Weinreich (2011:167) to answer Sub-question 1: how can employee engagement be strengthened with internal communication practices to help an organisation succeed? All employees in the organisation were firstly invited to participate in the survey by sending them information about the purpose of the study and why they were selected (Creswell, 2013:145). This was followed by the researcher sending the link for the online questionnaire to respondents who were willing to participate in the study to complete. Thereafter, along with the link that was emailed, the respondents were informed that the study was voluntary and that they did not have to complete the questionnaire if they did not want to (Creswell, 2013:145). In addition, the respondents were also informed of all ethical issues such as confidentiality, while informed consent was built into the questionnaire. Respondents could thus not proceed with the survey without providing consent (Creswell 2013:145). In this study, a self-administered online questionnaire was appropriate because the quantitative approach sought to objectively test correlations between variables.

5.6.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

O'Hara, Carter, Dewis, Kay and Wainwright (2011:169) explain that an interview can be defined as "a type of dialogue that is introduced by the interviewer in order to acquire research relevant information". Interviews are usually conducted on a one-to-one basis in which the interviewer gathers information from the interviewee. Interviews can take place telephonically or face to face. Interviews can also take place via non-real-time methods such as email, but in such cases functions like a questionnaire.

Interviews are useful for gaining in-depth information that is hard to gather through approaches such as considering background information alone (King & Horrocks, 2010:42).

There are three types of interviews, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews consist of prearranged questions asked in a static order like a questionnaire. In semi-structured interviews, the questions are determined prior to the interview but may be restructured, rephrased, removed, and enlarged. Unstructured interviews are not based on predetermined questions but instead upon an overall area of interest, thus allowing the discussions to advance freely (O'Hara et al., 2011:171).

This study adopted a semi-structured interview to answer Sub-question 2: what are the perceptions of how management should deal with employee engagement through internal communication practices at JvR Safety? According to Myers (2013:122), a semi-structured interview is located somewhere between structured and unstructured interviews. A semi-structured interview includes the utilisation of some pre-formulated questions, but there is no firm devotion to them. However, there is some consistency across interviews, given the fact that the interviewer typically starts with a similar set of questions every time. One of the major advantages of the structured interview is stability across interviews. Gerrish and Lacey (2010:87) add that semi-structured interviews are generally utilised in qualitative studies implementing a number of methodological approaches. Semi-structured interviews have predetermined topics and open-ended questions guided by an interview schedule. Semi-structured interviews require a more skilled and trained interviewer than the structured form. Therefore, the researcher must learn as much as possible about the attributes or experiences to be shared by the participants. Based on this knowledge, the researcher must decide before the interviews what aspects of the participants' experiences that are related to the topic must be focused on but may also add questions during the interview.

The researcher followed the detailed steps of Galletta (2013) for conducting the semi-structured interviews as follows. The participants were recruited by means of an email sent to them informing them about the study that is being done, what it is about, where

and when it would take place, the duration of the interview, and inviting them to participate. The next step was to explain why the respective participants were chosen for the interviews and what the purpose of the study was. The venue, which was a boardroom at JvR Safety, was booked in at different days and times during the month of July 2019, as arranged and scheduled with the participants in advance. On the day of each interview, the interviewer attempted to make participants as comfortable as possible by giving them a short introduction to what the expectations of the interview were and participants were informed by the researcher that the study was voluntary and that they could stop participating at any time, and were asked to complete a consent form prior to the interview. In addition, confidentiality was emphasised, meaning that their identity would not be revealed at any time. The participants were also assured that the data from the interviews would solely be accessed by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor. The participants were not identified by name or their position in the organisation throughout the interviews and in the process of reporting the study's findings.

After all the ethical issues were discussed, the next step was to ask the participants' permission to have the interviews recorded, whereafter permission was granted. The interviews started with the researcher asking questions as guided by the interview schedule. The researcher also took some notes in addition to recording the interviews. Lastly, after the interview ended, the researcher debriefed each participant and thanked him/her for taking the time and energy to participate in the interviews (see Addendum B).

5.6.2.3 Focus group

Davis (2017:1) suggests that a focus group can be defined as "group discussions focused on a particular situation or topic". A focus group allows researchers to assess how people communicate about or interact about a topic of interest in a group environment. It is important to clarify the difference between a focus group and other types of interviews. Unlike individual interviews, the participant's individual view is not the key focus but the group's collective views are recorded, which is an important distinction. A focus group is a small group, ranging anywhere from six to twelve participants that get together for an in-depth conversation on a topic. A focus group is

traditionally conducted face-to-face, but nowadays is often also conducted via telephone, Skype or other electronic means such as Google Hangouts (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013:93).

However, according to Coe, Waring, Hedges and Arthur (2017:215), a disadvantage of a focus group can be that participants are usually not representative of the broader population of interest, which means that the results cannot be generalised. Another disadvantage can be the group's dynamics (arising from very dominant or very restrained individuals), group members' desire to adapt to the views of others, or the conscious or unconscious views of the moderator, which can all bias the conversation and findings. It is not easy to facilitate a great focus group discussion which requires a knowledgeable moderator with decent interpersonal skills as well as adequate time and analytical capabilities to guarantee that the intricate data collected are thoroughly and accurately summarised, analysed and interpreted.

However, Bray and Kehle (2011:793) explain that these disadvantages can be overcome as a focus group also has many strengths that the moderator can use to an advantage. One of these strengths is that a focus group offers participants an opportunity to develop and polish their thoughts through conversations and interactions with others alike. The method is also valuable in engaging underprivileged and marginalised groups and those who feel that they have little say. A focus group also tends to be quicker and more affordable to take on than many other types of research.

A focus group was used in this study for research questions 1 and 2:

Sub-question 1: How can employee engagement be strengthened with internal communication practices to help an organisation succeed?

Sub-question 2: What are the perceptions of how management should deal with employee engagement through internal communication practices at JvR Safety?

For this study, the face-to-face focus groups were guided by a moderator's guide (see section 5.6.3.3 and Addendum C) and included six participants, from various departments and various positions within JvR Safety. To conduct the focus group, very similar steps were followed to those of the face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

However, because of the group dynamics of a focus group, some steps are dissimilar to face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The steps as proposed by Cyr (2019) were as followed: the participants were recruited by means of an email informing them about the study that is being done, what it is about, where and when it will take place, and inviting them to participate. The next step was to explain the purpose of the study and the reason for choosing the participants for the focus group interviews. Similar to the interviews, the venue, which was a boardroom at JvR Safety, was booked in advance for 3 December 2019 at 10:00.

Like the interviews, the researcher as the moderator of the focus group provided a brief introduction to the expectations of the focus group interview. All participants were once again informed by the researcher what the purpose of the study was and that participation was voluntary. Issues related to confidentiality of the data and the participants' identities were highlighted, after which each participant signed a consent form prior to the focus group.

Participants then gave permission for the focus group discussion to be recorded. The focus group started with the researcher allowing all participants a chance to acquaint themselves with the rest of the group, for example, by informing others what their roles and responsibilities are within the organisation. The pre-set questions that were in the moderator's guide were utilised during the focus group to guide the focus group discussion. The researcher also took notes in addition to recording the focus group session. Lastly, after the focus group ended, the researcher debriefed the participants and asked them whether there was anything else that they wanted to add. The researcher then thanked the participants for taking the time to participate in the focus group interview. In the subsequent sections, the data collection methods and the selection of the target and accessible population of this study are described.

5.6.3 Data collection methods

As mentioned previously in the chapter (section 5.6.1), a single case study approach involves an in-depth study of one case (Andrew, Pederson & McEvoy, 2011:137). It is also important to note that the data were collected in a cross-sectional time frame: the data were collected in the period from May 2019 to December 2019. The cross-

sectional time frame was appropriate for this study as it was not necessary to conduct research several times over a long or different period of time. A single case study design was implemented at one organisation (JvR Safety) in order to test perceptions on employee engagement within the context of internal communication. This study used an online questionnaire for the survey, interview schedule for the semi-structured interviews and a moderator's guide for the focus group. The three data collection methods are explained below:

5.6.3.1 Self-administered online questionnaire

In order to be able to do correlations between the items in the questionnaire, the researcher was advised by a statistician to gather statements from pre-existing questionnaires from studies that correspond with the proposed internal communication practices as explained in section 3.3 in Chapter 3. Since no existing questionnaire contained all these constructs, the researcher had to collect "tried and tested" constructs from several existing questionnaires in section 3.3 in Chapter 3 for the purpose of scale validity. The response format of the questionnaire was a five-point Likert-scale format where respondents had to indicate their agreement that ranged from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), to strongly agree (5). The final questionnaire consists of eight sections. Respondents' bibliographical information was also collected in order to contextualise and classify their responses (see Annexure A).

The statements in the questionnaire were also first pre-tested on individuals who were not part of the population, in order to make sure that they were clear and easily understood. The statistician assisted with the finalisation of the items in the questionnaire (see Addendum A).

5.6.3.2 Interview schedule

For this study, an interview schedule which is semi-structured in nature allowed for the gathering of rich data and at the same time complemented the quantitative data of the survey. Grinnell and Unrau (2011:231) maintain that although a semi-structured interview schedule can contain some pre-set questions, researchers have substantial

leeway to discover in their own manner matters relating to the research question being studied. Thus, the general areas to be explored are determined before the interview schedules, although few, if any questions, may be formulated in advance. Monette et al. (2011:178) add that an interview schedule comprises questions to be asked in a particular order and that also contains phrases to transition to the next question.

In this study, the formulation of the open-ended questions in the interview schedule was guided by the proposed theoretical guidelines in section 3.3 in Chapter 3. The interview schedule consisted of 11 questions. Participants' bibliographical information was also collected to classify their responses. The questions were pre-tested on individuals not part of the study to ensure that they would be clear to the participants (see Addendum B).

5.6.3.3 Moderator's guide

A moderator's guide is a document that guides the questions to be asked during a focus group discussion and should be handled with the same degree of importance and care to detail that is usually assigned to a quantitative research questionnaire. A moderator's guide is essentially a framework of the conversation to be held during the focus group session facilitated by a moderator (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013).

Similar to the interview schedule, the formulation of the open-ended questions in the moderator's guide was guided by the proposed theoretical guidelines in section 3.3 in Chapter 3. The moderator's guide consisted of 15 questions. Participants' bibliographical information was also collected to classify their responses. The questions were pre-tested on individuals not part of the study to ensure that they would be clear to the participants.

As is evident in the above discussion, these three data collection methods were appropriate for this study to address the study's research questions, strengthen the findings through methodological triangulation and clarify the results (see section 5.8.4). The researcher thus followed up on the survey with interviews and one focus group. In the subsequent section, the selection of the target and accessible population of this study is described.

5.6.4 Target and accessible population

McBride (2012:136) explains that the target population is the population that the researcher wants to abridge the results of the sample study to. The target population for this study was all the employees of similar organisations to the JvR Africa Group. On the other hand, an accessible population is the population that the researcher has access to as the sample pool (McBride, 2012:136). The accessible population for this study were all employees at JvR Safety, a sub-division of the JvR Africa Group (see Ruel, Wagner & Gillespie, 2016:17).

5.6.5 Unit of analysis

Tight (2016:112) refers to a unit of analysis as that which is studied, which could be an individual, community, family, organisation, a state, or even a nation. The unit of analysis for this study is the employees at JvR Safety and thus individuals, and consisted of both managers and employees at this organisation.

