

**STAFF EXPERIENCES ON ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION IN  
POLOKWANE'S TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
STUDY**

by

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28 May 2021

**DECLARATION**

I declare that the dissertation entitled **STAFF EXPERIENCES ON ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION IN POLOKWANE'S TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY** is my own work and that all the sources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that the summary of the originality checking software report is attached.

I further declare that this work has not been previously submitted by myself, or part thereof, for an examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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## ABSTRACT

It is evident from the 2015 national employee strike at organisation A that something should be done immediately to regain stakeholders' (employees, suppliers and customers) trust. Despite good initiatives to engage and retain talent, some employees are still resigning. The study aimed to understand staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. A qualitative research approach and an interpretative phenomenological analysis design were used to explore and interpret the lived experiences. In-depth interviews using open-ended questions were employed to collect data from participants, who were purposefully selected. The researcher interviewed seven employees. The main themes helped to summarise the individuals' responses. The following main themes emerged from the proposed employee engagement (EE) model: (i) communication, (ii) motivation, (iii) relationship, (iv) interest, (v) health and welfare, (vi) development and (vii) monetary value.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, interpretative phenomenological analysis, retention, social exchange theory, telecommunications.

## KAKARETŠO

Megwanto ya boipelaetšo go bašomi ka kakaretšo ye e bilego gona ka 2015 go khampani ya A e bontšhitše gore go pepeneneng gore se sengwe se swanetše se dirwe go tliša tshepho go batšeakarolo (bašomi, batšweletši le badiriši). Le ge go na le maitapišo a poledišano le go se lobe talente, bašomi ba bangwe ba sa tšwelapele go tlogela mošomo. Lebaka legolo la go dira nyakišišo ke go le leka go kwešiša maitemogelo a bašomi mabapi le tshwaragano le go lota khamphani ya tša megala Polokwane. Mokgwa wa dinyakišišo tše di tseneletšego le go hlathollwa ka mokgwa wa ponagalo le popego o somišitšwe go leka le go hlatholla maitemogelo a bona. Dipolelišano tše di tseneletšego go šomišwa dipotšišo tša go nyaka mmono wa bašomi di dirišitšwe go kgoboketša dipalopalo go tšwa go batšeakarolo bao ba kgethilwego ka nepo. Monyakišiši o boledišane le bašomi ba šupa. Kgwekgwe tša taba di thušitše go akaretša diphetolo go tšwa go batšeakarolo ba go fapafapana. Mohlala wo o šišintšwego wa go kgokogana le bašomi o tšweleditše kgwekgwe tše dilatelago: poledišano, tlhohleletšo, kamano, kgahlego, katlego ya tša maphelo, kgatelopelo le boleng bja matlotlo.

Mantšu ao a nyakišišwago:

Kgokagano le bašomi, tlhathollo ya dikgopolo, thibelo ya tahlego, dikgopolo tša go fana ka segwera, dikgokagano.

## OPSOMMING

Nadat maatskappy A se werknemers in 2015 landswyd gestaak het, moes ingegryp word om die vertroue van belanghebbendes (werknemers, verskaffers en kliënte) in die maatskappy te herstel. Ondanks daadwerklike pogings om bevoegde werknemers aan te stel en te behou, bedank werknemers steeds. Hierdie studie stel ondersoek in na werknemers se siening van die aanstelling en behoud van personeel in die telekommunikasiemaatskappy waarvan die hoofkantoor in Polokwane is. Oop vrae is in-diepteonderhoude aan opsetlik gekose deelnemers gestel om die data in te win. Die navorser het met sewe werknemers onderhoude gevoer. Hulle antwoorde is volgens temas opgesom. Die volgende temas blyk uit die voorgestelde werknemeraanstelling- of WA-model: (i) kommunikasie, (ii) motivering, (iii) verhoudings, (iv) belang, (v) gesondheid en welstand, (vi) ontwikkeling en (vii) monetêre waarde.

### **Kernbegrippe:**

Werknemeraanstelling, vertolkende fenomenologiese ontleding, behoud, sosialeruilteorie, telekommunikasie.

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## **DEDICATION**

The dissertation is dedicated to all the research participants in this study.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

EE	Employee engagement
ER	Employee retention
HR	Human resources
HRM	Human resources management
ICASA	Independent Communications Authority of South Africa
ICT	Information and communication technology
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
IT	Information technology
SET	Social exchange theory
UNISA	University of South Africa

# CHAPTER 1

## RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Employees are the most important asset in any organisation (Gregory, 2011). Their happiness is important. People spend many hours at work and that may be the reason they strive for innovative ways to make their work-life enjoyable (Ngwenya, 2014; Li, 2020). It follows that if employers want committed employees, they need to be committed as well (Ngwenya, 2014), in other words, commitment goes both ways. Despite the current availability of technology, human beings remain significant. Saks (2006) acknowledges that employee engagement (EE) has become a vital topic in recent years among organisations and in the business press. Employees need to be engaged effectively, supported, and paid fairly to be retained by the organisation (Gregory, 2011). The study was done to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. Commonly, talented employees are encouraged to stay in the organisations, while low performing employees are encouraged to leave (Kurdi & Alshurideh, 2020). Aman-Ullah et al., (2020) stated that human resources practices are the most important and valuable means that influence employee retention.

Today's business world is very vibrant and organisations compete to achieve sustainable growth. The global village has not only changed how organisations operate and do business, but has also emphasised the need for organisations to manage and retain their employees in a global context (Borah & Malakar, 2015). This is concerning because organisations need to put more effort into EE and employee retention (ER). Schaufeli (2013) relates engagement to involvement, passion, loyalty, enthusiasm, absorption, concentrated effort, dedication and energy. EE may also entail the relationship with the organisation (Schaufeli, 2013).

According to Borah and Malakar (2015), job embeddedness is negatively related to the intention of employees to leave. The key to retaining talented employees lies in the organisation's ability to support employees by considering and answering their



intrinsic motivators (Ngwenya, 2014). This simply means that employees' basic needs, for example, salary and good employment conditions, must be satisfied. Sandhya and Kumar (2011) explain that employees stay or resign for several reasons which may be either personal or professional. Gregory (2011) also identifies several reasons why employees may lose hope in their jobs and resign, including high stress, lack of communication within the organisation, lack of recognition and limited growth opportunities. Sandhya and Kumar (2011) further point out that employees who are satisfied and content with their jobs are more dedicated and strive for the organisation's growth. Therefore, ER is significant not just to reduce turnover costs, but also to retain talented employees and prevent them from getting poached. One of an employer's nightmares is losing their talented employees to the competition (Shonubi et al., 2017). This had led to business suicide for some organisations. Employees look for job opportunities elsewhere if they are not appreciated and organisations that appreciate their employees increase ER and decrease employee turnover (Shonubi et al., 2017).

Zigarmi et al. (2009) stated that a person cannot open a training magazine without reading about the importance of EE. The researcher believes that sometimes engaged employees are highly motivated, more productive and less likely to look for employment elsewhere. Therefore, this study adds value to the field of human resources management (HRM), by determining employees' perceptions of EE and ER. The study was conducted among employees living in Polokwane as the researcher is of the view that these employees are sometimes forgotten and undermined due to their location. This led to the current study to explore whether increased EE improves talent retention. Furthermore, innovative strategies are suggested to address the current challenges and create opportunities for future studies to be undertaken.

The study took place in Polokwane at an office of an organisation that operates in the telecommunications industry (referred to as organisation A). The researcher has worked for the organisation since October 2005. Over the years of working in the telecommunications industry, the researcher has observed that some competent colleagues resigned to seek greener pastures (some starting their businesses or

studying full time or getting other employment with more benefits) and others left but were at the time of writing still unemployed and looking for employment.

Organisation A is based in the Northern region. Within the Northern region, it has branches in Limpopo and Mpumalanga. The regional office is in Polokwane and the head office is in Johannesburg. At the time of the study, organisation A employed approximately 111 employees as the call centre department had been relocated to Johannesburg. Specifically, the organisation employed approximately 19,000 employees in South Africa and it is one of the leading service providers of telecommunications in Africa (MyBroadband, 2019). The most in-demand skills are in the network and the engineering department namely, radio engineers and software developers (MyBroadband, 2019). Moreover, the company is moving into the fintech space (MyBroadband, 2019).

The 2015 national employees' strike that took place within organisation A made it evident that something had to be done immediately to regain the trust of the stakeholders (employees, suppliers and customers) and for the organisation to regain a positive public image. Employees went on strike because they felt that their voices in terms of their employment conditions were not being heard. Issues included were annual salary increase requests, bonuses, matric to be used as an entry requirement for call centre staff, equal work for equal pay and many more. The duration of the strike was approximately two months. This is concerning as there was tension within organisation A. Some employees who participated in the legal strike felt betrayed by those who did not participate. Organisation A finally reached an agreement with the workers' union and employees returned to work.

Although there are multiple studies on engagement that were not conducted from a qualitative perspective (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011; Marais, 2014; Schaufeli, 2011 & Diedericks et al., 2019). For this study, the researcher regarded Polokwane as a small city when comparing it to cities such as Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg. Companies need not only healthy employees but also motivated employees that are

engaged (Schaufeli, 2011). Mental health is important for engagement. Employees with advanced technological skills could easily leave because of their high skills set demand in the market (Dockel et al., 2006). Floyd (2015, p.124) recommends that “future research may be useful for the Universities in the design and development of management of curriculum that address the importance of engagement and the contributing practices leading to increased retention in the workplace”. Furthermore, Floyd (2015) recommends that further studies use a qualitative approach as participants may share insights in detail. For this study, it is important to note that organisation A is an international telecommunications organisation. The main business of the organisation is to provide voice and data services to customers. Organisation A enables customers to do more, for example, it creates human connections and provides access to the world through education, lifestyle, interests, music and many more (K. Moncho, personal communication, September 15, 2020). Satisfied employees are more likely to be productive and are aware of what is happening in their organisations (Gregory, 2011). Therefore, this study focused on the unique perceptions of employees.

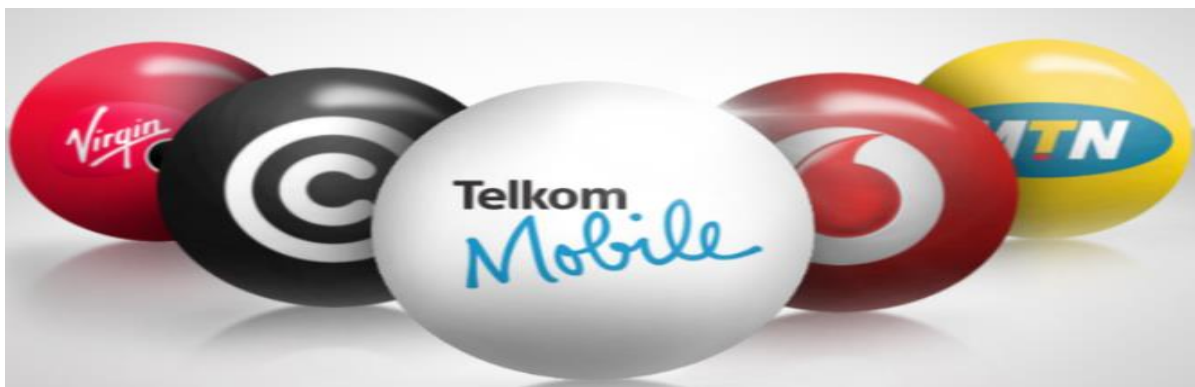
## **1.2 TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

The telecommunications industry offers sales, marketing, products and services to create more value for customers (Jwu et al., 2018). There are five main mobile phone service providers in South Africa (refer to figure 1.1), namely Cell C, Vodacom, Virgin Mobile, Mobile Telephone Network South Africa and Telkom (formerly 8ta). They offer internet and mobile phone services on both prepaid and contract deals (Expatica, 2020). The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) is the national regulating body for telecommunications in South Africa (Expatica, 2020).

Telecommunications organisations are adapting to a rapidly changing environment (Mybroadband, 2020). Competition is high in this industry. However, it is concerning that there has been a history of outsourcing and retrenchments within the South African telecommunications industry over the years. One of these listed telecommunications organisations was planning to retrench as many as 6 000 employees in 2020 and had started a consultation process with organised labour

regarding the staff cuts (Mybroadband, 2020). If the situation does not change for the better, some of those employees are going to lose their jobs. According to Davis (2016), the Fourth Industrial Revolution signifies new ways in which technology becomes rooted within societies and human bodies. However, sometimes the new ways in technology seem scary even though it reflects people's needs and choices.

History showed that customers gain a lot from the industrial revolutions as the cost of goods falls while quality increases (Davis, 2016). Within the South African telecommunications industry, the cost of buying data had decreased (#datamustfall movement). However, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has the potential to increase unemployment as a high level of skills are required (Davis, 2016). Hence the need to conduct the study on EE and ER as South Africa has a high unemployment rate. Moreover, the telecommunications industry contributes positively to building the South African economy.



**Figure 1.1: Five main telecommunications service providers in South Africa**

Source: Mybroadband (2014)

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Munish and Agarwal (2017) describe an engaged employee as one who is motivated, highly dedicated, goes the extra mile, sets a good example and aligns his or her goals with the organisation's goals. They point out that human resources (HR) professionals

use a mix and match of retention and engagement strategies to engage and retain a talented workforce for longer periods. Jwu et al. (2018) suggest that line managers encourage their subordinates to attend training as well as giving them platforms to apply what they have learnt, as this will influence retention in the organisation. Seymour and Geldenhuys (2018) found that team discussion sessions have a positive influence on EE.

Despite good initiatives to engage and retain talent, some employees still resign. The organisational cost of an employee leaving a job is very high, which is why managers are concentrating on ER in today's organisations and it is important to understand why people leave and why they stay (Borah & Malakar, 2015). The researcher is of the view that some employees resign to seek greener pastures, whereas others resign due to a lack of career opportunities in this organisation, as well as for other unknown reasons. Signs that an employee might resign or that the employer might terminate the employment contract are withdrawal from work, engaging in non-work-related talk, taking care of personal problems while at work, playing games, spending time on social media and low performance on the job (Gregory, 2011). These elements have also been observed in organisation A.

Competitors in the South African telecommunications industry might take advantage of this situation. Possible causes of this problem could be lack of job security, insufficient training, favouritism affecting certain employees and dissatisfaction with pay levels (Gregory, 2011). It is important to match the individual characteristics and values of the employee with the organisation (Gregory, 2011). Other possible contributors to ineffective EE and ER could be that managers might not be able to communicate well with lower-level employees (Gregory, 2011). Moreover, employees not being paid according to their educational qualifications could play a major role in discouraging them from studying further. People do not want to study for the sake of their obituary as it takes time and effort to study. Education is an investment, and therefore a person needs to gain financially as well.

One lost job of a breadwinner may mean a crisis for several families. According to Groenewald (2019), voluntary staff turnover is when an employee decides to leave the organisation, and involuntary staff turnover takes place when the employer terminates the contract of employment due to the employees' poor performance or retrenchments. On examining the company's human capital in table 1.1, the researcher saw a problem and believed that this study could add to the existing body of knowledge. The researcher anticipates less voluntary staff turnover with the development and implementation of effective strategies for EE and ER in this telecommunications organisation. In 2019, 80% of the employees in this organisation participated in the internal EE study and 78% participated in 2018 (Mobile Telephone Network, 2019). The researcher anticipates growth in participation of employee sustainable engagement scores if this organisation experiences fewer voluntary staff turnover. The organisation should avoid voluntary staff turnover as it might take a while for a new employee to reach maximum productivity while learning new skills and the pressure that is placed on the remaining employees might be unbearable (Groenewald, 2019). Furthermore, once an employee has developed an intent to resign voluntarily, it might be difficult to retain him or her. See human capital in table 1.1 below:

### Human capital

<b>Human Capital</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
Number of employees	19 288	18 835
Number of contractors	2 695	2 874
Voluntary staff turnover (%)	4	4,5
Employee sustainable engagement score (%)	80	78
Gender diversity was little changed, with women making up 37% of the workforce.		

Source: (Mobile Telephone Network, 2019, Table 1.1)

## 1.4 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The main purpose of the study was to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study focused on the research questions below to fulfil the purpose of the study:

- *What are the staff experiences on engagement in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*
- 
- *What are the staff experiences on retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Multiple studies indicate how important EE and ER are in various employment sectors. This study aimed to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. This understanding will help organisation A to develop and implement an EE model for organisations operating in the telecommunications sector.

## **1.7 DELINEATIONS**

The purpose of the study was to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. The study was based only on the perspectives of participants from this telecommunications organisation and not the whole national organisation.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To realise the research purpose, a qualitative hermeneutical phenomenology approach was followed. Creswell (2014) points out that social constructivists believe that people want to understand the world in which they live and work. The researcher

is of the same view. Phenomenology permits the study and description of the essences of specific phenomena as these appear in the life-world of participants (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological studies concentrate on the meaning that specific lived experiences hold for participants, meaning that people who have experience can give a good description of it (Maree, 2016). Moustakas (1994, p.13) further states that “from the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived” and that these descriptions entail what people have experienced and how they experienced it. The more open-ended the questioning, the better, as the researcher listens carefully to what people say (Creswell, 2014). Participants were interviewed individually at some length to determine how they experienced EE and ER in this organisation. They were ensured privacy and were made to feel at ease. Data collected from participants will remain confidential.

In this study, the purposive sampling method was used. Creswell (2014) states that the idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully choose participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that would best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. The researcher expected to interview approximately six out of seventeen potential participants, but the final number was determined by the richness and depth of data that was collected. Individuals from different departments based at organisation A were studied and participation was voluntary. Participants had to be employees working for the same employer. Line managers and their subordinates were chosen. Participants had to be working at a managerial level (level 2) or a subordinate level (level 1). Level 1 employees refer to low-entry staff and level 2 employees refer to line managers. They had to be between 18 to 65 years old. All potential participants had to be able to speak English. In other words, there was no interpreter.

In-depth interviews were used as a data collection strategy. However, questions were not asked in sequence. Questions covered the following topics: biographical data, EE and ER. The researcher used a tape recorder (audio) when interviewing participants and obtained permission from the participant before starting the digital recording. Additionally, the researcher took notes. As soon as the interview was over, the researcher listened to the recording and identified gaps. A written record of what was



said was prepared as soon as possible for data analysis. The transcription was prepared by the transcriber. However, transcriptions were read several times to make sure that there were no errors. Researchers assess all the data, make sense of it and consolidate it into themes (Creswell, 2014).

The model has three components: noticing, collecting and reflecting. While the researcher is reflecting on data that they gathered, they notice particular gaps that need additional data and they go and gather it. The study used interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA). Data analysis in phenomenology concentrates on individuals' experience of the world (Maree, 2016). The researcher applied credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity as principles ensuring the quality of the research conducted. Those principles are described in detail in chapter 4. An audit trail of research was developed to show the confirmability of this study.

## **1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher had to ask permission from the organisation to conduct the study (Appendix A). A letter of approval was received from the organisation (Appendix B). Ethical clearance was obtained (**ERC Reference #: 2019\_HRM\_005**) from the Research Ethics Review Committee in the College of Economic and Management Sciences. No harm was done to the participants and informed consent letters were sent to all participants (Appendix C) before conducting the interviews. The letters informed participants about the purpose of the study, stating that participation was voluntary, assured them of confidentiality and informed them that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant was interviewed and provided with a return slip (Appendix D). All participants were treated with respect. An interview schedule (Appendix F) was used.

## **1.10 CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

In this dissertation, the layout is as follows:

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the study. Telecommunications in South Africa, the problem statement, the purpose of the study and the research questions are highlighted. Furthermore, the significance and delineations of the study are discussed. The research design and methodology used in this study, as well as ethical considerations, are mentioned.

Chapter 2 is a literature review of EE and chapter 3 is a literature review of ER.

The research design and methodology used in this study are described in chapter 4. The sample design, sampling methods and data analysis are discussed. Criteria followed to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, as well as ethical considerations adhered to, are highlighted.

Chapter 5 presents the interpretation and reporting style and the context of the interviews. This is followed by a discussion of the research findings based on the analysis of data from research participants. Previous studies are used to support the participants' perspectives. The proposed EE model is presented to help organisations in the telecommunications industries.

Chapter 6 concludes the study. The research questions are aligned with empirical findings, and the contribution of the study is presented. Suggestions for future research are made and the chapter concludes with reflections on the study.

## **1.11 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 1 highlighted the telecommunications industry in South Africa which led to the problem statement. This study aimed to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. This understanding will help organisation A to develop and implement an EE model for companies operating in the telecommunications sector. The study was limited to organisation A only. To realise the research purpose, a qualitative hermeneutical

phenomenology approach was followed. Criteria applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the study were set out.

The next chapter presents the literature review of EE.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Kumar and Shweta (2011) conclude that the cost of not engaging employees effectively is damaging to an organisation's success. Thus, humans and the organisation need to employ positive, effective people managers with workplace policies and procedures that focus on the well-being and work-family life balance of employees. "Although engaged employees do feel tired after a long day of hard work, they describe their tiredness as a rather pleasant state because it is associated with positive accomplishments" (Bakker et al., 2011, p.5). According to Chopde (2020), EE makes a positive work atmosphere which may increase productivity. Moreover, an engaged employee takes a new initiative, solve problems, and keep themselves focused to achieve organisational goals (Chopde, 2020).

This chapter covers concepts such as defining EE, the importance of EE to employers and employees, EE theories, EE in a broader context, EE in the telecommunications industry and elements of engagement in the lived work experiences of employees.

#### **2.2 DEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

Research showed that there is no single definition of EE (Meyer & Schneider, 2021; Wahba, 2015). Definitions from different authors are provided here. Jose and Mampilly (2012) point out that it is the responsibility of top management to ensure that employees are engaged through human resources best practices. Kahn (1990) explains that employees should be engaged at work in situations that offer psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety and they should be psychologically available. Andrew and Sofian (2012) agree that there is no one-size-fits-all answer to EE and therefore this current study can contribute new knowledge to EE. Schaufeli (2013) asserts that EE and work engagement are used similarly. EE

may also encompass the connection with the organisation and one's work, whilst work engagement is the connection with one's work (Schaufeli, 2013). Moreover, EE is closely connected to employee performance, whilst work engagement can help an organisation to gain a competitive advantage (Sopiah et al., 2020).

According to Andrew and Sofian (2012), EE is a broad concept that touches nearly all the divisions of HRM. Furthermore, it is the level of commitment and participation an employee has towards their organisation and its principles (Krishnan, 2012). EE is also a workplace method to make sure that employees are dedicated to organisational goals and principles (Campus, 2015). Similarly, Herholdt (2012) asserts that EE is the psychological state of mind within which an employee links and finds their personal, job and organisational dimensions of their work. Schaufeli (2013) states that engagement is regarded as participation, desire, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, commitment and energy. More recently, Thompson (2016) defines EE as the level to which employees are loyal to their organisation, work hard and how long they are retained as a result of their loyalty.

Kahn (1990) explains personal engagement as connecting employees to their work roles and in engagement, people express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally when performing their tasks. Kahn (1990) contrasts this with personal disengagement, which is disconnecting employees from their work roles; in disengagement, people pull out and defend themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally when performing their tasks. The two major dimensions of psychological engagement are emotional and cognitive engagement. Specifically, emotional engagement means having a good relationship with supervisors and teammates and experiencing empathy for others (Kahn, 1990). Those who are cognitively engaged are aware of their mission and role in their work environment. According to Kahn (1990), an employee can experience engagement in any one of the dimensions at any point in time. This definition shows that job satisfaction is related to the cognitive aspect of EE.

According to Abraham (2012), engaged employees are dedicated to their role, will stay in the organisation for a long time, be more productive and give good customer service. They willingly put in the effort to meet organisational needs, take the initiative, support and reinforce cultures and values, and stay cautious and focused (Kahn, 1990). Furthermore, EE is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organisation to give their best each day, committed to their organisation's goals and values, eager to contribute to organisational success, with an enhanced sense of their well-being (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). EE is based on trust, integrity, two-way commitment and communication between an organisation and its members. Moreover, Cook (2012) states that engagement is how positively the employee thinks about the organisation and looks forward to achieving organisational goals for customers, colleagues and other stakeholders.

According to White (2013), engagement is about getting maximum contribution for the organisation and maximum satisfaction for its employees. Keenoy (2013) maintains that EE includes all efforts to improve job satisfaction, enrich tasks, encourage participation, inspire involvement and create self-managed teams. MacLeod and Clarke (2009) regard engagement as being about building mutual respect in the workplace. They believe that engaged organisations have strong and true values, with clear evidence of trust and fairness based on mutual respect, where two-way promises and commitments between employers and employees are understood and are fulfilled. More importantly, employees feel that they can talk about their ideas and be listened to (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). Saks and Gruman (2014) conclude that there is no agreement on the meaning of EE or concerns about the validity of the most popular measure of EE. Based on social exchange theory (SET), all statements made when communicating should continue to be reasonable and focus on keeping the interests of both the employer and the employees (Li, 2020). This confirms both the company's high productivity and every employee's happiness and engagement are achieved (Li, 2020). The above definitions show that there is a significant positive side to EE.

Jose and Mampilly (2012) highlight EE as management's serious concern globally. Ram and Gantasala (2011) point out that EE is a planned approach for driving improvement and positive organisational change. Furthermore, their research indicates that high levels of EE are found when employees are involved in decision-

making, committed and excited about their work. Theuri (2017) recommends that employees be encouraged to freely and voluntarily be involved in making changes in their departments. Furthermore, they should be encouraged to brainstorm innovative ideas on how to improve the organisation. Andrew and Sofian (2012) found that employees who believe that their opinions and suggestions are listened to and valued are more engaged and contribute to the organisation's productivity.

According to Abukhalifeh and Som (2013), EE becomes a vital issue as employee turnover increases due to the demand for and lack of skilful employees. Mutsuddi (2016) maintains that engagement is affected by various emotional factors relating to work and that engaged employees may be more likely to stay with their current organisation. For organisations to compete effectively, they must not only hire top talented employees but must also motivate and empower them to work up to their full potential (Bakker et al., 2011). This implies that the dynamics and implications of engagement must be understood. Wahba (2015) concludes that EE differs between job levels and found employees at the senior manager level to be more satisfied than at other levels. Furthermore, Wahba (2015) found that the maximum level of engagement was in employees who had less than two years of working experience in the organisation, whereas the group of employees that had more than ten years of working experience were not satisfied. This implies that new employees identify better with the organisation than old employees.

Diedericks (2016) found that participants with fewer years of work experience in the organisation could persist towards achieving goals, redirect paths to goals when they need to succeed and may also tend to see the positive side of changes and challenges. Furthermore, participants with fewer years of work experience have higher levels of willingness to invest time and energy into their work (Diedericks, 2016). Therefore, it was of interest to determine whether the number of years worked by staff in organisation A mattered in terms of EE and ER. Campus (2015) concludes that EE benefits every person involved within the organisation by making an informed and productive workplace that pushes the organisation to achieve its goals. Moreover, Campus (2015) encourages managers to communicate business plans and

performance requirements, and seek out ideas from employees on how to grow the organisation. The organisation can succeed if employers and employees work together towards achieving one goal. Engaged employees play an important role in achieving organisational goals and competitive advantage (Jose & Mampilly, 2012).

