THE INFLUENCE OF TEAM DIALOGUE SESSIONS ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

by

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DECLARATION

Student number: 42944066

I declare that **THE INFLUENCE OF TEAM DIALOGUE SESSIONS ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature   **Date**

(Michael Andrew Warwick Seymour)

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Abstract

Orientation: This study is about team dialogue and how dialogue in teams may impact on levels of employee engagement, especially how this can be applied and used in Industrial & Organisational Psychology.

Research purpose: The aim of this study was to investigate the influence that dialogue sessions in work teams may have on employee engagement.

Motivation for the study: The manager and first-line superior play a crucial role in facilitating and enabling the connection between the employee and the organisation and how this impacts on employee engagement. When practised successfully, dialogue may have an influence on the level of employee engagement, as it allows groups to move beyond any one individual's understanding to gain new insights and to create ideas in ways that could not be achieved individually. It may be argued that team dialogue and relational practices could assist in improving employee engagement in the South African workplace.

Research design, approach and method: The study used a quasi-experimental approach in terms of which an experimental group was exposed to an organisational development intervention of team dialogues over a period of time and then compared to a control group that had not been exposed to the organisational development team dialogue intervention. The main findings were reported and discussed, and recommendations were made.

Main findings: Team dialogues have an impact on employee engagement

Contributions/value add: This study contributes to the field of Industrial & Organisational Psychology in that it demonstrates the influence that team dialogue has on employee engagement.

Keywords: employee engagement, dialoguing, co-constructionism, organisation development, supervisory relationships, team relationships, turnover intention,

CHAPTER 1 SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to determine the influence that dialogue sessions in work teams may have on employee engagement. Chapter 1 provides the scientific orientation and background to the research. The core focus of the study and the background to the problem will be discussed. In addition, a research model will be presented, a problem statement formulated and the research questions listed. The rationale or need for the research is discussed, and the proposed contribution (value-add) that the research makes will be presented. An explanation of the paradigm perspective guiding the research will also be discussed and, finally, a delineation of the remaining chapters will conclude this chapter.

1.2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The Crabtree (2004) engagement index puts the current percentage of truly "engaged" employees at 29%. A majority of workers, 54%, falls into the "not engaged" category, while 17% are "actively disengaged". This finding should be a red flag for any organisation, as the extent of employee engagement in an organisation directly affects the bottom line (ISR Research, 2006).

Research conducted by ISR Consulting Services indicates that engaged employees are more loyal and more willing to give extra effort when the organisation needs it, and more likely to interact with customers in a way that positively influences customer satisfaction (ISR Research, 2006). Similarly, Dick (2002) indicates that individuals who identify closely with their employer's goals and values are more likely to take on a diverse range of challenging work activities, are more responsive to change, and are more motivated to direct their efforts towards organisational objectives.

Research by the Corporate Leadership Council (2004) has indicated that of the top 25 drivers of employee engagement, the most prominent is a clear connection between an employee's job and the organisation's strategy.

Ulrich (1997) draws attention to the importance of human resource (HR) practitioners acting as employee champions, finding methods to resolve demand and resource imbalances. When employees experience an imbalance between their demands and the available resources they are likely to become disengaged from their work and dissatisfied with their organisation. In contrast, when employees experience an appropriate balance of their demands and the available resources, they are better able to exercise their competencies and contribute to the organisation. Accordingly, employees are more likely to be engaged in their work and satisfied with their organisation when there is a balance between job demands and job resources (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

HR practitioners face a major ongoing challenge to enhance productivity in the workplace and must constantly strive to find ways of encouraging employees to be more committed to their employer and to increase the levels of employee engagement in the organisation.

Sartain and Finney (2003) maintain that the reality is that HR needs to identify innovative and creative behaviours to build a dynamic, lively, exciting and profitable workplace where employees will love their jobs. Those organisations that are not able to positively engage their employees in their work and in the organisation's values and objectives will not be able to realise their full potential.

According to Thomas (2002), South African organisations are often characterised by adversarial relationships, accompanied by a lack of trust and communication between individuals and groups, poor teamwork, an apparent absence of employee commitment and commitment to organisational goals, and a low intention to remain employed in the organisation.

The manager plays a crucial role in facilitating and enabling the connection between the employee and the organisation (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004). Dick (2007) stresses the important role that the first-line superior plays in employee engagement and refers to research conducted by Benkoff (1997a, cited in Dick, 2007), who found that where employees felt that their supervisors were competent, liked their management style and trusted their superiors, they shared the values of the company and were proud to be employed there.

When practised successfully, dialogue may have an influence on the level of employee engagement, as it allows groups to move beyond any one individual's understanding to gain new insights and to create ideas in ways that could not be achieved individually (Hale, 1998). Because of its centrality to team effectiveness and team learning, dialogue and the open healthy communication that allows it to occur can be considered a 'core competency' that should be aspired to by those organisations striving to maximise their potential (Hale, 1998).

A unique relationship develops among team members who enter into dialogue regularly, as they develop a deep trust that cannot help but carry over to discussions taking place in the team. They develop a richer understanding of the uniqueness of each person's point of view, and experience how larger understandings emerge by holding one's own point of view 'gently'. Part of the vision of dialogue is the assumption of a 'larger pool of meaning' accessible only to a group. This idea, while it may appear radical at first, has deep intuitive appeal for managers who have long cultivated the subtle aspects of collective inquiry (Senge, 1990).

This links directly to the question being asked by this study. Can an organisation build on and use dialogue effectively in teams as a tool to increase the levels of employee engagement? Senge's perspective seems to be that dialogue can be a powerful tool for building team learning. Such learning is viewed as "the process of aligning and developing the capacities of a team to create the results its members truly desire" (Senge, 1990, p. 53). It builds on personal mastery and shared vision – but these are not enough. People need to be able to act together. When teams learn together,

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Senge (1990) suggests, not only can there be good results for the organisation, but members will also grow more rapidly than they may have done otherwise.

David Bohm (1985, as cited in Hale, 1998), a quantum physicist turned philosopher, contributed to the emphasis on collective thought and learning. As he conceived it, dialogue would encourage the group to attend collectively, and to learn to watch for and experience its own tacit processes in action. Once noted and discussed, new ways of thinking can occur.

According to Preskill and Torres (1999), dialogue

- brings to the surface multiple points of view that need to be addressed and negotiated

- helps make individual and hidden agendas visible

- allows team members to develop shared meanings that are important for further inquiry activities

- contributes to building a sense of community and connection

- illuminates the organisation's culture, policies and procedures

- increases the likelihood that learning at the team level will lead to learning throughout the organisation

- enables undiscussables to be brought to light and addressed

- facilitates individual and team learning.

Taking the above discussion into account it follows that if teamwork or team functioning influences or has an effect on employee engagement, it would be of great benefit for an organisation to attempt to ensure that work teams are functioning optimally and effectively. Effective communication – dialoguing – in the work team is an essential component to ensure team learning, a sense of community, cooperation

among team members and team effectiveness. The point of departure for this study was the need to measure the effectiveness of the intervention of team dialogue sessions in increasing the levels of employee engagement in the company.

This study will contribute to a better understanding of the way in which co-constructive team learning through dialogues on the specific drivers of employee engagement within a small group influences levels of employee engagement. Should it be possible to positively influence and increase the level of employee engagement in an organisation through these active team dialogue sessions, this would be of great benefit to that organisation in terms of increased productivity, or discretionary effort, as well as the intention of employees to remain employed by the organisation. Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) state that engaged workers produce more, make more money for the company, and create emotional engagement and loyal customers. They contribute to good working environments where people are productive, ethical and accountable. They stay with the organisation longer and are more committed to quality and growth than are the other two groups of non-engaged and actively disengaged workers.

1.3.   PROPOSED CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

This study will contribute to a better understanding of the way in which an organisational development intervention, which was designed and implemented to improve teamwork and co-constructive team learning through dialogues on the specific drivers of employee engagement within a small group, influenced levels of employee engagement. Should it be possible to positively influence and increase the level of employee engagement in an organisation through these active team dialogue sessions, this would be of great benefit to that organisation in terms of increased productivity, or discretionary effort, as well as the intention of employees to remain employed by the organisation.   Team dialogue enables employees to better understand themselves, their work colleagues and their team, their supervisor and

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their organisation. The ability to test and understand the relationship, and the influence this may have on employee engagement, will also make a real and positive contribution to the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

1.4. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Until recently, surprisingly little academic and empirical research has been conducted on a concept that has been made so popular in the publications of consulting firms and in practitioner journals. Many of the writings on employee engagement have not been based on theory and empirical research but rather on what is being practised (Robinson et al., 2004; Saks, 2006). According to Macey and Schneider (2008), "[t]he academic community has been slow to jump on the practitioner engagement bandwagon and empirical research that has appeared on the topic in refereed outlets leaves little consideration for rigorously testing the theory underlying the construct". A number of different definitions can be drawn from research as well as from the practice-driven literature (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Similarly, very little research has been conducted on interventions that will influence employee engagement, especially the influence that team dialoguing in work teams may have on improving levels of employee engagement.