5.6.6 Sampling method and size

According to Yin (2013:32), it might not be probable to include each individual or document in the case study research. Consequently, only some members of the target population are selected by means of sampling. Generally, there are two types of sampling in research namely, probability and non-probability sampling. Daniel (2012:66) explains that probability sampling is a sampling procedure that gives every element in the target population a known and nonzero probability of being selected. The 'known' term in the definition of a probability sample design implies that the size of the population was known at the time that the sample was selected, and the probability of any element of the population being selected into the sample could be calculated. The 'nonzero' term in the definition implies that at the time the sample was selected, every element in the population had a chance to be selected. In contrast, non-probability sampling is a sampling procedure that does not give some elements in the population a chance to be in the sample. Often, non-probability sampling is employed by qualitative researchers who use different techniques from those seen in

quantitative research to access their samples. Types of non-probability sampling consist of quota sampling, snowball sampling and purposive sampling (Berkowitz, 2017:218).

For the semi-structured interviews and focus group, a purposive sampling method was used. A purposive sampling method is defined by Davis and Pecar (2013:191) as “a sampling method in which individuals are chosen based on the purpose of the study”. As with other non-probability sampling methods, purposive sampling does not select a sample that represents a larger population but a sample which is of theoretical interest to the study (Davis & Pecar, 2013:191). For this study, it means that the researcher purposefully selected employees at JvR Safety because their perceptions of how to strengthen employee engagement within the organisation by means of internal communication practices were deemed important to address the study’s research questions.

However, a census was used for the survey because the questionnaire was completed by all employees. The census method is also called a complete enumeration survey method whereby everyone in the population is selected for data collection. When the whole population is studied in order to collect detailed data around each person (participant/respondent), then the census method is applied (Lavrakas, 2008). Due to the restructuring of JvC Safety during the study, the researcher was left with fewer respondents than initially anticipated, but which were clarified by the statistician as still feasible because the findings were also validated by interviews and focus groups. Thus, only 20 respondents completed the questionnaire (see also the study’s limitations in Chapter 6).

A two-phased qualitative data collection approach was adopted by, firstly, conducting six semi-structured interviews with the management of JvR Safety, and secondly, conducting one focus group with seven employees of JvR Safety. In the next section, the validity and reliability of the three data collection methods are discussed.

5.7 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE THREE DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Each research study should assure quality of the research procedure and the research

results. Preparing for quality should be done during the research process (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). The quality of the research process is significant as it is the foundation on which research results can be viewed as information that can be integrated in the knowledge base of any individual field of study (Gerrish & Lacey, 2010). The study ensured validity and reliability by considering the following aspects.

5.7.1 Following a case study protocol

The study followed a case study protocol which means that the researcher focused on the topic and research questions for the case study including how the case study's findings should be reported. According to Elbardan, Othman and Kholeif (2017:134), a case study protocol defines the detailed processes for collection and analysis of raw data, occasionally called field procedures, and is a vital way of assisting the researcher in conducting the data collection procedure in a systematic way. A case study protocol thus allows the study to assess what the study argues to assess because the protocol clearly outlines the research questions and the data collection processes to be conducted. Yin (2013) observes that a case study protocol must adhere to the following guidelines as encapsulated in four sections:

- **Section 1:** An overview of the case study (objectives, case study topics, and applicable readings about the topic being studied);
- **Section 2:** Data collection processes should be in place (processes for protecting individual's rights, identification of similar sources of information, demonstration of identifications to field contacts and other logistical cues);
- **Section 3:** Research questions (the particular questions that the case study researcher should keep in mind when gathering data and the possible sources of evidence for answering each question);
- **Section 4:** A provisional outline for the case study report (for example, format of the data, utilisation and presentation of other credentials and bibliographic information).

The researcher thus meticulously followed this protocol to ensure that the study was done systematically as is evident in the preceding chapters as well as in this chapter. The validity and reliability of the survey are discussed below.

5.7.2 Validity and reliability of the survey findings

The following aspects were of importance with regard to the survey.

5.7.2.1 Validity of the survey

According to Tilmouth and Quallington (2016:21), validity is a measure of whether researchers have truly discovered what they claim to have found, and whether that which they have learned can be applied to other populations. A researcher who is aiming at measuring something needs to construct an instrument that he/she knows is measuring that topic. In this way, the results can be correctly applied and understood for an instrument to be valid. Suen and Ary (2014:164) explain that there are various validity measures for a survey. The discussion, however, only focuses on internal and construct validity as the main considerations.

- *Internal validity*

Fiske, Gilbert and Lindzey (2010:55) suggest that internal validity refers to having confidence in a study's measurement's accuracy to be able to draw valid cause-and-effect assumptions from research findings. McBride (2013:44) adds that internal validity is the degree to which a study offers a decent test of causal hypothesis or, as in the case of this study, a test of proposed theoretical guidelines where alternate explanations of the data can be ruled out. A study with high internal validity provides fundamental information about behaviour. In addition, the survey's internal validity was also enhanced by pretesting of all statements to avoid any misunderstandings about their meaning.

- *Construct validity*

According to Salkind (2010:229), construct validity refers to how constructs were operationalised in a survey to measure what it was supposed to measure. Construct validity thus signifies the degree to which an instrument (the self-administered online

questionnaire) measures the construct that it was supposed to measure. Connaway and Powell (2010:63) reiterate that in order to warrant construct validity, it must be clear that an instrument measured the constructs in question and not others.

The constructs for the questionnaire were operationalised in section 3.3 of Chapter 3 by identifying and proposing dimensions that holistically capture relevant aspects related to internal communication practices and employee engagement in the literature. Previously validated statements in pre-existing questionnaires were purposively selected for measurement. All statements thus reflected the proposed internal communication practices as put forward in section 3.3 in Chapter 3. In addition, the researcher also consulted with a statistician for guidance to ensure that the right constructs were measured.

- *External validity*

External validity refers to whether the results of the study can be generalised to other populations, other environments or other measurements (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012:168). The findings of the survey do not have any external validity and are only applicable to JvR Safety. However, it must be emphasised that external validity was not a consideration for the study.

5.7.2.2 Reliability of the survey

According to Mitchell and Jolley (2010), reliability refers to the extent to which a research study, test or measuring process gives similar results on recurring studies. Other researchers must be able to perform precisely the same study under the same circumstances and produce similar results in order to strengthen the findings. This is called replicating findings. It is also important to mention that reliability and validity exist side by side and cannot be equally exclusive of one another. For example, a measuring tool that is not reliable cannot at the same time be valid. Similarly, a study that has reliability does not assure validity (Wood & Haber, 2014:290). Scale reliability was important for the survey and is reported as follows.

- *Scale reliability*

The researcher made use of a statistician to determine scale reliability. The internal consistency or reliability of the scales was assessed by means of Cronbach's alpha. The following reliability coefficients were found for the various items (see section 3.3 in Chapter 3):

Internal communication strategy (a = .78)

Internal communication tools (a = .83)

Management style (a = .93)

Employees' needs (a = .59)

Participation in problem-solving (a = .80)

Organisational culture (a = .82).

All items in the questionnaire illustrate good reliability except for employees' needs. This item was nevertheless reported on in the findings to provide more context on the proposed internal practices for employee engagement from the viewpoint of employees at the organisation. For those items that indicated lower than desired reliability (.7), it is recommended that future research should use a larger sample to ascertain whether reliability improves.

5.7.3 Trustworthiness of the interviews and focus group

The trustworthiness of the interviews and focus groups are now explained in terms of the concepts of credibility, dependability, conformability and transferability.

5.7.3.1 Credibility

Credibility is similar to a study's internal validity and is the extent to which qualitative data is believable and how much confidence there is in the truth of the data (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:253). Numerous methods have been suggested for refining and recording the credibility of qualitative research such as tenacious observation, negative case analysis, peer examination, extended engagement, participant checks, quest for counterevidence, credibility of the researcher, and triangulation. This study

used persistent observation and researcher self-monitoring as well as triangulation of data to ensure credibility. Persistent observation refers to the researcher's focus on the facets of the situation that are applicable to the phenomenon being studied. Researcher self-monitoring, on the other hand, emphasises building an explanation in such a way that there is an association between the procedure of analysis and the proposed focus of the study (Profetto-McGrath, Polit & Beck, 2010:68). All questions in the interview schedule and moderator's guide were also pre-tested to ensure that questions were understood and clear.

5.7.3.2 Dependability

Tappen (2011:416) explains that in qualitative research, dependability involves accepting changes in the setting, studies and in the research design itself. This happens as the comprehension of the researcher becomes more distinguished over the course of data collection and even analysis. Dependability in this study occurred when the researcher had to accept the fact that there was restructuring taking place within JvR Safety, which led to a decrease in the accessible population throughout the course of the study.

5.7.3.3 Conformability

According to Yilmaz (2013), confirmability refers to the idea that the data and interpretations of an investigation are not fabricated. Conformability is about connecting findings and understandings to the data in manners that can be effortlessly understood by others. To guarantee confirmability, systems and measures utilised in the study must be evidently defined and data utilised in the data analysis has to be kept safe and accessible for other researchers to use for reanalysis. To guarantee that assumptions made from the thematic analysis are reasonable and executed in an unbiased way, the data collection and analysis were clearly defined and properly documented for any additional reanalysis by other researchers.

5.7.3.4 Transferability

Transferability is similar to external validity and refers to the degree to which the

findings from a qualitative study can be applied to or be suitable in other circumstances. Suitability or transferability is the choice that the person who reads makes about the findings of a qualitative study based on the researcher's depth of explanation of the study that would propose that findings are not exclusive to the study setting but might be found and applied somewhere else (Rees, 2016:54). As previously specified, the research findings of this particular study are only applicable to JvR Safety which forms part of the JvR Africa Group, but similar organisations could use the findings as a heuristic to improve their internal communication practices for enhanced employee engagement.

5.7.4 Methodological triangulation

Flick (2014:184) explains that triangulation means that the researcher takes various perspectives on a subject under study in answering a study's research questions. Methodological triangulation refers to any study that applies two or more independent methods to answering a similar research question(s) (Egbert & Baker, 2019:35).

In this regard, the study's research questions were analysed from different perspectives using different data collection methods in order to increase the validity of the findings. The validity of the study's findings was thus enhanced by means of methodological triangulation.

In addition, the construct validity of all measurement instruments was also enhanced. Robinson (2012:346) explains that in case study research, construct validity can be achieved by collecting a sum of data sources through methodological triangulation. This study established a strong chain of evidence throughout the data collection procedure, utilising numerous data collection methods and sources of evidence and keeping in mind the proposed internal communication practices as put forward in section 3.3 of Chapter 3. In the next section, data analysis is discussed.

5.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is discussed first for the survey and then for the interviews and focus group.

5.8.1 Data analysis of the survey

The data for the questionnaire were analysed by means of descriptive statistics as well as a bivariate analysis. The Pearson's product-movement correlation coefficient was first done to test the strength of the relationship between the variable employee engagement and the different internal communication practices variables as identified in Chapter 3, section 3.3. These include internal communication tools, internal communication strategy, management style, employees' needs, problem-solving, employee engagement and organisational culture. In addition, a multiple regression analysis was done to test which of the internal communication variables predict employee engagement, namely to estimate the relationship between the variable employee engagement and internal communication practices. The data for the questionnaire was analysed using the statistical programme R version 0.98.1103 (R Core Team 2013).

5.8.2 Data analysis of the interviews and focus group

The data for the interviews and focus group were analysed by following a hybrid approach for a qualitative thematic analysis using the ATLAS.ti software. This means that coding was first done deductively by considering the interview questions and then inductively to uncover any additional underlying ideas and meaning (see Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke's (2006:93) thematic analysis procedure was used as a qualitative data analysis approach. Braun and Clarke (2006:93) conceptualise six steps that a researcher must follow to analyse qualitative data. After the interviews and focus group were transcribed verbatim, data analysis of the interviews and focus group was done by following the following steps (at different occasions):

- **Step 1: Familiarising oneself with the data**

The first step of this thematic analysis is for the researcher to thoroughly read through

the transcripts. The interview schedule and moderator's guide that were used to gather this data can be found in Addendum A and Addendum B. It is important for the researcher to take notes and to look for patterns that emerge, in order to get ideas for coding the data. This way, the researcher becomes very familiar with the data before going any further (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). In this study, the coding researcher familiarised herself with the data by reading through the transcriptions to obtain a better understanding of the participants' responses and their potential meaning.