Engaging and retaining skilled employees is the main challenge for some organisations (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Engaging these employees to invest more effort voluntarily is another main challenge. Ngobeni and Bezuidenhout (2011) found in their study that most of the staff surveyed knew what was expected from them, felt their jobs were important and believed that they had the opportunity to use their skills daily. However, a lack of feedback regarding progress and lack of recognition of excellence was a concern for employees. While companies try to engage and retain their skilled employees, the responsibility lies with the line managers to make sure that talented employees are engaged, to promote retention (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that some managers have difficulty in recruiting and retaining valuable employees.

### **2.2.1 The importance of employee engagement to employers, employees and the organisation**

Companies around the globe would agree that EE is vital and should shift from “holding” to “attracting and engaging by building commitment, aligning individual and organisational goals and providing engaging work and a culture of growth” (Deloitte Consulting LLP and Bersin by Deloitte, 2014). Companies realise that retaining good people and keeping them engaged and productive are two separate things. According to Deloitte Consulting LLP and Bersin by Deloitte (2014), the secret is designing systems (work, culture, flexibility and social and community purpose) that support a talent experience that makes it easy for employees to be continually interested in the work they do. Jose and Mampilly (2012) associate EE with positive outcomes at individual and organisational levels. MacLeod and Clarke (2012) show that organisations with high levels of engagement beat their low-engagement competitors both in the public and private sector.



Abraham (2012) identifies one way of retaining people as having fully engaged employees. Factors such as nature of the job, supervisor's recognition of the employee's work, team spirit, a collaboration between departments, reasonable benefits and equal and proper administration of organisational policies contribute to a moderate state of EE (Abraham, 2012). A chance for employees to participate in management decisions is a good opportunity to build teamwork with managers and colleagues. EE is a win-win initiative, when done correctly, with good employee well-being and wealth creation (Purcell, 2013).

MacLeod and Clarke (2009) maintain that EE is about waking up in the morning and feeling great about going to work. An employee knows their role in the organisation and where they fit in the organisation's purpose and objectives. They further assert that EE is about employees being a voice to express views that are considered when decisions are made. As MacLeod and Clarke (2009) say, EE means that an employee has a positive attitude and behaviours leading to better organisational results. EE is about drawing on employees' knowledge and ideas to improve products and services and come up with new ways about how the organisation works. MacLeod and Clarke (2009) explain that EE is about getting a deeper commitment from employees so that there is less leave and sick leave, a decline in accident rates, fewer conflicts, fewer grievances and increased productivity. They believe that EE is about initiatives that are in line with the organisation's values. Specifically, it is about keeping promises, or an explanation why they cannot be kept. According to Li (2020), social exchange principles only require honesty from the employer. Employers should not promise something they are not able to deliver and should never lead their employees into thinking that working more than needed will benefit them (Li, 2020). All decisions made during these interactions should remain fair and keep the interests of both parties equally (Li, 2020). This guarantees both the organisation's productivity and every employee's active engagement.

According to Bains and Chitrao (2020), a high absenteeism rate in any business could have been caused by physiological, emotional, or financial problems. Therefore, leading to reduced productivity, low team morale, and unsatisfactory monetary results

(Bains & Chitrao, 2020). More importantly, absenteeism cannot be eradicated. Bains and Chitrao (2020), suggest that working conditions given to the workers should be comfortable, allow flexible hours, remote working and counselling which lead to high productivity.

According to Socialchorus (2019), EE is regarded as one of the most important indicators in gauging work satisfaction. Nowadays, employees are looking for more than just a nine to five job, as they want to be involved in their work, enthusiastic about the organisation they work for and loyal to their colleagues (Socialchorus, 2019). Researchers found that 71% of managers felt that EE was one of the most important factors in the overall organisational success (Socialchorus, 2019). The majority of the employees were disengaged at work, despite EE being highly valued (Socialchorus, 2019). According to Gallup data, only 33% of employees reported that they were engaged at work (Socialchorus, 2019). Specifically, low engagement can be caused by factors such as lack of recognition by managers, poor company communication and not being aligned with the mission of the organisation (Socialchorus, 2019).

### **2.2.2 Barriers to employee engagement**

The first barrier to engagement, in the study by MacLeod and Clarke (2009), was that managers believed that their status in the organisation was evidence enough that they had what it took to be regarded as leaders and therefore regarded their ongoing learning as pointless. Furthermore, when the managers returned to their workplace with a clearer idea of what leadership should look like, their frustrations increased as they became aware of the poor quality of the leadership shown by their senior managers. EE is about being the employer of choice (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

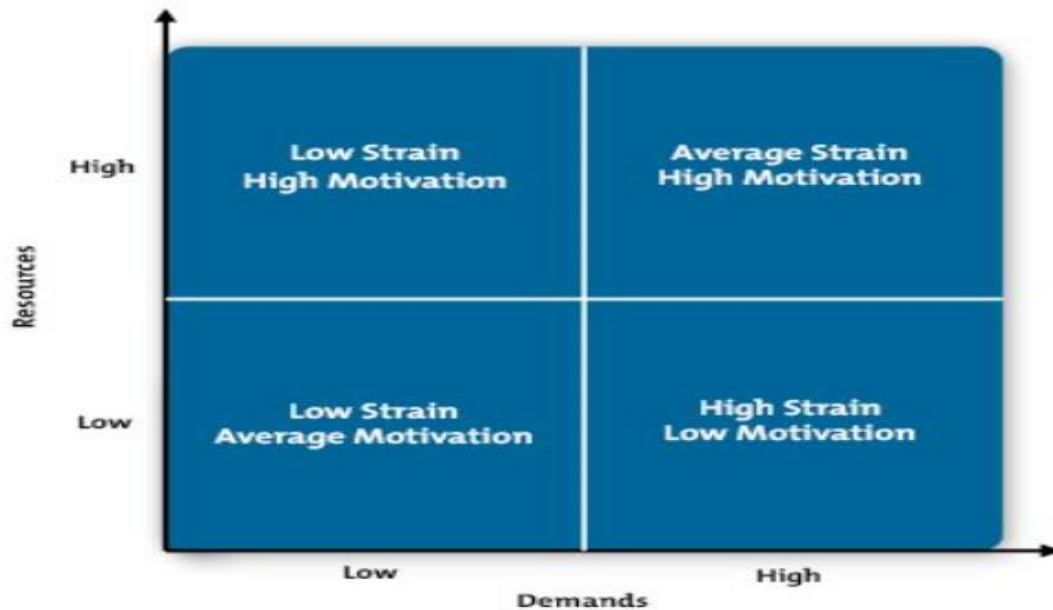
### 2.2.3 Employee engagement theories

A single theoretical framework for EE does not exist (Schaufeli, 2013). Instead, several theoretical perspectives have been suggested that each highlight a different aspect, but that cannot be integrated into one main conceptual model. Four approaches are the needs-satisfying approach, the job demands-resources model, the affective shift model and SET. According to Alola and Alafeshat (2021), SET is one of the most persuasive conceptual paradigms for understanding workplace behaviour. This study used SET to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

#### *The needs-satisfying approach*

The needs-satisfying approach, according to Kahn (1990), assumes that employees may be engaged when three basic needs (meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability) are met. According to Aiken, C. (2020), meaningfulness depends on the job itself. Whilst, psychological safety is prejudiced by the social environment. Lastly, availability depends on the personal resources that individuals can bring to perform the job, such as education, skills (Aiken, 2020). If the job is challenging and meaningful, the social environment is safe, and personal resources are available, engagement is likely to occur (Kahn, 1990).

*The job demands-resources model (JD-R model)*



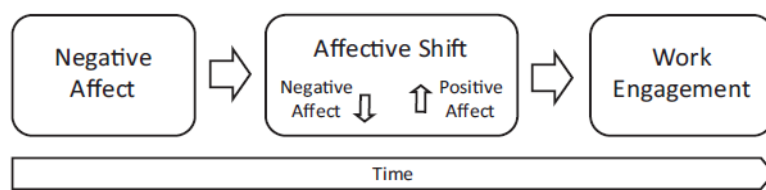
**Figure 2.1: The job demands-resources model (JD-R model)**

Source: Bakker and Demerouti (2006) as cited in Mindtools (2020)

**Note.** This model has been divided into two categories: job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2006, as cited in Mindtools, 2020). Job demands are the physical or emotional stressors in the role. These include meeting deadlines, a heavy workload, a stressful working environment, employees not sure what their roles are and experiencing poor working relationships. Job resources are job positives that help a person achieve goals and reduce stress. They include flexibility in the way of work, good relationships with colleagues, career paths, coaching and mentoring, and learning and development. According to Mindtools (2020), even if the employee's work is highly demanding, they can still experience less stress if their organisation provides resources to support them. For example, an organisation might offer team-building initiatives to boost staff morale, counselling facilities, time to catch up with colleagues over drinks during or after work and many more.

The JD-R model states that when job demands are high and job resources are low, employees are more likely to be negatively affected by stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2006). This implies that companies should provide resources that will enable employees to be productive to avoid burnout. Moreover, managers should provide support to their subordinates, offer them equal developmental opportunities and timeous constructive feedback (Mindtools, 2020). Schaufeli (2013) explains that in the JD-R model, resources motivate employees, encourage them to work hard and keep them focused. Bakker (2014) concludes that on the days that employees have access to appropriate resources; they can cope well with their daily job demands.

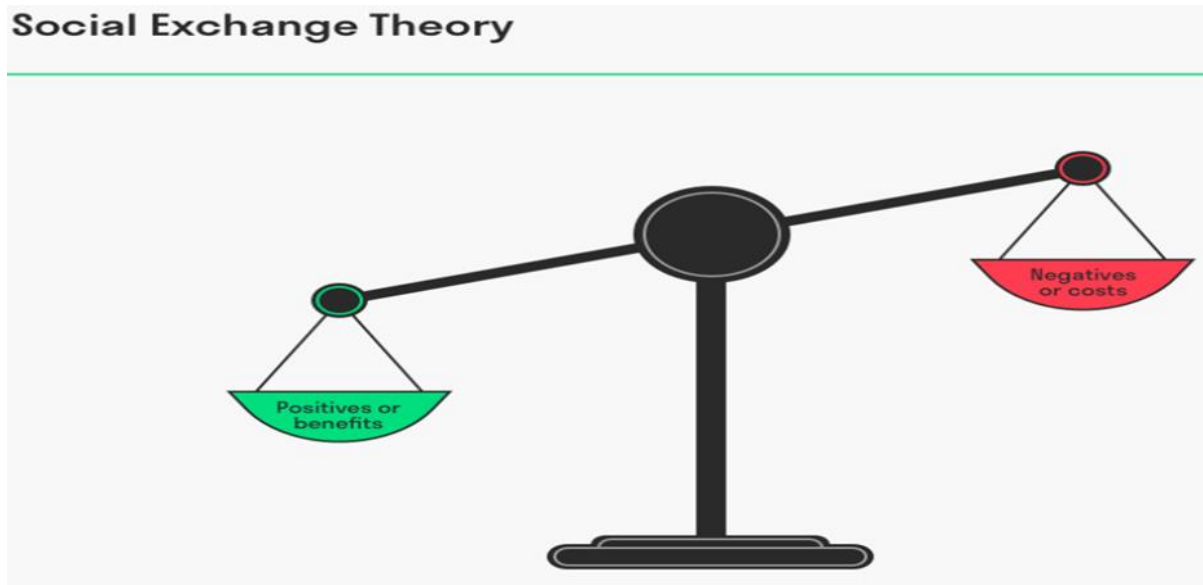
*The affective shift model*



**Figure 2.2: The affective shift model**

Source: Bledow, Schmitt, Frese and Kühnel (2011)

**Note.** The affective shift model suggests that negative affect is related to work engagement if negative affect is followed by positive affect (Bledow et al., 2011). Schaufeli (2013) asserts that the affective shift model assumes that people move from one task to another through the working day.



**Figure 2.3: Social exchange theory**

Source: Janse (2019)

**Note.** According to Jose and Mampilly (2012), a concrete theoretical background for describing EE may be found in social exchange theory (SET). SET is defined as a social, psychological and sociological perspective that clarifies social change and stability as a method of negotiated exchanges among parties (Wikipedia, 2018). Therefore, SET suggests that human contacts are formed by the use of subjective cost-benefit analysis and the comparison of alternatives (Wikipedia, 2018). It involves several interactions among parties who are in a state of mutual interdependence. In other words, the relationship among parties is about to give and take (Alola & Alafeshat, 2021; Janse, 2019). A basic principle of SET is that relationships evolve into trusting, faithful and common pledges if parties stand by rules of exchange (Abukhalifeh & Som, 2013; Alola & Alafeshat, 2021).

SET was first developed by the sociologist George Homans, who wrote about it in a 1958 essay entitled "Social Behavior as Exchange" (Homans, 1958).

According to Blau (1964), SET is based on a central premise that the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction. Crossman (2017) points that SET is about people's interactions that are based on the rewards or punishments that they expect to receive from others. The author further argues that SET does not capture the power that emotions play in our daily lives and our interactions with others.

SET is the most acknowledged and widely used theory in research on EE (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Lartey, 2021). SET is chosen as it provides a theoretical foundation to explain the reasons why employees decide to engage with their work or stay with their organisation. Furthermore, SET can be utilised as a theoretical framework in understanding the concept of EE. This implies that the exchange relationship between employer and employee goes beyond the exchange of personal resources such as data, money and service. SET "holds that individuals are more likely to value resources when based on the discretionary decision rather than situations beyond the donor's control" (Ngwenya, 2014, p.2). Therefore, trust remains important for both parties to build a good successful relationship.

Saks (2006) states that one way for people to repay their organisation is through engagement. In terms of Kahn's definition of engagement (1990), employees feel obliged to involve themselves more intensely in their role performances as repayment for the resources they receive from their organisation. Social exchange perspectives were applied in this study to explain the need to understand the staff experiences on engagement and how EE contributes to staff retention in the telecommunications organisation. According to Blau (1964), social exchange includes interactions that are dependent on each other. This implies that the action of one party may affect the action of an opponent. Those are face-to-face interactions. SET is based on promises: the exchange of social and material resources is a fundamental form of human interaction. The voluntary actions of individuals are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do bring from others (Blau, 1964).

Moreover, Reynolds (2019) has shown that emotions matter a great deal at work and happiness is important. Therefore, employees expect more from their employer and are willing to look for other employment opportunities when their expectations are not met (Reynolds, 2019).

Rules of exchange usually involve rules such that the actions of one party lead to a response by the other party (Jose & Mampilly, 2012). Moreover, Jose and Mampilly (2012) suggest that an engaged employee is positive, concentrates on their work and is willing and eager to go the extra mile to contribute to sustainable organisational success on a long-term basis. According to Blau (1964), and economic exchange involves measurable material goods, whereas social exchange is based on intangible goods that are not measurable. Social exchange includes providing advice, support, positive attitudes, signs of recognition, being friendly and showing empathy, all of which play a role in structuring social exchanges among individuals. However, for an exchange to produce the anticipated outcome in terms of durability and relational quality, the goods involved in the exchange must have a value (Blau, 1964). The individuals involved in the exchange are dedicated to pursuing the exchange if, in return for what they have given, they receive goods that have an estimated or perceived value equivalent to the goods they have previously given, even if the return is deferred over time. Long-term relationships may be maintained if there is trust (Blau, 1964). Schaufeli (2013) indicates that when employees get recognition and opportunities for growth, they appreciate and strive to achieve organisational goals. Furthermore, employees will choose whether to engage themselves to the resources they get from their organisation (Andrew & Sofian, 2012).

Employees who are provided with relevant training are highly likely to be motivated and engaged in their jobs (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). Therefore, engaged employees have positive behaviours, attitudes and intentions derived from a high-level mutual relationship with their co-workers and their employer (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). Engaged employees who feel supported by their



organisation and who have a good relationship with their line manager show more citizenship behaviour and less intention to resign (Schaufeli, 2013). However, Abukhalifeh and Som (2013) conclude that employees have realised that they are not able to work for one employer until they retire. This may be why employees feel less committed to their employers with reduced expectations of mutual exchange.

SET is an important social psychology theory that concerns social changes as a process of interactive exchanges among different people. This theory is usually used within the business world to explain and study commercial transactions (Social Work Degree Guide, 2018). Social exchange includes two main dimensions: an expectation of productivity and reciprocal trust between two parties (Renaud et al., 2015). Under SET, the organisation and its employees are partners involved involuntary actions, driven by the expectation of productivity.

Therefore, each party has expectations. The expert invests in the organisation by being aware of the organisational goals and goes the extra mile because they expect immediate or deferred monetary recognition as well as non-monetary recognition in return for their efforts. However, if the expert's expectations are not met, this individual may start looking for similar jobs outside the organisation (Renaud et al., 2015). Furthermore, rules are important as employers and employees are dependent on each other's efforts to achieve common goals (Jansen van Rensburg, 2012). Jansen van Rensburg (2012) asserts that social exchanges are considered under three fundamental ideas, namely the rules and norms of exchange, the resources or offer exchanged and the relationship that develops.

## 2.2.4 Employee engagement in a broader context

The findings of Gallant (2016) provide valuable insight into the importance of EE in a South African context. By understanding how employees from different backgrounds are engaged, organisations can use their engagement programmes to meet the needs of the various types of employees within the organisation, instead of applying a one-size-fits-all approach. According to Thompson (2016), EE may affect productivity and loyalty. Furthermore, it is suggested that employers should concentrate on a workplace culture that supports elements of engagement such as meaningful work, job enrichment, the right person for the right job, supervisor and colleague support, access to available resources, a friendly work environment and finally credible organisational values (Thompson, 2016).

Many staff members view their work as either a job or a calling (Beukes & Botha, 2013; Kang et al., 2021). Employees who view their work as a calling are more enthusiastic. On the other hand, different rewards have a different level of importance in EE (Deloitte Consulting LLP and Bersin by Deloitte, 2014). The following rewards were identified in a survey as the top three most important elements for sub-Saharan Africa: salary (65%), provident/pension fund and medical aid (63%) and performance bonus (62%) (Emergence Growth, 2013). However, when participants were asked which of the five most important challenges they would face in the next 12 to 18 months, 63% of participants rated retention and engagement as the second-most important challenge for South Africa.

While EE study seems to be successful in the United States and Europe, Rothmann (2014) emphasises the importance of conducting such studies in other countries as EE could be influenced by cultural factors. This implies that EE might take various forms around the globe. Schaufeli (2012) is of the view that engaged employees enthusiastically change their work environment, if required, and transfer their engagement to others in their department, for example, team members communicating positively about their work. Guaspari (2015) argues that focusing on engagement alone will not work as it is an outcome. One of the drivers of engagement,

as per Guaspari (2015), is respect, which implies giving due consideration to others.

### **2.2.5 Employee engagement in the telecommunications industry**

The telecommunications industry plays a vital part in building the country's economy (Saeed et al., 2013). Organisation A also builds the regional economy, which is contributing to the overall South African economy. EE is leading the agenda and a high priority for telecommunications companies in India (Krishnan, 2012). Lack of talent, high levels of mobility and skills shortages are the main challenges. The assumption is that the same is happening in the broader South African telecommunications industry. According to Deepa and Santhosh (2016), the telecommunications industry has been growing over the past few years. South Africa has also experienced that growth. Employees of these organisations play an important part in sustaining this growth.

Engaged employees identify with the organisational goals and they feel valued and therefore this study might help staff from organisation A to feel valued as staff morale is low. According to Krishnan (2012), an organisation with high levels of EE will have low employee turnover and high employee productivity. In addition, highly engaged employees are usually high performers and show emotional commitment. Remaining competitive is highly required in the telecommunications industry.

Organisations want their engaged employees to show proactive behaviour and be responsible for their personal growth (Patrick & Bhat, 2014). They intend to stay with the organisation for the long term and they go the extra mile to achieve organisational goals (Iddagoda et al., 2015). Dhanya and Prashath (2019) say that EE helps identify the level of loyalty and job satisfaction in an all-inclusive term, where the employees' performances are driven positively. They advise management to differentiate between the slow and high performers so that efforts can be made to satisfy both levels of employees to bring out the quality of management and maintain a good level of retention. This will in turn raise the morale of the employees.

According to Verma and Sarita (2014), EE leads to commitment which reflects in high retention of employees. They suggest that the level of engagement in employees can be improved by identifying its drivers and working on them. Furthermore, they conclude that ER can be improved by increasing the level of EE and focusing on a few non-financial drivers: communication, reward and recognition, line manager's support, work engagement, teamwork and role clarity. On the other hand, organisations with disengaged employees suffer from a waste of effort and bleed talent, earn less commitment from the employees, lose profit and experience increased absenteeism and less productivity (Verma & Sarita, 2014). Companies are determined to increase their performance. In organisation A, previous years' survey results are used to set a target for the new years' EE survey. Hence the need to understand staff experiences on engagement.

Managers face many challenges in putting their companies ahead of competitors and employee turnover harms family, organisation and society. It also brings stress to the family as the relocation of the family and employee could be necessary and financially related issues in connection with the relocation also arise (Verma & Sarita, 2014). Employee turnover may disrupt service to clients and extra workload may negatively affect the remaining employees (Verma & Sarita, 2014). When an employee with critical skills to support society leaves the organisation, this negatively affects society. Companies with engaged employees experience higher ER due to reduced intention to leave the organisation, increased productivity, business growth and customer satisfaction (Verma & Sarita, 2014).

### **2.2.6 Elements of engagement in the lived work experiences of employees**

In the view of Kumar and Shweta (2011), organisations that understand the conditions that highlight EE will have achieved something competitors will find difficult to copy. Sergio and Rylova (2018) encourage the use of EE and empowerment as tools to decrease organisational turnover. Although many might not consider retention, companies might save a lot of money by keeping the best professionals (Sergio &

Rylova, 2018). Chopde et al. (2019) and Sundaray (2011) identify common elements that have an influence on EE in all organisations, irrespective of the industry. These elements are as follows:

### *Recruitment*

Recruitment and selection entail finding the right candidate for a suitable position. Furthermore, suitable candidates should be engaged regarding possible growth and career opportunities to enhance loyalty.

### *Job design*

Jobs become attractive and significant to employees as they give employees a range of challenges. Additionally, engaged employees support their engagement through job design (Bakker et al., 2011).

### *Career development opportunities*

Career development influences the level of engagement and talented employees are likely to stay with the organisation. When companies plan for their employees' career paths and invest in them, the employees stay longer and become more productive (Krishnan, 2012).

### *Leadership*

Employees demand respect from their organisations, irrespective of their job level. Romans and Tobaben (2016) maintain that effective leaders continually find new ways of doing things. They found that in building a culture of engagement, engagement becomes the way the organisation operates, not something done separately. MacLeod

and Clarke (2011) describe engaging managers as offering simplicity, appreciating employees and treating them as individuals.

### *Empowerment*

Employees want to take part in decisions that affect their job. Bogosian and Rousseau (2017) argue that the organisations which encourage collaboration can recruit and retain visionary employees.

### *Equal opportunities and fair treatment*

Employees do not want unfair discrimination within the organisation. They demand equal opportunities for all.

### *Training and development*

Training helps employees to focus on their work because they get satisfaction from understanding new tasks. According to Groenewald (2019), training may occur through on-the-job or off-the-job training. As a result, employees are likely to be competitive in the job market. Kumar and Shweta (2011) point out that nowadays, access to training and career opportunities is vital. Through employee development programmes, employees in organisation A may acquire skills and knowledge required to do their jobs. Abukhalifeh and Som (2013) found employee development to be the highest contributor to EE. However, Abraham (2012) discovered that training, well-being and salary had no impact on EE and that management should prioritise employee development and employee well-being so that job satisfaction can be improved.

Giving employees dedicated training and development is an important process to enhance engagement (Crawford et al., 2013). Training is regarded as one of the main factors in reducing employee turnover in organisations (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Moreover, Rothmann (2014) recommends training and development

programmes to ensure that employees remain healthy and competent as well as engaged. Specifically, managers should pay close attention to the background and the process of training and development from the employees' perspective (Guan & Frenkel, 2019). Anitha (2014) suggests that training and career development are drivers to improve engagement. As a result, employees tend to be worried about their futures (Groenewald, 2019).

Numerous employees search for employers who offer training and skills development activities that enable career improvement. This may explain why, when they are given such opportunities, employees are likely to stay with the organisation. Therefore, a good line manager will mentor employees and encourage them to stay with the organisation (Aguenza & Som, 2012). Day by day the role of ER has been increasing in pharmaceutical companies in Indonesia and there is a need to develop employees to improve their performance (Diah et al., 2020). Organisational training is important for the performance of employees and contributes to better results. Diah et al. (2020) further assert that these training programmes increase the job satisfaction of employees, and simultaneously improve their skills and work performance. SET assumes that all parties in the environment are part of a defined social structure (Diah et al., 2020).

### *Performance management*

Performance management is a process of aligning individual goals with the overall goals of the organisation. Furthermore, it encourages the culture of accepting challenging objectives and encourages effective employee performance (Groenewald, 2019). Employees become highly engaged.

### *Compensation*

This includes salary and benefits but may also include other important elements such as day-care facilities at work, a canteen, employee assistance programmes and many more. Organisations should adopt an effective compensation management system to

motivate their employees. Basic pay can be revised based on the complexity of the jobs (Abraham, 2012). This may provide a sense of pride to the employees that their jobs are important to the organisation. By recognising employees' hard work regularly, employers add more benefits as employees seem happier when they are valued at work (Li, 2020). However, Li (2020) argues that even if employees are recognised for their hard work, compliments and awards cannot be turned into money. This implies that money is usually preferred. According to Li (2020), nearly 25% of employees would take a job elsewhere if it paid 10% more than their current salary. As a result of the social exchange process, many employees give their best performance when they are promised a raise compared to having no monetary incentive at all. In economic exchange, companies award the employees financially for their excellent job performance (Diah et al., 2020). Social exchanges are constituted of trust in the party that initiates the social contract.

#### *Health and safety*

Organisations should adopt suitable methods and systems for the health and safety of their employees. Literature indicates that employees' levels of engagement are low if they do not feel safe at work.

#### *Job satisfaction*

Organisations need to ensure that employees' jobs match their career goals to enhance job satisfaction. This implies that job satisfaction encourages high levels of engagement. The overall job satisfaction of the employees within the telecommunications sector of Pakistan was at a positive level (Saeed et al., 2013). However, there is a need for more studies on EE within the South African telecommunications industry. Engagement is an important predictor of job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Alarcon & Edwards, 2011).



## *Communication*

Organisations are encouraged to adopt an open-door policy, which means that communication should be a two-way process and not downward only. Specifically, employees should be involved in decision-making. Kang and Sung (2017) found that employee/internal communication management is associated with EE and that EE enhances supportive employee communication behaviours and reduces turnover intention. Moreover, they suggest that organisations need to apply a two-way, employee-centred regular communication system in their everyday communication management. Additionally, communication bosses are advised to invent internal communication practices that listen to the employees and invite them to participate (Kang & Sung, 2017). According to Li (2020), a major part of SET in the workplace concentrates on the importance of employees voicing their thoughts and managers are also highly respected when they actively listen to their employees. More importantly, employees want their feedback and ideas to be taken into consideration so they can see a positive change in their work environment (Li, 2020).

## *Family friendliness*

There should be a balance between work and family life. When employees realise that the employer is considerate, their families benefit too and they will be emotionally attached to the organisation, which encourages engagement.