1.4.1. Primary research question

The primary research question for the study is to determine the influence of the organisational development intervention of work team dialogue sessions and its effectiveness in increasing the levels of employee engagement.

1.4.2. Specific questions

1.4.2.1.   What is meant by employee engagement?

1.4.2.2.   What is meant by team dialogues?

1.4.2.3.   Does dialoguing in teams improve employee engagement?

1.5.   PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective of the study was to determine whether the implementation of an organisational development intervention of team dialogue sessions in work teams has an influence on the levels of employee engagement.

This primary research objective is subdivided into theoretical and empirical objectives as outlined below:

1.5.1. Theoretical objectives

The objective of this research was to conduct a literature study on the existing body of knowledge on employee engagements and team dialogue/dialoguing in work teams in order to

- define and describe the key concept of employee engagement, with an emphasis on a theoretical framework and the dimensions of this construct

- define and describe the key concept of team dialogues/dialoguing in work teams, with an emphasis on a theoretical framework and the dimensions of this construct

- theoretically determine the influence of team dialogues/dialoguing in work teams on employee engagement.

1.5.2. Empirical objectives

The empirical objectives of the study were to

- determine levels of employee engagement within this population and sample prior to the implementation of the organisational development intervention

- conduct team dialogue sessions in work teams

- determine levels of employee engagement in this population and sample after the implementation of the organisational development intervention

- determine the influence of the organisational development intervention of team dialogues on employment engagement

1.5.3. Corollary objective

The corollary objective of the study was to determine the biographical differences of employee engagement by ethnicity, gender, age, length of service and level between the study and control groups.

1.6.   PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

Mouton and Marais (1993) refer to paradigms as collections of meta-theoretical, theoretical and methodological beliefs that have been selected from the intellectual climate and the market of intellectual resources of a particular discipline. This research focuses on the discipline of industrial psychology and the sub-discipline of organisational psychology and organisational development.

1.6.1. Industrial and organisational psychology

Industrial and organisational psychology can be defined as the scientific study of people in their work environment, and includes the application of psychological principles, theory and research to the work setting (Landy & Conte, 2004; Riggio, 2009). Industrial and organisational psychology has two objectives: firstly, to conduct research in an effort to increase knowledge and understanding of human work behaviour; and secondly, to apply that knowledge to improve work behaviour, the work environment and the psychological conditions of workers.

1.6.2. Organisational psychology

Organisational psychology is described by Ivanchevich and Matteson (1996) as

> … the study of human behaviour, attitudes, and performance within an organisational setting; drawing on theory, methods, and principles from such disciplines as psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology to learn about individual perceptions, values, learning capacities, and actions while working in groups and within the total organization; analyzing the external environment's effect on the organisation and its resources, missions, objectives and strategies. (p. 7)

Robbins, Odendaal, and Roodt (2003, p. 7), on the other hand, regard organisational behaviour as "a field of study that investigates the influence that individuals, groups and structure have on behaviour within organisations for the purpose of applying such knowledge towards improving an organisation's effectiveness".

1.6.3. Organisational development intervention

An organisational development intervention can be defined as a planned process of organisational change. It is a "social and or behavioural strategy, method or technique for achieving change" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 98). In the context of this research, an organisational development intervention refers to the process of designing and implementing the intervention of work team dialogue sessions.

1.6.4. Post-positivistic paradigm

Positivist researchers believe that they can reach a full understanding based on experiment and observation. Accordingly, concepts and knowledge are held to be the product of straightforward experience, and are interpreted through rational deduction (Willis, 2007).

On the other hand, post-positivist research principles emphasise meaning and the creation of new knowledge, and are able to support committed social movements, in other words, those that aspire to change the world and contribute towards social justice (Ryan, 2006). A critical post-positivist stance takes the view that we cannot merely aggregate data in order to arrive at an overall 'truth', with this stance stressing the importance of values, passion and politics in research. Post-positivist research requires an ability to be able to see the whole picture, and to stand back in order to have a distanced view or an overview. The objectivity expressed by post-positivism differs from "just the facts", devoid of context – it does not imply judging from nowhere (Eagleton, 2003, p. 135). According to the post-positivist approach, when studying a complex phenomenon it is necessary to emphasise the possibilities, multiple points of view and perspectives, and the different variables that may affect the proceeding of the whole (Lor, 2011). Postpositivism shares with positivism the assumption that there is a single reality and that this is external to the observer. This reality is not absolute,

however, but probabilistic and provisional; it is therefore much more nuanced in its truth claims and researchers can be influenced by what they observe (Willis, 2007).

1.6.5. The ontological dimension

This dimension refers to the study of being or reality (Mouton, 2006). The ontological dimension of the research therefore refers to the reality that is being investigated and this reality becomes the research domain of the social sciences (Mouton & Marais, 1994). The research domain can be recognised as humankind in all its diversity, which encompasses human activities, characteristics, institutions, behaviour and products (Mouton & Marais, 1994). Although objective social facts exist independently of and externally to human beings, these facts are subject to uncertainty and probability. Cause-and-effect relationships do exist but it is not always possible to 'know' these relationships in their entirety. Human fallibility will always create imperfections but there remains the basic belief that a 'reality' is out there waiting to be discovered (Willis, 2007).

The methodology used in this paradigm aims to acquire information in more natural settings, collecting more situational information and determining the meanings and purposes that individuals ascribe to their actions. Post-positivism challenges the traditional notion of the absolute truth of knowledge, and recognises that social scientists cannot be 'positive' about the claims of knowledge when studying the behaviour and actions of humans.

One of the most common forms of post-positivism is a philosophy referred to as "critical realism" (Willis, 2007). This study will follow a quantitative research paradigm which is based on post-positivism and takes scientific explanation to be nomothetic (i.e. based on universal laws). Its main aims are to measure the social world objectively and to test hypotheses. In terms of methodology, the quantitative paradigm emulates the physical sciences in that questions or hypotheses are stated and subjected to empirical testing to verify them. Quantitative researchers use deductive reasoning,

universal propositions and generalisations as a point of departure, whereas qualitative research aims to understand phenomena within a particular context. The quantitative researcher sees him/herself as detached from, not as part of, the object that s/he studies. The researcher can therefore be objective – s/he does not influence the study object and is not influenced by it. In contrast, the qualitative researcher is subjective because s/he interacts with the subject (object of investigation) (Schurink & Schurink, 2001). From the above it is clear that this study falls within the quantitative paradigm.

1.6.6. The epistemological dimension

The epistemological dimension is driven by the search for the truth or truthful knowledge (Mouton, 2006). The ideas, assumptions and beliefs associated with post-positivism constitute what is referred to as an epistemological base (Ryan, 2006). According to Ryan (2006), an essential part of a post-positivist approach is investigating your own epistemologies and having an understanding of how they affect your research. This dimension therefore strives for the validity, demonstrability, reliability and replicability of research results (Mouton & Marais, 1994). This study endeavours to establish the truth through the application of a good research design and valid quantitative results.

1.6.7. The methodological dimension

This dimension refers to the 'how' of social science research (Mouton & Marais, 1994). It can be defined as the logic of applying scientific methods in the study of reality (Mouton & Marais, 1994). In view of the fact that researchers are fundamentally concerned with finding, discovering and disclosing the truth, they are committed to the use of methods and procedures that enhance research validity (Mouton, 2006). This study endeavoured to collect data through the use of questionnaires; subsequently

data analysis was achieved through statistical analysis, and inference through data interpretation and deductive reasoning.

The model for social science research presupposes three subsystems, that is, the intellectual climate of a specific discipline (for this study industrial and organisational psychology), the market of intellectual resources in each discipline and the research process in itself. Figure 1.1 below presents an integrated model of social science research adopted from Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 22).

Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 20) conceptualise the "intellectual climate" by referring to a variety of meta-theoretical values or beliefs that are related to a particular research project. These beliefs, values and assumptions can be traced to non-scientific contexts. The collection of beliefs that has a direct bearing on the epistemic states of scientific statements is referred to as "the market of intellectual resources" and can also be denoted by their status as knowledge claims (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p. 21). Two major types of belief are involved in the understanding of the market of intellectual resources; namely, theoretical beliefs about the structure and nature of phenomena and the methodological beliefs about the nature and structure of the research process (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p. 21).