- **Step 2: Generating initial codes**

The second step of this analysis starts after the researcher has generated an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about it and involves the production of initial codes from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). During the second step of the analysis, the researcher thus started to organise the data in a meaningful and systematic way in order to generate initial codes from the data. Coding decreases a lot of data into small portions of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). The researcher made use of qualitative data analysis software called ATLAS.ti which assisted in gathering initial codes from the data.

- **Step 3: Searching for themes**

The third step in the thematic analysis process involved organising the various codes into possible themes and assembling all the appropriate coded data extracts within the identified themes and thinking about the relationship between codes, themes and the main themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). For this study, the researcher separately examined the groups that formed from the responses to identify the main concept behind the responses and then assigned preliminary themes to these categories in accordance with the proposed internal communication practices in section 3.3 in Chapter 3. While doing so, the researcher also considered similar themes appearing in different categories formed from the responses, from both the interviews and from the focus group discussion, and also had a look at contradictory themes and the reason behind the discrepancy.

- **Step 4: Reviewing themes**

Step 4 follows after the researcher has created a set of possible themes by then refining those themes, removing some themes, merging certain themes or splitting others into separate themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). Braun and Clarke (2006:93) suggest that the data within themes should have coherent meaning and also that there should be clear and distinguishable divisions between themes. For this study, the researcher carefully re-read the themes identified and changed some of the wording while removing any repetitive phrases.

- **Step 5: Defining and naming themes**

This step involves recognising the core of what each theme is about and determining what part of the data every theme captures, by means of writing a comprehensive analysis to identify the narrative that each theme tells and how it fits into the broader context of the data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). It also involves the researcher considering the ultimate names to give the themes. As mentioned before, because the researcher followed a deductive approach, the theoretical guidelines embedded in the interview schedule and moderator's guide respectively guided the themes. However, it is always important that these names should be brief, effective and should instantly give the reader a sense of what the theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). For this study, the researcher also considered the different codes that emerged from the themes by rearticulating some of them in order to mirror the concepts behind the responses.

- **Step 6: Producing the report**

The final step of this thematic analysis procedure involves telling the complicated story of the data, which should be concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting and should, for example, use quotations to capture the essence of the point being made (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). This analysis should go beyond description and make arguments related to the research questions and the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006:93). In this study, the researcher described the findings identified under each

theme as they relate to a particular research question and questions in the interview schedule and moderator's guide. In the description, direct quotations from some participants were included in the data analysis to capture important and interesting issues from the interviews and the focus groups discussions and to relate them back to the literature. By considering the above six steps of a thematic analysis, the researcher was able to analyse the data in a systematic manner (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

5.9 SUMMARY

In summary, the study's research design and operationalisation were discussed, which includes the worldview and research approach adopted. The single case as the chosen research methodology was also discussed. The research methodology was explained in terms of data collection methods, the target population and accessible population, unit of analysis and sampling method. The three data collection methods that were adopted for this study were also explained, as well as validity and reliability. Lastly data analysis was explained. In the next chapter, Chapter 6, the study's findings are discussed and interpreted.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the study's research methodology and operationalisation to address the research problem and questions. This chapter, which addresses sub-questions 1, 2 and 3, focuses on the reporting and interpretation of the qualitative findings with regard to the semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group. In addition, the quantitative findings are also discussed. Then, the overall findings based on the triangulation of the data are deliberated in terms of the internal communication practices that are important and should be in place in JvR Safety, and also those that are not so important, in order to enhance employee engagement. Lastly, a table illustrates which internal communication practices are perceived to be important at JvR Safety.

6.2 REPORTING OF THE QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of the study are reported; first with regard to the semi-structured interviews (with six managers), followed by the focus group (with seven employees). As mentioned in Chapter 5, these qualitative methods were adopted for this study to answer Sub-question 3: In what way are the proposed theoretical guidelines to strengthen employee engagement through better internal communication practices applicable within an organisational setting?

Since the thematic analysis was done deductively and then inductively (see Chapter 5, section 5.8.2), the themes are first discussed in terms of the questions in the interview schedule and moderator's guide, respectively, and then their underlying meaning. The findings of the semi-structured interviews are as follows.

6.2.1 Findings of the semi-structured interviews

In this section, the findings of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the management of JvR Safety are explained. The findings of the semi-structured interviews were analysed using a deductive and inductive thematic analysis approach (see section 5.8.2 for a detailed discussion). The analysis was supported with the ATLAS.ti data analysis tool. Following a deductive approach, the following themes were considered during data analysis:

- Internal communication strategy
- Communication tools
- Management style
- Employees' needs
- Participation in problem-solving

The findings are explained under each of these themes.

Theme 1: Internal communication strategy

This theme refers to the communication methods used in order to allow for employees' opinions and inputs into JvR Safety's strategy. Participants indicated that regular meetings are held which allows for discussion platforms between employees and managers in order to generate new ideas and discuss current progress and future goals. Thus, this provides an opportunity for everyone to be updated and encourages everyone's input. One manager stated: *"We are inclusive in that we invite everyone's inputs where we can but especially when creating or embarking on initiatives that impact us all. We also allow for staff to pitch new ideas that they might have which they feel will add value to the business and overall strategy – whether it be an internal platform which makes us more efficient in how we work or a product to consider developing that we can use to expand our service offering to new and existing clients. At times, there are strategic decisions that the leadership team make which exclude the opinions of everyone else because of the responsibility such decisions hold and the experience the leadership team have in making decisions for the interest of the*

business and everyone part of the business.”

The finding is consistent with findings of past studies (Eid, 2012:273) which concluded that an internal communication strategy is a joint effort that embraces all internal stakeholders in an organisation with a variety of job functions across different hierarchical levels. As another participant stated: *“We have two-way communication streams within the company and making use of various platforms such as Asana and Slack which allows for two-way communication both top-down and bottom-up. This ensures that employees are always kept in the loop.”* Based on these arguments, it is evident that managers at JvR Safety are putting in the effort to ensure that employees’ inputs and opinions are included in JvR’s internal communication strategy.

Theme 2: Communication tools

Theme 2 refers to the availability of collaboration tools within JvR Safety and encompasses perceptions relating to employees’ power to take ownership of these tools. One participant stated: *“There is a great degree of ownership that we encourage (and largely expect) from everyone here. The resources to make use of tools is provided and the onus is on everyone to learn and internalise new tools. We are a mature team and spoon feeding/regulating too much is best avoided.”* This indicates that management offers these online communication tools for employees to use, which, according to the literature, have enabled horizontal communication that allows employees to communicate in a distinctive and formerly impossible manner. However, management at JvR Safety also expect them to take ownership and utilise these tools as they should.

When it comes to management’s perceptions about the utilisation and ownership of communication tools for better employee engagement, it is evident that these platforms such as Asana and Slack are freely available. However, these platforms seem to have some complications as not all employees are utilising them accordingly. The present finding also supports Tavana and Puranam’s (2015:152) study which concluded that the challenge does not lie in the utilisation of all possible and accessible internal communication tools, but in the selection of the most suitable ones to use.

This will enable the most efficient communication in accordance with the organisational culture.

The findings indicate that JvR Safety has a variety of collaboration tools for employees to utilise in order to voice their opinion, ask questions, be involved in the decision making of the organisation in order to reach goals, give and receive feedback from management and ultimately allow employees to be kept informed about the organisation's ventures with a horizontal flow of communication taking place. It is, however, evident that management at JvR Safety should put more focus on which communication tools to use that would be most suitable to the culture at JvR Safety.

Theme 3: Management style

This theme relates to managerial perceptions on employees being treated fairly and which implementations the managers adhere to in order to provide a non-biased and fair working environment. It should be noted that participants have mentioned that JvR Safety has implemented certain policies and regulations to ensure a non-discriminatory environment by: having an open-door policy, hearing everyone's opinion, allowing the space for challenge if warranted, and often reminding employees that they can check in about work or personal matters any time they want. One participant stated: *"I'll often set a check-in meeting and give the other person an opportunity to set the agenda as to what we should talk about – this has worked well. I also share myself how I am doing i.e. with a current project, or something of interest in my life to subliminally let the other person know that it's OK to communicate."* This finding is supported in the literature on the human relations management theory which acknowledges that it is management's duty to treat employees with respect, poise, and value in order to motivate and grow the full performance potential of employees (Bauer, 2012:5).

Furthermore, the participative management style which Yee-Melichar et al. (2011:160) observe, utilises a horizontal structure with a flatter line of authority and managerial control. The management of the organisation is thus more team-oriented where collective employee input and decision-making are of importance. This is highlighted in the findings and encapsulated by a statement from one of the participants who

stated: *“I personally do my best to hear everyone’s opinions and allow the space for challenge if warranted. When difficult decisions need to be taken, I do look to our values as a guide along with the inputs from employees in my team.”*

The findings indicate that management within JvR Safety do include employees in most of their decision-making. Although at times certain decisions are only made by leadership, it is understood by employees that there are certain strategic decisions that have to be made by leadership as they carry the responsibility that such decisions hold and they have the experience in making such decisions in the best interest of the employees and the organisation. The findings also show that management has an open-door policy and is open to communicating with employees at any time. Lastly, it was found that the management style within JvR Safety is inclusive and participatory. Management indicated that they try their best to be transparent and consistent with employees in order to ensure that employees feel valued and respected.

However, despite the vast experience of the participants in managerial roles at JvR Safety (see Table 6.1), it is important to note that the literature suggests that management within organisations still struggle to effectively utilise internal communication efforts in order to strengthen employee engagement.

Theme 4: Employees’ needs

This theme refers to what management does to ensure that their subordinates find it easy to approach them and communicate with them openly. The participants indicated that management are extremely relational, transparent and authentic, which make them very approachable and that there are certain things that they do in order to ensure that employees can communicate with them openly, such as constantly checking in with employees, having people as a value in the organisation, having breakfast and lunch with employees, and making it a habit of inviting feedback. One participant stated: *“If an employee approaches me with a query or concern, I try to listen as to what the actual concern is without judgement.”* This finding relates to the literature which found that the only way in which management will know what the needs of employees are, is by constantly communicating with them and always allowing for an open and free flow of information (Byrne, 2015:92).

Based on the findings it is evident that management within JvR Safety make an effort to ensure that employees find it easy to approach them and communicate openly with them about what their needs are.

Theme 5: Participation in problem-solving

This theme relates to how much authority employees within JvR Safety have to voice their opinions about anything that is of value to the organisation. The participants identified that employees do have the ability to be involved in decisions that need to be made and management invite fresh new thoughts and ideas. JvR Safety is seen as an organisation where the thoughts and views of all employees are appreciated and encouraged. This finding is supported by literature which suggests that if organisations give employees the authority of having their voice heard, even if it is in situations that stretch outside of the employee's job description, those organisations can be sure that employees will become more engaged within the organisation (Barrette, 2012:92).

However, participants also recognised that, in some instances, employees might not have the courage to voice their opinions for concern of a negative reaction – which could build on uncertainty. One participant highlighted that *“it depends on the topic and the individual. While we are mostly open to honest communication some employees are clearly more comfortable in giving feedback than others.”* Another participant stated that *“in some instances, colleagues might not have the courage to voice their opinions for concern of a negative reaction – which could build on uncertainty.”* This raises the concern that not all employees within JvR Safety have equal authority to voice their opinion. The demographic information of the participants who were interviewed are depicted below.

6.2.2 Demographic information of the participants of the semi-structured interviews

As is evident in Table 6.1 below, participants of the semi-structured interviews were all in a managerial position, consisting of three white males and three white females between the ages of 28 and 51. Only one participant indicated that they had less than a year's experience, while two indicated to have less than a year's experience in a

managerial role. Three participants indicated that they had vast experience in a managerial role. This means that the research participants had ample experience and could provide in-depth and reliable information on their perceptions of employee engagement and internal communication practices within the organisation.