## **2.3 CONCLUSION**

There is no single definition of EE according to the existing literature. EE is open to more than one interpretation, based on individual perception. It has a direct relationship with organisational attrition and productivity. Engaged employees are likely to stay with the organisation for the long term.

This chapter dealt with concepts such as defining EE, the importance of EE to employers and employees, EE theories, EE in a broader context, EE in the telecommunications industry and elements of engagement in the lived work experiences of employees.

This next chapter presents the literature review on employee retention.

## CHAPTER 3

### EMPLOYEE RETENTION

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Instabilities in the economy and changes in demographics and businesses globally have caused organisations to shift their attention towards ER (Ma et al., 2018). There is a need to attract, develop and retain talent with the right skills and knowledge for companies to flourish in the changing world of work. According to Das and Baruah (2013), ER is about encouraging employees to remain in the organisation for a longer period. Aguenza and Som (2012) explain that retention and engagement start at the recruitment process and that retaining a key employee is important to gain a competitive advantage. Both concepts of retention and engagement are critical to making sure that staff are highly productive. Research has indicated that retaining talented employees is a serious management issue in both private and public companies and that poor morale and productivity can decrease profitability even if the employee does not leave the organisation (Theuri, 2017). Additionally, Dutta and Banerjee (2014) concur that ER problems are developing as the most important workforce management challenges of the future. They further maintain that there is no one formula for retaining employees within an organisation. They point out that the increase in organisation mergers has left employees feeling unhappy with their employers and worried about job security.

Ghosh and Sahney (2011) identify different reasons for employees to resign, namely unequal salaries, limited growth opportunities, staying in the same position for a long time, underutilisation of skills and lack of recognition. Benish and Gulzar (2014) highlight one of the most practical ways of retaining employees as compensating them even more than what they are earning, for example with a development programme. However, creating a compensation structure that supports an employee development programme is a distinct challenge for companies (Sinha & Sinha, 2012). Pay is the primary factor that reveals the employer's commitment and intention towards the employee and is one of the compelling reasons for an employee to stay in that organisation (Deery & Jago, 2015). However, Deery and Jago (2015) caution that pay

is not enough to motivate employees to stay in the organisation. There can be different factors that affect the employees' decision to stay such as favouritism, employees wanting their ideas to be considered and many more. Benish and Gulzar (2014) are of the view that loyalty has a greater influence on ER than employee commitment.

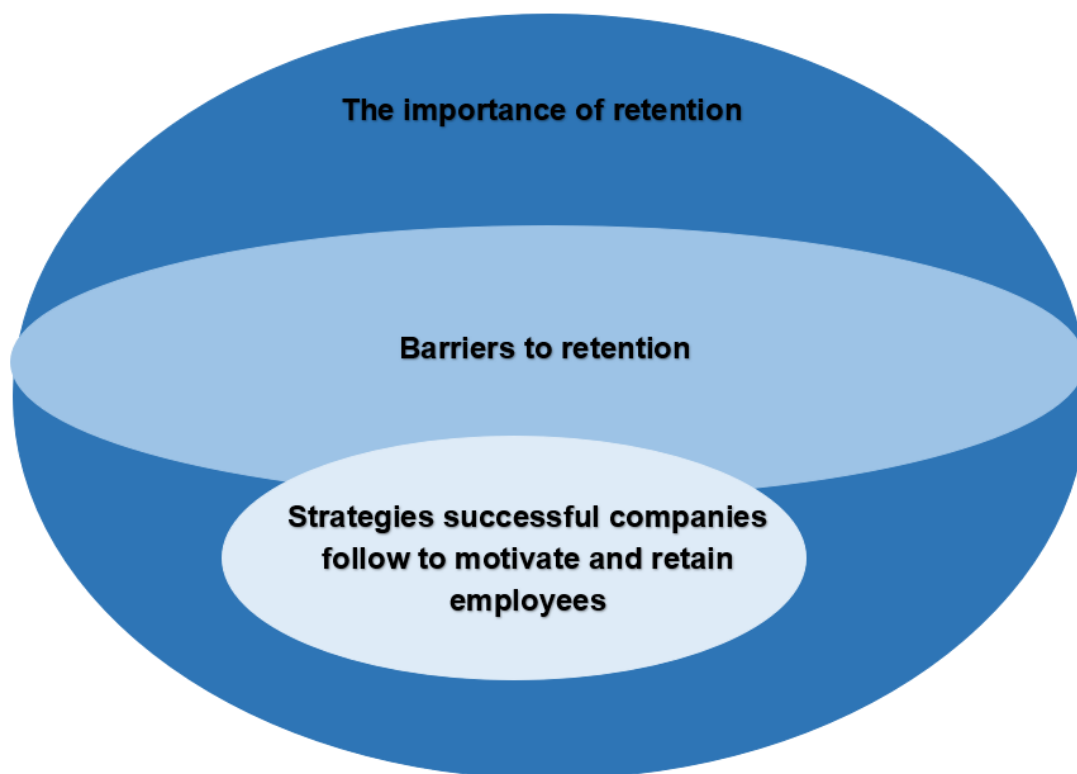
Wahba (2015) argues that talent is rare, resulting in a shortage of required skills, and keeping unproductive employees harms the organisation's profit. Lumley et al. (2011) described the 21st-century working world as having unequal levels of talent movement as employees want to satisfy their demands. This is alarming among organisations regarding the retention of talented employees. Talented employees play a vital role in the organisation's ability to achieve its objectives. When competent employees leave the organisation, they tend to take knowledge and skill with them (Harden et al., 2018). ER is important for an organisation's stability, growth and income (Cloutier et al., 2015) and could be achieved through effective communication and hiring diverse employees and suitably skilled people. However, hiring a new employee is less important than retaining a talented competent employee (Haider et al., 2015). ER involves procedures through which employees are encouraged to become part of the organisation for a longer period (Haider et al., 2015), meaning that retaining the best employees closest to the organisation's core competencies is vital. The layout of this chapter is as follows: defining employee retention (ER), map for ER, ER in the telecommunications industry, followed by the determinants of ER and the application of SET to ER.

### **3.2 DEFINING EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

Employee retention is defined as strategies used to encourage employees to work for the same employer for a longer period (Aukhoon, 2019; Das & Baruah, 2013). According to Aukhoon (2019), ER is beneficial to both employers and employees. Aruna and Anitha (2015) explain that if the organisation provides interesting work and self-advancement programmes for the employees, the employees will be faithful to the organisation; otherwise, they will resign quickly. Fox (2012) and Aruna and Anitha (2015) define ER as the ability of an organisation to keep its employees. Similarly, Mandhanya (2015) maintains that ER leads to satisfied employees. This implies that employees who are satisfied result in satisfied customers; thus customer satisfaction leads to good profit. Therefore, by retaining talented and experienced employees, the

profitability of an organisation will be improved and the organisation will be able to achieve its business goals and objectives (Siew et al., 2017). However, Yamamoto (2013), as cited in Siew et al., 2017) cautions that to retain employees, an organisation should first understand the reasons for retaining employees. Thus, high levels of employee commitment help an organisation to ensure high-quality services and achieve organisational objectives.

Anderson (2012) found that employers should tell their employees about the benefits of working for their organisation and highlight the opportunities and benefits provided by the organisation. The following factors in figure 3.1 found to be influencing retention have been explored in several studies:



**Figure 3.1: Map for employee retention (own compilation)**

### **3.2.1 Importance of retention**

Bhattacharya (2015) divides turnover into voluntary turnover, which takes place through resignations or retirement, and involuntary turnover, which takes place through dismissal or retrenchment. Aukhoon (2019) asserts that it is important for companies to understand the reasons and circumstances why employees leave. Simultaneously, companies may also gain better ideas of why employees stay. In the past, exit interviews were used to limit employee resignations. It is important to find out what makes employees stay with the organisation (George, 2015). Not all turnover is considered bad as new employees may also bring in fresh ideas. However, if the turnover is high to the extent that it impacts the firm's performance, then something must be done immediately to remedy the situation (Bhattacharya, 2015). Given this, it is not only retaining talented employees that are important but they must also be fully engaged by being emotionally and rationally involved in their work roles (Bhattacharya, 2015). If qualified employees resign voluntarily, it is a loss of intellectual capital for the organisation (Ratnasari et al., 2018). In this study, new knowledge resulting from the findings may add to a broader perspective of EE and ER at organisation A.

### **3.2.2 Barriers to retention**

Deery and Jago (2015) caution that failing to retain committed employees could be fatal for the survival of an organisation. Dutta and Banerjee (2014) identify potential barriers that cause an employee to resign, such as lower pay, lack of growth, lack of reorganisation, a supervisor not allowing self-growth, no trust in senior management and low job satisfaction. Retaining and engaging high prospective employees is the main challenge to organisations (Aguenza & Som, 2012).

Furthermore, sometimes engaged employees are not satisfied with the outcomes of organisational performance, which may cause them to resign. Aguenza and Som (2012) conclude that the main worry of most organisations is their capacity to hire, engage and retain the right staff. Deery and Jago (2015) blame increased competition in the market as it may lead to less ER. It is therefore crucial for organisations to hire competent employees to gain a competitive advantage in the market (Deery & Jago,

2015). Organisations are always searching for talented employees to develop them for future return aspects. Factors such as lack of skilled workforce, economic growth and employee turnover require the development of policies to increase ER.

Selesho and Naile (2014) reveal that job satisfaction, salary, promotion and leadership are important to employees. Employees' expectations of salaries, promotion and development are often not met. Salary differences have also been identified as one of the main reasons causing employees to leave their organisation (Selesho & Naile, 2014). Selesho and Naile (2014) believe that an understanding of the causes and antecedents of turnover is a first step for acting to reduce turnover rates. They say that to retain employees effectively, employers must know what factors motivate their employees to stay in the field and what factors cause them to leave. Compensation was regularly assumed to be the main barrier in ER (Ma et al., 2018). Compensation consists of non-cash assets such as a car, housing subsidy, organisation benefits and employee share scheme (Ma et al., 2018). However, George (2015) points out that the role of compensation does not appear to be a straightforward one.

### **3.2.3 Strategies successful companies follow to motivate and retain employees**

Bhattacharya (2015) identifies workload, fair processes, teamwork, work-life balance, being valued by the organisation, employment security, a caring organisation, adequate work resources, pay and benefits, training, career advancement, recognition of work and involvement in decision making as drivers of retention. Employees might choose to stay with the organisation if the drivers of retention are adopted by employers. Career paths should be written down and communicated to motivate employees (Anderson, 2012) so that they can see how their career will proceed in the next ten years. Aguenza and Som (2012) show the uselessness of having great personnel if they are just as likely to leave. Furthermore, they indicate that organisational culture attracts and retains talented employees. Employees want to feel that they are part of the organisation. Employers can increase employee retention and engagement by using several practical people-focused strategies (Aguenza & Som, 2012). According to George (2015), good relationships with co-workers is

another significant factor in retention. Additionally, Aukhoon (2019) asserts that listening is considered one of the important strategies of ER.

Autonomy includes flexibility in decisions involving workload (Aukhoon, 2019). In simple terms, this means allowing employees to make decisions or be creative on how they would tackle assigned tasks (George, 2015). Talented employees are attracted and motivated by compensation and reward and recognition should be based on good performance so that employees may take pride in their work (Aukhoon, 2019). Moreover, cultures where employees plan and where feedback on performance is given improve loyalty and commitment (Aukhoon, 2019).

### **3.3 EMPLOYEE RETENTION IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**

The telecommunications industry is huge, consisting of companies that make hardware and software and that offer services such as telephone and internet services. Retention plays an important role in the growth of mobile communications and the information society (Siew et al., 2017). The telecommunications industry helps to connect the global village. Information and communication technology (ICT), or information technology (IT), stresses the role of combined communications and the integration of telephone lines and wireless signals. For this reason, other relevant studies within the IT industry were also used in this study.

Organisations are compelled to remain competitive. Unfortunately, there will be no competition without competent employees, and so organisations need to strive for better ways to retain talent. Judeh (2013) asserts that there should be proper HRM policies in place as increasing labour turnover is costly. Kwenin et al. (2013) agree that many organisations recognise that human resources play an important role in gaining a competitive advantage in today's highly competitive world-class business environment.

Belot (2011) maintains that the growth of ICT in South Africa has been determined mostly by the telecommunications industry and identifies the two market changes affecting telecommunications as market saturation and product maturity. Furthermore,



it is suggested that improvements should be made or customers should be offered innovative products and services continually for a business to remain competitive. Replacing lost talent can be more expensive than hiring a new employee (Kwenin et al., 2013). Unfortunately, employee turnover is a worldwide problem and organisations in the telecommunications sectors have not been excluded. This calls for greater efforts to be made to determine how to hold on to talented employees. Recognition programmes could be an important part of an ER plan (Hee & Rhung, 2019; Kwenin et al., 2013). When employees are not motivated, they might think of leaving the organisation.

Therefore, management should offer striking and equitable reward packages that simultaneously attract new employees and keep them in the organisation (Kwenin et al., 2013). Safiullah (2015) agrees that this would encourage ER. Turnover is expensive and hiring does not guarantee the success of the position (Sergio & Rylova, 2018). Pandita and Ray (2018) conclude that talent management practices and EE initiatives lead to improved talent retention. Jain and Swami (2014) reveal that employees prefer to stay longer with the organisation if there are flexible work arrangements. Successful telecommunications companies usually realise the importance of hiring the right people for the right jobs (Safiullah, 2015). According to Benish and Gulzar (2014), organisations may retain employees for longer periods if they constantly learn how to keep employee satisfaction higher.

Anzazi (2018) found that a high rate of telecoms employee's turnover negatively affected organisational performance since most of the top talented employees were leaving. Therefore, it took time before the newly employed recruit could learn the required skills for performing work successfully (Anzazi,2018). Organisations spend more resources on training talented employees (Monica & Reddy, 2020; Younis & Ahsan, 2021). In the telecommunications industry, ER is important for achieving the best results. However, you need to offer good pay (Malik, 2019; Monica & Reddy, 2020). Malik (2019) found that telecom employees also need to be motivated through performance-based rewards, clear communication and need to be listened to. Specifically, top talent in telecoms know more about the systems and will make winning recommendations (Malik, 2019).

### 3.4 DETERMINANTS OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION



**Figure 3.2: Determinants of employee retention (own compilation)**

For this study, the determinants of ER consist of work-life balance, work environment, social support, employee training and development. Kossivi et al. (2016) stated that organisations should attract the best talents and simultaneously retain them for a long period. Das and Baruah (2013) maintain that employees are the assets of any organisation, although most organisations are technology-driven. Employees are still required and valued in organisations as technology is run by people. However, satisfying the employees continuously is another challenge that organisations are facing nowadays (Das & Baruah, 2013). Fang et al., (2021) found that employee satisfaction can improve both profit margin and asset turnover. Moreover, the study suggests that employee satisfaction can be an important intangible asset that contributes to the employees' long term employment service (Fang et al., 2021).

Das and Baruah (2013) divide retention factors into three categories: social, mental and physical. The mental dimension of retention consists of work characteristics. Some employees prefer flexible work tasks where they can use their expertise and see the outcomes of their efforts. Moreover, people are different. They have different demands and expectations from the organisation. The social dimension consists of the interactions that the employees have with other people, both internal and external. The physical dimension consists of conditions of labour relations and pay. The determinants of ER as indicated in figure 3.2 are discussed below.

### **3.4.1 Work-life balance**

Work-life balance policies positively influence employees' psychological attachment to their companies as they notice that the organisation cares for them (Ma et al., 2018). For employees, work-life balance is slowly becoming more fundamental and may affect employees' decision to stay in the organisation (Kossivi et al., 2016). There needs to be a balance between their personal and work lives. According to Sahni (2019), work-life includes wages, working hours, work environment, benefits and services, career prospects and human relations. All these factors are associated with employee satisfaction and motivation. Organisational commitment and individual level of engagement may improve if the quality of work-life improves (Sahni, 2019).

### **3.4.2 Work environment**

Flexibility, a fun workplace and availability of resources are factors contributing to a friendly working environment (Kossivi et al., 2016). Therefore, to create a friendly working environment that motivates employees to stay with their organisations, management needs to offer fair pay, assign meaningful tasks and encourage positive working relationships among employees (Lumley et al., 2011).

### **3.4.3 Social support**

Social support fundamentally relates to the level of satisfactory relationships with colleagues (Kossivi et al., 2016). Moreover, relationships with colleagues appear to be a determining factor of retention. In some instances, colleagues are the number one thing employees love about their jobs (Li, 2020).

### **3.4.4 Employee training and development**

Training and development encourage employees to remain loyal to the organisation and simultaneously create togetherness within the organisation (Cloutier et al., 2015). Formal training and job-related training are available options for all employees to

choose from, which should encourage lifelong learning for employees (Cloutier et al., 2015). Organisations should make the effort to understand their employees and employees should also understand the organisational goals. This should be a win-win situation for both employers and employees. Hassan et al. (2013) believe that career development opportunities and training encourage ER. They argue that lack of training and promotion opportunities are the main reasons why talented employees leave their jobs. Job dissatisfaction might be caused by a lack of opportunities to grow and lead to employees seeking better opportunities elsewhere (Ma et al., 2018). Some employees do not want to stay in the same work position for a long time, as they seek new tasks that will challenge them to acquire new knowledge and skills (Ma et al., 2018). Career development is another strategy for ER (Hee & Rhung, 2019).

Benish and Gulzar (2014) found that training contributes to the organisation at two levels, namely job skills improvement and promotion of employees. Given this, employee development programmes cannot exist without a culture that supports them (Sinha & Sinha, 2012). This implies that managers should be supportive of their subordinates' development programmes. The purpose of career planning is to help people manage the many aspects of their lives (Sinha & Sinha, 2012). Relevant research indicates that suitable training programmes improve employees' satisfaction (Haider et al., 2015). Training is defined as a process in which people acquire skills to help achieve organisational goals (Haider et al., 2015) and which helps employees to do their work in acceptable ways. George (2015) states that development opportunities are characterised by the potential to develop new skills and career prospects. Vasquez (2014) recommends the expansion of training to bridge the gap of training needs.

Deery and Jago (2015) suggest that skills development, the competence of management and both psychological and financial rewards contribute positively to ER. They reiterate that if organisations want to retain their talented employees, they need to invest in training and development. Suitable training and career development programmes should be an essential service offered by organisations (Deery & Jago, 2015). Furthermore, organisations should encourage employees to participate in

these programmes. Development-focused behaviours serve as job resources to improve work engagement and reduce turnover intention (Lee, Idris & Tuckey, 2019).

### **3.5 APPLICATION OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY TO EMPLOYEE RETENTION**

This study utilised SET as a framework. Both employers and employees should bring something valuable to secure the employment relationship as SET entails a series of exchanges. The organisation offers employment, compensation, etc., and employees bring knowledge, skills and abilities and execute required tasks and functions (Harden et al., 2018). According to Li (2020), in any relationship, individuals evaluate the risks and rewards involved. Research highlight that the theory explains social exchange as a process of negotiated exchanges among parties in which both parties involved take responsibility for each other and depend on each other (Almaaitah et al., 2017).

The research found that when employees perceive that rewards are fair, that is, equal to their performance, they are more likely to be committed to the organisation and less likely to leave (Harden et al., 2018). Similarly, the social exchange process outlines that when people perceive that they are receiving fair returns in the exchange process, they tend to be more satisfied and may terminate the relationship when the costs are more than the rewards that they gain from the relationship (Almaaitah et al., 2017). Research indicates that if the organisation is not offering training or allowing employees opportunities to acquire appropriate skills, this might trigger the employees to leave the organisation (Harden et al., 2018).

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

ER is the ability of an organisation to keep its employees. Nowadays, organisations face the challenge of satisfying their employees' needs. Multiple retention initiatives may satisfy employees with different personalities in an organisation. ER in a firm is

specifically related to the relationship between line managers and employees. Employees are the assets that can either make or break an organisation. Retaining them will help the long-term growth of an organisation. However, management needs to re-examine rewards and recognition, job security, training and development, supervisor support culture, work environment and organisational justice. ER is essential to an organisation because an organisation spends more time manufacturing and less time training new employees. Retention improves job satisfaction and customer service.

This chapter addressed the following: definition of ER, map for ER, ER in the telecommunications industry, followed up by the determinants of ER and the application of SET to ER.

The next chapter presents the research design and research methodology used to understand the staff experiences of engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous two chapters the need for this study was emphasised. Specifically, a summary was provided of the literature review on engagement and retention to provide context to the study. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the decisions made in planning the study and the researcher's paradigm. Subsequently, the research approach and research design used are explored. Followed by a description of the research method and a discussion of the criteria applied for ensuring the quality of the research conducted.

#### **4.2 PARADIGM**

The philosophical assumptions consist of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Guba, 1990; Creswell & Poth, 2017). A world view is defined as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p.17). According to Babbie (2010), a paradigm is a frame of reference through which people perceive and understand the world. Ontology refers to the nature of reality (participant codes and themes are used) and there are multiple realities. Epistemology refers to how the researcher learned what she knows (the researcher spent time with the participants). Specifically, the researcher collected the data. Methodology refers to the research process followed.

In this study, the researcher used a constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) i.e. people want to understand the world in which they live and work. In contrast to the positivist paradigm, the researcher is part of the research and interprets the experiences shared by participants (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Research questions were used to understand the staff experiences of engagement and retention in a

Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand a specific social situation, event, role, group or interaction (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the researcher entered the participants' world and, through ongoing interaction, sought their views and meanings.

### **4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH**

There are three approaches to research, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative methodology intends to understand a complex reality and the meaning of actions in a given context. In qualitative research, researchers frequently engage with flexible realities where the subjective understandings of participants may shape the research frame and the whole process of an inquiry (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representivity, but with deepening the understanding of a given problem (Queirós et al., 2017). Qualitative data can be richer in meaning than quantitative data (Babbie, 2010). Open-ended questions and responses are used in qualitative interview questions. Qualitative research takes place in natural settings, where human behaviour and events take place (Maree, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, the researcher interprets data (Smith, 2017), which means that this type of research focuses on the individuals' perspectives. The final written report is flexible.

On the other hand, the quantitative methodology intends to get accurate and reliable measurements that allow a statistical analysis (Queirós et al., 2017). The difference between quantitative and qualitative data in social research is the difference between numerical and non-numerical data (Babbie, 2010). According to Babbie (2010), most qualitative research is concerned with an inductive rather than a deductive approach. However, qualitative research does not allow the use of statistical tools to find relationships that point toward patterns in need of explanation (Babbie, 2010). Theories are examined by testing relationships among variables and quantitative research uses closed questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The final written report



has a set structure consisting of an introduction, literature review, theory, methods, results and discussion findings. The findings can be generalised.

Mixed method research joins elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and the researcher's own personal training and experiences may influence their choice of approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This qualitative research was conducted to fulfil the researcher's curiosity and desire for a better understanding of a particular phenomenon. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, which allow ad hoc and follow-up questions (Smith, 2017). See the elements of qualitative research in table 4.1 below:

#### **Elements of qualitative research applied to current study**

<b>Elements of qualitative research</b>	<b>How elements were used in the study</b>
The study takes place in a natural setting.	The study took place in a telecommunications organisation, specifically in one of the boardrooms.
The study focuses on context.	The focus was on the experiences of line managers and low-level employees only.
The study is fundamentally interpretive.	The main aim of the study was to understand the staff experiences of engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.
The study is emergent and evolving rather than tightly prefigured.	The researcher posed questions to the participants individually. Some answers were almost similar, and others were unique, which made the findings discussed in chapter 5 interesting.
The qualitative method draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study.	Participants were individually interviewed to find out how they personally experienced EE and ER.

	Open-ended questions were asked, which allowed flexibility, but the focus was only on the key concepts (EE and ER) throughout the interview.
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Source: (Marshall & Rossman, 2014, Table 4.1)

#### 4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is about thinking of a problem, writing research questions and collecting and interpreting data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this study details could only be recognised by talking directly to participants, so the researcher went to their place of work and allowed them to tell their stories. The researcher put aside all assumptions and judgements about EE and ER in order to gain insight into the phenomenon through the participants.

Phenomenology permits the study and description of the essences of specific phenomena as these appear in the life-world of participants (Van Manen, 1990). Phenomenological studies focus on lived experiences, meaning that people who have experience can give a good description of it (Maree, 2016). Moustakas (1994, p.13) further states that “from the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived”. Data was collected from participants who had experienced the phenomenon and the essence of the experience for all participants was described. These descriptions entailed what they had experienced and how they experienced it (Maree, 2016).

According to Van Manen (1990), a challenge with phenomenology is that the participants included in the study need to be chosen wisely. They need to have all experienced the phenomenon in question, although bracketing personal experiences may be difficult for the researcher to implement. In this current study, the grounded theory of generating or discovering a theory, narrative research, ethnography and

case study approaches were not followed as the researcher identified better with phenomenology out of all five approaches.

According to Husserl (2012), information and perception do not come from large amounts of data, but arise from a concentrated study of experiences, through the phenomenological method. Phenomenology does not block the existence of the real world but seeks instead to simplify the sense of this world as actually existing. Wernet (2013) explains that hermeneutics is the art of understanding its origin and it deals with the question of the “true meaning” of texts. However, hermeneutics no longer deals only with the topic of textual understanding, but broadens the question of understanding as a basic principle of human action and everyday life operations. Interpretation is no longer seen as the result of a separated view of a scientific interpreter that leads to an unbiased understanding, but as a dialogue, where different perspectives are met. It is important to note that objective hermeneutics interpretations focus fundamentally on what was said and not on what somebody wanted to say (Wernet, 2013).

Kögler (2011) says that in hermeneutics the other's meaning can be identified only if the other is approached by having a conversation. This calls for a one-on-one. He further argues that if the researcher remains outside the intentional understanding of the issues at hand, they cannot find out which acts and meanings of the other they are to explain. Moreover, the researcher needs to understand what the other's actions and expressions involve, but this demands taking a second-person perspective by approaching the other as someone who makes sense of things just as the researcher does. Entering ever more deeply into the other's perspective means that the researcher comes to connect the other's symbolic expressions in a clear manner (Kögler, 2011).

According to Farina (2014), phenomenology is a method and an experience that always renews itself. Furthermore, it involves a change in the sense of the world. This implies that people's experiences differ from one individual to another. Van

Manen (2017) describes phenomenology as the study that deals with human experiences. Kafle (2011) is of the view that it is phenomenology that is likely to penetrate deep into the human experience. Phenomenology claims that a person cannot be considered as an object.

For this study, hermeneutic phenomenology was applied. The method of objective hermeneutics was developed in the 1970s by the German sociologist Ulrich Oevermann (Wernet, 2013). The participants' lived experiences are told from their perspective (Kafle, 2011). The hermeneutic approach is the verbal mediated interpretation of people's beliefs and assumptions (Kögler, 2011). The phenomenological hermeneutic approach confirms how the meaningful background of the interpreter plays an important role in understanding the self-understanding of authors and agents (Kögler, 2011). The real meaning of the other's beliefs, assumptions and practices is shown to develop from an engaged interpretation in which the other's voice and values profile themselves. To fully work as a framework for social science, people need to see how the intentional attribution of the interpreter is justified when trying to explain human agency (Kögler, 2011).