1.7. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design reflects the type of study undertaken in order to provide acceptable answers to the research problem (Mouton, 2001). The aim of the research design, according to Mouton and Marais (1993, p. 33.), is to plan and structure a given research project in such a way that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised. The design of this research is therefore structured in such a way as to best answer the research question.

The overall research design follows a typical quantitative approach where an experimental group will be compared to a control group over a period of two years in

order to measure the influence that team dialogue sessions may have on employee engagement. According to Schurink and Schurink (2001), this is type of research is based on positivism and takes scientific explanation to be nomothetic (i.e. based on universal laws). Its main aims are to measure the social world objectively and to test hypotheses.

A model of social science research can best be described as a system of theoretical sub-models composed of three interrelated subsystems; in addition, the research domain is defined within a specific discipline. These subsystems comprise (1) the intellectual climate, (2) the market of intellectual resources, and (3) the research

process. Figure 1.1 below depicts an integrated model of social science research as adopted from Mouton and Marais (1990, p. 22).
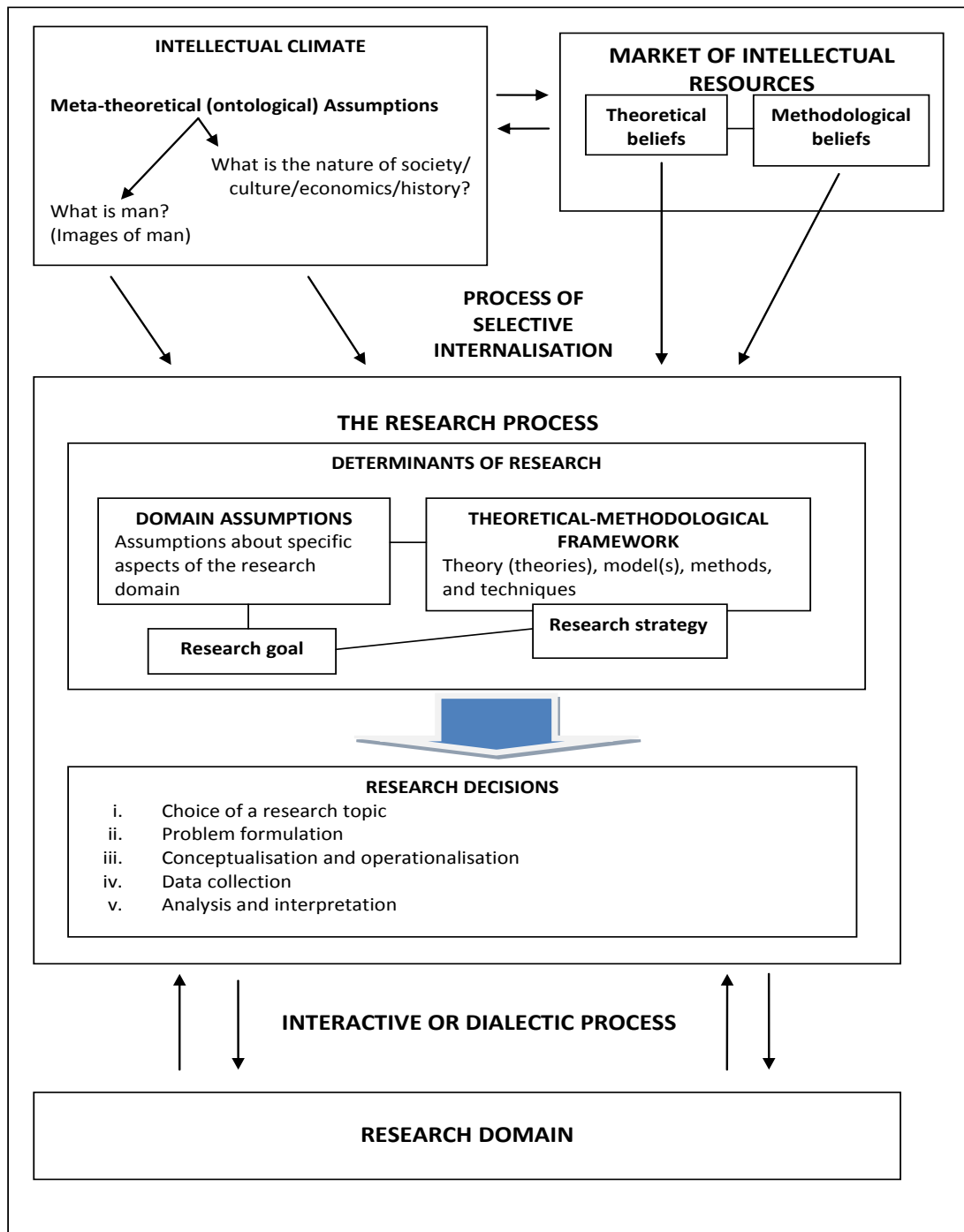
Figure 1.1. An Integrated Model of Social Science Research

1.7.1. Unit of analysis

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), the objects of an investigation are known as the units of analysis. In this study the units of analysis were the individual employees employed permanently at the ICT company that participated in the employee engagement surveys of 2008 and 2010. The influence that team dialogues had on employee engagement was investigated in an experimental group and compared to a control group that was not exposed to team dialogues. The unit of analysis for this study was the 660 individual full-time employees of the ICT company who participated in all the employee engagement surveys conducted by the company between 2008 and 2010, and who were also participants in the organisational intervention of work team dialogues.

1.7.2. Independent and dependent variables

According to Mouton and Marais (1993, p. 130), the distinction between independent and dependent variables lies in the basic cause–effect relationship that exists between specific events or phenomena.   The independent variable is the antecedent phenomenon, while the dependent variable is the consequent phenomenon. In terms of this research, the independent variable was the organisational development intervention in the form of the team dialogue sessions, while the dependent variable was the level of employee engagement that was measured by means of the survey conducted before the intervention and the subsequent survey that followed the intervention.

1.7.3. Population and sampling

The population group for this study was the 6 064 individual full-time employees of the information and communication technologies (ICT) company who participated in the employee engagement surveys conducted by the ICT company between 2008 and 2010. A personally addressed email was sent to each of these employees with the Universal Resource Locator (URL) address of the web-based online survey attached to the email. A census-based approach was used for the employee engagement surveys in order to survey all employees in the heterogenic population (everybody in the target population had an equal opportunity to participate in the survey). These surveys were conducted over a period of one month in February of each year from February 2008 to February 2010.

The participants were located in a large national ICT company and this was the source of the primary data that was required for this study. The company has offices spread throughout South Africa and employs a heterogeneous workforce of approximately 30 000 full-time and part-time employees that is representative of both genders and all race groups. All these employees are highly trained and have access to the company intranet, which is used as the main communication medium for internal communication with all employees.

1.7.4. Measuring instrument

The employee engagement scale developed by the Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) was used by the ICT company in which the study was conducted and the results of this survey will be used in this study. Both the control group and the experimental group took part in the survey and answered the same questions. This survey measured the extent of employee engagement and the drivers of employee engagement. The study will specifically focus on the drivers of employee engagement identified in the literature review, including rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived team support, and perceived supervisory

support, which may be influenced and enhanced by team dialogue. The two main outcomes that indicate the level of employee engagement are intention to leave, or turnover intention and discretionary effort, and are measured by this survey. The literature review conducted as part of this research will include an investigation into the antecedents of employee engagement and how these may be influenced by team dialogue.

1.7.5. Methods to ensure reliability and validity

According to Terre Blanche and Durheim (2002), reliability is the degree to which the research findings are repeatable; this applies to both the subjects' scores on the measures (measurement reliability) and to the outcomes of the study as a whole. Reliability is also the application of a valid measuring instrument to different groups under different conditions, resulting in the same observation (Mouton & Marais, 1994). The reliability of the observation is influenced by the researcher, the participant, the measuring instrument and the research context or the circumstances under which the study is conducted (Mouton & Marais, 1994). In this study reliability was maintained by using a web-based online survey questionnaire. The same sets of questions were used in all of the web-based online survey questionnaires conducted between February 2008 and February 2010, and the same questions were answered by both the experimental group and the control group.