Table 6.1: Demographic information of the participants of the semi-structured interviews

Demographic Results	N
Gender	
Male	3
Female	3
Race	
White	6
Age	
Years (25-30)	3
Years (31-40)	1
Years (41-50)	2
Job Position	
Manager	6
Time in that Position	
Years (0-1)	2
Years (1-2)	1
Years (2-5)	3

In the next section, the findings of the focus group are discussed.

6.2.3 Findings of the focus group

In this section, the findings of the focus group that was conducted with employees of JvR Safety are discussed. Similar to the findings of the interviews, the findings of the focus group were analysed using a deductive and inductive thematic analysis approach (see section 5.8.2 in Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion). The ATLAS.ti tool was also used to support the analysis. The following themes were identified from the data analysis for the focus group:

- Internal communication strategy
- Communication tools
- Management style
- Employees' needs
- Participation in problem-solving
- Meaningful contribution to the organisation

The findings are clarified under each of these themes.

Theme 1: Internal communication strategy

This theme explains whether the internal communication strategy of JvR Safety should be a joint effort, meaning that everyone should be involved. Participants stated that it is very important for everyone to be involved in the internal communication strategy for the following reasons: information openness, having an opinion from the beginning to establish that the internal communication strategy would mean that employees have more accountability to ensure that the strategy is executed properly as they would feel more accountable to make it work. One participant stated: *“Having everybody involved and having an open platform helps to ensure that the information doesn’t fall through the cracks, because that could happen.”* This is confirmed in the literature stating that an internal communication strategy is a joint effort that embraces all internal stakeholders in an organisation with a variety of job functions across different hierarchical levels. It is important for internal communication as internal communication efforts will not be executed successfully if there is no strategy in place for how to do so (Eid, 2012:273). This was evident in this statement of a participant who said: *“I think also specifically for JvR Safety where we try to do away with a lot of structures and hierarchy that if you want to evaluate on things like new ideas and technology that there is forms where we can collaborate more and it’s very important that it involves everyone so that we have open communication within our organisation.”* This is an aspect that both Leshan (2009:21) and Tavana and Puranam (2015:152) agree upon which is that an internal communication strategy is of great importance as it informs the best way to establish effective communication in an organisation.

The above statements indicate that it is of great importance that all employees at JvR Safety really have a need to be involved in most, if not all, forms of internal communication that take place within the organisation. Employees think that the more they know about what is going on in the organisation, the more they can contribute to the organisation.

Theme 2: Communication tools

This theme refers to the ease of use of internal communication tools within JvR Safety. The participants stated that the internal communication tools that they currently use work well for the purpose of getting a message across, but there is definitely room for improvement. It was highlighted by the participants that they use WhatsApp as an internal communication tool but that there are multiple groups that are being used and that this is problematic. The reason for this is that because there are multiple groups and because it is not a formal communication tool, important messages sometimes do get lost, as it will be sent in a group and followed by irrelevant communication which will then disappear in the thread of informal messages. It was stated that *“WhatsApp is more for social communication and that the meetings that we have in the mornings are more suited for the important communication, but then there is other communication that needs emails.”* The literature cautions against choosing to solely use online communication tools to execute all communication means and advises that traditional communication is just as important (Tavana & Puranam, 2015:161). The participants indicated a definite need to keep better track of internal communication: *“With WhatsApp you won’t be able to log communication that took place, I’m not sure if Slack has that but that’s where email does track a message trail.”*

Additionally, participants stated that they do use a platform called Asana as an internal communication tool but that it is actually meant to be used solely for project management purposes. A communication platform called Slack is also used for internal communication purposes. It is evident from the participants responses that JvR Safety do use multiple internal communication tools, both online and traditional, but it was not clearly defined in the internal communication strategy which channels

should be used for what kind of communication and that could be “*a bit overwhelming as well*”.

Theme 3: Management style

This theme relates to the efforts that are being made by management in order to ensure that employees at JvR Safety get recognition for the work they do. Participants mentioned that because managers at JvR Safety have an open-door policy, “*it ensures that there is an open line of communication between us and management, which allows management to actually be in touch with what it is we do and how we are achieving the goals that are being set out for us.*” One participant stated: “*Managers make a point of giving praise and recognition to those who have done a good job on a particular project, in front of our colleagues. Which makes you feel like you are doing something right and that it is being noticed.*”

Furthermore, participants indicated that management allows for open communication and feedback which results in “*them to be able to give you the recognition for the work that you do when it is applicable and needed.*” It was also indicated by participants that because management at JvR Safety are friendly and understanding, it makes them more approachable which, in turn, makes employees feel more engaged towards the organisation as a whole. This is in line with the literature that suggests that management style is a key driver of employee engagement as employees who have a manager with a firm or harsh management style will not be as engaged as employees who have a manager with a sociable and friendly management style (Hess & Orthmann, 2012:8).

It is clear from the findings above that employees at JvR Safety value their managers having an open-door policy, which means that they can approach them at any time and that managers have an open communication style that allows for input and feedback from employees. They also appreciate working closely with management as this allows their managers to see the work they put in and give them recognition accordingly. Similarly, employees at JvR Safety feel that managers trust their ability to do their own job and also give them the space and trust them to do so. Employees at JvR Safety appreciate the fact that they are allowed to solve problems on their own

without management trying to micromanage everything that they do, which makes them more engaged toward the organisation.

Theme 4: Employees' needs

This theme deals with the importance of having a work-life balance; whether employees feel that they have a work-life balance at JvR Safety; and what employees' views are of the significance of employee benefits. Firstly, participants indicated that it is very important to have a work-life balance and if they do not have that balance, they will not be able to be the best employee/manager that they are capable of being. One participant gave an example: *"If you are spending too much time at work and you go home and carry on working and sending emails then that will mean that you are neglecting your personal life. If you are neglecting your personal life then you will end up being unhappy and then you won't perform at work as well as you are supposed to."* Participants amplified the importance of a work-life balance and clearly stated that *"if you can give the same amount of attention to your personal life as you do to your work-life then you will be a more stable and happier individual which will mean that you will be happy and engaged at work."* The findings corroborate the literature that indicates that to most employees, a stable work-life balance is vital and also creates a stronger level of employee engagement. Employees are expected to be more engaged when they can manage to complete their work but also get enough time to spend with their families and personal lives because of their organisation's human resource policies encouraging a work-life balance (Rao, 2017).

Participants stated that they feel like they do have a work-life balance at JvR Safety, because even though they work long hours when they are out on projects, when they are at the office, the working hours are shorter than normal working days and that balances it out. Also, participants specified that something that really helps is the fact that the management of JvR Safety constantly communicates with them to see whether they are coping with the longer hours and to find out what it is that they can do in order to make it easier on them. One participant stated: *"I also think that we are allowed to take personal time if we really need it, for instance if you really have to go to the dentist then you can quickly go or if you have to go and fetch your child from*

school. Those are things that are important to have and that makes life so much easier. So, I really do think that even though we work very hard sometimes, especially on projects, that the other benefits that we have balances it out."

Furthermore, participants indicated that having employee benefits such as a medical aid and retirement fund is *"extremely significant"*. It was stated that *"it shows a commitment from the organisation towards you, towards your welfare and towards also offering a sense of security as well, it takes to those values of a family-oriented business so it provides credibility amongst the values and to know that we are covered creates a piece of mind within our own lives as well."* This is in line with the literature which suggests that the way in which organisations can ensure that all needs of employees are met is by keeping in mind what the basic needs of employees are and by looking at Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs for a good foundation to satisfy employees' different types of needs, such as the safety need. As one participant stated: *"I think medical aid is not something that's a nice to have, you have to have it if you have an accident no one has cash in their back pocket to just pay for an operation, it just doesn't work that way, so I think it's very important to have medical aid and I am really thankful that it is one of our benefits at JvR Safety. "*

As can be seen from the statements above, employees at JvR Safety truly value a healthy work-life balance. It is highlighted that they do work very hard at times but that it is balanced out by their working hours at the office being shorter than normal. Also, they feel that the organisation is very reasonable when it comes to taking personal time when needed, and this is also a very positive indication that employees at JvR Safety have a healthy work-life balance. Employees also feel secure in the fact that they have benefits at JvR Safety such as medical aid, which puts their minds at ease knowing that they are covered, should anything happen to them.

Theme 5: Participation in problem-solving

This theme deals with participants' thoughts on being involved in the strategy and decisions of tasks that directly affect them as well as whether participants prefer having control over choices and problem-solving related to their work, or whether they

would rather leave that up to management. Participants indicated that they believe that it is important to be involved in the strategy of their own work. As one participant stated: *“You are afforded the opportunity to discuss potential problems before it arises, so if I need to get a task done today and I’m involved in what needs to be done, then I can say or see foreseeable challenges and say I also have other things that need to be done or perhaps what I’m doing here is a duplication of what I’m doing in another task, so since I’m being involved and considered, then I can bring those things up.”* This is verified by the literature describing that employees feel less like an object and more like a vital partner in the organisation as an actively participating employee (Garber, 2013:108).

Moreover, the participants all agreed that even though it will be good to be involved in the strategy and decisions that are being made, which will ultimately affect their work, there is still a sense of collaboration because each employee is given the opportunity to raise their opinion even if the strategy is already in place. The fact that the participants feel like JvR Safety is an organisation where everyone’s voice is heard, means that they trust in management to make certain decisions on their own. As stated by one participant: *“There’s a sense of co-creation but at the end of the day there are still strategies that need to be set out by management.”* These statements suggest that employees are engaged because they are offered opportunities to be involved in problem-solving and strategies for their own work. The literature reiterates that employee engagement can create a less stressful working environment because employees have greater participation and control over choices and problem-solving rather than thinking that they do not have an influence at work (Garber, 2013:108).

Theme 6: Meaningful contribution to the organisation

Following the deductive analysis, an additional theme became evident during the inductive analysis. This theme refers to participants’ opinions on getting rewards and recognition based on their performance at work. Participants indicated that rewards and recognition within the working context is not as clear-cut and straightforward as it might seem, and that it can lead to confusion amongst employees. It was indicated that they would need to implement some strategy that will incentivise employees or give them recognition for the work that they do (some form of recognition that will

enhance the internal motivational factors of the employee). One participant stated: *“I do still feel that there can be an incentive, I don’t want to use the word incentivise because I think that that takes away more of the intrinsic motivation to achieve that goal, but maybe a recognition based on where you can find individual efforts or individual contributions towards the company and again it shouldn’t be a hard rule based on incentivising because then it is just going to become a transactionally driven intervention, but more on an intent and effort.”* This is verified by the literature which explains that an organisation can develop a rewards and acknowledgement plan to encourage the growth in employees’ sense of ownership when it comes to developing their own communication skills, through setting goals and receiving incentives based on their performance (Moss & DeSanto, 2011:293).

However, participants also stated that because JvR Safety is such a family-oriented organisation, there is a fear of losing that by creating competition amongst employees with the goal of being incentivised. This was encapsulated by the following statements: *“I also think that sometimes if you start to get individual rewards it might take away from the close-knit family feeling because then it can start to feel like competition and even if that only happens with one person, so if only one person gets recognised and three other feel motivated to be recognised as well, but there is one that feel alienated then that starts to segment a family feel within an organisation.”*

“I also think in a heavily team-driven it’s difficult to start individuating over and above performance-based rewards, because when we accomplish success on a project there is so many key role players and key activities that take place which form a collection of success factors it’s never just one.”