The choice of the hermeneutic method in this study allowed the participants to describe their lived experiences and allows the readers to imagine experiences described. Van Manen (1990) asserts that there is no fixed way to conduct hermeneutic phenomenological research. In this study the researcher did not take anything for granted and was open-minded to questions that arose during the interview. New meanings emerged. Kafle (2011, p.186) is adamant that reduction is impossible in hermeneutic phenomenology and that "hermeneutic phenomenology is focused on subjective experience of individuals and groups".

#### **4.5 RESEARCH METHOD**

Research methods involve data collection, analysis and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data was collected by the researcher through in-depth interviews.

#### **4.5.1 Study setting, population sampling and demographics**

Naturalistic inquiry refers to research that occurs in research participants' natural settings and tries to understand people and phenomena deeply. It involves understanding the ways individuals see, approach and experience the world and make meaning of their experiences (Frey, 2018). Naturalistic inquiry purposefully took place only at the Polokwane office, because this is where the researcher had identified potential participants who could give rich, raw data. The organisation has regional service centres situated in all nine provinces of South Africa and internationally.

Those who are engaged in naturalistic inquiry do not believe in finding an objective truth; instead, they believe in individuals' subjective interpretations of experiences and events. Naturalistic and qualitative inquiry is based on the premise that people are experts of their own experiences (Frey, 2018). The fundamental goal of naturalistic inquiry is to gather, study and present contextualised understandings of people, settings and phenomena (Frey, 2018). These settings are regularly referred to as the field, and naturalistic research is also known as fieldwork.

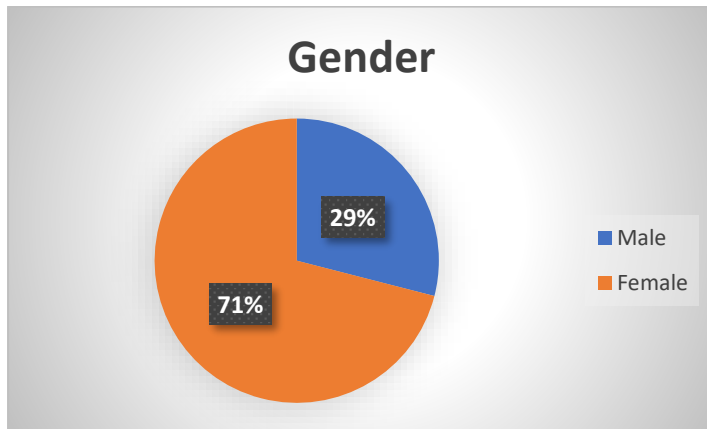
For this study, purposeful sampling was used. Potential participants were chosen from organisation A and the site for the study because they could purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and main phenomenon in the study. Smith and Shinebourne (2012) and Smith (2017) state that interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) studies are conducted on small sample sizes and that there is no right answer to the question of the sample size. IPA aims to study the participants' lived experiences and how individuals make sense of those experiences (Shinebourne, 2012; Smith, 2017). Thematic analysis was used to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. Creswell and Poth (2017) suggest 5 to 25 participants in phenomenology. Only line managers and lower-level employees were included in the study. The senior managers, area managers and the general manager were

purposefully excluded from the study as they have regular engagements concerning the organisation as whole. They are perceived as the employer in this study, not as staff members. On the same vein, the researcher acknowledges that the current findings might be different if they were included.

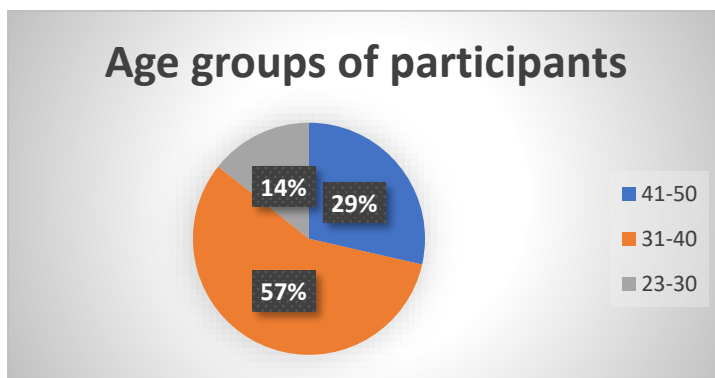
Koh (2018) defines sampling as selecting an example or a sample from a population. It helps the researcher to get a better understanding of the phenomenon in question. A small purposive sample of seven out of 17 employees was taken, because of the expected difficulty of obtaining consent from participants. Initially, the researcher aimed to interview 6 participants, but after sending email invitations requesting in-depth interviews with all 17 potential participants, seven agreed to be interviewed and informed consent letters were signed before the interviews (**Appendix C: Request letter to the participant and Appendix D: Return slip for the participant**). All participants were given a clear explanation about the current study via email. This was followed by a verbal explanation. According to Braun and Clarke (2021); Creswell and Creswell (2018) data saturation is a point whereby there are no new themes emerging from data. It is referenced as thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Moreover, there is no need for more participants when a researcher has reached data saturation (FitzPatrick, 2019).

The sample comprised two males and five females. The majority (71%) of participants were female, and the rest (29%) were male. The participants' gender is indicated in figure 4.1 below. Two participants were in the 41 to 50 years old (29%), four were in the 31 to 40 years old (57%) and only one was in the 23 to 30 years old (14%). The participants' age group is indicated in figure 4.2 below. According to Babbie (2010), age signifies the number of years people have been alive. However, some people describe age as maturity even though that is not always the case. According to Pandita and Ray (2018), retention of younger employees does prove more difficult compared to other demographics. Three participants (43%) were at level two (supervisory level) and four (57%) were at level one (entry level). The participants' level of employment is indicated in figure 4.3 below. All the participants had been in their current jobs for more than 1 year and had been with the organisation for an average of 11 years. Their

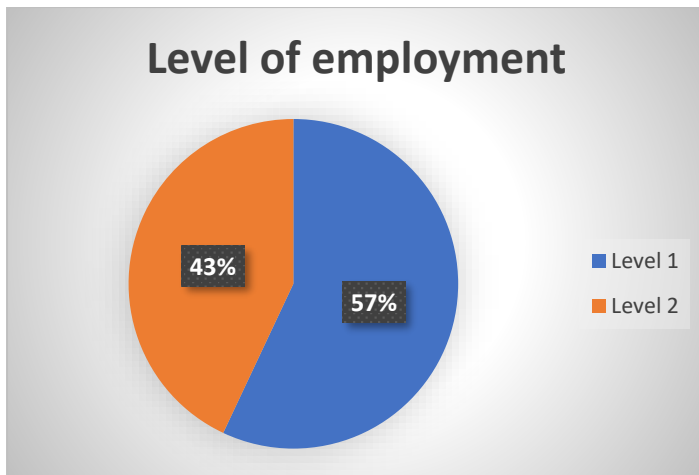
years of working experience ranged from 6 to 19. At the time of the study, participants were all permanently employed in organisation A. The participants' years of working experience are indicated in figure 4.4 below:



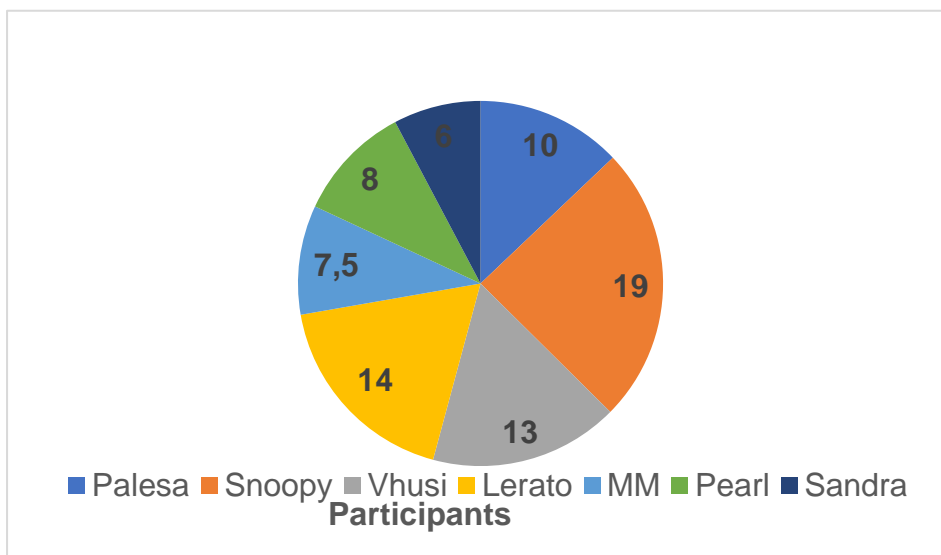
**Figure 4.1: Sample distribution by gender (own compilation)**



**Figure 4.2: Age groups of participants (own compilation)**



**Figure 4.3: Sample distribution by level of employment (own compilation)**



**Figure 4.4: Participants' years of working experience (own compilation)**

Participants were interviewed individually. The sample included individuals who worked in different departments in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. Therefore, the study cannot be generalised. The interviews took place in organisation A's boardroom where participants were assured comfortable surroundings and anonymity. The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully choose participants or sites that will effectively help the researcher understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2014). The researcher chose the



organisation because she was working for them at the time of the study. Admiration for the organisation inspired this study. Curtis et al. (2000, as cited in Creswell, 2014) identify six criteria for sampling, which were met in this study: The sampling strategy was appropriate to the conceptual framework and the research questions addressed by the research. The sample generated rich information and enhanced or highlighted transferability of the results. The sample produced real-life experiences, was reasonable in terms of money and time, and practical issues such as accessibility were considered.

Qualitative analysis requires a smaller sample size than quantitative analysis. Individuals from different departments based at organisation A were studied. The aim was to collect in-depth data through interviews. Patton 2002 (as cited in De Vos et al., 2011) states that there is no absolute consensus for sample size, but there are guidelines. Sample size depends on what the researcher wants to know, credibility and what will be useful, what is at stake and what can be done with the available time and resources. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the target population, sample method and sample size.

### **Summary of target population, sample method and sample size**

<b>Population</b>	<b>Sample</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
17 potential participants	Purposive sampling	7

Source: (own compilation, Table 4.2)

As displayed in table 4.3, each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

## Participants' pseudonyms

Participant	Pseudonym
Participant one	Palesa
Participant two	Snoopy
Participant three	Vhusi
Participant four	Lerato
Participant five	MM
Participant six	Pearl
Participant seven	Sandra

Source: (own compilation, Table 4.3)

The inclusion and exclusion criteria set out in table 4.4 below were used to select participants.

## Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
<p>Participants had to be employees in this telecommunications organisation. At the time of the interview they were at managerial level (level two) or subordinate level (level one). Participation was voluntary.</p>	<p>Senior manager, area managers and the general manager as they are perceived as the employer in this study.</p> <p>All participants who were not able to speak English, as there was no interpreter.</p> <p>All employees who did not work at the telecommunications organisation's regional office.</p> <p>All employees who had less than one year of working experience.</p> <p>All employees who recently moved to the telecommunications organisation's regional office with more than one year of working experience.</p> <p>People without Grade 12.</p>

Source: (own compilation, Table 4.4)

#### 4.5.2 Data production

In-depth interviews were used as the data collection strategy (Smith et al., 2009). These interviews provide rich evidence and enable the researcher to ask follow-up questions. Participants were interviewed individually (one-on-one) and they were informed about the purpose of the study and its confidentiality. To save time, all questions related to the proposed topic were prepared in advance. However, questions were not asked in sequence. The interview was spontaneous so that the participant would be at ease. Questions covered biographical data, EE and ER. Consent was obtained from each participant for the researcher to write notes and simultaneously audio record the one-on-one interviews. As soon as the interview was over, the researcher listened to the recordings and identified gaps. This process made it possible to transcribe the audios. The audios were sent to the transcriber, who agreed and signed the confidentiality form included in **Appendix G**.

To make each participant feel at ease, the interviewer had a set rules of respectful communication at the beginning of the interview. This gave participants the courage to speak freely about the topic. Each participant was asked to engage in active listening without interruption and participants could ask for clarity where there was a need. Lastly, each participant was encouraged to come up with effective solutions to answer the research questions (Ellis & Toney-Butler, 2019). The researcher maintained eye contact throughout the interviews to show interest in the participants. Table 4.5 lists the advantages and disadvantages of in-depth interviews.

#### Advantages and disadvantages of in-depth interviews

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Adjusted to get detailed information</li><li>- Need only a few participants to offer useful and appropriate understandings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Time-consuming</li><li>- Longer verification process to extract compared information</li></ul>

- Can be done in informal environments	- Participants should be chosen cautiously to avoid unfairness - Cannot be generalised
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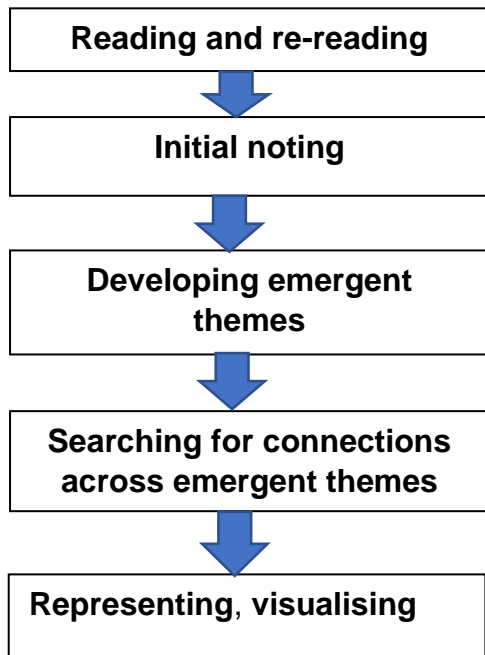
Source: (Queirós et al., 2017, Table 4.5)

**Note.** The interviewer’s main function in the interview was to develop a framework in which participants could express their views verbally. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative interviews focus on gathering more in-depth data from fewer participants. Interviews were conducted according to an interview guide (**Appendix F**) and the researcher discussed a range of themes relevant to the study with the participants. In naturalistic research, the research questions can and regularly do evolve throughout the course of the study (Frey, 2018).

### 4.5.3 Data analysis

IPA was first mentioned in the United Kingdom in the 1990s and was initially chosen as an approach to the psychology of experience in health and medical psychology (Smith, 2017). It has gained popularity ever since. Specifically, IPA is used to examine in detail personal lived experiences. Interpretative processes on both the researcher and the participant are unavoidable. All participants’ perspectives about the phenomenon are considered and they are regarded as experiential experts (Smith, 2017). However, IPA researchers acknowledge the unavoidability of biases, concerns and expectations when conducting research; they reflect on how these shape their research inquiries (Smith, 2017).

For IPA there is no prescribed single ‘method’ for working with data (Smith et al., 2009). IPA researchers are encouraged to be innovative, as there is no clear right or wrong way of conducting this sort of analysis (Smith et al., 2009). See thematic data analysis in figure 4.5 below:



**Figure 4.5: Thematic data analysis adapted from Creswell and Poth (2017); Saldaña (2015); Smith et al. (2009) and Smith and Shinebourne (2012)**

*Step 1: Reading and re-reading*

A written record of what was said was prepared by the transcriber as soon as possible for data analysis. In qualitative studies researchers usually find it suitable and necessary to go back to the original field notes to confirm conclusions or go back to the participants to collect additional data and to confirm it, or to ask feedback from participants consulted in the study (Maree, 2016). The researcher read all the transcriptions several times, listened to the recorded interviews several times and compared them with field notes for quality. Notes were added as well. Sub-themes were prepared manually on a Word document. Data was taken from seven interview transcripts from a single word to a full paragraph. Moving between these parts and wholes is one way of gathering meanings from data (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of what is happening to them (Creswell, 2014; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Smith et al., 2009). For this study, the researcher put aside personal experiences about the phenomena studied (EE and ER) in order to develop a textured multi-layered narrative of possible meanings (Maree, 2016; Smith, 2017).

### *Step 2: Initial noting*

Specific ways by which participants talk, understand and think about the problem at hand are categorised. Steps 1 and 2 were combined and notes on the transcript were added as the researcher start reading, and further comments could be added with subsequent readings. As Smith et al. (2009) explain, there are no rules when commenting and this is where the researcher spends more time. Some interview texts are richer than others and quotations are used to show the multiple ways in which exploratory commenting can be conducted. For this study, the researcher used a different font colour to highlight descriptive comments, linguistic comments and conceptual comments. In reading through the transcript, the researcher came across similarities and differences, repeats, amplifications and contradictions in what the person was saying (Smith et al., 2009).

### *Step 3: Developing emergent themes*

The researcher wrote initial comments about emergent themes. According to Saldaña (2015), a set of themes is a good thing to develop from analysis, but at the beginning cycles, there are other rich encounters to be made with participants' process, emotions and values. Saldaña (2015) explains the difference between codes and themes: A theme could be an outcome of coding and categorisation.

All sub-themes were brought together in a Word document manually to create themes. This is the classifying stage. The part is interpreted in relation to the whole and the whole is interpreted in relation to the part, which is the hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2009). Themes not only reflect the participants' perspectives, but also show the researcher's interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). Participants' personal experiences were described through bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

According to Creswell and Poth (2017), interpretation in quality research means that the researcher draws meaning from the findings of data analysis. The researcher printed the Word documents to look for patterns (similarities, differences and red flags). Then those themes were named, in other words, the researcher narrated the participants' experiences. It is important to note that IPA is an appropriate approach when trying to find out how individuals perceive the particular situation they face and how they make sense of their personal and social world (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Notes were taken during the interviews. The researcher read the interview transcriptions several times and looked for what was interesting about what the participants said. Specifically, in the first stage of the analysis it is important to read and re-read the transcripts (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). New insights (sub-themes) emerged on each reading. The researcher listened to the interview voice recordings repeatedly.

#### *Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes*

Emergent themes were mapped on how they fit together (Smith et al., 2009). Emergent themes that shared the same understanding were put together as the main themes. See table 5.2 in chapter 5. Abstraction is a straightforward process of identifying patterns between emergent themes and developing the main theme (Smith et al., 2009). It contains of putting like with like in order to develop a new name for the cluster (main theme). From the seven participants in this study there were a number of emergent themes on how they understood EE: face-to-face engagement, consultative engagement, open-door policy, communication between the employer and the employees, teamwork, engagement between HR and employees, employees need assurance and clear job responsibilities. These were grouped together under the main theme title: communication.

The researcher also looked for differences instead of similarities (Smith et al., 2009). This process is referred to as polarisation. From the seven participants in this study the emergent themes were *what contribution do you want to make for the organisation; employees tend to wait for the employer to give them something; leaders being self-centred; pension contribution to be determined by age; reporting fraud; leaving the*

*organisation*. These were grouped together under the main theme title: red flags (concerns).

The researcher compiled transcript extracts to make files of emergent themes on a Word document.

#### *Step 5: Representing, visualising*

Themes and sub-themes were finalised on a Word document. Then transcripts, themes and sub-themes were loaded on ATLAS.ti. The proposed EE model was derived from the EE and ER main and emergent themes from the participants' perspectives.

#### **4.5.4 Data management**

Data management is a process to create and organise files for data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this study, data was produced through seven in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher. There was a need to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Smith and Shinebourne (2012) indicate that, if the researcher tries to write down everything that the participant is saying during the interview, they will miss important information and only capture the idea. Hence tape recording is required. Moreover, the interview will not run smoothly and rapport will not be established (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). All participants were individually asked permission for the researcher to record the in-depth interview. A digital voice recorder was used to aid in transcription and for future referral. This also allowed the source data to be saved.

The researcher took notes of some non-verbal cues during the in-depth interviews and reflected on the interviews after they had been conducted. The language used in all the documents is English. The transcriptions were prepared by the transcriber on a Word document. All printed transcribed data is kept in a safe locker. All computer-



based records are stored on a laptop that is password protected. All seven audio recordings and computer-based documents will be deleted after five years. Hard copies of participants' answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet (stand number five (5), Tshukudu and Ndou Street, Southern Gateway, Polokwane, 0700) for future research or academic purposes; future use of the stored data will be subject to further research ethics review and approval if applicable. Information will be destroyed if necessary (e.g. hard copies will be shredded, and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software program).

#### **4.5.5 Quality of research**

Chowdhury (2015) and Lincoln and Guba (1986) explain that credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability are strategies that may be used to ensure quality of qualitative research.

##### *Credibility*

Credibility is all about ensuring that the findings of the research are believable (Visagie, 2012). To be credible, the researcher's reconstruction of the views should match participants' views (De Vos et al., 2011). The whole truth needs to be told. All participants were assured of confidentiality and were made to feel at ease. Individual in-depth interviews with participants were conducted in the organisation's boardroom, according to the interview schedule, to show professionalism and respect. The researcher took notes during the interview and all participants were asked to confirm their responses during the interview where necessary. This was done to prevent misunderstandings between the researcher and the participants. According to Smit (2019), a credible study is one where the researchers have accurately and richly described the phenomenon in question. Instead of ensuring that

the researcher has measured what they set out to measure, they make sure that they have accurately represented the data (Smit, 2019).

The researcher may invite research participants to comment on research findings and participants may agree or disagree with the conclusions reached by the researcher by providing alternative perspectives (Chowdhury, 2015). Member checking was used to check the accuracy of the raw data. For this study, the transcribed text was member checked by asking the interviewees to read through the text individually to determine whether it accurately and adequately captured their voice. Participants confirmed that their voices were captured, and some made a few corrections where they felt this was necessary.

### *Dependability*

The study has been reported thoroughly, allowing future researchers to repeat work done previously and get the same results (Shenton, 2004). Smit (2019) states that findings are reproducible if they can be replicated exactly when using the same context and procedures.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability refers to the assessment of the characteristics of data rather than the researcher (Visagie, 2012). The results of the research must be confirmed by another. Confirmability is about ensuring the accuracy of data and the results. Notes were taken during the interviews and were rechecked. Audit trails allow any observer to look back at the course of the study step by step to review decisions made and processes described (Shenton, 2004). Diagrams have also been used in the study. According to Smit (2019), confirmability reflects the need to ensure that interpretations and findings match the data. All claims have to be supported by data. Participants were given their

transcripts individually. Some confirmed their statements with minor changes, and some confirmed without making any changes.

### *Transferability*

In qualitative research, it is not relevant to generalise the findings. Individual experiences are shared or described in a unique way (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The researcher in this study focused on a limited number of participants. Therefore, results will not be generalised. Transferability reflects the need to be aware of and to describe the scope of the qualitative study so that its applicability to different contexts (broad or narrow) can be easily determined (Smit, 2019). The possibility of transferring the findings of a study from a specific situation to another situation is referred to as transferability (De Vos et al., 2011).

### *Authenticity*

The researcher showed the following characteristics: understanding of the issues being studied, ability to help people to appreciate other opinions, active and fair conduct, empowering others through education, honesty and fairness (Maree, 2016). To maintain fairness, the researcher received consent from participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Consent was negotiated throughout the study, not only before the interviews. This process ensured consistency of the study.

## **4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Researchers are overseen by a set of ethical restrictions that reflect principles aimed at helping and not harming the participants (Babbie, 2010). The supervisor submitted the research proposal, which was approved by the College of Economic and Management Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The researcher

found key personnel to help in organisation A. Permission to conduct study within the organisation was granted. The Polokwane based telecommunications organisation was chosen as the suitable site of the study.

The following precautions were adopted to protect the participants' rights: the research aims were expressed verbally and in writing so that they were clearly understood by the participants (including a description of how data would be used), written consent to proceed with the study was received from the participants, the participants were notified of all data collection devices and activities, verbatim transcriptions and written interpretations and reports were made accessible to the participants and the participants' rights, interests and wishes have been considered first when choices were made regarding reporting the data (Creswell, 2014). Participants were told that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study. The researcher worked for organisation A at the time of the study and already knew about cultural, religious, gender and other differences that needed to be respected.

The researcher booked a boardroom within organisation A for the in-depth interviews as disruptions were anticipated. At the beginning of the in-depth interview, the researcher set rules of communication whereby personal impressions about both researcher and participant were set aside. Participants were encouraged to answer questions freely. Professionalism was maintained at all times. The interview schedule helped to make the interview comfortable for both the researcher and the participant. Eye contact was maintained to build trust with the participants. The main purpose of the study was to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation and how data would be used. Sensitive information about participants has not been disclosed. Participants were assured anonymity and there were no rewards for participation. Questions were only asked about EE and ER. Different participants' perspectives were reported. Conflicting findings were reported. Pseudonyms were developed to hide the profiles of the participants. Thematic analysis was used to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. It is a qualitative approach used to determine common things that arose

from all participants' responses. The following main themes that emerged from the proposed EE model in this study were: communication, motivation, relationship, interest, health and welfare, development, and monetary value. See discussion of the main themes on section 5.4. Moreover, thematic analysis had been used widely by researchers from different fields (Finkelstein et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2021).

All participants' perspectives about the phenomenon were captured from their own understandings. The findings of the study will be presented at UNISA students' conferences. An EE model has been developed for companies operating in the telecommunications industry to retain their employees, engaging them to alleviate labour turnover. This implies that organisation A and its employees will benefit from the study. It is in the common interest of both employees and employers to engage effectively in order to improve retention. The inputs and findings may be used internationally.

The participants' answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the academic supervisor, transcriber and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Moreover, electronic information is stored on a password-protected computer.

#### **4.7 CONCLUSION**

The research methodology followed to carry out the current research was described. A qualitative approach was followed in this study with an IPA research design. The research methodology was described and ATLAS.ti was used to analyse the data through thematic analysis. The researcher described the criteria applied for ensuring the quality of the research conducted. Ethical principles adhered to were highlighted.

In chapter 5, the research findings are interpreted and highlighted.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis and discussion of the research findings. As mentioned earlier, the main aim of the study was to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. Bakker (2017) maintains that modern organisations that want to remain competitive need engaged employees. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted to understand the phenomenon (EE and ER) to answer the following research questions:

*What are the staff experiences on engagement in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*

*What are the staff experiences on retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*

This chapter contains a description of the participants' perspectives about EE and ER. The interpretation, reporting style, referencing of participants on ATLAS.ti and context of the interviews are discussed. In this study, the participants' verbatim quotations were used. It is important to note that all the main themes in this chapter are discussed with evidence from literature. According to Bui (2009), themes should be interrelated to the research questions. The findings are presented under the research questions. The researcher's desires and expectations were left out of the analysis and the reporting process. The proposed EE model is presented to help companies in the telecommunications industry.

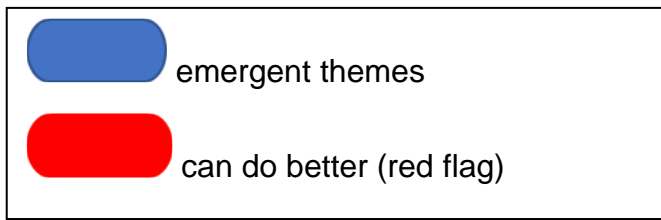
## 5.2 INTERPRETATION AND REPORTING STYLE

For this study, IPA could attend to the small parts of this experience, those moments of responsiveness such as how employees become aware of engagement and retention in organisation A (Smith, 2017) and what it is like to experience both phenomena. However, IPA researchers are more likely to focus on how the whole experience is meaningful in the context of life as it has been, is being and might be lived. Each participant shared his or her own experiences. Moreover, IPA attends to all aspects of this lived experience, from the individual's wishes, desires, feelings, motivations and belief systems through to how these show in action (Smith, 2017). In this chapter the first-person narrative is used to present the findings (Smith, et al., 2009). All identifying information was removed to protect the identity of the participants.