Validity refers to the degree to which the research conclusions are sound (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 2002). This includes internal and external validity, measurement, and interpretative and statistical validity. Using the systematic application of research methodology and discussion with subject matter experts in the field, the study attempted to achieve results which were reliable and valid. The measuring instrument used in the study is the ICT employee engagement survey, which was conducted by the Corporate Leadership Council in 2008 and 2010 and has been validated through their research (CLC, 2004).

1.7.6. Ethical considerations

An integral part of the study entailed including a clause in the invitation letter requesting participants to participate, thus confirming that confidentiality would be assured. This reassured the participants that all information collected would be treated in the strictest confidence and that no individual responses would be revealed. Ethical considerations were also assured by regulating access to the data and not allowing individual records to be revealed. At no time were employee names and surnames stored in the database. The survey administrator was the only person with access to the survey data and was required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

1.8.   THE RESEARCH METHOD

The study was conducted in two main phases, namely, a literature review and an empirical study, and each phase included a number of steps:

1.8.1. Phase one – Literature review

A literature review was conducted into the nature and relevance of

- employee engagement

- team dialogues

- the theoretical relationship between employee engagement and work team dialogues

1.8.2. Phase two – Empirical study

An empirical study was conducted in the organisation to, firstly, determine the levels of employee engagement over a period of time and, secondly, to test the influence that the introduction of the organisational development intervention of work team dialogue sessions had on employee engagement.

This part of the study was conducted according to the following steps:

- selection and description of the population and sample

- identification of and motivation for the measuring instrument

- the data collection

The responses to each question in the web-based online survey questionnaire were captured electronically and stored directly in a database for analysis.

1.8.2.1. Data processing and analysis

Statistical analysis of the data collected via the online web-based surveys was conducted using the SPSS Windows program version 17 of SPSS International Pallant (2007).

1.8.2.2. Formulation of hypothesis

The research hypothesis was formulated in terms of the empirical study.

1.8.2.3. Reporting and interpretation of the results

The quantitative results were subsequently reported and interpretations made.

1.8.2.4. Integration of the literature study and the results of the empirical study

The results of the empirical study were then integrated with the findings of the literature review.

1.8.2.5.   Conclusions

Conclusions were formulated on the basis of the research findings.

1.8.2.6.   Limitations

A number of limitations pertaining to the research were formulated and discussed.

1.8.2.7.   Recommendations

Finally, recommendations were made on the basis of the results of the empirical study and the findings of the literature review.

1.9.   OUTLINE OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS

The layout of the remaining chapters is as follows:

Chapter 2:   Employee engagement

Chapter 3:   Team dialogue

Chapter 4:   Empirical study

Chapter 5:   Research results

Chapter 6:   Conclusions, limitations and recommendations

List of references

CHAPTER 2 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

2.1.   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the concept of employee engagement will be defined, different perspectives on the concept will be discussed and its dimensions identified, and the antecedents/drivers of employee engagement will be presented.

2.2.   DEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

According to Macey and Schneider (2008), employee engagement is considered to be a desirable condition, with an organisational purpose that connotes involvement, commitment, passion, enthusiasm, focused effort and energy. It therefore has both attitudinal and behavioural components. Macey and Schneider (2008) are further of the opinion that employee engagement can be considered from three main perspectives. Firstly, it can be viewed as state engagement, where the focus is on a psychological state (involvement, commitment, attachment or mood). Secondly, it can be viewed as trait engagement, where engagement can be regarded as an orientation or inclination in terms of which the world is experienced from a particular perspective or disposition (positive affectivity including feelings of enthusiasm). Thirdly, it may be seen as a performance construct, that is, as behavioural engagement (effort, observable behaviour, which includes prosocial and organisational citizenship behaviour [OCB]), or it can be a variation or combination of the above.

Simpson (2008) maintains that four main streams of research have emerged in the study of employee engagement. Firstly, employee engagement is conceived as personal engagement, a concept introduced by Kahn (1990) and further developed and tested by May, Gibson and Harter (2004), using a 14-item scale.

Secondly, employee engagement is conceived as the positive antithesis of burnout, a concept developed by Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) and Leiter and Maslach (2004) and measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

Thirdly, employee engagement is conceived as work engagement, a concept developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) and measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Work engagement is defined independently from job resources and positive organisational outcomes such as organisational citizenship and commitment, as a positive, fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work-related wellbeing that is the antithesis of job burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

Lastly, employee engagement is conceived and conceptualised as job involvement, satisfaction and enthusiasm, a set of motivating resources, such as support and recognition from colleagues and supervisors, performance feedback, opportunities for learning and development, and opportunities to use one's skills This concept was developed by Harter, Hayes, and Schmidt (2002) and measured using the Gallup Work Audit.

Employee engagement is defined in terms of the extent to which an employee demonstrates discretionary effort (willingness to go 'above and beyond' the call of duty), as well as their intention to remain employed by that organisation (CLC, 2004). Employee engagement includes the extent to which an employee displays rational commitment, that is, the degree to which an employee feels that managers, teams and the organisation have their interests at heart. Employee engagement also includes emotional commitment, that is, the degree to which an employee believes in, values and enjoys their job. Highly engaged employees show marked improvement in performance levels and are much less likely to leave the organisation than employees with low engagement levels. The CLC (2004) defines employee engagement as the extent to which employees commit to something or someone in their organisation, how hard they work, and how long they stay as a result of that commitment. In this study this definition was used to determine the level of employee engagement and it was the basis of the survey questionnaire that was used.

2.3. PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In this study, the following perspectives on employee engagement were considered in more depth. Each of these perspectives contain several dimensions:

2.3.1. Employee engagement as a psychological presence or personal engagement

According to Kahn (1990), employee engagement differs from other employee role constructs such as commitment, job involvement and intrinsic motivation. He suggests that while these constructs may add to the way employees perceive themselves and their work, and the relation between them, these understandings are too distant from the day-to-day process of people experiencing and behaving in their work situations. Kahn (1990, p. 694) subsequently defines employee engagement as "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Personal disengagement refers to "the uncoupling of selves from work roles; in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances" (Kahn, p. 694). Therefore, according to Kahn (1990), employee engagement is the result of being psychologically present when occupying and performing an organisational role. Kahn (1990) suggests that engagement is a multidimensional construct where employees can be emotionally engaged (psychological safety), physically engaged (psychologically available) and cognitively engaged (psychological meaningfulness), with the two major dimensions being cognitively and emotionally engaged. Workers are likely to be more engaged in situations that allow them to experience more psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety, as well as when the workers are more psychologically available (Kahn, 1990).

Rothbard (2001) defines engagement as psychological presence but explains that it involves two critical components: attention and absorption. Attention refers to

"cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role" while absorption "means being engrossed in a role and refers to the intensity of one's focus on a role" (p. 656).

Saks (2006) maintains that "although the definition and meaning of engagement in the practitioner literature often overlaps with other constructs, in the academic literature it has been defined as a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performance".

Rutledge (2005) provides the following definition of employee engagement: "Engagement is the state of being attracted, committed, and fascinated" (p. 13). Rutledge goes on to say, "[t]o be fully engaged, the three elements of the definition need to be present:

- Attracted – I want to do this.

- Committed – I am dedicated to the success of this.

- Fascinated – I love doing this". (p. 14)

Robinson et al. (2004) define engagement as "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values" and state that "[a]n engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation". Moreover, Robinson et al. aver, "[t]he organisation must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee".

May et al. (2004) conducted an empirical study building on the contributions of Kahn's understanding of employee engagement. Subsequently, they designed a scale containing items that reflect each of the three components of engagement put forward by Kahn, namely, cognitive, emotional and physical engagement. The results of their study support Kahn's theory and they found that psychological meaningfulness,

psychological safety and psychological availability are significantly related to engagement.

Psychological meaningfulness is defined here as the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards (May et al., 2004). Victor Frankl (as cited in May et al., 2004) argued that individuals have a primary motive to seek meaning in their work. Consequently, lack of meaning in one's work can lead to alienation or 'disengagement' from one's work.

Psychological safety is defined as "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990). Individuals feel 'safe' when they perceive that they will not suffer if they express their true selves at work. In a safe environment, individuals understand the boundaries surrounding acceptable behaviours. However, unsafe conditions exist when situations are ambiguous, unpredictable and threatening.

Psychological availability is defined as an individual's belief that s/he has the physical, emotional or cognitive resources to engage the self at work (Kahn, 1990). In essence, this refers to the readiness, or confidence, of a person to engage in his/her work role given that individuals are engaged in many other life activities. May et al. (2004) also found that job enrichment and role fit were positive predictors of psychological meaningfulness, as were co-worker relations and supervisor relations, whereas co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors of psychological safety while resource availability was a positive and outside activities a negative predictor of psychological availability.