It is clear from the above findings that employees at JvR Safety do appreciate being recognised for the work and efforts that they put in, but they are also aware of the fact that within their working environment it is very difficult to do so as most of the work that they do is very team-oriented. The findings also suggest that because employees value the family-oriented culture at JvR Safety, they are afraid that if employees are incentivised individually, it would become more of a competition between them and that is not what they want. This contradicts the findings of Huus (2015) who states that organisations that have reasonable rewards and recognition procedures in place

based on employees' performance will have more engaged employees. It can be assumed that because employees at JvR Safety are already so engaged, that they do not need rewards for their performance. In the next section, the demographic information of the participants of the focus group is discussed.

Table 6.2: Demographic information of the participants of the focus group

Demographic Results	N
Gender	
Male	4
Female	3
Race	
White	6
Black	1
Age	
Years (25-30)	3
Years (31-40)	4
Job Position	
Employee	7
Time in that Position	
Years (0-1)	1
Years (1-2)	3
Years (3-5)	3

Participants of the focus group were all employees, comprising four males and three females between the ages of 28 and 39. Only one participant indicated that they had less than a year's experience as an employee, whereas three participants indicated that they had less than two years in their position as an employee and the other three participants indicated that they had between two and five years' experience in their current position. Having reported on the qualitative findings of the study, in the next section, the findings of the survey are discussed.

6.3 REPORTING OF THE QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of the survey are discussed which include some descriptive statistics, the reliability of the scales, the Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, as well as a multiple regression analysis.

6.3.1 Findings of the survey

For the survey, statistical analyses were performed using a statistical programme called R version 0.98.1103 (R Core Team 2013). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was first done to test the strength of the relationship between the variable employee engagement and the different internal communication variables as identified in Chapter 3 section 3.3. These variables include: internal communication tools, internal communication strategy, management style, employees' needs, problem-solving and organisational culture. In addition, a multiple regression analysis was done to test which of the internal communication variables predict employee engagement. This was important to determine which of the proposed internal communication practices increase employee engagement. Some descriptive statistics are first highlighted to summarise some features of the data.

6.3.2 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were obtained to provide some demographic information about the respondents. The demographic results are depicted in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3 Demographic information of the respondents in the survey

Demographic Results	N
Gender	
Male	5
Female	8
Not indicated	7
Age	
20-29 years	8

30-39 years	3
40-49 years	2
Job Position/level	
Employee	11
Manager	6
Director	3
Time in that Position	
Years (1-5)	13
Not indicated	7
Race	
White	9
Black	3
Not indicated	8
Home Language	
Afrikaans	3
English	6
Zulu	2
Other	9

All 20 employees at JvR Safety completed the survey, of which five were male and eight were female. However, seven of those employees did not indicate their gender. In terms of age, eight individuals indicated that they were between 20 to 29 years, three indicated that they were between 30 to 39 years, and two indicated that they were between 40 to 49 years. In terms of job position/level, 11 respondents indicated that they are employees, six respondents indicated that they are managers and three indicated that they are directors of the organization. The majority of the sample (N = 13) stated that they had been working for one to five years at JvR Safety. In terms of job level, nine individuals stated that they were employees while four indicated that they were managers. The ethnic spread of the sample consisted of White (N = 9) and Black/African (N = 3) individuals; eight of the respondents did not indicate their race. With respect to home language, six individuals stated that they spoke English, three stated that they spoke Afrikaans, two stated that they spoke Zulu, while two individuals chose "other". In the next section, the results for the Pearson product-moment

correlation coefficient are explained.

6.3.3 Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient

To test the strength of the relationships between the research variables, the Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was conducted. Table 6.4 below provides the results of the correlation analysis. As depicted in Table 6.4, it is evident that the variables internal communication strategy ($r = .41$, $p < .01$), employees' needs ($r = .70$, $p < .001$), and problem-solving ($r = .49$, $p < .05$) are all positively related to employee engagement. This suggests that adopting an internal communication strategy, catering for employees' needs, and participation in problem-solving will result in an increase in employee engagement. However, the variable, employee engagement was not related to internal communication tools, management style or organisational culture. This means that employee engagement will not increase or decrease as a result of adopting internal communication tools or because of the organisation's management style.

Table 6.4: Pearson-product moment correlation coefficient

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Internal communication strategy	1						
2. Internal communication tools	.86**	1					
3. Management style	.91**	.83**	1				
4. Employees' needs	.67**	.74**	.68**	1			
5. Problem-solving	.60**	.80**	.72**	.63**	1		
6. Employee engagement	.41*	.41 (ns)	.39 (ns)	.70**	.49*	1	
7. Organisational culture	.43*	.48*	.33 (ns)	.58**	.23 (ns)	.39 (ns)	1

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

(ns) not significant

6.3.3.1 Variables that positively relate to employee engagement

Three variables in the proposed internal communication practices as indicated in section 3.3, Chapter 3 have a relationship with the variable employee engagement, namely internal communication strategy, employees' needs and problem-solving. It can be concluded from the results above that an internal communication strategy ($r = .41, p < .01$) is positively related to employee engagement. This means that if JvR Safety has a sound internal communication strategy in place, employees will be more engaged. This is supported by the literature that reiterates the importance of an internal communication strategy by stating that as a strategic process, internal communication can inspire and empower an organisation's employees (Camilleri, 2016:269).

Employees' needs ($r = .70, p < .001$) are also positively related to employee engagement, meaning that the more employees' needs within JvR Safety are met, the more engaged they will be. This is supported by Byrne (2015:92) who explains that the key to ensure that engagement happens is to align messaging around engagement by focusing the message on employees' needs.

As can be seen from the results above, problem-solving ($r = .49, p < .05$) is also positively related to employee engagement, meaning that the more employees within JvR Safety have leverage to solve problems on their own, the more engaged they will be towards the organisation. This is reinforced by the literature that the more employees have the power to participate in problem-solving, the more engaged they will be, which will create a less stressful working environment because employees have greater participation and control over choices and problem-solving rather than thinking that they do not have an influence at work. Employees feel less like an object and more like a vital partner in the organisation as an actively participating employee (Garber, 2013:108).

6.3.3.2 Variables that do not relate to employee engagement

Two variables of the proposed internal communication practices in section 3.3, Chapter 3, do not have a relationship with the variable employee engagement, namely

internal communication tools and management style. Interestingly, the variable internal communication tools was not related to employee engagement, which means that employee engagement will not increase or decrease as a result of internal communication tools. The literature on the relationship between employee engagement and internal communication tools (see section 3.3 in Chapter 3) indicates that even though an organisation might have access to a wide range of internal communication tools, this will not necessarily lead to more engaged employees. The key is to rather select internal communication tools that will be most appropriate to use for that specific organisation (Tavana & Puranam, 2015:152). This result potentially suggests that JvR Safety has the means to increase employee engagement by using internal communication tools, but is currently using the wrong internal communication tools to do so.

Furthermore, management style was also not related to employee engagement, which means that employee engagement in the organisation will not increase or decrease as a result of the organisation's management style. When it comes to JvR Safety, this finding is inconsistent with the literature where scholars argue that the biggest goal for managers to strive toward in order to create an engaged workforce is to ensure that employees are committed to the organisation (Dickson, 2011:49).

However, it can be inferred that the reason for the results showing no correlation between management style and employee engagement is that a census was used for the survey (employees and management), which means that employees' and management's views of the management style within JvR Safety differ. This was observed in mean differences on the management style variable across the two groups. Employees and managers scored a mean of 4.09 and 4.30 on management style, respectively. This suggests managers scored slightly higher, which is illustrated in Figure 6.1 below:

```

Descriptive statistics by group
group: 1
  vars n mean sd median trimmed mad min max range skew kurtosis se
x1    1 9 24.56 6.13    26  24.56 1.48  9 30  21 -1.69  1.72 2.04
-----
group: 2
  vars n mean sd median trimmed mad min max range skew kurtosis se
x1    1 4 25.75 2.63    26  25.75 2.97 23 28  5 -0.05  -2.38 1.31
-----
group: N/A
  vars n mean sd median trimmed mad min max range skew kurtosis se
x1    1 7 24.14 4.6    26  24.14 4.45 19 29 10 -0.16  -2.14 1.74
> |

```

Figure 6.1: Correlation between management style and employee engagement

Lastly, employee engagement showed no correlation with the variable organisational culture, meaning that employee engagement will not increase or decrease as a result of JvR Safety’s organisational culture. As Clark (2012:161) mentions, developing an organisational culture is supportive of engagement, meaning that the organisation has to provide space and motivation for employees to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation. It can thus be deduced that there is room for improvement in JvR Safety’s organisational culture in order for employee engagement to rise. In the next section, the multiple regression analysis is reported on.

6.3.4 Multiple regression analysis

A multiple regression analysis (see Table 6.5) was performed to determine which of the proposed internal communication practices are the strongest predictors of employee engagement (see section 3.3 in Chapter 3). A multiple regression model was created with employee engagement as the independent variable and internal communication strategy, internal communication tools, management style, employees’ needs, problem-solving, and organisational culture as the dependent variables.

As can be seen in Table 6.5 below, the variable internal communication tools was a negative predictor of employee engagement. That is, as internal communication tools increase, employee engagement decreases by .78 units. The variable employees’ needs was a positive predictor of employee engagement, where a unit increase in employees’ needs will lead to a 1.1 unit increase in employee engagement. Furthermore, problem-solving was also a positive predictor of employee engagement,

with a unit increase in problem-solving leading to a .74 unit in employee engagement. The variables management style, internal communication strategy and organisational culture were not significant predictors of employee engagement.

Table 6.5: Multiple regression coefficients of the predictors of employee engagement

	Unstandardised coefficients		t	Sig	R ²	F
Model 1	B	Std. error		0.02689	0.6196	3.529
Intercept	2.27358	9.64467	0.236	0.8173		
Internal communication strategy	0.90574	0.62411	1.451	0.1704		
Internal communication tools	-0.77613	0.42919	-1.808	0.0937 .		
Management style	-0.46220	0.36851	-1.254	0.2318		
Employees' needs	1.10268	0.40732	2.707	0.0179*		
Problem-solving	0.74430	0.39357	1.891	0.0811 .		
Organisational culture	0.07838	0.22329	0.351	0.7312		

Note. Intercept (employee engagement); * p < .01; '.' p < .10

These predictors are now interpreted to uncover their potential meaning for this study.

6.3.4.1 Negative predictors of employee engagement

As can be seen from the Table 6.5 above, the variable *internal communication tools* was a negative predictor of employee engagement. That is, as internal communication tools increase, employee engagement decreases by .78 units. The literature indicates that internal communication tools can be adopted either by every employee or by no one. Even if there is just a single reluctant employee, it can disrupt the whole internal communication strategy, resulting in employees being disengaged when the organisation adopts more internal communication tools (Brito, 2011:161). With reference to this literature, it can be concluded that before implementing new and additional internal communication tools, JvR Safety did not do an audit to ensure that

all employees are on board and satisfied with the new internal communication tools being adopted. The chances are that employees of JvR Safety also felt that there are too many internal communication tools implemented in the organisation without their knowledge or consent and that it became overbearing for them.

6.3.4.2 Positive predictors of employee engagement

As is evident in Table 6.5 above, the variable *employees' needs* was a positive predictor of employee engagement, where a unit increase in employees' needs will lead to a 1.1 unit increase in employee engagement. By considering the literature as discussed in section 3.2.7 of Chapter 3, it can thus be argued that in order to strengthen employee engagement, managers should constantly listen to what the needs are of employees and whether those needs are already, or still need to be met. The key to ensure that engagement happens is to align messaging around engagement by focusing the message on employees' needs (Byrne, 2015:92). The result can thus be interpreted as meaning that employees at JvR Safety feel that their needs are acknowledged and met within the organisation, which makes them feel more engaged towards JvR Safety.