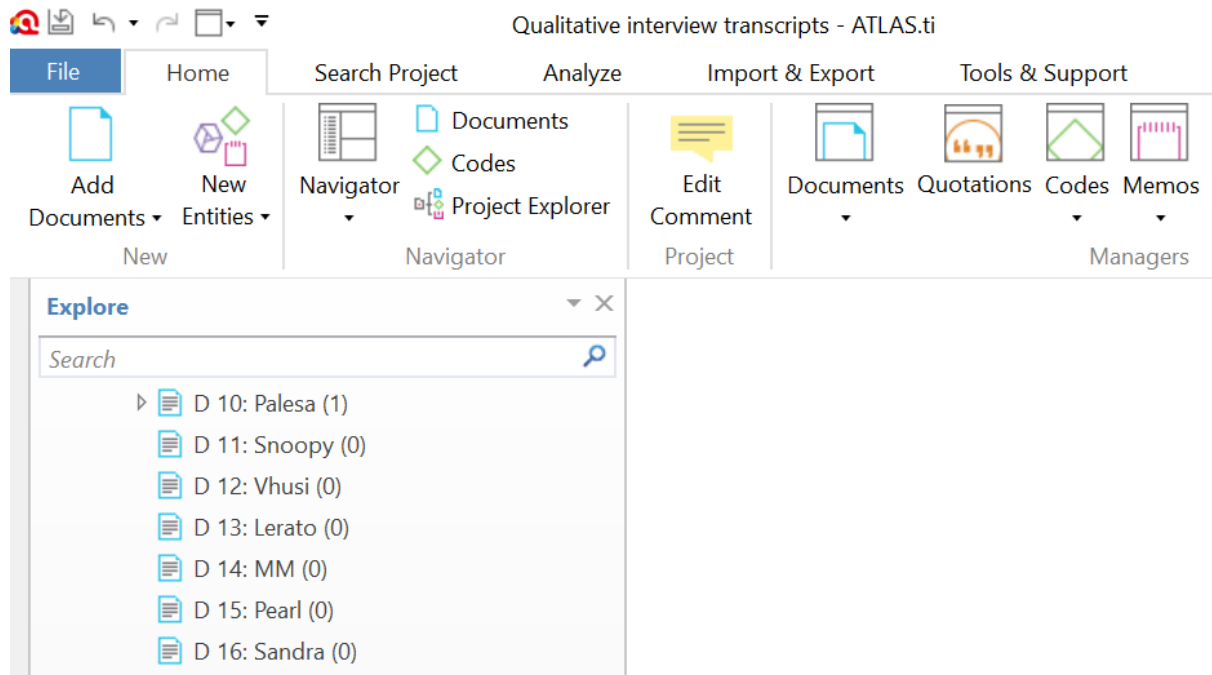
“One way that IPA thinks about this part/whole dynamic is as a set of relationships which can be used to work interpretively with the data:

The part	The whole
The single word	The sentence in which the word is embedded
The single extract	The complete text
The particular text	The complete oeuvre
The interview	The research project
The single episode	The complete life (Smith et al., 2009, p.28)”

Throughout the chapter the researcher repeatedly applies the parts and wholes discussed earlier to interpret participants' understanding of EE and ER. The findings of the research are presented, focusing on the main and emergent themes. See figure 5.1; similar emergent themes are written in blue font and all the red flags (concerns) from the interview transcripts are written in red font.



**Figure 5.1: Colour font description** (own compilation)



**Figure 5.2: Referencing of participants on ATLAS.ti** (own compilation)

**Note.** In the above example, D 10 is the document number, Palesa is the participant’s pseudonym, and then ATLAS.ti created (1) or (0) automatically. This is a list of transcriptions uploaded on ATLAS.ti. For the sake of simplicity, I used the following referencing system on a Word document: Palesa:1

- Palesa indicates the transcribed interview, and
- 1 indicates the quotation number in the transcribed interview.

The verbatim quotes used to represent the findings are in inverted commas and indented. Shorter verbatim quotes are in inverted commas.



### 5.3 CONTEXT OF THE INTERVIEWS

The context of the interviews is shown in table 5.1 using the same order of the interviews from the first to the seventh participant. There were no interruptions during all seven interviews and all seven participants showed interest in this study. During the one-on-one interviews, participants were willing to share their experiences of EE and ER. However, one participant seemed shy during the interview. Most were relaxed and motivated to participate in the study as the researcher encouraged them to come up with solutions to the problem at hand. Some participants used their fingers to count points; some rolled their eyes when they were answering research questions. During the interviews, questions were asked in order to gain insights from the participants' perspectives and to get clarity.

#### Context of the interviews

Participant	Interview context
<p><b>Palesa</b></p>	<p>Some years ago, Palesa and I used to work in the same department. This could be the reason why she was relaxed whereas I was anxious as this was the first interview. As we proceeded with the interview, her calmness helped me to relax and stay focused as well. Palesa was passionate about EE and encouraged organisations to adopt an “open door policy”. She expressed herself as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“There should be an open-door policy, meaning that from top to bottom there should be that level of communication wherein there is a door ... open door policy (Palesa:2). I can go to the CEO office and interact with them. There should be transparency, meaning that that whatever that is happening in the organisation, is transparent for everybody to see, to understand.</p> <p>Palesa also referred to her notes when answering the research questions, in order to ensure that she did not miss any point she</p>

	intended to share. Moreover, she used her fingers to count as she was sharing her experiences.
<b>Snoopy</b>	<p>Snoopy used her hands to express herself and rolled her eyes when answering research questions. This could be the participant's way of remembering points. Some years ago, Snoopy and I used to work in the same department. This could be the reason why Snoopy felt free to share her experiences. Snoopy was passionate about communication, customer service, maintaining relationships and confidentiality. She expressed herself as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“So, for us to be <b>accurate in our daily task</b> every day, it's very important” (Snoopy:2). “Because <b>customer service is very important. For as long as our customer service are not on point, we cannot ... we cannot contribute</b> to that (Snoopy:3). So, when we ... because we are human beings we do make mistakes, but when that's why for me ne, HR in overall ne, it's a very big task, confidentiality. <b>That's the first thing when I see HR, confidentiality</b>” (Snoopy:4).</p>
<b>Vhusi</b>	Vhusi used his hands to express himself. The interview was comfortable as Vhusi shared his experiences openly. He referred to EE as one common vision for both employers and employees and felt that lower level staff needed to communicate with their superiors as well. Vhusi rated commission and housing allowance as the most important strategies for employee retention.
<b>Lerato</b>	Lerato used her hands to express herself and rolled her eyes when answering research questions. Some years ago, Lerato and I used to work in the same department. This could be the reason why she was not reluctant to share her experiences. Lerato referred to her notes so that she did not leave out anything that she intended to share during the interview. Moreover, she was passionate about “transparency, good leaders who share valuable information with their subordinates” and she was worried about the “demoralisation of staff”. She said that

	staff engagement might resolve many problems within the organisation.
<b>MM</b>	This interview had to be rescheduled as the participant had other work commitments. MM used his hands to express himself. The interview flowed throughout. Some years ago, MM and I used to work in the same department. This could be the reason why the interview flowed. MM referred to EE as change management. He indicated that all changes happening within the organisation should be communicated to all staff through active engagement and not communicated to staff through emails only. MM seemed to have a financial management background, as he mentioned the following as good employee retention strategies: age to be considered on pension fund contribution, housing allowance, organisations to negotiate good deals for their employees, organisation to promote internally and there should be accountability.
<b>Pearl</b>	Pearl seemed shy during the interview. She was passionate about commitment and wanted to add value to the organisation by being a team player.
<b>Sandra</b>	This interview had to be rescheduled twice as the participant had other work commitments. Sandra encouraged management to share ideas with lower level employees.  Sandra was not aligned with retention but when asked to elaborate further on her preferred benefits, she stated that a high salary would be her deal breaker. She expressed herself as follows:  "I'm not even looking to stay in the organisation anymore. I'm looking to get out of the organisation, so I'm not aligned with that question at all" (Sandra:4).

Source: (own compilation, Table 5.1)

**Note.** When listening to the interview voice recordings and looking back on the field notes and the interview transcripts, I realised that each participant had his

or her own experiences about EE and ER. However, there were some similarities, differences (uniqueness) and red flags. See table 5.2 below:

### Main themes and emergent themes

EE in organisation A	
Main themes	Verbatim extracts from interviews
Communication	<p>“So, basically that would cover how the organisation filters information through to their employees. There should be a <b>consultative engagement</b> with employees for decisions that involve employees, meaning that whatever decision that involves the employees, should be discussed with the employees and the organisation before there can be any decisions that would be made” (Palesa:1). “There should be an <b>open-door policy</b>, meaning that from top to bottom there should be that level of communication where in there is an open-door policy” (Palesa:2). “I can go to the CEO office and interact with them. There should be <b>transparency</b>” (Palesa:3).</p> <p>“So it ... for me to be ... to see that our engagement with any person is efficient it’s <b>openness</b>” (Snoopy:1).</p> <p>“My understanding about the engagement, the core thing is about <b>communication</b>” (Vhusi:1). “Meaning communication to the ... <b>between the employer and the employees</b>. If I can break it down in terms of the employer and employees ne, <b>one of the most important thing is for the management or Executive ne, to communicate with the lower level staff so that the organisation can have the one common vision and understanding</b>. So, it is a matter of <b>Executive ne, to cascade the information to the lower level so the ...</b></p>

	<p>so we understand. Just on a light note, engagement as well it can be <a href="#">engagement on working together</a>, to <a href="#">achieve one common thing</a>, it can be we engage this staff to participate on what you could it can be the foundation where we go out and donate ... like ... we call it bring it back to the community of our Northern Region” (Vhusi:2). It is also an engagement because we need to organise lot of things and we need to have the same understanding. <a href="#">It can be also an engagement between the HR and the staff</a>, as well” (Vhusi:3).</p> <p>“Supervised, almost like every day or whenever it's about an <a href="#">employee knowing their responsibilities and doing their responsibilities according to the job requirements, obviously performing responsibilities with enthusiasm, with commitment and basically putting the organisation's goals or the organisation's interest above their own</a>” (Lerato:1). “The <a href="#">staff can come up with ideas</a> and see that this is because they are the people on the ground level” (Lerato:2). “They're the people who are communicating with everyone ... every day of our lives. We go ... you go home, you interact with the family, the family they'll tell you about data. What ... what ... being child ... what. We get to experience that, you know and I would say that every day we are the living brand of our organisation, where the ambassadors of the organisation, so is important to engage the staff and say okay this is what's happening in them. How about we implement ABCD, then see if it will work. I think that's the only problem that the management have. Not only that, it's just one of the problems that management maybe are failing to ... to do as management, so <a href="#">communication is key, again trust again, honesty, transparency</a> very, very important so that everybody can be on the same level” (Lerato:3).</p>
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	<p>“I think the most important one that I want talk about, which I think is being ignored, is the whole process is <b>change management</b>” (MM:1). “Management should not assume that everybody's on the same level of understanding. <b>Organisation should invest in face to face engagement</b> avoid the email notifications” (MM:2). “<b>Staff really need that assurance.</b> Management to inform staff about little changes” (MM:3).</p> <p>“So and I think that is where <b>communication through management staff is important</b>, yeah” (Pearl:1).</p> <p>“I believe employee engagement would be <b>management of the organisation, engaging with the employees</b>” (Sandra:1).</p>
Motivation	<p>“Moreover, it is the level of <b>enthusiasm, dedication, motivation, emotional commitment and passion</b> the employee has towards his or her job. Basically, here it talks about <b>staff being motivated</b> without being ... being pushed or without being” (Lerato:4).</p> <p>“To me, I think employee engagement is the <b>commitment employees have in the organisation</b>” (Pearl:2).</p> <p>“To find out from the <b>employees whether they have any ideas to better implement</b> the ideas of the ... of management” (Sandra:2).</p>
Relationship	<p>“Okay my definition of employee engagement would mean, a <b>relationship between an organisation and its employees</b>” (Palesa:4).</p> <p>“Sometimes it will put you were to the personal level that no, I've got a problem, <b>I've got kids, my daughter or my son is not feeling well</b>, you know, I'll be late, something like that. Or this, been admitted he's got</p>

	<p>problem you know, then you need to communicate to your superior, so they can understand why maybe because once you are affected at home, probably be, there is high changes of you may perform low, because you are not hundred percent” (Vhusi:4)</p> <p>“Employee engagement according to my understanding, is the effect of the relationship between the organisation and its employees” (Lerato:5).</p> <p>“Okay, the way I understand employee engagement, it's got ... it's got lots of faces in it and I think the most important one that I want to talk about, which I think is being ignored, the ... the whole process is change management, the way I see it is that though communication is not enough also on this ... on the changes which are happening, which makes engagement of staff to ... not to be like satisfactorily engaged” (MM:5).</p> <p>“So, I think what the organisation is doing currently is ignoring the change management part, which basically creates a lot of fear and panic among staff due to the fact that there were not really in the ... they were not really the ... the changes that are happening when it communicated sufficiently” (MM:6).</p>
<b>ER employees in organisation A</b>	
<b>Main themes</b>	<b>Verbatim extracts from interviews</b>
Interest	<p>“The contribution pertaining to the retentions in the organisation, if I were the business owner, I will ensure that my employees feel valued, you need to ensure that there is a trust relationship between the employer and the employees by doing that you'd be listening to their ideas, valuing their opinions (Palesa:5). I think most of all, the core basic would be hiring the right people in the right positions. I think that would be the basic or the fundamental basic of ... of all covering retentions” (Palesa:6).</p>

	<p>“So, for us to be <b>accurate in our daily task</b> every day, it’s very important” (Snoopy:2). “Because <b>customer service is very important. For as long as our customer service are not on point, we cannot ... we cannot contribute</b> to that” (Snoopy:3). “So, when we ... because we are human beings we do make mistakes, but when that’s why for me ne, HR in overall ne, it’s a very big task, confidentiality. <b>That’s the first thing when I see HR, confidentiality</b>” (Snoopy:4).</p> <p>“<b>Transparency and honesty</b>” (Lerato:6). “Transparency is very vital in the organisation and honesty. And then, <b>leaders also who trust their employees</b>, very important as well because the minute you trust your employee, you’ll be able to assign maybe like tasks to them because you know that you can trust them” (Lerato:7).</p> <p>“I want to <b>add value</b> by working to the best of my ability” (Pearl:3).</p>
Health and welfare	<p>“As part of my retentions, I would offer them benefits, more over including <b>health benefits</b>, because in the lifestyle that we living at, there is a lot of sicknesses, so you need to insure that your employees are in the right space to be able to make contributions to the organisation, they are in a healthy position” (Palesa:7). “And at the same time, most importantly, <b>creating a balance from work to home</b>” (Palesa:8).</p> <p>“The organisation has to make sure that they develop the staff within <b>flexibility</b>” (Lerato:8). “In each organisation, it is very vital <b>cultural diversity</b>, accepting each and every one of us according to whatever preferences ... cultural preferences” (Lerato:9).</p>



	<p>“Me ensuring that whatever is put before me to deliver, I deliver to the best of my ability and <b>be supportive to the team</b> in ensuring that we make the goals of the organisation a success” (Pearl:4).</p>
Development	<p>“I would be creating a great working environment for the employees and as part of retentions, I would have a system wherein there is <b>job rotation</b>” (Palesa:9). “Job rotation, meaning that if there’s opportunities in the organisation, you would be able to take from the pool of the organisation, meaning that you’d be able to uplift your employees, rather than going outside of the organisation to bring people in, you would work with the existing employees that you have in terms of uplifting them, you offer them <b>mentorship, career development</b>” (Palesa:10)</p> <p>“A <b>classroom training</b> or a morning training, once in three months. So, <b>we would like to be more involved in travelling to the certain stores, so we can go check up on these things and where there is mistakes, we can rectify it immediately</b>” (Snoopy:5).</p> <p>“First of all, I’ll talk about <b>career development</b>” (Lerato:10).  “The organisation has to make sure that they develop the staff within <b>flexibility</b>” (Lerato:11).</p> <p>“Basically retain employees knowing that when I work for this organisation, I get treated, especially in the bank, in the everything, a lot of other places in the car buying and all the other places. So ... so basically that is what should be done also. <b>But important thing again another thing will be to promote internally because what is happening is that the ... the ... the strategy at the top currently says, we should promote internally</b>” (MM:7). “That is what is being done in all other ... all other places. But then we don’t see that strategy being carried down at the regional level because yeah, <b>the CEO is saying the organisation</b></p>

	<p>should promote internally, but I don't see that happening we see, we don't see that, we just see people are coming from outside, and not that it's wrong, but it's good for diversity" (MM:8). "But on the organisation said we should promote internally; it should be consistent. It should be, that shouldn't be that others have got exceptions it should be consistent and then ... and there should be accountability in case where there's non-compliance because yeah" (MM:9).</p>
<p>Monetary value</p>	<p>"Like in a situation whereby commission, with trade commission as a retention, because we are benefiting out of that, benefiting in terms of money" (Vhusi:5). "Yes, it's good but when there is no commission then there is no performance, you see. So, it goes back even on the engagement as well because that retention is a one of the most important thing in the organisation. Because if it's a good retention, staff are happy, the moral are happy. Bonuses are one of the retention in you now, because it's a bonus, you see. It's money that's why all in all it drives back to money" (Vhusi:6). "So, and also, retention in terms of security. Security, I mean house allowance, you understand, because we need, we all need security, we all need shelter" (Vhusi:7). "So, so once there's maybe sort of house allowance, it makes us to feel comfortable, to feel at home, to feel motivated to go back to work" (Vhusi:8). "And they must reduce data man. Reducing data. So people ... the users can afford" (Vhusi:9).</p> <p>"So, trust is important and good communication obviously communication amongst the employees and leaders or management and then recognition, achievements" (Lerato:12).</p>

	<p>“They should understand their employees in order to retain them because now at this rate, the package are good but then if somebody comes and then they give you liquidity, they give you cash in the hand, they give you a <a href="#">good net income</a>, because that is what you want” (MM:10).</p> <p>“... it is important but it's not really a big priority, so to retain, they should start there and they should start there, <a href="#">give people liquidity so they can resolve their short term debt commitments or you get what I'm saying? So ... so ... so that is ... that is one thing they should do. The other thing is that you need this kind of flexibility.</a> Also, same thing with this pension I mean it's things like you are where you can use your pension as a ... to fund your bond. So, basically they should go back to that thing and rather have more controls on it. That's another thing again to retain because things of <a href="#">housing allowance</a> that I see, but also many companies don't really do that nowadays, which ... which is fair enough” (MM:11). “But they should allow that <a href="#">flexibility</a> of saying, should you want to take your bond now because you are young ... your pension basically because you are young and put it in your bond, let them allow you that so that you can avoid paying all these high interests” (MM:12). “It speaks to the same issue of liquidity again with pensions, so that it's [Inaudible 00:14:27] let it be <a href="#">flexible</a> too, in terms of allowing to” (MM:13). “So, so basically, they need that. <a href="#">And also, that retention again, there are also certain things that they can do again regarding the special deals for the employees. I mean there used to be deals where the organisation will speak to sort of, multi choice and say the employees of this organisations get a discounted rate. Those kinds of things. Issues where maybe they speak to Nedbank and say, if you open a, account with Nedbank, you're going to get free this, because you're M</a></p>
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	<p>... can I say name of the organisation? Because you're an ... employee, then you can get this and that benefit a lot of companies. Issues that they can have with the car dealers with McCarthy and, yeah, McCarthy Barloworld. They can have ... lot of organisations have got that from my experience in the organisation that you come from where you say. If you buy with them, they got a special sales person who is a key account manager for that and when you buy with them you get ... you get that attention and don't go to anyone into the floor and you get a discount. It's ... its ... its sure case. I mean the same I thing they try to do with the insurance. I think they did it with AON. I don't know what happened if it was still in there, but it's the same thought it was coming right then they were saying that they should've taken it not only to insurance to all other ... they should've taken that kind of deals to all other faces where employees is involved whether it's car buying. I was banking services, all the kind of whether it's television, I mean whether it's that television be it Netflix, Showmax, those kinds of things. I think that with the power that they've got with the number of employees that they've got; they can actually negotiate very good deals. They've shown it with ... I mean, the thing that is good is with the insurance of for ... for ... for funerals, where staff are paying very little because of the power which come through their pay ... the payroll and then they get the benefits" (MM:14).</p> <p>"I think a higher pay" (Sandra:3).</p>
Red flags (concerns) from both EE and ER	<p>"Now to engage with management or with my supervisor or any other person in this thing. We need to have a very communication where it's an approachable. And there is at the time, but there come times that are very difficult for us to communicate because from upwards downwards there is no communication" (Snoopy:6).</p>

“No. It’s very difficult sometimes because on our side as workers or staff, **we tend to wait for a employer to give us something**, so then this is where we can say you know this is a retention” (Vhusi:10). “And we can also help the organisation as well you know, like reporting fraud. **You are reporting fraud to the employer**, beside us only benefiting. Because if you report such things it also helps the organisation as well” (Vhusi:11).

“**Leaders, we can develop the skills of others because if you have leaders that actually don't care about others then you're going to get people who are self-centred always, it's all about them that they want their light to shine upon them**” (Lerato:13). “And then, you know because honestly **this staff is ... is ... it's demoralised ... demoralised in ... in many, many aspects**. I think, it's important for the organisation. **Staff engagement, it is important**, and we find that in our organisation ... in many organisations that engagement is not even priory, it's not even like staff member ... management just come up with it, with whatever then policies or whatever then they just say okay fine” (Lerato:14) .

“The organisation to retain staff. I think firstly in this organisation, or maybe actually in this industry, **the average age of employees**, it's, it's less than 50 so long is less than 40 is the ... its very young people working in this industry” (MM:15). “So, firstly from the start, the way the organisation in my opinion is structured their pension benefits it's ... it's ... it's because they take almost 20% of ... of the, of a basic into pensions. So, basically for me that is not fair because the standards ... or I mean even from government or any other party status, they take 7% or 7.5 maxim as pension. So, that's what the start is

	<p>cause now you better and that ... that pension of mine for my basic, you put it in a pension that time. I'm only less than 30, I can get that thing after 35 years. When I'm 65, then that thing grows at less than inflation" (MM:16)</p> <p>"... there's history of retrenchment and which ... which comes with the ... with these changes and whenever there are changes that are come. People first go into panic mode because of the historical experiences" (MM:17).</p> <p>"I'm not even looking to stay in the organisation anymore. I'm looking to get out of the organisation, so I'm not aligned with that question at all" (Sandra:4).</p>
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Source: (own compilation, Table 5.2)

**Note.** From the interview transcripts, emergent themes were grouped together to develop the main themes. The following main themes emerged on EE: communication, motivation and relationship. The following themes emerged on ER: interest, health and welfare, development and monetary value. There were red flags (concerns) from both EE and ER.

## 5.4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 5.4.1 Communication

Research has found that trust reinforces the relationship between employer communication effectiveness and employees' performance results (Newman et al., 2020). Some participants were worried about communication in organisation A. Similar findings in other research suggest that transparent communication is positively associated with employee organisational trust, which influences employee openness to change positively (Yue et al., 2019). The majority of participants perceived EE as being transparent. This implies that there is no room for false promises, meaning that

both employers and employees should deliver on their promises and hold each other accountable. According to Landells and Albrecht (2019), if employees think that their work environment is characterised by backstabbing, gossip and misuse of power, they withdraw from work activities.

Similarly, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) and Andrew and Sofian (2012) found that employees who believe that their opinions and suggestions are listened to and valued are more engaged and contribute to the organisation's productivity. Moreover, Campus (2015) encourages managers to communicate business plans and performance requirements, and seek out ideas from employees on how to grow the organisation. A chance for employees to participate in management decisions is a good opportunity to build teamwork with managers and colleagues (Abraham, 2012). Kang and Sung (2017) found that employee or internal communication management is associated with EE and that EE enhances supportive employee communication behaviours and reduces turnover intention. Li (2020) found that a major part of SET in the workplace concentrates on the importance of employees voicing their thoughts and managers are also highly respected when they actively listen to their employees. The following comments serve as evidence:

“So, basically that would cover how the organisation filters information through to their employees. There should be a **consultative engagement** with employees for decisions that involve employees, meaning that whatever decision that involves the employees, should be discussed with the employees and the organisation before there can be any decisions that would be made” (Palesa:1). “There should be an **open-door policy**, meaning that from top to bottom there should be that level of communication where in there is an open-door policy” (Palesa:2). “I can go to the CEO office and interact with them. There should be **transparency**” (Palesa:3).

Palesa believed that employees should also be involved in decision making as they integrate with customers on a daily basis. She encouraged an open-door policy to remove the bottlenecks. Sometimes queries were reported to line managers, but those queries were not all declared to the executives. Some were hidden under the carpet. According to Palesa, employees should be free to communicate with anyone within

the organisation, irrespective of their level. This is in line with Theuri (2017), who recommends that employees be encouraged to freely and voluntarily be involved in making changes in their own departments. Furthermore, they should be encouraged to brainstorm innovative ideas on how to improve the organisation.

Snoopy valued integrity (Snoopy:1). She was disappointed when people were dishonest.

Duthler and Dhanesh (2018) also found out that communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) together with employee perceptions of CSR strongly predicted EE. Schroeder and Modaff (2018) found that social exchanges occur between the employer and the employees and the ways in which employees communicate their engagement is a direct response to the exchanges occurring between the two parties. Communication bosses are advised to develop internal communication practices that listen to the employees and invite them to participate (Kang & Sung, 2017). The following comments serve as evidence:

“My understanding about the engagement, the core thing is about **communication**” (Vhusi:1). “Meaning communication to the ... **between the employer and the employees**. If I can break it down in terms of the employer and employees ne, **one of the most important thing is for the management or Executive ne, to communicate with the lower level staff so that the organisation can have the one common vision and understanding**. So, it is a matter of **Executive ne, to cascade the information to the lower level so the ... so we understand**. Just on a light note, engagement as well it can be **engagement on working together, to achieve one common thing**, it can be we engage this staff to participate on what you could it can be the foundation where we go out and donate ... like ... we call it bring it back to the community of our Northern Region” (Vhusi:2). “It is also an engagement because we need to organise lot of things and we need to have the same understanding. **It can be also an engagement between the HR and the staff**” (Vhusi:3).

Vhusi shared the same sentiments as Palesa, Lerato and MM, as they all believed information should be filtered down to the junior employees. Employees interact with customers on a daily basis and should therefore have more knowledge about their



organisation. Snoopy, Pearl and Sandra echoed the same sentiments to some extent. Schaufeli (2013) states that engagement is regarded as participation, desire, enthusiasm, absorption, focused effort, commitment and energy. It is the level of commitment and participation an employee has towards their organisation and its principles (Krishnan, 2012; Campus, 2015). The following comments serve as evidence:

“Supervised, almost like every day or whenever it's about an [employee knowing their responsibilities and doing their responsibilities according to the job requirements, obviously performing responsibilities with enthusiasm, with commitment and basically putting the organisation's goals or the organisation's interest above their own](#)” (Lerato:1). “The [staff can come up with ideas](#) and see that this is because they are the people on the ground level” (Lerato:2). “They're the people who are communicating with everyone ... every day of our lives. We go ... you go home, you interact with the family, the family they'll tell you about data. What ... what ... being child ... what. We get to experience that, you know and I would say that every day we are the living brand of our organisation, where the ambassadors of the organisation, so is important to engage the staff and say okay this is what's happening in them. How about we implement ABCD, then see if it will work. I think that's the only problem that the management have. Not only that, it's just one of the problems that management maybe are failing to ... to do as management, so [communication is key, again trust again, honesty, transparency](#) very, very important so that everybody can be on the same level” (Lerato:3).