According to May et al. (2004), job involvement is the result of a cognitive judgement about the need-satisfying abilities of the job and is tied to one's self-image. Employee engagement is therefore concerned with how individuals involve themselves in the performance of their work role. In addition to this, employee engagement involves the active use of emotions and behaviours as well as cognitions. May et al. (2004, p. 12) also suggest that "engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job involvement

in that individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs".

2.3.2. Employee engagement as a positive antithesis of burnout

Burnout researchers are of the opinion that employee engagement is the opposite or positive antithesis of burnout. Burnout is defined as a psychological syndrome that occurs in response to chronic job stressors and is characterised by exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Maslach et al. (2001), employee engagement is characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy, which are the direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. Employee engagement is defined by Maslach et al. (2001, p. 417) as "a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment". Consistent with this, Maslach and Leiter developed the MBI to measure these three components and to determine both burnout and engagement. The opposite scoring pattern used to measure burnout is used to imply engagement.

Maslach et al. (2001) proposes six areas of work life that will lead to burnout:

- Value conflict – where there is a mismatch between the requirements of a job and the person's principles.

- Breakdown of community – where there is a breakdown or loss of positive connection with others in the workplace.

- Absence of fairness – there is a lack of fair application of procedures that maintain equity and mutual respect in the workplace.

- Insufficient reward – lack of internal rewards (pride in doing the job) and external rewards (salary and benefits).

- Work overload – job demands exceed human limits.

- Lack of control – employees have little control over the work that they are doing.

According to Maslach et al. (2001), employee engagement mediates these six factors to produce various work outcomes.

2.3.3. Employee engagement considered to be work engagement

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) consider employee engagement to be a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind, characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption. They accordingly designed a scale to measure these three factors called the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which has been tested in various countries on numerous students and workers. The results have shown that high engagement scores are negatively related to burnout.

Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) explain that vigour (the opposite pole of exhaustion) is characterised by high levels of energy, working with mental resilience, and a willingness to put effort into one's work and to persist even in the face of adversity. Dedication (the opposite pole of cynicism) is related to enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, challenge and a sense of significance; and absorption refers to a state where time passes quickly and where the individual has difficulty in detaching himself/herself from work (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

Schaufeli et al. (2002) suggest that vigour and dedication are the opposite of the burnout dimensions, emotional exhaustion and cynicism, identified by Maslach, and that absorption is a third component of work engagement. Furthermore, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) theorise that both engagement and burnout can be integrated into a comprehensive and overarching framework which they refer to as the Job Demands Resources Model (JD-R Model).

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), this model firstly assumes a process of health impairment where burnout mediates the relationship between job demands and

poor resources on the one hand, and negative health outcomes on the other, and secondly, as a motivational process where engagement mediates the relationship between job resources on the one hand and positive organisational outcomes, such as citizenship and commitment, on the other.

2.3.4. Employee engagement considered to be employee satisfaction and job involvement

Harter et al. (2002) refer to employee engagement as "the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work". The Gallup Organisation has developed an instrument called the Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA: The Gallup Organisation, 1992–1999), which is composed of an overall satisfaction item as well as an additional 12 items that measure the perceptions of employees of work characteristics. According to Harter et al. (2002), these 12 items enable a great deal of the variance in what is defined as 'overall job satisfaction' to be explained, and refer to them as measures of employee engagement to differentiate them from the more general theoretical construct of 'job satisfaction'. Harter et al. (2002) state that the GWA was designed to measure two broad categories of item; those that measure attitudinal outcomes such as satisfaction, loyalty, pride, customer service intent and intention to stay employed by the company, and those items that measure the antecedents of these attitudinal outcomes.

Erikson (2004) states that employee engagement is more than just employees' satisfaction with their job, and that it also involves elements such as "commitment, loyalty, pride in the organisation, a willingness to advocate for the organisation, and a sense of personal responsibility". According to Erikson (2004), employee engagement is about discretionary effort where the employee makes a decision whether to do one's very best and put in extra effort or just do the bare minimum of what is expected in the job. According to Erikson (2004), the importance of employee satisfaction should not be underemphasised; however, research has shown that employee engagement is a

more important factor in influencing levels of productivity and effectiveness in organisations. "When employees are fully engaged, they will endure periods of low satisfaction and remain committed. But when satisfaction is low and people become disengaged, they will soon leave – physically or perhaps mentally, which can be even worse" (Erikson, 2004). The predictors or antecedents of these attitudes and behaviours are found in the conditions under which people work, and the consequences are considered to be of value to organisational effectiveness (Erikson, 2004).

2.3.5. Employee engagement as organisational commitment and organisation citizenship behaviour

Organ (1997, p. 86) defines organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation". Employee engagement has been defined in a number of different ways but most often in terms of other better known and established constructs like organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (Robinson et al., 2004). Generally, engagement is defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organisation (Shaw, 2005 in Saks, 2006) or the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their jobs and the length of time they intend to stay employed by the organisation (CLC, 2004).

Porter et al. (1974, as cited in Dick, 2007) identify three dimensions of commitment, namely:

- a strong belief and commitment to organisation goals

- a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organisation

- a strong desire to retain membership of the organisation.

Robinson et al. (2004) state that

> … engagement contains many of the elements of both commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB), but is by no means a perfect match with either. In addition, neither commitment nor OCB reflect sufficiently two aspects of engagement – its two-way nature, and the extent to which engaged employees are expected to have an element of business awareness. (p. 8)

As can be deduced from the above discussion on the perspectives on employee engagement, various dimensions present themselves and are common to all of the perspectives presented.

2.4. DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

It is necessary here to consider the following dimensions of employee engagement which have been supported by the above discussion. These dimensions may be influenced by an organisational intervention such as team dialogues, which may improve or worsen levels of employee engagement.

2.4.1. Discretionary effort

Organ (1997, p. 86) defines OCB as "individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognised by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organisation". Erikson (2004), on the other hand, states that "[f]rom the most practical perspective, employee engagement is about discretionary effort --- deciding whether to do one's very best and put forth extra effort or to just go through the motions" (Kahn, 1990). "In essence, it refers to the readiness, or confidence, of a person to engage in his/her work role given that individuals are engaged in many other life activities" (Kahn, 1990).

2.4.2. Emotional commitment

Kahn (1990) suggests that engagement is a multidimensional construct relating to the emotional engagement (psychological safety) of employees. Rothbard (2001) considers engagement to have a dimension of psychological presence "absorption", while Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) consider employee engagement to be a positive, fulfilling, and "work related state of mind". Psychological safety is defined as "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990). In addition, employee engagement involves the active use of "emotions and behaviours" (May et al., 2004, p. 12). Employee engagement can therefore be said to have a dimension containing what can be referred to as emotional commitment.

2.4.3. Rational commitment

Employee engagement can also be said to have a dimension of cognitive or rational commitment. Saks (2006) states that engagement has "cognitive behavioural components associated with individual role performance", while Kahn (1990, p. 694) maintains that "people employ and express themselves cognitively in role performances". May et al. (2004) agree with Kahn (1990) and introduce "psychological meaningfulness", "the value of a work goal or purpose", and "a primary motive to seek meaning in their work". Rothbard (2001, p. 656), on the other hand, refers to "cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role". Engagement thus includes the cognitive resources to engage the self at work (Kahn, 1990). Victor Frankl (as cited in May et al., 2004) argued that individuals have a primary motive to seek meaning in their work.

2.4.4. Communication

According to Erikson (2004), there are eight factors that consistently emerge as drivers of employee engagement and that influence the levels of employee engagement. Open two-way communication is one of these factors and it forms an in integral part of employee engagement. Robinson et al. (2004) agree that employees are more engaged in circumstances where there is clear communication from their manager.

> Communication dialoguing is one way to overcome contradictory expectations by bringing similarities and differences in perspective out into the open. They can then be discussed, modified by other data or new interpretations, and shared … Such exchange is the foundation for understanding, trust, and thus effective working relations, and successful managers and employees use it frequently. (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 98)

Schein (1993, p. 47) considers dialogue to be a basic process for building common understanding, in that it allows one to see the hidden meanings of words, first by revealing these hidden meanings in our own communication. Schein (1993, p. 44) writes that "dialogue aims to build a group that can think generatively, creatively, and most importantly, together".

2.4.5. Perceived supervisory support

Dick (2007) stresses the important role that the first-line superior plays in employee engagement and refers to research conducted by Benkoff (1997a, as cited in Dick, 2007), who found that where employees felt that their supervisors were competent, liked their management style and trusted their superior, they shared the values of the company and were proud to be employed there. May et al. (2004) also found that co-worker relations and supervisor relations were positive predictors of employee engagement.