Furthermore, *problem-solving* was also a positive predictor of employee engagement, with a unit increase in problem-solving leading to a .74 unit increase in employee engagement. This finding shows that employees within JvR Safety truly value having the ability to have a say in their own work, as well as having the ability to solve problems relating to their work without having to consult with their manager first. This is supported by the literature which proposes that organisations should allow employees to have a say in the strategy of their own work, as it may be efficient in growing employee engagement because employees are then able to identify a better fit between the employees' skills, desires, standards and their job, which may promote psychological significance (Truss et al., 2014:141).

6.3.4.3 Non-significant predictors of employee engagement

The findings also reveal non-significant predictors of employee engagement, which means that these variables do not positively or negatively affect employee

engagement. Although these variables are non-significant predictors of employee engagement, they are reported because, for the purpose of this study, it is important to take note of those variables that do not affect employee engagement.

The variable *management style* is not a significant predictor of employee engagement. This means that the organisation's management style does not positively or negatively affect employee engagement. Based on this finding, it can be argued that employees at JvR Safety are not more or less engaged based on the management style adopted in the organisation. This finding is also not aligned with the literature where several scholars propose that the ideal management styles which will allow and encourage employee engagement are the participative management style and human relations management styles. The participative management style literature posits that a horizontal structure is used with less control from management where managers are more team-oriented and focused on collective decision making and input (Yee-Melichar, Boyle & Flores, 2011:160). Literature on the human relations management style acknowledges the significance of the employee as the most important part of the organisation, where employees are treated with respect, poise, and value in order to motivate and grow the full performance potential of employees (Bauer, 2012:5). This is similar to the theoretical position adopted for this study, namely the postmodern approach (see section 2.10 in Chapter 2).

While the correlation analysis showed that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between *internal communication strategy* and employee engagement, the regression analysis showed that internal communication was not a statistically significant predictor of employee engagement. When a correlation between two variables exists, it merely means that there is a relationship between the variables; it does not mean that one variable necessarily predicts or causes another variable. So, in this case, internal communication strategies do not affect the engagement levels of JvR employees. The literature states that if employees are unaware of what their organisation's internal communication strategy is, then they are not part of implementing this strategy, and if they do not receive feedback about the work that they are doing, they may lose enthusiasm and passion for the organisation (Camilleri, 2016:269).

Lastly, *organisational culture* is also not a significant predictor of employee engagement. This means that this variable does not positively or negatively affect employee engagement, indicating that employees at JvR Safety are not more or less engaged based on the organisational culture that is in place in the organisation.

6.3.5 Interpretation of the main findings of the survey

The main findings of the survey are now interpreted by considering both the Pearson moment-product correlation coefficient and the multiple regression analysis. As mentioned elsewhere in the dissertation, the survey was conducted in order to address both research questions 1 and 2 as follows.

When it comes to Sub-question 1, the results of the survey indicate that there are three main internal communication practices that should be in place in JvR Safety in order to strengthen employee engagement. Firstly, a proper internal communication strategy should be in place which includes the input of all employees in order to ensure that there is commitment from employees to execute the internal communication strategy so that it succeeds. Secondly, it is important for JvR Safety to communicate with employees about what their needs are in order for them to be able to address and fulfil those needs. Thirdly, JvR Safety should create opportunities for employees to actively participate in problem-solving, allowing them to partake in strategic decision-making regarding their line of work.

When it comes to Sub-question 2, the results of the survey indicate that management should pay more attention to employees' needs through internal communication practices within the organisation. Managers should constantly listen to what the needs of employees are and whether those needs are already, or still need to be met. The key to ensure that engagement happens is to align messaging around engagement by focusing the message on employees' needs (Byrne, 2015:92). Management should also pay more attention to employees' problem-solving abilities; in other words, management should allow employees to have a say in the strategy of their own work, thus allowing for open dialogue and one-on-one feedback opportunities, as it may be efficient in growing employee engagement. Employees are then able to identify a better fit between the employees' skills, desires, standards and their job, which may

promote psychological significance. In the next section, the study's overall findings are presented by triangulating the quantitative and qualitative data.

6.4 DISCUSSION OF THE OVERALL FINDINGS

In this section, an interpretation of the interviews, focus group and surveys is discussed in line with the internal communication practices of section 3.3 as explained in Chapter 3 and applied to the context of the study. This is done by means of triangulation of the qualitative and quantitative data obtained through the three primary data sources.

In order to interpret the overall findings and triangulate the data, it is important to revisit the theoretical guidelines that were proposed in section 3.3 of Chapter 3, in order to identify which are perceived as more important for JvR Safety to strengthen employee engagement, as opposed to those perceived as less important.

6.4.1. An effective internal communication strategy

The findings of the focus group showed the important role that open communication within an organisation as well as having a sound internal communication strategy in place has on how involved and engaged employees feel toward the organisation. This indicates that employees at JvR Safety really have a need to be involved in most, if not all, forms of internal communication that occurs within the organisation. Employees feel that the more they know about what is happening in the organisation, the more they can contribute to the organisation. Similarly, the findings from the survey also indicated that internal communication strategy is positively related to employee engagement. This evidence could potentially be interpreted as follows: because JvR Safety has a sound internal communication strategy in place, their employees are more engaged. It is also evident from the interviews that managers at JvR Safety are putting in the effort to ensure that employees are included in JvR Safety's internal communication strategy.

The evidence supports the literature by Camilleri (2016:269), Ragusa (2010:17) and Kruse (2012:118) in that an internal communication strategy is significant for

strengthening employee engagement as the internal communication efforts can inspire and empower an organisation's employees.

In an organisation where employees' views are heard, answered to, and even form part of the solution, employees can become more engaged. More openness supported by internal communication is thus the actual power of the postmodern organisation. It is only through open dialogue, rather than hierarchical communication, that managers can release the power within their organisations.

6.4.2. The right internal communication tools for engagement

It is evident from the findings of the interviews that JvR Safety has a variety of communication tools for employees to utilise in order to voice their opinion, ask questions, be involved in the decision-making of the organisation in order to reach goals, provide and receive feedback from management, and ultimately, allow employees to be kept informed about the organisation's ventures with a horizontal flow of communication taking place. It is, however, evident that management at JvR Safety should put more focus on which communication tools would be most suitable to the culture at JvR Safety.

Results of the focus group also indicate that within JvR Safety, there is a wide variety of communication tools used, specifically online communication tools. The findings did, however, indicate that there are too many internal communication tools and that it can become overwhelming as employees are unsure about which internal communication tools they should use for which kind of communication. This is similar to the findings of the survey which indicated that an increase in internal communication tools leads to a decrease in employee engagement.

Thus, it can be understood that having too many internal communication tools and implementing them without a strategy in place can lead to employees at JvR Safety being less engaged. This is supported by the literature in that selecting tools and tactics is an important part of an internal communication strategy, as pointed out in section 2.8 of Chapter 2. However, the challenge does not lie in the utilisation of all possible and accessible internal communication tools, but in the selection of the most

suitable ones to use.

6.4.3 Supportive management style

The findings from the interviews show that management within JvR Safety do include employees in most of their decision-making. Although, at times, certain decisions are only made by leadership, it is understood by employees that there are certain strategic decisions that have to be made by leadership as they carry the responsibility that such decisions hold and they have the experience to make such decisions in the best interest of the employees and the organisation. The findings also show that management have an open-door policy and are open to communicating with employees at any time. Lastly, it was found that the management style within JvR Safety is inclusive and participatory, which in turn makes employees feel more engaged towards the organisation. Management indicated that they attempt to be transparent and consistent with employees in order to ensure that employees feel valued and respected. This is supported by the findings of the focus group where it is clear that employees at JvR Safety value their managers having an open-door policy, which means that they can approach them at any time and that managers have an open communication style that allows for input and feedback from employees. They also appreciate working closely with management as this allows their managers to see the work they put in and give them recognition accordingly. In contrast, the findings of the survey indicated that management style did not contribute to the level of employee engagement. This means that employees at JvR Safety are not more or less engaged based on the management style adopted in the organisation.

The discrepancy in the findings between the focus group, interviews and surveys could potentially be as a result of the demographics of each research instrument. The demographics of the interviews were only management, where the focus group and surveys consisted of both management and employees, meaning that management's perception of how their managing style affects employee engagement differs from the perception of employees.

However, the majority of the findings indicate that having a supportive management style is important for enhancing employee engagement at JvR Safety. This is

supported by literature stating that the biggest goal for managers to strive toward in order to create an engaged workforce is to ensure that employees are committed to the organisation. In order to achieve commitment, management must have a supportive style in which they manage employees. This can be achieved through open dialogue rather than hierarchical communication (Dickson, 2011:49).

6.4.4 Adhering to employees' needs within the organisation

The findings of the focus group demonstrate that employees feel that their needs are fulfilled at JvR Safety and that it is very important to them that management listen to what their needs are and understand that an aspect such as work-life balance is of great significance to their overall well-being and consequently their performance at work. Results of the interviews indicate that management within JvR Safety make an effort to ensure that employees find it easy to approach them and communicate openly with them about what their needs are, which makes them feel more engaged towards the organisation. This is supported by the findings from the survey which indicated a correlation between employees' needs and employee engagement, meaning that the more employees' needs within JvR Safety are met, the more engaged they will be.

Thus, adhering to employees' needs within the organisation is important to enhance employee engagement within JvR Safety. This finding supports the literature in that the key to ensuring employee engagement is to align messaging with employees' needs. When considering employees' needs within the organisation, management must understand their needs, guide them and root for their success (Byrne, 2015:92).

6.4.5 Opportunities for employees to participate in problem-solving

While the findings from the focus group suggest that employees are engaged because they are offered opportunities to be involved in problem-solving and strategies for their own work, the findings from the interviews also indicated that employees have the opportunity to participate in problem-solving but that, in some instances, employees might not have the courage to voice their opinions for concern of a negative reaction. This raises the concern that not all employees within JvR Safety have equal authority to voice their opinion. The findings from the surveys, on the other hand, show that

problem-solving is positively related to employee engagement, meaning that the more employees within JvR Safety have leverage to solve problems on their own, the more engaged they will be towards the organisation. This finding shows that employees of JvR Safety truly value having the ability to have a say in their own work, as well as having the ability to solve problems relating to their work without having to consult with their manager first.

It can be assumed that because the findings from the interviews alone indicated that employees might be afraid to participate in problem-solving, it can be seen as management that was just observant and perhaps sensitive towards employee behaviour. Thus, it is still deemed important for employees to have opportunities to participate in problem-solving in order to enhance employee engagement within JvR Safety. This finding supports the existing literature stating that employee engagement can create a less stressful working environment because employees have greater participation and control over choices and problem-solving rather than thinking that they do not have an influence at work. Employees feel less like an object and more like a vital partner in the organisation as an actively participating employee (Garber, 2013:108).

6.4.6 Establishing a good organisational culture

The findings of all three methods show no correlation between the importance of establishing a good organisational culture and enhancing employee engagement within JvR Safety. Thus, it can be assumed that JvR Safety's organisational culture is not deemed as important for employees' level of engagement towards the organisation. This contradicts the literature which shows that organisations that focus on developing a good organisational culture is supportive of engagement. By having a good organisational culture, the organisation provides space and motivation for employees to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation (Clark, 2012:161). Table 6.6 below summarises the findings of the triangulated results:

Table 6.6: Findings of the triangulated results

Summary of which internal communication practices should be in place at JvR Safety, based on the triangulated findings of the three methods
An effective internal communication strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees at JvR Safety truly value open communication and have a need to be involved in most, if not all communication. This is because employees think that the more they know about what is going on in the organisation, the more they can contribute to the organisation.
The right internal communication tools for engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees at JvR Safety want to utilise communication tools to be kept up to date with what is going on in the organisation. They want to form part of communication that relates to their work as well as to the larger organisation.
Supportive management style <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees at JvR Safety value that their managers have an open-door policy, which means that they can approach them at any time and that managers have an open communication style that allows for input and feedback from employees. They also appreciate working closely with management because this allows their managers to see the work they put in and give them recognition accordingly.
Adhering to employees' needs within the organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When it comes to employees' needs, employees at JvR Safety truly value a healthy work-life balance. It is highlighted that they do work very hard at times but that it is balanced out by their working hours at the office being shorter than normal. Employees at JvR Safety also value having benefits such as medical aid and a retirement fund, which helps them feel at ease and that they are covered by the organisation in that way.
Opportunities for employees to participate in problem-solving <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employees within JvR Safety truly value having the ability to have a say in their own work, as well as having the ability to solve problems relating to their work without having to consult with their manager first. This gives them a sense of empowerment to be able to do their job successfully on their own.
Establishing a good organisational culture <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The findings show no evidence that having a good organisational culture at JvR Safety enhances employee engagement in this organisation.