Pearl perceived EE as communication between management and employees. She highlighted the interaction as being important (Pearl:1). Sandra perceived EE as engagement between employees and the employer (Sandra:1). This implies that lack of regular communication between employer and employees might affect the organisational successes as there would be no direction.

The main barrier to organisational change has been identified as the employees' resistance to change (Diedericks et al., 2019). The following comments serve as evidence:

“I think the most important one that I want talk about, which I think is being ignored, is the whole process is change management” (MM:1). “Management should not assume that everybody's on the same level of understanding. [Organisation should invest in face to face engagement](#) avoid the email notifications” (MM:2). “[Staff really need that assurance](#). Management to inform staff about little changes” (MM:3).

MM proposed a range of EE strategies: organisation A should invest in face-to-face engagement and avoid email notifications as staff really need that assurance. Management should inform staff about small changes, as they do matter. Organisation A should avoid retrenchment as the history of retrenchment leaves employees feeling unhappy and uncertain about their careers. MM valued face-to-face engagement. He mentioned it several times. He felt that current internal communication platforms were not enough and suggested that executives visit the regional offices to clarify changes.

In communication, there is a need for face-to-face engagement; this is even more important if there are changes within the organisation. Therefore, relevant questions may be asked of the relevant executives. Employees might get relevant answers, feel at ease and less worried. Communication is the heart and mind of any relationship; without it there could be no social exchanges between the employer and the employees. Li (2020) found that social exchange principles only require honesty from the employer. Employers should not promise something they are not able to deliver and should never lead their employees into thinking that working more than needed will benefit them (Li, 2020). All decisions made during these interactions should remain fair and the interests of both parties should be kept equally (Li, 2020).

#### **5.4.2 Motivation**

Flourishing at work is a positive psychological state in which employees experience both learning and energy and it is important to consider both workplace and individual qualities that uplift employees (Nawaz et al., 2020). Lerato was in line with Kumar and Das (2019) when she said that EE “talks about staff being motivated”. According to O’Connor, Borkowski and Kemp (2015), motivating employees starts with knowing that they do their best work and that employees must be in an environment that meets their basic emotional drives. Pearl indicated that EE is about commitment employees have

towards the organisation. This is also in line with Kumar and Das (2019), who say that commitment is a strong emotional bond an employee has with the organisation such that they personalise the goals of the organisation. Specifically, when employees feel connected to an organisation, their attitudes and behaviours are more positive (McCarthy et al., 2018).

Lerato also agreed with Pearl as she said that EE is about the level of enthusiasm, motivation, emotional commitment and passion the employee has towards the organisation. Similarly, research suggest that participation in HR development practices and cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement are negatively related to turnover intent (Shuck et al., 2014). Abraham (2012) also found that engaged employees are dedicated to their role, will stay in the organisation for a long time, be more productive and give good customer service. Krishnan (2012) asserts that highly engaged employees are usually high performers and show emotional commitment. Lerato and Pearl both perceived EE to be commitment. Organisations require employees who are motivated and willing to go the extra mile (Schaufeli, 2013). The following comments serve as evidence:

“Moreover, it is the level of enthusiasm, dedication, motivation, emotional commitment and passion the employee has towards his or her job. Basically, here it talks about staff being motivated without being ... being pushed or without being” (Lerato:4).

“To me, I think employee engagement is the commitment employees have in the organisation” (Pearl:2).

“To find out from the employees whether they have any ideas to better implement the ideas of the ... of management” (Sandra:2).

If employees are not committed, they will not share ideas freely, as they would be asking what they would gain by sharing their ideas with others. Lerato supported Sandra by saying that “staff can come up with ideas”. Employees require reward and recognition for their ideas as this is one of the drivers of retention. Das and Baruah (2013) encourage management to prioritise reward and recognition, job security,

training and development for employees. Similarly, Hee and Rhung (2019) found that recognising employees will ensure that they stay focused on their duties and contribute positively to individual development. In the same vein, Schaufeli (2013) indicates that when employees get recognition and opportunities for growth, they appreciate and strive to achieve organisational goals. Motivated employees go the extra mile and contribute positively towards achieving both the departmental and organisational goals.

Krishnan (2012) asserts that highly engaged employees are usually high performers and show emotional commitment. Verma and Sarita (2014) found that EE leads to commitment which reflects in high retention of employees. White (2013) also found that engagement is about getting maximum contribution for the organisation and maximum satisfaction for its employees. Factors such as nature of the job, supervisor's recognition of the employee's work, team spirit, collaboration between departments, reasonable benefits and equal and proper administration of organisational policies contribute to a moderate state of EE (Abraham, 2012). Anderson (2012) emphasises that the value of recognition should not be underestimated and that giving leadership awards and recommending employees for outside business achievement awards improve morale. Other motivating factors encompass taking on new work or having increased responsibility. Therefore, management should offer striking and equitable reward packages that simultaneously attract new employees and keep them in the organisation (Kwenin et al., 2013). When employees perceive that rewards are fair, that is, equal to their performance, they are more likely to be committed to the organisation and less likely to leave (Harden et al., 2018).

### **5.4.3 Relationship**

Social exchange includes two main dimensions: an expectation of productivity and reciprocal trust between two parties (Renaud et al., 2015). Perceived responsible leadership meaningfully influences employees' organisational commitment and their

turnover intentions (Haque et al., 2019). MacLeod and Clarke (2011) describe engaging managers as offering simplicity, appreciating employees and treating them as individuals, but in this study one of the participants was worried that some leaders were self-centred. Palesa felt that EE is about a relationship between the organisation and its employees (Palesa:4) and Lerato felt that EE is about the consequences of the relationship between the organisation and its employees (Lerato:5). This implies that the relationship is guided by what happened in the past and what is currently happening on a daily basis. It is common knowledge that some people hold on to things that make them happy and prefer to forget the things that make them sad in order to continue with the relationship.

SET holds that “individuals are more likely to value resources when based on discretionary decision rather than situations beyond the donor’s control” (Ngwenya, 2014, p.2). Therefore, trust remains important for both parties to build a good successful relationship. Saks (2006) states that one way for people to repay their organisation is through engagement. Blau (1964) found that social exchange includes interactions which are dependent on each other. Reynolds (2019) has shown that emotions matter a great deal at work and happiness is important. Abukhalifeh and Som (2013) found that a basic principle of SET is that relationships evolve over time into trusting, faithful and common pledges if parties stand by rules of exchange. Thompson (2016) found that EE may affect ER, productivity and loyalty.

Work relationships may be described as any kind of interpersonal relation; in the workplace these relate to both the individual and the organisation (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). In organisational backgrounds work relationships are part of the socialisation process, a source of information needed for successful performance, and employees are motivated to develop positive relations for workplace satisfaction (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Pandita and Ray (2018) found that talent management is an effective strategy to ensure that employees stay engaged and committed to the organisation. They are of the opinion that through EE, organisations should attempt to develop a relationship between the employer and employee, encouraging intent to stay in the organisation. Good relationships with co-workers is

another significant factor in retention (George, 2015). Almaaitah et al. (2017) explain social exchange as a process of negotiated exchanges among parties in which both parties involved take responsibility for each other and depend on each other. The social exchange process is when people perceive that they are receiving fair returns in the exchange process, and then they tend to be more satisfied and may terminate the relationship when the costs are more than the rewards that they gain from the relationship (Almaaitah et al., 2017). In any relationship individuals evaluate the risks and rewards involved (Li, 2020). The following comments serve as evidence:

EE is about "working together to achieve one common thing, work-life balance, engagement between the HR and the staff" (Vhusi:4).

SET governs the relationship between employers and employees. According to Kossivi et al. (2016) as well as Das and Baruah (2013), work-life balance is important for employees and tends to affect employees' decision to stay in the organisation, unlike in the past. The balance between personal and work life is determined by the amount of sacrifice the individual is ready to make at the expense of other areas of life (Kossivi et al., 2016). Barnard (2018) argues that a subjectivist understanding of work-life balance recognises the importance of individual differences. The following comments serve as evidence:

"Sometimes it will put you were to the personal level that no, I've got a problem, I've got kids, my daughter or my son is not feeling well, you know, I'll be late, something like that. Or this, been admitted he's got problem you know, then you need to communicate to your superior, so they can understand why maybe because once you are affected at home, probably be, there is high changes of you may perform low, because you are not hundred percent" (Vhusi:4).

Vhusi wanted work-life balance in order to remain relevant both at home and at work. Communication between the HR, line manager and the employee is important. Change implementers provide employees with a better understanding of the content

and justification of the change through effective internal communication (Yue et al., 2019). However, in this study MM felt that change management was ignored by management and that more needed to be done to assure employees on changes. Change can be good if it is well management. On the other hand, it can turn into a wildfire if it is ignored. The following comments serve as evidence:

“Okay, the way I understand employee engagement, it's got ... it's got lots of faces in it and I think the most important one that I want to talk about, which I think is being ignored, the ... the whole process is change management, the way I see it is that though communication is not enough also on this ... on the changes which are happening, which makes engagement of staff to ... not to be like satisfactorily engaged (MM:5). So, I think what the organisation is doing currently is ignoring the change management part, which basically creates a lot of fear and panic among staff due to the fact that there were not really in the ... they were not really the ... the changes that are happening when it communicated sufficiently” (MM:6).

MM felt that there was separation between employers and employees as communication was not enough regarding change management. He believed that people panic due to uncertainty. Moreover, management should not assume that everybody is on the same level of understanding. For example, people may read the same email, but the interpretations would be different. MM believed that EE did not exist in organisation A and that there was room for improvement.

It is common knowledge that some employees resign because of the perceived leadership style in their respective departments. This implies that not all employees resign because of greener pastures. On the other hand, some line managers resign because of a perceived lack of respect from their subordinates. Relationships need to be honoured and both employer and employees need to show willingness. MacLeod and Clarke (2009) found that engagement is about building mutual respect in the workplace. One of the drivers of engagement identified by Guaspari (2015) is respect, which implies giving due consideration to others. Cook (2012) states that engagement

is how positively the employee thinks about the organisation and looks forward to achieving organisational goals for customers, colleagues and other stakeholders.

#### 5.4.4 Interest

Experts invest in the organisation by being aware of the organisational goals and going the extra mile because they expect immediate or deferred monetary recognition as well as non-monetary recognition in return for their efforts. However, if the expert's expectations are not met, this individual may start looking for similar jobs outside the organisation (Renaud et al., 2015). Exchanges not only govern the interest of employees, but also communicate the types of outcomes employees will achieve (Diah et al., 2020). Employees who add value to the organisation are referred to as the best (Gupta et al., 2019). Vasquez (2014) maintains that entry-level employees add value to the organisation because they have continuous contact with colleagues and customers. This indicates that lower level staff should not be taken for granted. The majority of participants can add value to organisation A.

There should be mutual trust between the employer and the employees. Tadesse (2018) argues that employees who experience job satisfaction not only improve ER, but also decrease the cost of hiring new employees. According to Yumnam and Singh (2019), retaining the existing talent is better than hiring new talent. In the same vein, ER would improve by hiring the right person, training and developing them to execute tasks, creating a friendly work environment, building employment relationships based on trust and recognising high performers (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019; Yumnam & Singh, 2019). On the other hand, ER will not be improved until employees' experience job satisfaction and employers should create a friendly work environment, where important information could be communicated freely (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019). The following comments serve as evidence:

“The contribution pertaining to the retentions in the organisation, if I were the business owner, I will **ensure that my employees feel valued**, you need to



ensure that there is a [trust relationship between the employer and the employees](#) by doing that you'd be listening to their ideas, valuing their opinions. I think most of all, the core basic would be [hiring the right people in the right positions](#). I think that would be the basic or the fundamental basic of ... of all covering retentions" (Palesa:6).

According to Palesa, hiring of employees should be a well-thought-out strategy in order to improve ER. People responsible for this should not just tick the boxes.

"So, for us to be [accurate in our daily task](#) every day, it's very important. Because [customer service is very important](#). For as long as our customer service are not on point, we cannot ... we cannot contribute to that" (Snoopy:3).

"So, when we ... because we are human beings we do make mistakes, but when that's why for me ne, HR in overall ne, it's a very very big task, confidentiality. [That's the first thing when I see HR, confidentiality](#)" (Snoopy:4).

"[Transparency and honesty](#)" (Lerato:6). "Transparency is very vital in the organisation and honesty. And then, [leaders also who trust their employees](#), very important as well because the minute you trust your employee, you'll be able to assign maybe like tasks to them because you know that you can trust them" (Lerato:7).

"I want to [add value](#) by working to the best of my ability" (Pearl:3).

It is interesting to note that once an employee develops an interest to work for an employer of choice, he or she will strive to impress the employer.

Vasquez (2014) suggests that today managers should strive to maintain open communication, specifically with lower level employees, and that managers can perform well when all team members are involved. Retaining and engaging high prospective employees is a main challenge to organisations and the main worry of most organisations is their capacity to hire, engage and retain the right staff (Aguenza & Sam, 2012). Abraham (2012) found one way to retain people is to have fully engaged

employees. Similarly, Das and Baruah (2013) found that ER is about encouraging employees to remain in the organisation for a longer period. Aguenza and Som (2012) explain that retention and engagement start at the recruitment process and that retaining a key employee is important to gain a competitive advantage.

#### **5.4.5 Health and welfare**

Jain and Swami (2014) reveal that employees prefer to stay longer with the organisation if there are flexible work arrangements. For employees, work-life balance is slowly becoming more fundamental and may affect employees' decision to stay in the organisation (Kossivi et al., 2016). There needs to be a balance between their personal and work lives. According to Sahni (2019), work-related life includes wages, working hours, work environment, benefits and services, career prospects and human relations. All these factors are associated with employee satisfaction and motivation. Organisational commitment and individual level of engagement may improve if quality of work life improves (Sahni, 2019). Similarly, Tadesse (2018) found that organisations adopt different healthy workplace practices to retain key talents. Barnard (2018) reports that the gendered notion of work-life balance is also continued through women's projective identification with its primary outdated norms for gender roles. Women are not only sustained by society, but sustain themselves by covering the gendered role expectations in the work-life balance. Kossek and Lautsch (2018) define work-life flexibility as practices in employment scheduling that are designed to give employees greater control over when, where, how much, or how continuously work is done. This is part of autonomy.

Flexibility to control work location is not really available for lower level jobs at organisation A, but benefits middle and upper level employees. However, during the South African national lockdown in 2020, some lower level employees in different industries were able to work from home. This was a new norm for some companies. Going forward, all employees, irrespective of their employment level, may be afforded the opportunity to work from home as some employers have invested in the new norm.

As the population becomes more diverse, employers should adjust communication strategies to work with employees from different cultural backgrounds (Fowler, 2018). Important factors in achieving ER are extrinsic, intrinsic and social rewards (Fletcher et al., 2018). Social rewards have been shown to have contributed highly to ER. Extrinsic rewards include the total package, total benefits which the employer offers, medical aid benefits, employee incentives, internal bursary educational programmes for employees, career development and opportunities for promotion. Intrinsic rewards include non-financial benefits such as supervisor support in performing job responsibilities and consistency in involving employees in decision making. Social rewards include friendliness, appreciation and care from others (Fletcher et al., 2018). Healthy minds contribute positively both at home and at work. The following comments serve as evidence:

“As part of my retentions, I would offer them benefits, more over including [health benefits](#), because in the lifestyle that we living at, there is a lot of sicknesses, so you need to insure that your employees are in the right space to be able to make contributions to the organisation, they are in a healthy position. And at the same time, most importantly, [creating a balance from work to home](#)” (Palesa:8).

“The organisation has to make sure that they develop the staff within [flexibility](#)” (Lerato:8). “In each organisation, it is very vital [cultural diversity](#), accepting each and every one of us according to whatever preferences ... cultural preferences” (Lerato:9).

All cultural backgrounds are important and all employees and employers should respect one another to create a friendly working environment.

“Me ensuring that whatever is put before me to deliver, I deliver to the best of my ability and [be supportive to the team](#) in ensuring that we make the goals of the organisation a success” (Pearl:4).

Employees need line managers who are able to resolve daily operational queries. They need to have confidence in their line manager. Otherwise, they will not see the

need to escalate queries to the line manager. It is common knowledge that healthy minds are positive. Therefore positive thinkers strive to look for innovative ways to resolve problems.

Bhattacharya (2015) identifies workload, fair processes, teamwork, work-life balance, being valued by the organisation, employment security, a caring organisation, adequate work resources, pay and benefits, training, career advancement, recognition of work and involvement in decision making as drivers of retention. Autonomy includes flexibility in decisions involving workload (Aukhoon, 2019). In simple terms, this means allowing employees to make decisions or be creative on how they would tackle assigned tasks (George, 2015). Moreover, cultures where employees are encouraged to plan ahead and where feedback on performance is given improve loyalty and commitment (Aukhoon, 2019).

#### **5.4.6 Development**

Formal training and job-related training are available options for all employees to choose from, which should encourage lifelong learning for employees (Cloutier et al., 2015). Organisations should make the effort to understand their employees and employees should also understand the organisational goals. This should be a win-win situation for both parties. Hassan et al. (2013) believe that career development opportunities and training encourage employee retention. They argue that lack of training and promotion opportunities are main reasons why talented employees leave their jobs. Job dissatisfaction might be caused by lack of opportunities to grow and lead to employees seeking better opportunities elsewhere (Ma et al., 2018). Some employees do not want to stay in the same work position for a long time, as they seek new tasks that will challenge them to acquire new knowledge and skills (Ma et al., 2018). Career development is another strategy for ER (Hee & Rhung, 2019).

Employees who are provided with relevant training are highly likely to be motivated and engaged in their jobs (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). Groenewald (2019) found that training may occur through on-the-job or off-the-job training. As a result, employees are likely to be competitive in the job market. Kumar and Shweta (2011) point out that nowadays, access to training and career opportunities is vital. Abukhalifeh and Som (2013) found employee development to be the highest contributor to EE. However, Abraham (2012) discovered that training, well-being and salary had no impact on EE. Giving employees dedicated training and development is an important process to enhance engagement (Crawford et al., 2013). Training is regarded as one of the main factors in reducing employee turnover in organisations (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011). Moreover, Rothmann (2014) recommends training and development programmes to ensure that employees remain healthy and competent as well as engaged. Specifically, managers should pay close attention to the background and the process of training and development from the employees' perspective (Guan & Frenkel, 2019). Anitha (2014) suggests that training and career development are drivers to improve engagement.

The results show that there is an important relationship between employee development and ER. There is also a positive impact on employee development on both ER and social exchange. The work environment significantly influences employees' job satisfaction, followed by empowerment, pay and relationships with line managers, which influence employee commitment and intention to remain in the organisation (Frye et al., 2020). Moreover, low retention rates will lead to bad customer service, low productivity and high labour costs (Frye et al., 2020). Career development and mentoring helps employees to work with others more effectively (Nava-Macali et al., 2019). Career planning is an essential part of employee training and development and it helps them identify skills gaps; job rotation improves employees' planning and organisation skills (Nava-Macali et al., 2019).

Nava-Macali et al. (2019) point out that employees' training programmes should be aligned with their career development. They say that employees experience job satisfaction because there is an opportunity for growth within the organisation.

Therefore, employees are willing to stay with the organisation due to good opportunities and career growth. At some point, hiring managers in all organisations face the dilemma of whether to hire internally or externally (DeOrtentiis et al., 2018). Despite the dilemma, results suggest that internal hires usually outperform external hires, and they do so for less money (DeOrtentiis et al., 2018). The following comments serve as evidence:

“I would be creating a great working environment for the employees and as part of retentions, I would have a system wherein there is [job rotation](#)” (Palesa:9).  
“Job rotation, meaning that if there’s opportunities in the organisation, you would be able to take from the pool of the organisation, meaning that you’d be able to uplift your employees, rather than going outside of the organisation to bring people in, you would work with the existing employees that you have in terms of uplifting them, you offer them [mentorship, career development](#)” (Palesa:10).

According to Palesa, job rotation, mentorship and career development would motivate employees and lift their spirits.

“A [classroom training](#) or a morning training, once in three months. So, [we would like to be more involved in travelling to the certain stores, so we can go check up on these things and where there is mistakes, we can rectify it immediately](#)” (Snoopy:5).

Snoopy would travel to stores to offer training to her colleagues in order to avoid mistakes which may badly affect customer experiences.

“First of all, I’ll talk about [career development](#)” (Lerato:10). “The organisation has to make sure that they develop the staff within [flexibility](#)” (Lerato:11).

Lerato believed career development would contribute positively to both the employer and the employees. However, employees should be developed according to their preferred career path while simultaneously matching the required organisational skills.

“Basically retain employees knowing that when I work for this organisation, I get treated, especially in the bank, in the everything, a lot of other places in the car buying and all the other places. So ... so basically that is what should be done also. But important thing again another thing will be to promote internally because what is happening is that the ... the ... the strategy at the top currently says, we should promote internally” (MM:7). “That is what is being done in all other ... all other places. But then we don't see that strategy being carried down at the regional level because yeah, the CEO is saying the organisation should promote internally, but I don't see that happening we see, we don't see that, we just see people are coming from outside, and not that it's wrong, but it's good for diversity” (MM:8). “But on the organisation said we should promote internally; it should be consistent. It should be, that shouldn't be that others have got exceptions it should be consistent and then ... and there should be accountability in case where there's non-compliance because yeah” (MM:9).

MM spoke highly of internal promotions as employees felt demoralised when an outsider came and filled a managerial position. On the other hand, a new person might be a blessing in disguise for the organisation as they may give new solutions to old challenges. Through appropriate training and development, employees may be productive, motivated and remain with the organisation for longer periods. Career paths should be written down and communicated to motivate employees (Anderson, 2012) so that they can see how their career will proceed in the next ten years. Arpitha (2020) found that internal promotion boosts employees' confidence and morale. However, the majority of HR managers rank recruiting challenges as a top concern (Schake & Craft, 2019).

#### **5.4.7 Monetary value**

Anderson (2012) emphasises that employers should tell their employees about the benefits of working for their organisation, and highlight the opportunities and benefits provided by the organisation. Other research found that monetary benefits offered and structured for an economic exchange can be used to increase ER (Diah et al., 2020). Compensation, benefits and employees' involvement are positively associated with employees' outcomes (Zeb et al., 2018). This implies that compensation and benefits lead to higher levels of productivity. Relevant prior research found that there is a

relationship between the retention factors and intention to leave, and compensation highly contributes towards intention to leave (Dhanpat et al., 2018).

At managerial level, fringe benefits are used to attract, retain and motivate employees who may continue to strive to achieve organisational goals (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019). However, managers alone may not succeed as teams of employees are required at ground level to interact with customers. This implies that fringe benefits are required by low-level employees as well. One reason for this is that fringe benefits play a vital role to encourage an individual's interest to work in a specific organisation (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019). Fringe benefits may include medical aid, employees' educational bursaries, housing subsidy, car allowance, petrol allowance, cell phone allowance and many more. Ali (2019) recommends that employers have fair and reasonable compensation policies and create suitable performance evaluation systems. According to Sawaneh and Kamara (2019), pay has played a major role in retaining and rewarding talent. On the other hand, low salary is perceived to be one key contributing factor for an employee resigning from a particular job. The following comments serve as evidence:

“Like in a situation whereby commission, with **trade commission as a retention**, because we are benefiting out of that, benefiting in terms of money” (Vhusi:5). “Yes, it's good but when there is no commission then there is no performance, you see. So, it goes back even on the engagement as well because that retention is a one of the most important thing in the organisation. Because if it's a good retention, staff are happy, the moral are happy. **Bonuses** are one of the retentions in you now, because it's a bonus, you see. It's money that's why all in all it drives back to money” (Vhusi:6). “So, and also, retention in terms of security. **Security, I mean house allowance**, you understand, because we need, we all need security, we all need shelter” (Vhusi:7). “So, so once there's maybe sort of house allowance, it makes us to feel comfortable, to feel at home, to feel motivated to go back to work” (Vhusi:8). “**And they must reduce data man. Reducing data. So people ... the users can afford**” (Vhusi:9).

Vhusi's preferred ER strategies were commissions, bonuses, housing allowance and reduction of data for customers.



“So, trust is important and good communication obviously communication amongst the employees and leaders or management and then recognition, achievements” (Lerato:12).

For Lerato trust, effective communication, reward and recognition were preferred as ER strategies.

“They should understand their employees in order to retain them because now at this rate, the package are good but then if somebody comes and then they give you liquidity, they give you cash in the hand, they give you a good net income, because that is what you want” (MM:10).

“... it is important but it's not really a big priority, so to retain, they should start there and they should start there, give people liquidity so they can resolve their short term debt commitments or you get what I'm saying? So ... so ... so that is ... that is one thing they should do. The other thing is that you need this kind of flexibility. Also, same thing with this pension I mean it's things like you are where you can use your pension as a ... to fund your bond. So, basically they should go back to that thing and rather have more controls on it. That's another thing again to retain because things of housing allowance that I see, but also many companies don't really do that nowadays, which ... which is fair enough” (MM:11). “But they should allow that flexibility of saying, should you want to take your bond now because you are young ... your pension basically because you are young and put it in your bond, let them allow you that so that you can avoid paying all these high interests” (MM:12). “It speaks to the same issue of liquidity again with pensions, so that it's [Inaudible 00:14:27] let it be flexible too, in terms of allowing to” (MM:13).

“So, so basically, they need that. And also, that retention again, there are also certain things that they can do again regarding the special deals for the employees. I mean there used to be deals where the organisation will speak to sort of, multi choice and say the employees of this companies get a discounted rate. Those kinds of things. Issues where maybe they speak to Nedbank and say, if you open a, account with Nedbank, you're going to get free this, because you're M ... can I say name of the organisation? Because you're an ... employee, then you can get this and that benefit a lot of organisation. Issues that they can have with the car dealers with McCarthy

and, yeah, McCarthy Barloworld. They can have ... lot of companies have got that from my experience in the organisation that you come from where you say.

If you buy with them, they got a special sales person who is a key account manager for that and when you buy with them you get ... you get that attention and don't go to anyone into the floor and you get a discount. It's ... its ... its sure case. I mean the same I thing they try to do with the insurance. I think they did it with AON. I don't know what happened if it was still in there, but it's the same thought it was coming right then they were saying that they should've taken it not only to insurance to all other ... they should've taken that kind of deals to all other faces where employees is involved whether it's car buying. I was banking services, all the kind of whether it's television, I mean whether it's that television be it Netflix, Showmax, those kinds of things. I think that with the power that they've got with the number of employees that they've got, they can actually negotiate very good deals. They've shown it with ... I mean, the thing that is good is with the insurance of for ... for ... for funerals, where staff are paying very little because of the power which come through their pay ... the payroll and then they get the benefits" (MM:14).