2.4.6. Perceived team support

May et al. (2004) found that co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors of employee engagement. "One of the basic and most persistent problems of organisational life is that different people see situations, issues, or goals differently, depending on their particular perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and biases – yet everyone typically assumes that everyone else sees things as they do" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 98). Schein (1993, p. 44) writes that "dialogue aims to build a group that can think generatively, creatively, and most importantly, together". Schein (1993) argues that dialogue is discovered when the interpretation that someone else puts on a concept is recognised as being different from one's own. In other words, there is a willingness to accept differences in the way that people reason and act under conditions of high uncertainty and high task interdependence can lead to greater levels of understanding of alternative ways of thinking and 'dedication' to a particular 'worldview' or Weltanschauung.

In this study employee engagement will be regarded in the context of these dimensions.

2.5. ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The above discussion on the perspectives and dimensions of employee engagement leads us to ask the question as to what antecedents of employee engagement have been identified, as well as how these may be influenced by team dialogues. The discussion that follows will investigate the different antecedents of employee engagement and will attempt to identify those that may be influenced by team dialogues.

Maslach (2001) identified six areas of work life that will lead to burnout and that may influence or contribute towards levels of engagement:

- value conflict – where the requirements of a job and the person's principles and values are in conflict or there is a mismatch between them

- breakdown of community – where there is a breakdown of team relationships or relationships with the employee's supervisor or loss of positive connection with others in the workplace

- absence of fairness – there is a lack of fair application of procedures that maintain equity and mutual respect in the workplace

- insufficient reward – lack of internal rewards (pride in doing the job) and external rewards (salary and benefits)

- work overload – where the job demands exceed the capabilities of the individual performing the work or beyond human limits

- lack of control – employees have little control over the work that they are doing.

According to Maslach (2001), employee engagement mediates these six factors to produce various work outcomes. In other words, where these six factors are perceived negatively by an employee that employee will be disengaged and where these six

factors are viewed from a positive perspective or point of view the employee is more likely to be engaged.

According to Erikson (2004), there are eight factors that consistently emerge as drivers of employee engagement and that influence the levels of employee engagement. Where these factors are considered to be positive by an employee they are more likely to be engaged, whereas if they are viewed in a negative light it is possible that the employee will not be engaged. The factors are

- teamwork, involvement, and belonging

- open, two-way communication

- recognition and rewards

- empowerment

- growth and development

- trust and confidence in leadership

- future vision

- product/service quality.

Saks (2006) has identified the following six drivers of employee engagement:

- Job characteristics – Where the job provides challenging work, variety, the opportunity to use skills, personal discretion and being able to contribute, psychological meaningfulness can be achieved. Kahn (1990) and May et al. (2004) found that psychological meaningfulness was positively related to job enrichment which, in turn, mediated the relationship between meaningfulness and engagement.

- Rewards and recognition – The perceived benefits that individuals feel they receive from a role will influence levels of engagement through a sense of a return on investment (Kahn, 1990).

- Perceived organisational and supervisor support – Employees gain a sense of psychological safety when they feel that they are able to reveal their true self without negative consequences, and this stems from the amount of support that they perceive to be provided by their direct supervisor, their work colleagues and the organisation (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; May et al., 2004).

- Distributive and procedural justice – Saks (2006) found that both procedural and distributive justice were positively related to job engagement and to organisational engagement.

Robinson et al. (2004) state that employees are more engaged in circumstances when they

- have a strong relationship with their manager

- have clear communication from their manager

- have a clear path set for focusing on what they do best

- have strong relationships with their co-workers

- feel a strong commitment from their co-workers, enabling them to take risks and stretch for excellence.

May et al. (2004) define employee engagement in terms of psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability, and identify the following workplace dimensions that influence these:

- The workplace dimensions of psychological meaningfulness include job enrichment, and work role fit.

- The workplace dimensions of psychological safety include supervisory relations, co-worker relations, work role insecurities and behavioural norms.

- The workplace dimensions of psychological availability are the individual's physical, emotional and cognitive resources, as well as the time demands for outside organisational activities.

Warr (1987) introduced a broad approach to looking more generally at the way the psychological features of any environment, including that of unemployed people, may influence psychological wellbeing. Warr (1987) developed a model called the 'vitamin model' which is based on an analogy of the relationship between vitamins and physical health. Some vitamins, such as A and D, though essential for health, when consumed in large quantities are harmful. Other vitamins, such as C and E, which are also essential to health, can be consumed in large quantities with no ill-effects. Warr (1987) accordingly describes the psychological features of the environment in terms of vitamins, such that the presence of each in the environment is important for psychological wellbeing but their effects on wellbeing will vary as their level increases. While all of these in moderation are necessary for psychological wellbeing, some, such as externally generated goals (workload) and environmental clarity, are at very high levels assumed to be harmful to wellbeing. Others, such as the availability of money and valued social position, are, according to the model, unlikely to ever be detrimental to wellbeing even at very high levels. The vitamin model is useful as a reminder of the range of environmental features that might be relevant and the fact that their relationship to wellbeing may not always be a linear one.

The nine environmental vitamin features identified by Warr (1987) as being significant for psychological wellbeing are listed below:

- Opportunity for control – discretion, decision latitude, independence, autonomy, job control, self-determination, personal control, absence of close supervision, participation in decision-making, absence of utilisation.

- Opportunity for skill use – skill utilisation, utilisation of valued abilities, application of skills and abilities, required skills.

- Externally generated goals – job demands, quantitative or qualitative workload, time demands, role responsibility, time pressure at work, required concentration, conflicting demands.

- Variety – variation in job content and location, non-repetitive work, varied roles and responsibilities, skill variety, number of different job operations.

- Environmental clarity – information about the consequences of behaviour (e.g. availability of feedback), information about the future (e.g. absence of job future ambiguity), information about required behaviour (e.g. low role ambiguity).

- Availability of money – income level, amount of pay, moderate/high standard of living, absence of poverty, material resources.

- Physical security – absence of danger, good working conditions, ergonomically adequate equipment, safe levels of temperature and noise, absence of continuous heavy lifting.

- Opportunity for interpersonal contact – quantity of interaction (e.g. contact with others, adequate privacy), quality of interaction (e.g. good relationship with others, social support).

- Valued social position – cultural evaluations of status (e.g. social rank, occupational prestige), more localised social evaluations of in-company status or job importance, personal evaluations of task significance (e.g. meaningfulness of job or self-respect from the job).

In Table 2.1 below a comparative analysis is presented of the antecedents of employee engagement as discussed above. This table assists in identifying similarities and themes of common thought that will enable the researcher to find those antecedents that will be present in the context of team dialogues and that may be influenced by team dialogues.

Table 2.1

Comparative Analysis of the Antecedents of Employee Engagement

(Maslach, 2001) Antipode of ….	(Erikson, 2004)	Saks(2006)	(Robinson, Perryman and Hayday, 2004)	(May, Gilson and Harter, 2004)	Warr's Vitamin Model
Value conflict - where there is a mismatch between the requirements of a job and the person's principles;	Teamwork, involvement, and belonging	Perceived supervisor support	Employees have a strong relationship with their manager	**Psychological meaningfulness** workplace dimensions include job enrichment, and work role fit.	**Opportunity for control.** Discretion, decision latitude, independence, autonomy, job control, self-determination, personal control, absence of close supervision, participation in decision-making, absence of utilization.
Breakdown of community - where there is a breakdown or loss of positive connection with others in the workplace;	Open, two-way communication	Perceived organisational support	They have clear communication from their manager	**Psychological safety** workplace dimensions include supervisory relations, co-worker relations, work role insecurities and behavioural norms.	**Opportunity for skill use.** Skill utilization, utilization of valued abilities, application of skills and abilities, required skills
Absence of fairness - there is a lack of fair application of procedures that maintain equity and mutual respect in the workplace	Recognition and rewards	Job characteristics	They have a clear path set for focusing on what they do best	**Psychological availability** workplace dimensions are the individual's physical, emotional and cognitive resources, as well as the time demands for outside organizational activities.	**Externally generated goals.** Job demands, quantitative or qualitative workload, time demands, role responsibility, time pressure at work, required concentration, conflicting demands.