6.5 SUMMARY

In summary, this chapter focused on reporting the qualitative findings with regard to the semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group. In addition, the quantitative findings were discussed. The overall findings based on the triangulation of the data were deliberated in terms of the internal communication practices that are deemed important and should be in place at JvR Safety, and also those that are not so important, in order to enhance employee engagement. Lastly, a table illustrated which internal communication practices are perceived to be important at JvR Safety. In the next chapter, the study's conclusions as well as recommendations for future studies will be deliberated.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

While in Chapter 6, the findings of the study were explained, in this chapter, the focus is on the conclusions of the study as well as recommendations. All of the study's research questions are answered based on the overall triangulated findings including the solution to the research problem that was posed. Also, the main conclusions that were drawn from the study are discussed as well as new knowledge that was gained regarding internal communication practices and employee engagement. The limitations of the study are explained, followed by the relevance of the findings for similar organisations. Lastly, the recommendations for future research are deliberated.

7.2 ANSWERING THE STUDY'S RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The intent of this study was to answer the research questions which are as follows:

Sub-question 1: How can employee engagement be strengthened with internal communication practices to help a postmodern organisation succeed?

Sub-question 2: What are the perceptions of how management should deal with employee engagement through internal communication practices at JvR Safety?

Sub-question 3: In what ways are the proposed internal communication practices to strengthen employee engagement applicable within a postmodern organisational setting?

7.2.2 Sub-question 1

Based on the triangulated findings of the study, the answer to Sub-question 1 is that employee engagement within a postmodern organisation can be strengthened by adopting the following internal communication practices:

- Having an effective internal communication strategy in place within the organisation; this includes involving employees in internal communication, inspiring employees to be a part of the communication, making internal communication a joint effort, and having information openness where information is shared freely.
- Utilising the right internal communication tools for engagement; this entails the organisation to have an alignment of preferred communication with employees, ensuring that employees have ownership of internal communication tools, and making sure that internal communication tools are easy to use.
- Implementing fewer but more appropriate internal communication tools since too many can be overwhelming to employees.
- Having either a human relations management style or a participative management style.
- An organisation taking into consideration the importance of employees' needs such as work-life balance.
- Having communication channels open and available to employees to enable them to be part of the discussion and decisions that need to be made and to assist in problem-solving activities that relate to their work.
- Having a proper and well-communicated internal communication strategy in place in order to help an organisation succeed.

7.2.3 Sub-question 2

Based on the triangulated findings of the study, the answer to Sub-question 2 is as follows:

- Having a supportive management style in place within the organisation; meaning that management must encourage employees to be involved in decision-making and communication of their own line of work and beyond. In addition, management must treat all employees fairly when it comes to communicating with each employee, managers empowering employees to be able to provide them feedback and approach them whenever needed (having an open-door policy in place). Lastly, management should give employees the

recognition they deserve and communicate it to them and to others if appropriate.

- Management should ensure that they adhere to employees' needs within the organisation; this entails management listening to what the needs of employees are, having an open flow of communication within the organisation with a bottom-up approach, ensuring that employees have a healthy work-life balance, and providing employees with benefits such as medical aid, pension, commission benefits, and so forth.
- Management should allow employees opportunities to participate in problem-solving. This encompasses management allowing for employee involvement in decision-making, giving employees authority to solve problems on their own, being open towards employees with regard to the vision of the organisation and how employees form part of that, and letting employees participate in important decisions that need to be made that will affect those employees.
- Management should motivate employees to contribute to the organisation in a meaningful way; this entails management encouraging employees to have job pride. Management can do this by including employees in communication relating to the essence and the importance of the work that the organisation does and how that contributes to the environment/society/people as a whole. Management should be performance-orientated and have a good skills development programme in place for all employees where they have the opportunity to learn and grow in their skills-set and then give them recognition for the work that they do based on their knowledge and skills. Organisations should allow employees to take ownership of tasks that are related to their own line of work. Lastly, management should provide a platform for employees to be innovative and creative in order for them to truly feel like they are contributing to the organisation.
- It is evident from the triangulation of findings that it is management's responsibility to ensure that all employees are involved in the internal communication strategy in order for them to be engaged in the execution of that strategy.
- It is the responsibility of management to ensure that employees are comfortable with, and understand, what the purpose of an internal communication tool is

before implementing it.

- It is the responsibility of management to ensure that they treat employees fairly and view employees as vital to the organisation in order to enhance employee engagement.
- Employee engagement can be strengthened by management being open to listening to what employees' needs are through allowing open communication and dialogue in order to be knowledgeable about how they can fulfil those needs.
- Management should ensure that employees are involved in all communication that relate to their work, which will allow them the opportunity to participate in problem-solving in order to make them more engaged towards JvR Safety.

7.2.4 Sub-question 3

Based on the triangulated findings of the study, the answer to Sub-question 3 is as follows:

This study tested the proposed internal communication practices in section 3.3 in Chapter 3 within a postmodern organisational setting. Findings indicate that only five of the seven proposed internal communication practices were applicable at JvR Safety, but this might differ in another organisational setting. Thus, internal communication practices and their importance for employee engagement will differ from organisation to organisation.

7.3 SOLVING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The intent of this study was to solve the research problem which was to investigate by means of a mixed method cross-sectional single case study approach how to strengthen employee engagement with internal communication practices in order to enhance a postmodern organisation's success.

The study was able to solve the research problem by answering the objectives and research questions that guided this study namely:

Objective 1: To describe how to strengthen employee engagement with internal communication practices to help a postmodern organisation succeed; *Sub-question 1:* How can employee engagement be strengthened with internal communication practices to help a postmodern organisation succeed?

Objective 2: To explore perceptions of how employee engagement should be dealt with by management through internal communication practices at JvR Safety; *Sub-question 2:* What are the perceptions of how management should deal with employee engagement through internal communication practices at JvR Safety?

Objective 3: To explore in what ways proposed internal communication practices to strengthen employee engagement are applicable within a postmodern organisational setting; *Sub-question 3:* In what ways are the proposed internal communication practices to strengthen employee engagement applicable within a postmodern organisational setting?

These objectives and research questions were addressed by exploring which internal communication practices are in place in JvR Safety, and whether those practices are contributing to the enhancement of employee engagement within the organisation. Additionally, this study also explored the management style within JvR Safety and how managers within the organisation utilise internal communication in order for employees to be more engaged and for the organisation to succeed. The research problem originated from arguments that internal communication is vital for ensuring that employees within an organisation are engaged and that if proper internal communication practices are in place within an organisation, this could lead to employees being more engaged. It is important to note that the solving of the research problem led to a better understanding of a South African organisational context. The knowledge gained by answering the research questions is discussed in section 7.2.2 and 7.2.3.

7.4 MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study revealed that five out of the seven proposed internal communication practices, as discussed in section 3.3 of Chapter 3, should ideally be in place in order for JvR Safety to strengthen employee engagement. These internal communication practices were proposed based on the extant literature on internal

communication, employee engagement, strategic communication and organisational communication.

The first internal communication practice that could be used by postmodern organisations as a heuristic on how to use internal communication more effectively to better address employees' needs to improve their employee engagement is by *firstly* having an effective internal communication strategy in place within the organisation; this includes including employees in internal communication, inspiring employees to be a part of the communication, making internal communication a joint effort and having information openness where information is shared freely. *Secondly*, utilising the right internal communication tools for engagement; this means that JvR Safety must have an alignment of preferred communication with employees, ensuring that employees have ownership of internal communication tools, and making sure that internal communication tools are easy to use. *Thirdly*, having a supportive management style in place within JvR Safety; meaning that management must encourage employees to be involved in decision-making and communication of their own line of work and beyond, management must treat all employees fairly when it comes to communicating with each employee, and empower employees to be able to provide feedback and approach them whenever needed (having an open-door policy in place), and lastly, management should give employees the recognition that they deserve and communicate it to them and to others if appropriate. *Fourthly*, JvR Safety should ensure that they adhere to employees' needs; this entails listening to what the needs of employees are and having an open flow of communication within the organisation with a bottom-up approach, ensuring that employees have a healthy work-life balance, and also providing employees with benefits such as medical aid, pension, commission benefits, and so forth. *Lastly*, JvR Safety should allow employees opportunities to participate in problem-solving; this encompasses organisations allowing for employee involvement in decision-making, giving employees authority to solve problems on their own, being open towards employees with regard to the vision of the organisation and how employees form part of that, and lastly, allowing employees to participate in important decisions that need to be made that will affect those employees.

7.4.1 Conclusions

This study focused on conducting a single case study design at a postmodern organisation in order to test proposed internal communication practices on employee engagement. Although the findings cannot be generalised to other organisations, the findings are nevertheless useful in that it could be used as a heuristic by similar organisations regarding how to use internal communication more effectively to better address employees' needs to improve their employee engagement. In conclusion, the purpose of this study was, firstly, to describe what internal communication measures should be in place in an organisation in order to strengthen employee engagement to help the organisation succeed, to explore how employee engagement should be dealt with by management through internal communication within an organisation, to ensure that the organisation succeeds, and to describe the proposed components of internal communication practices to strengthen employee engagement through better internal communication in an organisation. Secondly, based on the findings from the research objectives and from the literature, this study proposes some theoretical guidelines for postmodern organisations to increase employee engagement through internal communication measures with which to better address employees' needs. The research problem was solved by firstly reviewing the existing literature on organisational communication practices in general and then specifically on internal communication and employee engagement. This was followed by a triangulated study that was conducted in practice through online surveys that was sent out to the entire organisation (JvR Safety) to complete, through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with the management of JvR Safety, and through a focus group with some of the employees of JvR Safety. Contrary to existing literature, this study showed that a good organisational culture does not enhance employee engagement.

7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations of the study are acknowledged:

- Because this was a single case study conducted on only one organisation, one of the major limitations of this study was that the sample size was too small. A larger sample size would have allowed for a more favourable reliability of

scales, more rigour in the statistical analysis as well as a more in-depth view from the qualitative analysis.

- The findings of this study cannot be generalised to the larger population due to the single case, small sample size and sample method, but only to JvR Safety.
- The organisation restructured during the study which resulted in a smaller sample size than anticipated.
- Another limitation was that not all the respondents completed their demographic information. However, this is a shortcoming that was not a major concern as the focus of the study does not have any relation to the demographics of the sample. The study mainly focuses on employees and management within an organisation and not on the demographic information of those employees and management.

7.6 RELEVANCE OF THE FINDINGS FOR SIMILAR ORGANISATIONS

The findings of this study could be used as a heuristic by similar organisations on how to use internal communication more effectively to better address employees' needs to improve their employee engagement. It could also be used to establishing in what way management should deal with employee engagement through internal communication within the organisation to ensure that the organisation succeeds. Likewise, this study can guide similar organisations on what the components of internal communication practices are that could be used to strengthen employee engagement through better internal communication. Additionally, this study added to the body of knowledge in the organisational communication field since it presented some theoretical guidelines with practical implications for internal communication practices and employee engagement which postmodern organisations can use and adapt.