Firstly, MM preferred a good net income, so that employees can afford to pay their debts on a monthly basis. It is not good enough to be offered a good gross income while the net income is too low. Secondly, MM preferred flexibility to use the pension to fund the home bond. Thirdly, MM compared organisation A with other corporate companies regarding offering benefits and negotiating discounts with different corporate companies on behalf of employees. More importantly, MM acknowledged that organisation A offered competitive life cover and funeral policies to its employees. However, according to MM, the organisation could do better in terms of negotiating discounts with other corporate companies on behalf of its employees.

Sandra felt that "high pay" was the only form of compensation that could make her stay in organisation A. Most times affordability alleviates stress. Dutta and Banerjee (2014) identify potential barriers that cause an employee to resign, such as lower pay, lack of growth, lack of reorganisation, a supervisor not giving an opportunity for self-growth, no trust in senior management and low job satisfaction. Similarly, Ghosh and Sahney (2011) identify unequal salaries, limited growth opportunities, staying in the same position for a long time, underutilisation of skills and lack of recognition.

Benish and Gulzar (2014) highlight one of the most practical ways of retaining employees, namely compensating them even more than what they are earning, for example with a development programme. However, creating a compensation structure that supports an employee development programme is a distinct challenge for companies (Sinha & Sinha, 2012). Pay is the primary factor which reveals the employer's commitment and intention towards the employee and is one of the compelling reasons for an employee to stay in that organisation (Deery & Jago, 2015). However, Deery and Jago (2015) caution that pay is not enough to motivate employees to stay in the organisation. There can be different factors that affect the employees' decision to stay. Employees' expectations of salaries, promotion and development are often not met. Salary differences have also been identified as one of the main reasons causing employees to leave their organisation (Selesho & Naile, 2014).

#### **5.4.8 Concerns raised by some participants**

Snoopy, when asked about EE, stated that there was a lack of upwards and downwards communication on everyday operational issues. She believed that an organisation should find and implement effective ways of engaging with employees in order to close the gap. Snoopy tended to withdraw if reported queries were not resolved. She wanted to be seen as an advisor, not as someone that made other people look bad. More importantly, she felt that supervisors should not make a big deal out of it. Rather rectify the wrong, as she wanted to do the right thing as guided by the organisation brand value (integrity). When taken seriously, employees feel valued and satisfied with communication if they perceive that they are getting supervisory support (Dasgupta et al., 2013).

When asked about EE, MM commented that it was most important for management to communicate with the lower level staff, so that the organisation could have one common vision and understanding. The participants were in line with Kumar and Das (2019), who state that intracommunication is also known by experts and management

as the factor which is to be addressed immediately as an important tool for EE. They continue that in most organisations, communicating effectively with employees creates an environment where employees seem to believe in the organisation's goals. Therefore, employees will show a lot of effort throughout their work shift. Lerato stated that communication is key for success.

However, MM argued that management should not assume that everybody is on the same level of understanding and recommended that the organisation invest in face-to-face engagement. Furthermore, it should avoid email notifications as staff need job security. According to MM, executives should constantly visit and engage employees in the regions, in order to update them regarding the status core of the organisation even though they have busy work schedules. That way there will be a culture of assurance, especially if there are changes within the organisation. Therefore, with the face-to-face engagements, more employees would be aligned with the organisational goals. Usually with face-to-face engagements, employees are able to ask questions, get immediate feedback or sometimes executives request time to come back with relevant answers.

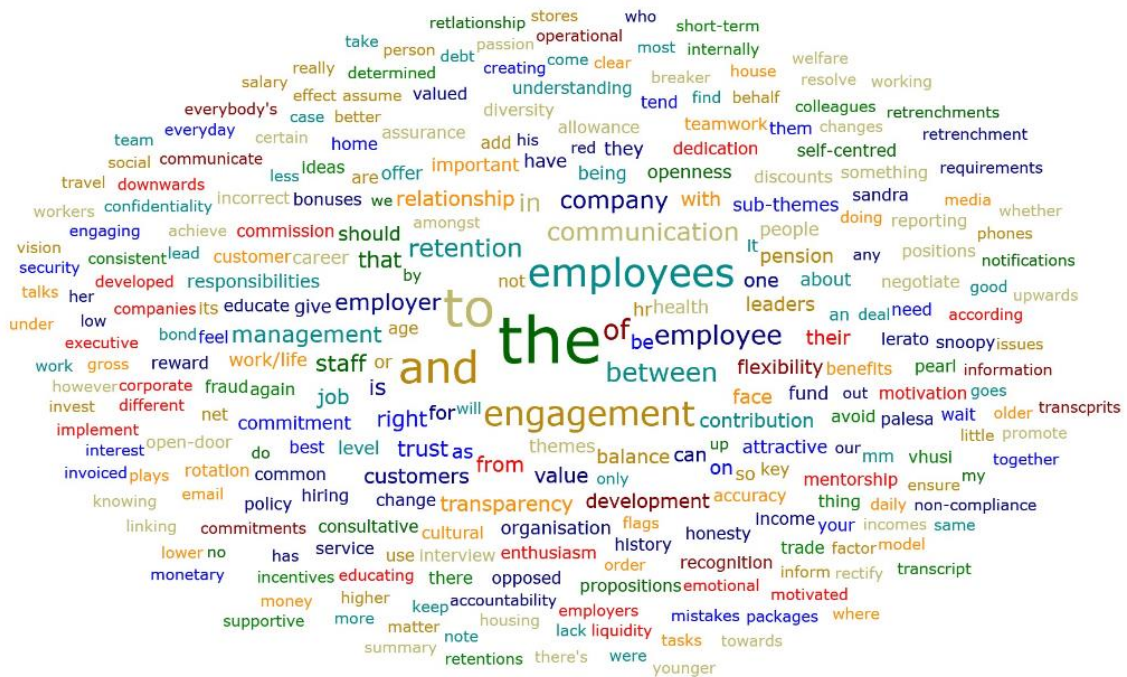
Moreover, the history of retrenchments within organisation A validates the need for face-to-face engagement, as Vhusi and MM suggested. Sutherland et al., (2018) report that in academic communities, the majority (82%) never or hardly ever used technology to facilitate offline engagement. Vhusi and MM perceived face-to-face engagement as being taken seriously by the employer. Deepa and Santhosh (2016) found that the telecommunications industry has been growing over the past few years but in this study MM was worried about the history of retrenchment in this industry.

“So, I think what the organisation is doing currently is ignoring the change management part, which basically creates a lot of fear and panic among staff due to the fact that there were not really in the ... they were not really the ... the changes that are happening when it communicated sufficiently, so that is what we are experiencing now and also from the fact that by the fact that from the history of this particular organisation is that, there have been history ... there's history of retrenchment and

which ... which comes with the ... with these changes and whenever there are changes that are come. People first go into panic mode because of the historical experiences” (MM:17).

According to MM, the average age of employees working in the telecommunications industry is 40 (MM:15). He recommended that organisation A consider employees’ age when deducting pension money on a monthly basis.

When asked what contributions they wanted to make to the organisation, Sandra revealed that she was on the verge of leaving the organisation and was not aligned with the positive contributions’ employees could make to the organisation. However, when asked to elaborate further, she stated that high pay would be the only reason for her to stay in the organisation. Research has found that compensation contributes the most towards intention to leave as there is a relationship between retention factors and intention to leave (Bibi et al., 2017; Ma et al., 2018). According to Hee and Rhung (2019), for employees, salary is the most important factor. Compensation was regularly assumed to be the main barrier to ER (Ma et al., 2018). Aguenza and Som (2012) show the uselessness of having great personnel if they are just as likely to leave. Aukhoon (2019) states that listening is considered as one of the important strategies of ER. It is recommended that organisation A consider their employees’ concerns carefully. Corrective actions need to be taken in order to align both employer and employees. On the other hand, employees need to be willing to assist the employer as together more can be achieved. The following word cloud in figure 5.3 below reflects how participants perceived EE and ER:



**Figure 5.3: Word cloud from main themes and emergent themes (own compilation)**

## **5.5 CENTRAL STORYLINE**

This study aimed to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. The experiences of the participants in this study have been summarised. Therefore, it is hoped that this understanding will help organisation A to implement an EE model (refer to figure 5.4) developed for companies operating in the telecommunications sector. It was possible to differentiate emergent themes with similarities, differences and uniqueness between the different experiences. In terms of EE in this study, the majority of participants ranked communication, motivation and relationship high. In terms of ER, the majority of participants ranked interest, health and welfare, development and monetary value high. Those were the main themes. However, there are red flags regarding both EE and ER. Each participant shared his or her own unique experiences while employed in organisation A. See further explanations in sections 5.5.1 and 5.5.2.

### **5.5.1 Employee engagement in organisation A**

Firstly, the common view among participants was that there should be effective communication between the employer and employees. The majority of the participants shared that communication within organisation A needed to be improved. Some participants appreciated face-to-face engagement. One participant recommended that management inform staff about small changes as they do matter. Moreover, the history of retrenchment within organisation A might cause employees uncertainty. An open-door policy was highly recommended by some participants. They believed in transparency between the employer and the employees. They also believed in teamwork as together organisational goals could be achieved and divided they did not stand a chance of winning. Engagement between HR and employees needs to take place frequently for alignment. Participants required job security and clear job responsibilities for smooth daily operations.

Participants needed a push in the right direction to encourage them to be committed and enthusiastic. However, misalignments in terms of change management had also played a negative role in EE. Participants felt that there should be trust in the relationship between the employer and the employees. A relationship that is based on trust has more chance to grow than one that is based on lies. Some participants felt the need for the employer's support in terms of the work-life balance.

### **5.5.2 Employee retention in organisation A**

In terms of ER, participants spoke a great deal about compensation. The majority of the participants shared that they wanted to feel valued by organisation A. Some would prefer to be included in the decision-making process and they would feel honoured when their ideas were considered by the employer. This speaks volumes, as most employees who want to grow with any organisation would share the same sentiments, myself included. Specifically, trust is considered to be a pillar of the relationship

between the employers and the employees. This begins from hiring the right people in the right positions in order to maintain accuracy and offer the best customer service both internally and externally. Participants value openness and transparency in order to maintain the social exchanges between the employer and the employees. Therefore, participants would continue to add value to colleagues and the organisation as a whole. Specifically, they would make positive contributions.

Some participants preferred good health benefits. Other participants encouraged cultural diversity, which might differentiate organisation A from its competitors. Some participants highly recommended flexibility to allow autonomy in the daily operations and to use their individual pension fund for home bond instalments. Teamwork contributed positively towards ER as employees valued support from their line managers and colleagues. Participants encouraged consistent internal promotions. However, they stressed that there should be accountability in cases where there is non-compliance. One of the participants highlighted that hiring from outside should still take place, as they said that new brooms would sweep better and that old furniture might remain unproductive. One of the participants recommended a work-life balance to encourage ER.

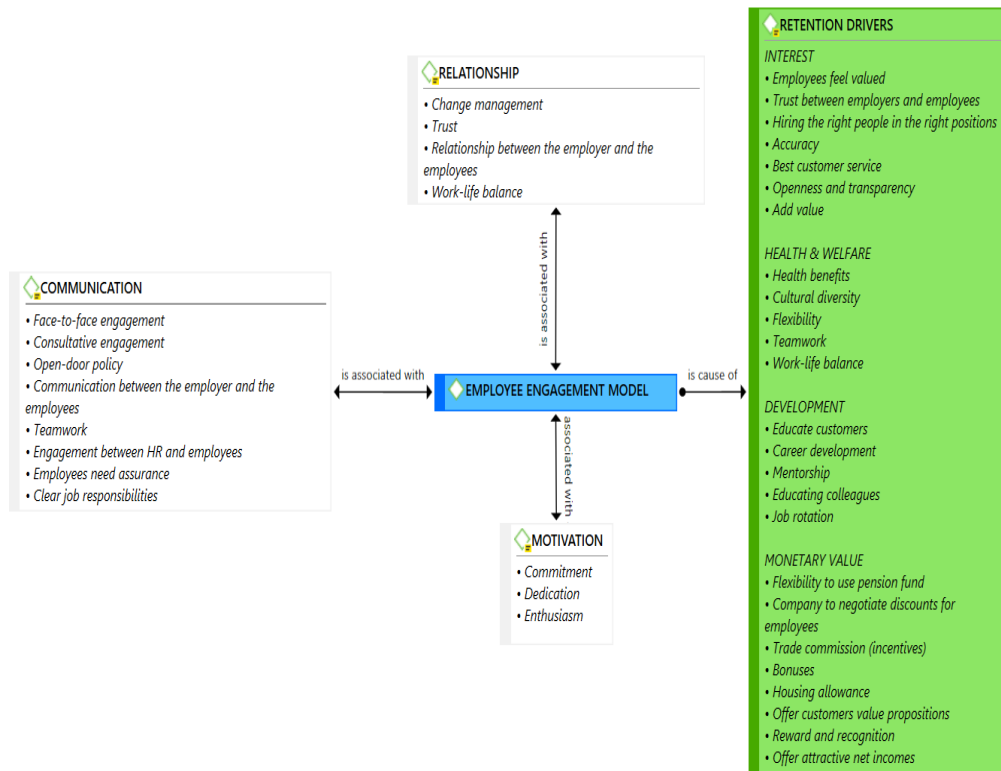
For some participants, there was a need to educate colleagues and customers. This would contribute positively towards the individual's career development within organisation A. One of the participants highlighted that there should be suitable mentorship programmes and job rotation to create a good learning environment. Participants needed bonuses and housing allowances. They became motivated when they were rewarded and recognised. Attractive net incomes would make employees stay with organisation A for longer periods. One participant suggested that organisation A should negotiate discounts with different corporate companies on behalf of employees. The participant acknowledged that in terms of insurance, organisation A had already negotiated a better deal for employees.



However, in terms of both EE and ER there were red flags. It is recommended that organisation A investigate these concerns and take the necessary corrective actions. One of the participants highlighted that there was no upwards and downwards communication on everyday operational issues. One highlighted that employees tended to wait for the employer to give them something. In order to repay the employer, a participant recommended that employees should report fraud to save the organisation. Some leaders were felt to be self-centred, as highlighted by one of the participants. A participant recommended that pension contributions should be determined by age and that there should not be a blanket approach. At the time of the study, one participant was on the verge of leaving the organisation even though most of the other participants wanted to contribute positively towards ER. When asked to elaborate further, high salary was the only reason that the participant would stay with the organisation. The challenges and the proposed solutions regarding EE and ER are presented in table 6.1.

This study relied on SET as a frame of reference. Even engaged employees are sometimes dissatisfied with the outcomes of organisational performance, which may lead them to look elsewhere (Aguenza & Som, 2012). According to Pandita and Ray (2018), retention of an employee and the challenge faced when engaging employees deal with how an employee perceives the entire work experience and the treatment they receive in the organisation. Therefore, retention is a decision that can be influenced by employee emotions, which can be affected positively by actions undertaken by the organisation (Pandita & Ray, 2018). However, some employees might show interest in engagement efforts by the organisation. It is important for the organisation to know which employees they should target for their retention efforts while simultaneously guarding against unfair discrimination.

The following proposed EE model was derived from the main and emergent themes of EE and ER from the participants' perspectives:



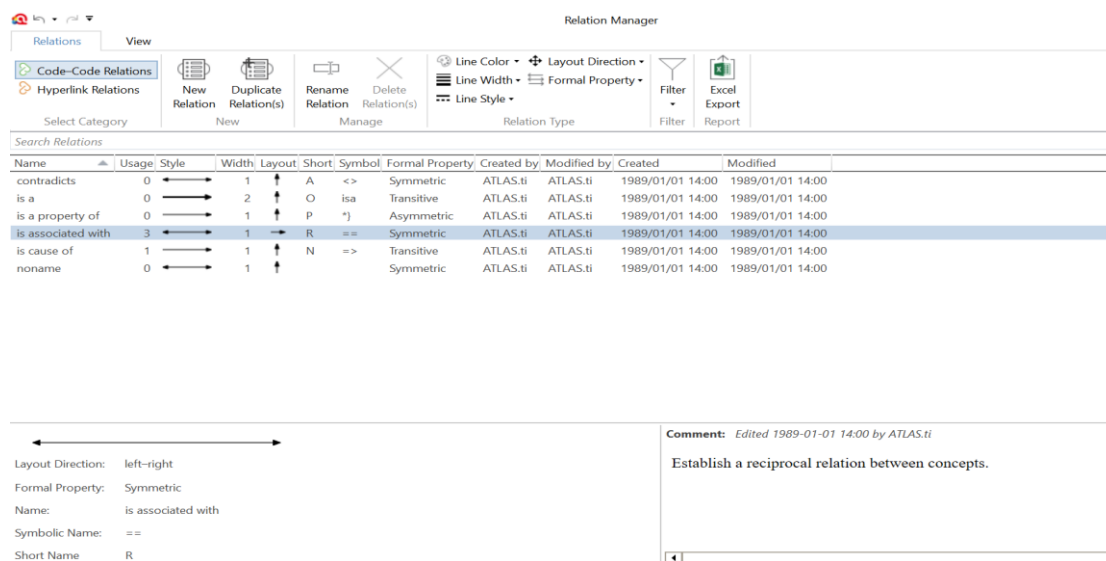
**Figure 5.4: Proposed employee engagement model (own compilation)**

The layout of the EE model is perpendicular with organic routing and label links (“is associated with” and “is cause of”). It is important to note that in this Polokwane based telecommunications organisation, all three unique concepts (motivation, relationship and communication) should be included when developing strategies to enhance EE. Kusuma and Madasu (2015) indicate that to be ranked as an employer of choice, companies should adopt the approach of "inside out", which implies that employees should be engaged first.

The proposed EE model suggests that communication needs to include face-to-face engagement, consultative engagement, an open-door policy, communication between the employer and the employees, teamwork, engagement between HR and employees, assurance for employees and clear job responsibilities. Motivation includes commitment, dedication and the level of enthusiasm an employee has towards the organisation. Lastly, EE includes an effective relationship between the employer and the employees, trust, change management and work-life balance. The

colour blue on the EE model symbolises water, which is needed to nurture retention drivers, which in turn are coloured green to symbolise life. Without water, there is no life. The researcher is of the view that without EE, there would be no retention. SET suggests that one hand washes the other, otherwise one of the two parties will end the employment relationship.

The relationship manager from ATLAS.ti is shown below.



**Figure 5.5: Relationship manager (own compilation)**

**Note.** The relationship manager shows the association of constructs on EE, specifically that EE leads to ER.

## 5.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings were presented, focusing on the main and emergent themes. The interpretation, reporting style and context of the interviews were discussed. Verbatim quotes from seven participants were used. Previous studies were used to support the participants' perspectives. The chapter concluded with a central storyline in section 5.5 and an EE model was developed to help companies in the telecommunications industries.

Chapter 6 concludes the research study.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

##### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 5 presented the research findings that described the understanding of the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

Chapter 6 sets out the contribution of the study, the limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, as well as a reflection on the study to address the researcher's subjective experiences and the conclusion to the study.

##### **6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

Chapter 1 contained the introduction to the study. The problem statement, the purpose statement, the research question and the significance of the study were explained. In addition, the definitions of key terms and concepts were given, and the research methodology, as well as the research ethics that were applied throughout the study were highlighted.

Chapter 2 presented a literature review of EE. It included defining EE, the importance of EE to employers and employees, EE theories and EE in a broader context. EE in the telecommunications industry was then discussed. The chapter concluded with elements of engagement in the lived work experiences of employees. Chapter 3 was the second literature review chapter on ER. It included defining ER, the map or overview of ER, ER in the telecommunications industry and determinants of ER. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the application of SET to ER.

Chapter 4 was a description of the researcher's social constructivist paradigm, which had framed her inquiries. The paradigm influenced the research approach and research design followed to answer the research questions. The data production and how data was analysed and management were described. Criteria applied for ensuring the quality of the research conducted were also discussed. The chapter concluded with the clarification of the ethical considerations throughout the research study.

Chapter 5 included the interpretation and reporting style context of the interviews, as well as context of the interviews. Specifically, the findings were reported and discussed regarding the understanding of the staff experiences of engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

### **6.3 ALIGNMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

This research project attempted to answer the following main questions:

*What are the staff experiences on engagement in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*

*What are the staff experiences on retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*

In chapter 5 the findings were reported on staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation with support from previous studies. The participants' experiences revealed in this study brought new knowledge about the telecommunications industry. However, some insights resonated with previous research on engagement and retention.

The majority of the participants in this study wanted to engage and contribute positively to organisation A. Each participant had his or her own unique experience while employed in the Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. Some experiences were similar, some were different and some raised red flags (concerns) which need the employer's urgent attention. The main themes helped to summarise responses from different individuals. The proposed EE model emerged from the

following main themes: (i) communication, (ii) motivation, (iii) relationship, (iv) interest, (v) health and welfare, (vi) development and (vii) monetary value.

## **6.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

This study has contributed immensely through theory, application and methodology:

### **6.4.1 Theoretical contribution**

The study's theoretical contribution includes some important insights into EE and ER from employees in the telecommunications industry. Moreover, it adds value to the field of HRM. The study was conducted with employees living in Polokwane as the researcher was of the view that they are sometimes forgotten and undermined due to their location. Participants required leaders that are not self-centred. The first 2 was that managers believed that their status in the organisation was evidence enough that they had what it took to be regarded as leaders and therefore regarded ongoing learning as pointless (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009). Specifically, participants suggested that employers should be flexible, create a work-life balance, support cultural diversity, be open, offer consistent job rotation and health benefits, ensure that employees feel valued, offer bonuses, attractive net income and housing allowances, negotiate discounts on behalf of their employees, offer value propositions to customers, provide education and training, and hire the right individuals for the right jobs so that productive employees can be retained.

Organisations that put their employees first are more likely to attract and engage top talent (McCarthy et al., 2018). It is important to ensure that in the selection process the candidates' experience is a positive one (McCarthy et al., 2018). The researcher also concurs with this. However, the long-term success of any organisation depends on the retention of key employees and excellent customer service (Das & Baruah, 2013). In the same vein, employers should not fold their arms and do nothing about EE and ER. Employees are the lifeblood of any organisation, even though they are complex and not easy to understand. Umamaheswari and Krishnan (2015) stress that

knowledgeable workers play an important role in the business activities and that retaining key employees differentiates the organisation from their competitors. The researcher concurs with this. This study extends current knowledge of EE and ER from the participants' context. To ensure that the study has an impact, the researcher will present her findings and recommendations to the organisation and to the participants. She will also write articles and present the study at conferences.

#### 6.4.2 Applied contribution

Findings of the study could help the government to promote EE and ER within private and public companies as high unemployment negatively affects the economy. All barriers to EE and ER could be addressed appropriately. Moreover, the study has identified challenges and proposed solutions from the participants' perspectives, which are presented in table 6.1.

#### Challenges and proposed solutions regarding employee engagement and retention

<b>EE barriers/challenges</b>	<b>Proposed solutions</b>
Lack of effective communication between employer and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be an open-door policy.</li> <li>• The employer should provide clear job responsibilities.</li> </ul>
Employees are not motivated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give reward and recognition to employees.</li> <li>• Maintain consistency within the teams. This would encourage employees' commitment, dedication and enthusiasm.</li> </ul>
Lack of good relationship between employer and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships should be based on trust.</li> <li>• There should be a work-life balance.</li> </ul>
<b>Retention barriers/challenges</b>	<b>Proposed solutions</b>



Lack of interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees want to feel valued.</li> <li>• The right people must be hired in the right positions.</li> <li>• Offer the best customer service internally and externally. This would differentiate the organisation from its competitors.</li> </ul>
Employers' interests are consistently prioritised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be work-life balance.</li> </ul>
Lack of career development in the regions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer mentorship programmes in the regions.</li> <li>• There should be job rotation in the regions. Give employees equal opportunities to learn.</li> </ul>
Lack of security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organisation should negotiate discounts for employees with other corporate companies.</li> <li>• Offer housing allowances to employees.</li> <li>• Offer attractive net incomes to employees.</li> </ul>

Source: (own compilation, Table 6.1)

### 6.4.3 Methodological contribution

This study contributed at a methodological level by moving away from the tradition of quantitative research to the use of an explorative qualitative research approach and an IPA research design to explore and interpret the experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

## **6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The following limitations were noted, even though the study was conducted with an appropriate research design best suited to achieve the purpose of the study and adhered to the criteria for ensuring quality research:

### **6.5.1 Methodological limitations**

A qualitative IPA research design was employed to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. However, it is acknowledged that if a different research approach (quantitative or mixed method) was followed, it may lead to different findings. Purposive sampling was employed to select the participants. The study was limited to seven participants (Smith et al., 2009), as other potential participants were reluctant to participate in the study. The experiences of the research participants may not be extended. When people are involved in a study, results may be one-sided because of the perceived special attention given to some participants, and this may influence feedback from participants (Maree, 2016). The findings show a specific perspective on the phenomenon under study. This implies that other perspectives may be possible.

### **6.5.2 Theoretical limitations**

The study was based only on SET as a frame of reference.

### **6.5.3 Contextual limitations**

This study only focused on the need to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention and excluded the senior manager, area managers and the general manager. The study was only conducted in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation. However, time was limited as the researcher had to interview participants at their preferred time since they were busy with their operational duties. The limitations worked as a constant checklist and reminder of the possible shortcomings and weaknesses of the study (Maree, 2016). They were

checked throughout the study and used as an additional measurement of validity (Maree, 2016).

## **6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The researcher identified several areas for further research, through the analysis of the study findings. The EE model for Polokwane based telecommunications employees was developed based on the findings originating from the participants in the study. All the participants were employed by organisation A. Five suggestions for future studies are as follows: determine staff experiences of work-life balance, determine whether mentorship programmes contribute positively to staff retention, determine whether job rotation enhances employee development, determine whether staff benefits lead to retention and determine whether attractive employees' net incomes should be determined by age. A quantitative approach could be used.

## **6.7 REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY**

Reflexivity refers to the introspection done by the researcher (Palaganas et al., 2017). A researcher's world view and interests affect all stages of the research journey. Researchers need to acknowledge that it is impossible to remain "outside of" their study topic while conducting research and they are encouraged to share these reflexivities, towards enhancing theory building not only for learning purposes (Palaganas et al., 2017). Initially, when I started my research journey, I was not able to write like an academic. I lacked knowledge about research although I was fascinated by the phenomenon. My interest grew in qualitative research during my initial reading of scholarly journal articles as I like to express myself with words rather than numbers. Sometimes, people say I am talkative. I agree with them. To me, qualitative research seemed more "in depth" and less to do with numerical analysis.

It has always been my dream to work for organisation A. It is a reputable telecommunications organisation operating in many countries. However, significant events and experiences in my life resulted in my decision to embark on the research journey. The study was conducted among employees living in Polokwane as the

researcher is of the view that these employees are sometimes forgotten and undermined due to their location. Some colleagues resigned as they wanted greener pastures, whereas some resigned for unknown reasons. Some are still unemployed and this was my main concern. As a result, I pursued this study to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

Listening to the participants' experiences brought back many pleasant and unpleasant memories of my career within organisation A. I caught myself thinking what would have happened if I had resigned from the organisation. Where would I have been in terms of career? Would I have been employed in the HR department in the other organisation or would I still have been unemployed? I thought about how I would have shared my experiences if I had been invited to be a participant in this study. Moreover, I noticed many similarities between my personal experiences and those of the participants. There were days where I could not cope with my studies as I had to learn more. Yet, the research journey was indeed rewarding. For me, this is the beginning of a successful research career.