(Maslach, 2001) Antipode of ….	(Erikson, 2004)	Saks(2006)	(Robinson, Perryman and Hayday, 2004)	(May, Gilson and Harter, 2004)	Warr's Vitamin Model
Insufficient reward - lack of internal rewards (pride in doing the job) and external rewards (salary and benefits);	Empowerment	Distributive justice	They have strong relationships with their co-workers		**Variety. Variation in job content and location, non-repetitive work, varied roles and responsibilities, skill variety, number of different job operations.**
Work overload - job demands exceed human limits and	Growth and development	Procedural justice	They feel a strong commitment with their co-workers enabling them to take risks and stretch for excellence		**Environmental clarity. Information about the consequences of behaviour (e.g. availability of feedback), information about the future (e.g. absence of job future ambiguity), information about required behaviour (e.g. low role ambiguity)**
Lack of control - employees have little control over the work that they are doing.	Trust and confidence in leadership	Reward and recognition			**Availability of money. Income level, amount of pay, moderate/high standard of living, absence of poverty, material resources**

(Maslach, 2001) Antipode of	(Erikson, 2004)	Saks(2006)	(Robinson, Perryman and Hayday, 2004)	(May, Gilson and Harter, 2004)	Warr's Vitamin Model
	Future vision				**Physical security.** Absence of danger, good working conditions, ergonomically adequate equipment, safe.
	Product/ service quality				**Opportunity for interpersonal contact.** Quantity of interaction (e.g. contact with others, adequate privacy), quality of interaction (e.g. good relationship with others, social support).
					Valued social position. Cultural evaluations of status (e.g. social rank, occupational prestige), more localized social evaluations of in-company status or job importance, personal evaluations of task significance (e.g. meaningfulness of job or self-respect from the job).

It becomes evident from Table 2.1 above that a number of the antecedents of employee engagement may be addressed through and by an organisational intervention of team dialogues. In the team dialogue sessions, the facilitator encourages dialogue on themes covering the extent to which there is teamwork, involvement and belonging; in addition, areas are addressed in which there is a breakdown or loss of positive connection with others in the workplace. The facilitator encourages dialogue on areas where communication, trust in leadership, perceived supervisory support and clarity on job roles, job performance and expectations can be improved. There is also an opportunity to improve employees' commitment to their co-workers, reduce misunderstandings between team members, and encourage feelings of psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; May et al., 2004; Maslach, 2001; Erikson, 2004; Saks, 2006; Robinson et al., 2004; Warr, 1987).

2.6.   CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, the concept of employee engagement was defined, various perspectives were discussed, dimensions were identified, and the antecedents or drivers of employee engagement were tabulated and compared. In chapter 3, the concept of team dialogue will be investigated and described.

CHAPTER 3 TEAM DIALOGUE

3.1.   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the various perspectives on team dialogue are discussed   the dimensions of team dialogue identified and the influence of dialogue will be discussed within the context of team learning and co-constructivism. "One of the basic and most persistent problems of organisational life is that different people see situations, issues, or goals differently, depending on their particular perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and biases – yet everyone typically assumes that everyone else sees things as they do" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99). This chapter will then conclude with a theoretical integration and a synthesis of the two constructs of employee engagement and team dialogue.

3.2.   DEFINING TEAM DIALOGUE

As part of the process of attempting to define the concept of team dialogue, it is firstly necessary to consider what is meant by a team, secondly, to consider what is meant by dialogue and, thirdly, to consider how this will be defined in terms of a social constructivist perspective. According to Knapp (2010), teams differ from groups in that the members of a team work interdependently and have a shared purpose and responsibility for team performance and a subjective perception of a common identity, whereas a group is merely a collection of people with no common purpose or shared responsibility. In the organisational context you may have various types of team, such as cross-functional teams, self-managed teams, project teams, crews and task forces (Knapp, 2010).

Dialogue differs from debate, discussion or persuasion. In a debate, there is usually a battle of views and positions where the most rational argument wins the prize. Persuasion, however, takes a softer approach where the aim is to try and find convincing ways to make people take one's side. Dialogue, in contrast, constructs a

space for conversation that welcomes participants to bring in a multiplicity of voices. It is a process that is intimately connected with the co-creation of new realities (Gergen, McNamee, & Barrett, 2001). Dialogue is not focused on finding the "right way" or "the only way" of doing things, but on finding ways to generate and create opportunities for people to feel connected and willing to participate. Through dialogue, different understandings are vocalised and used to generate fresh new possibilities. From there, many alternatives for action can then be imagined and created (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). In this process, imagination is not only an important tool, but creates a more fluid, less fixed and predicted view of possibilities and encourages ingenuity, spontaneity and novelty. Meanings gain freedom, and new knowledge can arise when imagination is unleashed; encouraging participants to voice their views on a topic amplifies the potential of meaningful experiences to be created. Social constructionism seriously engenders the potential for imagining future possibilities and generates great potential for social change. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005), our collective imagination and discourse through dialogues within an organisation has infinite possibilities in terms of the impact they may have on human resources. Dialogue is a process full of imagination, transforming habitual ways of thinking, building new meanings and new organisational realities that are more engaging and inclusive, and it generates a sense of co-responsibility and belonging among all participants.

Co-creation increasingly becomes a fundamental part of an organisation's process in today's "network society" (Ramaswamy, 2009). In society, there are new forms of participation emerging where people are more than merely expectant and very much enabled by technological developments and a more trusting relationship within organisations can be built. According to Ramaswamy and Gouillart (2010), dialogue becomes the core process in providing an environment for co-creation and a potential approach to invest in new forms of relation and interaction among stakeholders. The process of co-creating dialogue within an organisation through the facilitation of a coordinator encourages participants to use their collective imagination, and develop stories and generate new ideas that speak about themselves, their surroundings and

commitment, and create what Gergen and Gergen (2004) call "relational responsibility".

According to Camargo-Borges and Rasera (2013), social constructionism introduces concepts such as dialogue, imagination, co-creation and meaning-making within organisations, creating resources for organisational interventions that may be used by managers, consultants and group leaders alike. This stimulates the creativity to develop new ways of working with people in teams, investigating the interconnections and mutual influence among members, and the analysis of each of them (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013). Social constructionism brings an alternative philosophical understanding of reality construction and knowledge production, and investigates the historically situated ways in which knowledge is embedded in cultural values and practices. Meanings are socially constructed using this approach, through the coordination of people in their various encounters (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013).

In a constructionist perspective, dialogue is about an ongoing interactive process happening in conversation, where the focus is on the potential of multiple local realities that can be shared (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). According to social constructionism in a dialogue type of conversation, different understandings are welcomed – finding the "best opinion" or achieving "the best solution" is not a matter of accurate observation and description of the "real world", but rather a dynamic process that takes into account the cultural and historical aspects available in society (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013).

From a social constructionist perspective, co-creation can be both conceptual and practical. Conceptually, co-creation relates to the epistemological understanding of people being relational by nature, considering everything to start co-creating with others, having an emergent property of social systems where people are constantly in an ongoing relational process of social construction (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). Practically, co-construction can be designed and facilitated as a creative process that incentivises the ability to experiment and question the taken-for-granted. With new ways of talking, ambiguity is embraced and, as a consequence, lead to the pursuit of

new ideas and solutions. Another way to instigate co-creation is through so-called circular questions (Tomm, 1988), where open and imaginative questions should be asked, questions that can trigger people's imagination. The purpose is to ask questions that create difference and spark creative friction, inspiring directions that generate new possibilities of understanding and therefore new meanings. Circular questions stimulate people into opening up multiple descriptions of a situation, thereby amplifying the possibilities for imagining and co-creating multiple solutions (Tomm, 1988).

These types of question illustrate how dialogue, imagination and co-creation play a role in organisational development, deconstructing old patterns of thinking about a subject, co-creating new meanings and opening up transformation within the organisation. Therefore, according to social constructionism, creating a space for dialogical conversations by making use of the imagination increases the process of change through the co-creation of new possibilities (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013).

According to Camargo-Borges and Rasera (2013), one example of a process in which all these resources are combined is the methodology developed under constructionist assumptions and applied to organisational interventions, which is referred to as appreciative inquiry (AI).

According to Geldenhuys (2015), a different perspective on organisational psychology as a discipline is provided by social construction, introducing relational practices as a practical philosophy that places emphasis on enhancing workplace relationships. This is especially relevant for organisational development as an applied field of organisational psychology. Accordingly, the role of the organisational psychologist in the workplace will develop into one of a relational facilitator whose role will be to create a relational space where dialogue will be encouraged. Such dialogue will be characterised by openness and curiosity, in which conversations can be brought together or coordinated based on multiple realities, representing various stakeholders with different stories and experiences, bases of power and belief systems. In exploring

ways of creating a context that invites dialoguing, the emphasis is on the relational processes between the team members and not on the team members as entities themselves (Geldenhuys, 2015).