7.7 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following recommendations are made for future research:

This study opens up more research opportunities and further debate. Future studies could be done on a larger sample; in other words, at postmodern organisations with

more employees and managers to provide data on the topic at hand. Also, a longitudinal study could be done on different postmodern organisations to allow for more generalisability. This can be done by building onto this study's findings and conclusions with a larger sample and several data collection periods. The larger the sample population, the more the findings can be generalised to the larger population.

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ADDENDA

ADDENDUM A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey

How to strengthen employee engagement through internal communication

Dear respondent.

My name is Louise van der Hoven and I am a Master's student at the University of South Africa (Unisa). For my study, I am investigating how to strengthen employee engagement through internal communication in order to propose a theoretical framework for organisations within which to better address employees' needs. Because you are an employee of JvR Safety (a sister company of The JvR Africa Group), I am inviting you to participate in this study by completing the survey. The survey will require approximately 10 to 15 minutes of your time. Should you choose to participate in this study please answer all questions as truthfully and honestly as possible. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. There is no known risk involved in completing the survey. All information will remain confidential and the results will only be used for purposes of this master's project. Your identity will also remain anonymous, so kindly do not include your name. Once you have completed the questionnaire, please submit it by not later than Friday, 12 July 2019. You can contact me at 076 941 4878 should you have any queries related to this survey.

By continuing and moving to the questions in the questionnaire you are providing permission to partake in this research study.

This survey consists of nine sections: **Section A: Internal communication strategy**, **Section B: Communication tools**, **Section C: Management style**, **Section D: Employees needs**, **Section E: Participation in problem-solving**, **Section F: Employee engagement**, **Section G: Organisational culture**, **Section H: Demographic information** and **Section I: Demographic Information**. For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

SECTION A: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

This section intends to measure your awareness of JvR’s internal communication strategy and whether it engages employees (Njuguna 2016:50; Hayase 2009:71). For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

Option	1	2	3	4	5
1. I know what the firm is doing to achieve long term goals					
2. My team's group meetings are conducted effectively					
3. I feel that my supervisor values my input regarding project budget and scope preparation					
4. Communications are good within my office					
5. The mission/purpose of the company makes me feel my job is important					

SECTION B: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT

This section intends to measure how you feel about the internal communication tools that are used within the JvR Africa Group (Hayase 2009:72; Arins, 2013:43 & Mbhele 2016). For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you are Very Dissatisfied (1), Dissatisfied (2), Neutral (3), Satisfied (4), or Very Satisfied (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

Option	1	2	3	4	5
6. You receive information from the sources that you prefer (e.g. from your superior’s department meetings, co-workers, newsletters).					
7. I have good equipment/tools to execute my daily tasks					
8. Most staff meetings I attend are detailed					
9. My department shares important information with other departments					
10. I think that information I receive from management is reliable.					
11. In most situations, I receive the information necessary to effectively perform my job					

SECTION C: MANAGEMENT STYLE

This section intends to measure the management style within the JvR Africa Group (Roberts 2014:53). For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

Option	1	2	3	4	5
12. Your superior expresses his/her confidence with your ability to perform the job.					
13. Your supervisor makes you feel that things you tell him/her are really important.					
14. You are free to tell your superior that you disagree with him/her.					
15. You think you are safe in communicating "bad news" to your superior without fear of retaliation on his/her part.					
16. Your superior encourages you to bring new information to his/her attention, even when that new information may be bad news.					
17. Your superior listens to you when you tell him/her about things that are bothering you.					

SECTION D: EMPLOYEES' NEEDS

This section intends to measure whether the needs of the employees within the JvR Africa Group are met (Hayase 2009,69). For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

Option	1	2	3	4	5
18. Top management is providing you with all kinds of information you really want and need.					
19. You are notified in advance of changes that affect your job.					
20. Your job requirements are specified in clear language.					
21. There exists flexibility for personal time/family needs					
22. I am paid fairly					

SECTION E: PARTICIPATION IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

This section intends to measure whether there are opportunities for employees to participate in problem-solving within the JvR Africa Group (Hayase 2009:71). For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

Option	1	2	3	4	5
23. During the last year, I have had opportunities to learn and grow					

24. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day					
25. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work					
26. Someone at work encourages my development					
27. At work, my opinions seem to count					

SECTION F: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

This section intends to measure whether the JvR Africa Group motivates you to contribute to the organisation in a meaningful way (Mbhele 2016:223). For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

Option	1	2	3	4	5
28. At work I feel bursting with energy.					
29. At work I always persevere, even when things do not go well.					
30. I can continue working for very long periods of time.					
31. In doing my job, I am very resilient mentally.					
32. To me, my job is challenging.					
33. I find work I do full of meaning and purpose.					
34. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.					
35. I feel happy when I am working intensely.					

SECTION G: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

This section intends to measure the culture within the JvR Africa Group (Roberts 2013:56). For each statement presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), or Strongly Agree (5) by ticking the appropriate box.

Option	1	2	3	4	5
36. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.					
37. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.					
38. I feel very little loyalty to this organization					
39. The work I do is very important to me.					
40. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.					

41. I find my values and the organization's values are very similar.					
42. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.					
43. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.					
44. This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.					
45. I really care about the fate of this organization.					
46. For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.					
47. Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part.					

SECTION I: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

The information in this section will only be used to better classify your responses and will not be revealed to anyone.

Please tick the appropriate box:

48. Please indicate your age?

20-29	30-39	40-49	50 and above
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

49. What is your gender?

Male	Female	Other
(1)	(2)	(3)

50. Please indicate the number of years that you have worked at JvR?

1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16 years or more
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

51. What is your current job level?

Employee	Manager	Director	Managing Director
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)

52. What is your race?

White	Black	Asian	Indian	Other
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

53. What is your home language?

English	Afrikaans	Zulu	Xhosa	Other
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

Thank you very much for your response to this survey.

ADDENDUM B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

How to strengthen employee engagement through internal communication

Dear Participant.

My name is Louise van der Hoven and I am a Master's student at the University of South Africa (UNISA). For my final research project, I am investigating how to strengthen employee engagement through internal communication in order to propose a theoretical framework for organisations within which to better address employees' needs. Because you are an employee of JvR Africa, I am inviting you to participate in this study by completing the interview schedule below. This should take about 20 minutes of your time. Before we proceed, please would you sign the consent form, as well as understanding that you will remain anonymous, and that your answers will only be used for the purpose of this study.

SECTION A: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

1. How do you ensure that all employees are included in JvR Africa's strategy, in order for them to feel like their opinions are being appreciated?

SECTION B: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

2. Do you think that employees within JvR Africa have the power to take ownership of collaboration tools?

SECTION C: MANAGEMENT STYLE

3. Could you please describe to me what it is you do to ensure that all employees are treated fairly?

SECTION D: EMPLOYEES NEEDS

4. What do you do to ensure that your subordinates find it easy to approach you and communicate with you openly?

SECTION E: PARTICIPATION IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

5. How much authority would you say do employees within JvR Africa have, to voice their opinions about anything that is of value to the organisation?

SECTION F: MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ORGANISATION

6. How proud do you think employees are of working for JvR Africa?

SECTION G: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

7. How do you think JvR Africa ensures that their employees are dedicated to the organisation's values?

SECTION H: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

8. What is your position at your organisation?
9. How long have you been at your current position?
10. How old are you?
11. Are you male or female?

I want to thank you for taking part in this interview; your contribution is truly valued. Please let me know if there are any questions that you might have regarding this interview and I will gladly answer them for you.

ADDENDUM C: MODERATOR'S GUIDE

MODERATOR'S GUIDE

Facilitator's welcome, introduction and instructions to participants

WELCOME and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate as your point of view is important for the purpose of this study. I appreciate your time. My name is Louise van der Hoven and I am a Masters' student at the University of South Africa (Unisa). For my study, I am investigating how to strengthen employee engagement through internal communication in order to propose a theoretical framework for organisations within which to better address employees' needs.

INTRODUCTION: This focus group discussion is intended to assess your current thoughts on what is happening in the JvR Africa Group regarding internal communication practices and employee engagement.

The focus group discussion will take no more than an hour. May I tape this discussion for future recollection? (If the answer is yes, facilitator can switch on the recorder).

ANONYMITY: Despite this focus group being taped, I would like to assure you that the discussion will be kept anonymous. The recording will be kept safe with a passcode which only I have access to, and will be deleted after it was are transcribed word for word. The transcribed notes of the focus group will contain no information that would allow individual subjects to be linked to specific statements. You should try to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. I and the other focus group participants would appreciate it if you would refrain from discussing the comments of other group members outside the focus group. If there are any questions or discussions that you do not wish to answer or participate in, you do not have to do so; however please try to answer and be as involved as possible. Please also take note that you will be required to sign a consent form.

GROUND RULES

- Please allow only one person to speak at a time. There may be a temptation to jump in when someone is talking but please wait until they have finished.

- There are no right or wrong answers.
- You do not have to speak in any particular order.
- When you do have something to say, please do so. There are many of you in the group and it is important that I obtain the views of each of you.
- You do not have to agree with the views of other people in the group.
- Does anyone have any questions?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

SECTION A: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

1. What are your thoughts on JvR Africa's internal communication strategy being a joint effort (meaning that you should or should not be involved)?
2. Do you think that it is important that you should be aware of what the internal communication strategy of JvR Africa is? Explain your answer?

SECTION B: COMMUNICATION TOOLS

3. How do you find the ease of use of the current internal communication tools that are being used within JvR Africa?
4. Would you want to use different collaboration tools and why?

SECTION C: MANAGEMENT STYLE

5. What efforts are being made by management within JvR Africa to ensure that you receive recognition for the work that you do?
6. Do you think that it is important for management to empower you to take charge of your own line of work? Why would you say so?

SECTION D: EMPLOYEES NEEDS

7. What is your opinion on the importance of having a work-life balance?
8. Would you say that you have a work-life balance at JvR Africa? Explain your answer?

9. What, according to you, is the significance of having employee benefits (such as medical aid and a retirement fund)? Do the benefits, that JvR Africa offers you, meet your needs?

SECTION E: PARTICIPATION IN PROBLEM-SOLVING

10. What are your thoughts on being involved in the strategy and decisions of tasks that directly affect you?
11. Do you prefer having control over choices and problem-solving related to your work, or would you rather leave that up to management? Motivate your answer?

SECTION F: MEANINGFUL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ORGANISATION

12. What is your opinion on getting rewards and recognition based on your performance at work?
13. Would you say that the rewards and recognition procedures that JvR Africa has in place are adequate?

SECTION G: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

14. How comfortable are you with JvR Africa's values and beliefs? Why do you say so?
15. What do you think about the idea that all employees within JvR Africa give each other truthful feedback, for the purpose of your own professional development, even if the feedback is not always positive?

Conclusion

- Thank you for taking your time to participate in this focus group. This has been a very successful discussion.
- Just a reminder that all comments featuring in my dissertation will be kept anonymous.

ADDENDUM D: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

26 November 2018

Dear Louise van der Hoven

NHREC Registration # : Rec-240816-052

CREC Reference # : 2018-CHS-0231

Name Louise van der Hoven

Student #: 53374452

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 26 November 2018 to 25 November 2021

Researcher(s): Louise van der Hoven

Supervisor(s): Prof C du Plessis
Department of Communication Science
dplestc@unisa.ac.za

Research Title

Theoretical guidelines to strengthen employee engagement through internal communication: a single case study

Qualification: Masters

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

The *low risk application* was reviewed **and expedited** by the Chair of College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee on the 22 November 2018 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Psychology Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013 Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**25 November 2021**) Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 2018-CHS-0231 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Signature: Lizeth Roets

Prof Lizeth Roets
Chair : CHS Research Ethics Committee
E-mail: roetsl@unisa.ac.za
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Signature: Professor A Philips
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