I compared the proposed EE model to a three-legged pot (see figure 6.1 below). If one leg on the pot breaks, the pot will not stand on its own. For this study, employer, employees and the phenomenon studied (EE and ER) are the three legs of the pot.



**Figure 6.1: Three-legged pot metaphor** (own compilation)

With the proposed EE model discussed in chapter 5, both employers and employees have to be aligned so that employees may effectively experience engagement. On the other hand, employers may retain the best talent. Based on SET, EE and ER are the vehicle to ensure the alignment. Successful telecommunications companies usually realise the importance of hiring the right people for the right jobs (Safiullah, 2015). Similarly, Collins (2009) discovered that the most important factor applied by the top companies is that they should first get the “right people on the bus, and the wrong people off the bus”. The second step is to get the right people “in the right seats on the bus”, which implies that employers should ensure that the right people work in the right positions. To meet the business goals, employers should develop the habit of thinking in terms of exactly who is going to carry out each task and responsibility (Collins, 2009). In many cases, it is not possible to move forward until the business can attract and put the right person into the right position. It is a pity that many of the top business plans ever developed sit on shelves today, because of the absence of key people who can execute those plans (Collins, 2009).

## **6.8 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This study has highlighted the importance of face-to-face interaction so that employers can be held accountable. It is common knowledge that people build rapport by maintaining eye contact. Relevant questions should be posed to the relevant people; one of the participants said that the “right information must go to the right person, not any other”. All seven participants expressed their perspectives. From the findings, EE has three main themes, namely communication, motivation and relationships. The main ER themes are interest, health and welfare, development and monetary value. However, both EE and ER have red flags which should be rectified or alleviated by management in organisation A. Aguenza and Som (2012) found that the important motivational factors to drive ER are financial rewards, job characteristics, career development, recognition, management and work-life balance. The findings of the current study support those of Aguenza and Som (2012) to some extent. The findings suggest that EE drives ER and that employees’ opinions matter as the relationships

between employees and employers, between employees, and an individual's relationship to their work are important.

This concludes the research project.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A:


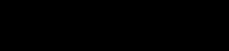
### REQUEST LETTER TO THE ORGANISATION

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FROM ORGANISATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Dear 

My name is **Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana** and I am currently enrolled for a Master of Commerce in Business Management (Full Dissertation) specialising in Human Resources Management in the College of Economic and Management Sciences Department  at the University of South Africa.

The topic for my research study is “**staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study**”. It entails interviews. Moreover, the purpose of the study is the need to understand the indigenous staff experiences on engagement and how employee engagement (EE) contribute to staff retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation.

I would like to request permission to conduct research within   
 Furthermore, the research study will involve interviews.

#### **Purpose of the interview**

In-depth interviews will be used as a data collection strategy. Participants will be interviewed as individuals (one-on-one) and they will be informed about the purpose of the study and its confidentiality.



To save time, all questions related to the proposed topic will be prepared in advance. However, questions will not be asked in sequence. The interview will be spontaneous so that the participant will be at ease. Questions will cover the following topics: biographical data, EE and retention. The researcher will make use of a tape recorder (audio) when interviewing participants.

The researcher will ask permission from the participant before the beginning of a digital recording (Maree, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, the researcher will take notes. As soon as the interview is over, the researcher will listen to the recording and identify gaps (Maree, 2016). A written record of what was said will be prepared as soon as possible for data analysis (Maree, 2016). The transcription will be prepared by the transcriber.

### **What is the nature of my participation in this study?**

Participants will share their experiences regarding EE and retention. The researcher will make use of a tape recorder (audio) when interviewing participants. Questions that will be asked are as follows:

*What are the staff experiences on engagement in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*

*What are the staff experiences on retention in a Polokwane based telecommunications organisation?*

### **Questions asked during the interview:**

1. How do you understand employee engagement?
2. What contribution do you want to make for the organisation?



3. Please indicate the correct answer below:

Years of working experience:

Age: 18-22  23-30  31-40  41-50  51-65

Male:  Female:

### **Include who will be involved - inclusion criteria**

Participants should be employees working in Polokwane for the same employer. It would follow that equal number of line managers and their subordinates will be chosen (For instance, three managers and three subordinates). Participants should (at the time of the interview) be working on a managerial level (level two) or a subordinate level (level one). Participation is voluntary. Specifically, participants should be eighteen years of age or older. All potential participants must be able to speak English. This implies that, there will be no interpreter.

Therefore, the study will develop an EE model for companies operating in the telecommunications industry. This further implies that organisation A and its employees will benefit from the study. Additionally, the study may also help other companies within the South African telecommunications industry to retain their employees, engaging them to alleviate labour turnover. The inputs and findings may be used internationally.

We do not foresee that you and/or the organisation will experience any negative consequences by allowing its' employees to take part in the interviews. The researcher(s) undertake to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual.




We would like to request to use the organisation's boardroom when doing the interviews. Specifically, hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at stand number [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Moreover, hard copies will be shredded, and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software programme.

The research will be reviewed and approved by the < research ethics chairperson of the CAES General Ethics Review Committee, [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. The primary researcher, Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana, can be contacted during office hours at [REDACTED]. The study leader, < Dr J C Diedericks, Senior Lecturer, Deputy CoD: Human Resource Development, Department of Human Resource Management>, can be contacted during office hours at [REDACTED].

Kind Regards

Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana

Signature: 





## APPENDIX B

### RETURN SLIP FOR THE ORGANISATION

09 May 2019

#### Organisation's consent to participate in this study

Title: Staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study

I, [REDACTED] on behalf of [REDACTED] (MTN) Proprietary Limited, agree that Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana has discussed with me about research that she needs conduct using the [REDACTED] staff as participants in order to fulfil the requirements for her Masters dissertation.

I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

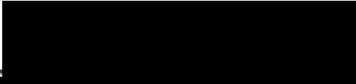
[REDACTED]

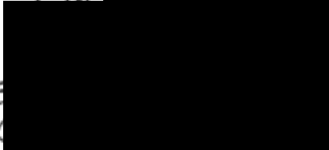
I understand that participation is voluntary and that [REDACTED] is free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

Please note that feedback will be required by the organisation [REDACTED] [REDACTED] before submission of the dissertation and that our organisation's participation will be kept confidential.

I agree to the recording of the qualitative in-depth interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

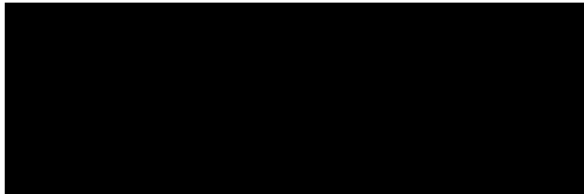
Participant Name & Surname  (please print and sign this page)

Participant Signature  Date 10/05/2019

Researcher's Name & Surname Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana

Researcher's signature  Date 10 May 2019

Warm regards,



## APPENDIX C

### REQUEST LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANT

#### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Ethics clearance reference number: **2019\_HRM\_005**

Research permission reference number: **2019\_HRM\_005**

18 June 2019

Title: Staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study

**Dear Prospective Participant**

#### ***Student research project***

My name is Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana and I am doing research with Dr Hanneli Diedericks, a Senior Lecturer, *Deputy CoD: Human Resource Development* in the Department of Human Resource Management towards Master of Commerce in Business Management (Full Dissertation) specializing in Human Resources Management at the University of South Africa. Student number 45064350. We have funding from Division Student Funding, UNISA for degree purpose. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study



## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The main aim of the study was the need to understand the staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company.

## WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO PARTICIPATE?

The researcher works for organisation A and will maintain professionalism always. Again, the researcher will have an advantage to gain trust from participants as she works with them. The researcher expects to interview approximately six participants out of seventeen potential participants, but the final number of participants will be determined by the richness and depth of data that will be collected.

## WHAT IS THE NATURE OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will share their experiences regarding EE and retention. The researcher will make use of a tape recorder (audio) when interviewing participants. Questions that will be asked are as follows:

### Main research questions:

*What are the staff experiences on engagement in a Polokwane based telecommunication company?*

*What are the staff experiences on retention in a Polokwane based telecommunication company?*

### Questions to be asked during the interview

- 1. How do you understand employee engagement?*
- 2. What contribution do you want to make for the company?*



3. Please indicate the correct answer below:

Years of working experience:

Age: 18-22  23-30  31-40  41-50  51-65

Male:  Female:

### **CAN I WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY EVEN AFTER HAVING AGREED TO PARTICIPATE?**

Participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Participating in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

The study will develop an EE model for companies operating in the telecommunications industry. This further implies that organisation A and its employees will benefit from the study. Additionally, the study may also help other companies within the South African telecommunications industry to retain their employees, engaging them to alleviate labour turnover. The inputs and findings may be used internationally.

### **ARE THERE ANY NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR ME IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT?**

There are no risks or side-effects to the potential participants



## **WILL THE INFORMATION THAT I CONVEY TO THE RESEARCHER AND MY IDENTITY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Your answers will be given a code number, or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings.

Transcriber will have access to the data and these individuals will maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality agreement. Please note that confidentiality agreements will be submitted to the Research Ethics Review Committee for consideration. Your answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, and members of the Research Ethics Review Committee. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Please note that anonymous data may be used for other purposes, such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. However, privacy will be protected in any publication of the information.

## **HOW WILL THE RESEARCHER(S) PROTECT THE SECURITY OF DATA?**

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet at [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] ay, Polokwane, 0700 for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. Moreover, hard copies will be shredded, and/or electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer using a relevant software programme.



**WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There will be no payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise.

**HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICS APPROVAL?**

Yes, this study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Economics Management and Sciences, UNISA. However, a copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish. Ethics clearance reference number: **2019\_HRM\_005**

**HOW WILL I BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS/RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH?**

[Redacted] Glenrose  
[Redacted]  
[Redacted] the research has [Redacted]  
[Redacted] Deputy CoD: Human Resource Development,  
Department of Human Resource Management, [Redacted]  
[Redacted]

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Signature.....

Name Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana



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## APPENDIX D

### RETURN SLIP FOR THE PARTICIPANT (CONSENT)

#### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.

I have had enough opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable).

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified.

I agree to the recording of the in-depth interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.



Participant Name & Surname..... (please print)

Participant Signature.....Date.....

Researcher's Name & Surname Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana

Researcher's signature  Date 18 June 2019



## APPENDIX E

### COPY OF ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



#### UNISA HRM ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date 21 May 2019

Dear Mrs Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana

**Decision: Ethics Approval from  
June 2019 to December 2021**

NHREC Registration # : (if applicable)

ERC Reference # :  
2019\_HRM\_005

Name : Mrs G.M. Kekana  
Student: #45064350

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs G.M Kekana  
E-mail address, telephone # Glenrose.Kekana@mtn.com

**Supervisor (s):** Name: Dr J.C Diedericks  
E-mail address, telephone # diedejc@unisa.ac.za , 012 429 2613

**Working title of**

Staff Experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study

**Qualification:** MCom

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa HRM Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for Mrs G.M Kekana for 3 years.

*The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the HRM Ethics Review Committee on 21 May 2019 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.
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 HRM Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.



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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 field work activities may continue after the expiry date December 2021. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*

*The reference number 2019\_HRM\_005 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Signature

Chair of DREC : Prof IL Potgieter



Signature

Executive Dean : Prof MT Mogale



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## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Ethics clearance reference number: **2019\_HRM\_005**

Research permission reference number: **2019\_HRM\_005**

Title: staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study

#### **Before the one on one in-depth interview starts,**

- The researcher had set rules of respectful communication.
- Ask **each participant** involved to set aside personal opinions about each other.
- Ask **each participant** to engage in active listening without interruption.
- Ask **each participant** to ask for clarity where there is a need.

Lastly, encourage **each** participant come up with a solution (Ellis & Toney-Butler, 2019).

#### **Main research questions:**

*What are the staff experiences on engagement in a Polokwane based telecommunication company?*


*What are the staff experiences on retention in a Polokwane based telecommunication company?*

#### **Questions to be asked during the interview**

**Researcher:** *How do you understand employee engagement?*

**Participant:**

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**Researcher:** *What contribution do you want to make for the company?*

**Participant:**

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3. Please indicate the correct answer below:

Years of working experience:

Age: 18-22  23-30  31-40  41-50  51-65

Male:  Female:

Comments:

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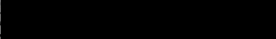
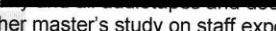
## APPENDIX G

### TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

#### CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

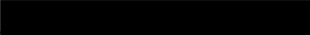
##### Transcription Services

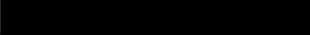
Staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study

I,  transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regard to  and documentation received from Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana related to her master's study on staff experiences on engagement and retention in Polokwane's telecommunication company: A phenomenological study. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana;
3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Glenrose Mokgaetji Kekana in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed)  \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature  \_\_\_\_\_

Date  \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX H

### VERBATIM EXTRACTS SUPPORTING MAIN THEMES AND EMERGENT THEMES

#### Employee engagement and employee retention in organisation A (main themes and emergent themes)

Employee engagement in organisation A	
Main themes	Verbatim extracts from interviews
Communication	<p>“So, basically that would cover how the organisation filters information through to their employees. There should be a <b>consultative engagement</b> with employees for decisions that involve employees, meaning that whatever decision that involves the employees, should be discussed with the employees and the organisation before there can be any decisions that would be made (Palesa:1). There should be an <b>open-door policy</b>, meaning that from top to bottom there should be that level of communication where in there is an open-door policy (Palesa:2). I can go to the CEO office and interact with them. There should be <b>transparency</b>” (Palesa:3).</p> <p>“So it ... for me to be ... to see that our engagement with any person is efficient it’s <b>openness</b>” (Snoopy:1).</p> <p>“My understanding about the engagement, the core thing is about <b>communication</b> (Vhusi:1). Meaning communication to the ... <b>between the employer and the employees</b>. If I can break it down in terms of the employer and employees ne, <b>one of the most important thing is for the management or Executive ne, to communicate with the lower level staff so that the organisation can have the one common vision and understanding</b>. So, it is a matter of <b>Executive ne,</b></p>

	<p>to cascade the information to the lower level so the ... so we understand. Just on a light note, engagement as well it can be engagement on working together, to achieve one common thing, it can be we engage this staff to participate on what you could it can be the foundation where we go out and donate ... like ... we call it bring it back to the community of our Northern Region (Vhusi:2). It is also an engagement because we need to organise lot of things and we need to have the same understanding. It can be also an engagement between the HR and the staff, as well” (Vhusi:3).</p> <p>“Supervised, almost like every day or whenever it's about an employee knowing their responsibilities and doing their responsibilities according to the job requirements, obviously performing responsibilities with enthusiasm, with commitment and basically putting the organisation goals or the organisation's interest above their own (Lerato:1). The staff can come up with ideas and see that this is because they are the people on the ground level (Lerato:2). They're the people who are communicating with everyone ... every day of our lives. We go ... you go home, you interact with the family, the family they'll tell you about data. What ... what ... being child ... what. We get to experience that, you know and I would say that every day we are the living brand of our organisation, where the ambassadors of the organisation, so is important to engage the staff and say okay this is what's happening in them. How about we implement ABCD, then see if it will work. I think that's the only problem that the management have. Not only that, it's just one of the problems that management maybe are failing to ... to do as management, so communication is key, again trust again, honesty, transparency very, very important so that everybody can be on the same level” (Lerato:3).</p>
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	<p>“I think the most important one that I want talk about, which I think is being ignored, is the whole process is <b>change management</b> (MM:1). Management should not assume that everybody's on the same level of understanding. <b>Organisation should invest in face to face engagement</b> avoid the email notifications (MM:2). <b>Staff really need that assurance.</b> Management to inform staff about little changes” (MM:3).</p> <p>“So and I think that is where <b>communication through management staff is important</b>, yeah” (Pearl:1).</p> <p>“I believe employee engagement would be <b>management of the organisation, engaging with the employees</b>” (Sandra:1).</p>
Motivation	<p>“Moreover, it is the level of <b>enthusiasm, dedication, motivation, emotional commitment and passion the employee has towards his or her job.</b> Basically, here it talks about <b>staff being motivated</b> without being ... being pushed or without being” (Lerato:4).</p> <p>“To me, I think employee engagement is the <b>commitment employees have in the organisation</b> (Pearl:2).</p> <p>“To find out from the <b>employees whether they have any ideas to better implement</b> the ideas of the ... of management” ” (Sandra:2).</p>
Relationship	<p>“Okay my definition of employee engagement would mean, a <b>relationship between an organisation and its employees</b>” (Palesa:4).</p> <p>“Sometimes it will put you were to the personal level that no, I've got a problem, <b>I've got kids, my daughter or my son is not feeling well</b>, you know, I'll be late,</p>

	<p>something like that. Or this, been admitted he's got problem you know, then you need to communicate to your superior, so they can understand why maybe because once you are affected at home, probably be, there is high changes of you may perform low, because you are not hundred percent" (Vhusi:4)</p> <p>"Employee engagement according to my understanding, is the effect of the relationship between the organisation and its employees" (Lerato:5).</p> <p>"Okay, the way I understand employee engagement, it's got ... it's got lots of faces in it and I think the most important one that I want to talk about, which I think is being ignored, the ... the whole process is change management, the way I see it is that though communication is not enough also on this ... on the changes which are happening, which makes engagement of staff to ... not to be like satisfactorily engaged (MM:5). So, I think what the organisation is doing currently is ignoring the change management part, which basically creates a lot of fear and panic among staff due to the fact that there were not really in the ... they were not really the ... the changes that are happening when it communicated sufficiently" (MM:6).</p>
<b>Employee retention in organisation A</b>	
<b>Main themes</b>	<b>Verbatim extracts from interviews</b>
Interest	<p>"The contribution pertaining to the retentions in the organisation, if I were the business owner, I will ensure that my employees feel valued, you need to ensure that there is a trust relationship between the employer and the employees by doing that you'd be listening to their ideas, valuing their opinions (Palesa:5). I think most of all, the core basic would be hiring the right people in the right positions. I think</p>

	<p>that would be the basic or the fundamental basic of ... of all covering retentions” (Palesa:6).</p> <p>“So, for us to be <b>accurate in our daily task</b> every day, it’s very important (Snoopy:2). Because <b>customer service is very important</b>. For as long as our customer service are not on point, we cannot ... we cannot contribute to that (Snoopy:3). So, when we ... because we are human beings we do make mistakes, but when that’s why for me ne, HR in overall ne, it’s a very big task, confidentiality. <b>That’s the first thing when I see HR, confidentiality</b>” (Snoopy:4).</p> <p>“<b>Transparency and honesty</b> (Lerato:6). Transparency is very vital in the organisation and honesty. And then, <b>leaders also who trust their employees</b>, very important as well because the minute you trust your employee, you'll be able to assign maybe like tasks to them because you know that you can trust them” (Lerato:7).</p> <p>“I want to <b>add value</b> by working to the best of my ability” (Pearl:3).</p>
Health and welfare	<p>“As part of my retentions, I would offer them benefits, more over including <b>health benefits</b>, because in the lifestyle that we living at, there is a lot of sicknesses, so you need to insure that your employees are in the right space to be able to make contributions to the organisation, they are in a healthy position (Palesa:7). And at the same time, most importantly, <b>creating a balance from work to home</b>” (Palesa:8).</p> <p>“The organisation has to make sure that they develop the staff within <b>flexibility</b> (Lerato:8). In each organisation,</p>

	<p>it is very vital <b>cultural diversity</b>, accepting each and every one of us according to whatever preferences ... cultural preferences” (Lerato:9).</p> <p>“Me ensuring that whatever is put before me to deliver, I deliver to the best of my ability and <b>be supportive to the team</b> in ensuring that we make the goals of the organisation a success” (Pearl:4).</p>
Development	<p>“I would be creating a great working environment for the employees and as part of retentions, I would have a system wherein there is <b>job rotation</b> (Palesa:9). Job rotation, meaning that if there’s opportunities in the organisation, you would be able to take from the pool of the organisation, meaning that you’d be able to uplift your employees, rather than going outside of the organisation to bring people in, you would work with the existing employees that you have in terms of uplifting them, you offer them <b>mentorship, career development</b>” (Palesa:10)</p> <p>“A <b>classroom training</b> or a morning training, once in three months. So, <b>we would like to be more involved in travelling to the certain stores, so we can check up on these things and where there is mistakes, we can rectify it immediately</b>” (Snoopy:5).</p> <p>“First of all, I’ll talk about <b>career development</b> (Lerato:10). The organisation has to make sure that they develop the staff within <b>flexibility</b>” (Lerato:11).</p> <p>“Basically retain employees knowing that when I work for this organisation, I get treated, especially in the bank, in the everything, a lot of other places in the car buying and all the other places. So ... so basically that is what should be done also. <b>But important thing again another thing will be to promote internally because what is happening is that the ... the ... the strategy at the top currently says, we</b></p>

	<p>should promote internally (MM:7). That is what is being done in all other ... all other places. But then we don't see that strategy being carried down at the regional level because yeah, the CEO is saying the organisation should promote internally, but I don't see that happening we see, we don't see that, we just see people are coming from outside, and not that it's wrong, but it's good for diversity</p> <p>(MM:8). But on the organisation said we should promote internally; it should be consistent. It should be, that shouldn't be that others have got exceptions it should be consistent and then ... and there should be accountability in case where there's non-compliance because yeah”</p> <p>(MM:9).</p>
Monetary value	<p>“Like in a situation whereby commission, with trade commission as a retention, because we are benefiting out of that, benefiting in terms of money (Vhusi:5). Yes, it's good but when there is no commission then there is no performance, you see. So, it goes back even on the engagement as well because that retention is a one of the most important thing in the organisation. Because if it's a good retention, staff are happy, the moral are happy. Bonuses are one of the retention in you now, because it's a bonus, you see. It's money that's why all in all it drives back to money (Vhusi:6). So, and also, retention in terms of security. Security, I mean house allowance, you understand, because we need, we all need security, we all need shelter (Vhusi:7). So, so once there's maybe sort of house allowance, it makes us to feel comfortable, to feel at home, to feel motivated to go back to work (Vhusi:8). And they must reduce data man. Reducing data. So people ... the users can afford” (Vhusi:9).</p>

	<p>“So, trust is important and good communication obviously communication amongst the employees and leaders or management and then recognition, achievements” (Lerato:12).</p> <p>“They should understand their employees in order to retain them because now at this rate, the package are good but then if somebody comes and then they give you liquidity, they give you cash in the hand, they give you a good net income, because that is what you want” (MM:10).</p> <p>“... it is important but it's not really a big priority, so to retain, they should start there and they should start there, give people liquidity so they can resolve their short term debt commitments or you get what I'm saying? So ... so ... so that is ... that is one thing they should do. The other thing is that you need this kind of flexibility. Also, same thing with this pension I mean it's things like you are where you can use your pension as a ... to fund your bond. So, basically they should go back to that thing and rather have more controls on it. That's another thing again to retain because things of housing allowance that I see, but also many companies don't really do that nowadays, which ... which is fair enough (MM:11). But they should allow that flexibility of saying, should you want to take your bond now because you are young ... your pension basically because you are young and put it in your bond, let them allow you that so that you can avoid paying all these high interests (MM:12). It speaks to the same issue of liquidity again with pensions, so that it's [Inaudible 00:14:27] let it be flexible too, in terms of allowing to (MM:13). So, so basically, they need that. And also, that retention again, there are also certain things that they can do again regarding the special deals for the employees. I mean there used to be deals where the</p>
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organisation will speak to sort of, multi choice and say the employees of this companies get a discounted rate. Those kinds of things. Issues where maybe they speak to Nedbank and say, if you open a, account with Nedbank, you're going to get free this, because you're M ... can I say name of the organisation? Because you're an ... employee, then you can get this and that benefit a lot of companies. Issues that they can have with the car dealers with McCarthy and, yeah, McCarthy Barloworld. They can have ... lot of companies have got that from my experience in the organisation that you come from where you say. If you buy with them, they got a special sales person who is a key account manager for that and when you buy with them you get ... you get that attention and don't go to anyone into the floor and you get a discount. It's ... its ... its sure case. I mean the same I thing they try to do with the insurance. I think they did it with AON. I don't know what happened if it was still in there, but it's the same thought it was coming right then they were saying that they should've taken it not only to insurance to all other ... they should've taken that kind of deals to all other faces where employees is involved whether it's car buying. I was banking services, all the kind of whether it's television, I mean whether it's that television be it Netflix, Showmax, those kinds of things. I think that with the power that they've got with the number of employees that they've got, they can actually negotiate very good deals. They've shown it with ... I mean, the thing that is good is with the insurance of for ... for ... for funerals, where staff are paying very little because of the power which come through their pay ... the payroll and then they get the benefits" (MM:14).

"I think a higher pay" (Sandra:3).

Red flags (concerns)  
from both EE and ER

“Now to engage with management or with my supervisor or any other person in this thing. We need to have a very communication where it’s an approachable. And there is at the time, but there come times that are very difficult for us to communicate because **from upwards downwards there is no communication**” (Snoopy:6).

“No. It’s very difficult sometimes because on our side as workers or staff, **we tend to wait for a employer to give us something**, so then this is where we can say you know this is a retention (Vhusi:10). And we can also help the organisation as well you know, like reporting fraud. **You are reporting fraud to the employer**, beside us only benefiting. Because if you report such things it also helps the organisation as well” (Vhusi:11).


**“Leaders, we can develop the skills of others because if you have leaders that actually don't care about others then you're going to get people who are self-centred always, it's all about them that they want their light to shine upon them (Lerato:13).** And then, you know because honestly **this staff is ... is ... it's demoralised ... demoralised in ... in many, many aspects.** I think, it's important for the organisation. **Staff engagement, it is important**, and we find that in our organisation ... in many organisations that engagement is not even priory, it's not even like staff member ... management just come up with it, with whatever then policies or whatever then they just say okay fine” (Lerato:14) .

“The organisation to retain staff. I think firstly in this organisation, or maybe actually in this industry, **the average age of employees**, it's, it's less than 50 so long is less than 40 is the ... its very young people working in this

	<p>industry (MM:15). So, firstly from the start, the way the organisation in my opinion is structured their pension benefits it's ... it's ... it's because they take almost 20% of ... of the, of a basic into pensions. So, basically for me that is not fair because the standards ... or I mean even from government or any other party status, they take 7% or 7.5 maxim as pension. So, that's what the start is cause now you better and that ... that pension of mine for my basic, you put it in a pension that time. I'm only less than 30, I can get that thing after 35 years. When I'm 65, then that thing grows at less than inflation" (MM:16)</p> <p>“... there's history of retrenchment and which ... which comes with the ... with these changes and whenever there are changes that are come. People first go into panic mode because of the historical experiences” (MM:17).</p> <p>“I'm not even looking to stay in the organisation anymore. I'm looking to get out of the organisation, so I'm not aligned with that question at all” (Sandra:4).</p>
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## APPENDIX I

### Turnitin Digital Receipt



## Digital Receipt

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STAFF EXPERIENCES ON ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION IN  
POLORWANI'S TELECOMMUNICATION COMPANY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
STUDY

by

GLENROSE MOKGAETJI KEKANA

submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

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In the subject

Business Management

at the

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