Dialogue lies at the core of organisational learning, for without dialogue individuals and groups cannot exchange ideas effectively, nor can they develop shared understanding. Organisational norms and routines that prevent open and honest dialogue continue to act as impediments to organisational learning and, specifically, to the detection and correction of errors (Argyris, 2003).

According to Isaacs (1993), dialogue is not the same as consensus building. Where consensus building often seeks to limit options and find strategies that are acceptable to most people, dialogue seeks to surface fundamental assumptions and an understanding of why they arise. Dialogue seeks to explore and eventually alter underlying patterns of meaning. The goal in dialogue is not to cool differences but to create a super-cooled field where the differences can exist and be studied, not be ignored or shoved aside to arrive at something all parties can agree on. Bohm (as cited in Dixon, 1996) argues that discussions and negotiations are not dialogue, because each represents a process whereby someone tries to win or convince others to assume the views of another. Rather, Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991, p. 3) see dialogue as "not concerned with deliberately trying to alter or change behaviour nor to get the participants to move toward a predetermined goal. Any such attempt would distort and obscure the processes that dialogue has set out to explore" (p. 3). Rather, dialogue is a way to develop shared meaning, to uncover new realities. "[Our] thoughts hold all sorts of presuppositions which limit understanding and prevent people from talking freely. Through dialogue, everyone's ideas are held by all – a common pool of information" (Bohm, as cited in Dixon, 1996, pp. 11–12).

Dialogue helps to produce an environment where people are constantly participating in the creation of shared meaning. Once established, this pool becomes the context in which particular complex issues can begin to be addressed. The primary objective of dialogue is not to win but rather to come to understand the opinions of others.

Dialogue is a process with ancient roots. Socrates saw his role as being a 'midwife' to the growth and healing of youth in ancient Greece by engaging them in dialogue (Apatow, 1998). He believed that he possessed no true wisdom, but that his gift was the ability to engage others in a dialogue process that would be transformative (Apatow, 1998).

The success of a team dialogue session is linked to the extent that team members are willing to create shared meaning rather than gaining agreement on one meaning. They are consequently more able to learn from each other and to 'criss-cross' their views with each other, thus enhancing their understanding of the sorts of issue that are impeding their ability to perform (Jabri, 2004).

According to Knapp (2010), teams differ from groups in that in a team the members work interdependently and they have a shared purpose and responsibility for team performance and a subjective perception of a common identity. A group, on the other hand, is merely a collection of people with no common purpose or shared responsibility. Dialogue, seen from a constructionist perspective, is about an ongoing interactive process that happens in conversation, where the focus is on the potential of multiple local realities that can be shared (Gergen & Gergen, 2004). In a dialogue type of conversation, different understandings are welcomed. According to social constructionism, finding out the 'best opinion' or achieving 'the best solution' is not a matter of accurate observation and description of the 'real world' but rather a dynamic process that takes into account the cultural and historical aspects available in society (Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2013).

In the context of this research, team dialogue will be defined as the process in which a natural team and its immediate superior meet to dialogue and socially co-construct an understanding of the drivers of employee engagement. This team dialogue session is facilitated by an HR practitioner whose role is to ensure that the dialogue remains within the context of the drivers of employee engagement.

3.3.   DIMENSIONS OF TEAM DIALOGUE

Dialogue in its current form was first developed by the late physicist David Bohm (Bohm, 1987; Bohm & Edwards, 1991). Dialogue has been referred to as a shared exploration towards greater understanding, connection or possibility and this will be explored in the discussion that follows where the different dimensions identified above will be explored and discussed.

3.3.1. Thinking together as a dimension of team dialogue

Dialogue is a process full of imagination, transforming habitual ways of thinking, building new meanings and new organisational realities, more engaging and inclusive, generating a sense of co-responsibility and belonging among all participants (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). The concept of team learning starts with 'dialogue'; the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together'. For the Greeks, *dialogos* meant a free flowing of meaning through a group, allowing the group to discover insights not attainable individually (Senge, 1990). Today, it also involves learning how to recognise the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning (Senge, 1990). When working in a team, knowledge can be shared and developed amongst its members (Senge, 1990).

Bohm (as cited in Jaworski, 1996, p. 110) points out that a great deal of what we call discussion is not deeply serious, in the sense that there are all sorts of things which are non-negotiable – the "undiscussables". No one mentions the "undiscussables", they are just there, lying beneath the surface, blocking deep, honest, heart-to-heart communication. Furthermore, we all bring basic assumptions with us (our own mental models or pictures) about how the world operates, our own self-interests, and so on. Our basic assumptions are developed from our early childhood days, our life experiences and socialisation, our peers and family, our education and reading. We hold these assumptions so deeply that we become identified with them, and will defend

them with great emotion and energy when they are challenged. Quite often, we do this unconsciously.

Jaworski (1996, p. 111) states that, "[i]f there was an opportunity for sustained dialogue over a period of time, we would have coherent movement of thought, not only at the conscious level we all recognise, but even at the tacit level, the unspoken level which cannot be described".

According to Isaacs (1994, p. 353), the word 'dialogue"'has two Greek roots – *dia* (meaning 'through' or 'with each other') and *logos* (meaning 'the word'). For Isaacs (1994, p. 353), dialogue is "the art of thinking together" and is "a sustained collective inquiry" into everyday experience, and is what we take for granted.

For Ellinor and Gerard (1998, p. 21), dialogue involves "[s]eeing the whole rather than breaking it into parts; seeing connections rather than distinctions; inquiring into assumptions rather than justifying or defending them; learning through inquiry and disclosure rather than persuading, selling or telling; and creating shared meanings rather than gaining agreement on one meaning".

"Communication dialoguing is one way to overcome contradictory expectations by bringing similarities and differences in perspective out into the open. They can then be discussed, modified by other data or new interpretations, and shared" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99). "Such exchange is the foundation for understanding, trust, and thus effective working relations, and successful managers and employees use it frequently" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99). Schein (1993, p. 47) considers dialogue as a basic process for building common understanding in that it allows one to see the hidden meanings of words, first by revealing these hidden meanings in our own communication.

Schein (1993, p. 44) writes that "dialogue aims to build a group that can think generatively, creatively, and most importantly, together". He (Schein, 1993) further argues that dialogue is discovered when the interpretation that someone else puts on a concept is recognised as being different from one's own; that is, there is a willingness to accept differences in the way that people reason and act under conditions of high

uncertainty and high task interdependence can lead to greater levels of understanding or alternative ways of thinking and dedication to a particular worldview or Weltanschauung. Gerard and Teurfs (as cited in Kurt, 1999) maintain that dialogue actually consists of four skills or a set of dialogue dimensions.

3.3.2. Suspending judgement as a dimension of team dialogue

Because our way of thinking divides things up and creates what seems like ultimate 'truths', it is difficult for us to stay open to alternative views. Our egos become identified with how we think things are. We defend our positions against those of others, close ourselves off from learning and do harm to our personal relationships. When we 'suspend judgement', we see others' points of view; hold our positions lightly, and build a climate of trust and safety. As people learn that they will not be 'judged' as 'wrong' for having opinions, they feel free to express themselves fully and the atmosphere becomes more open and truthful (Gerard & Teurfs, as cited in Kurt, 1999).

3.3.3. Identifying assumptions as a dimension of team dialogue

The opinions and judgements we hold are usually based on layers of assumptions, inferences and generalisations, such that when we do not look at the underlying belief system behind our judgements, we make decisions that lead to disappointing results. Only when we peel away the assumptions can we see what might be giving us trouble: some incomplete or 'incoherent' thought. We can then explore differences, build common ground and consensus, and get to the bottom of misunderstandings (Gerard & Teurfs, as cited in Kurt, 1999).

3.3.4. Listening as a dimension of team dialogue

The way we listen influences how well we learn and how effective we are in building quality relationships. We focus on developing our capacity to stay present and open to the meaning arising at both the individual and collective levels. We can learn to listen and perceive at more subtle levels by overcoming typical blocks in our ability to listen attentively and to stay present (Gerard & Teurfs, as cited in Kurt, 1999).

3.3.5. Inquiring and reflecting as a dimension of team dialogue

Through inquiry and reflection, we dig deeply into matters that concern us and create breakthroughs in our ability to solve problems. By learning how to ask questions that lead to new understanding, we accelerate our collective learning. In addition, we gain awareness of our thinking processes and the issues that separate and unite us. By learning how to work with silence, we can identify reactive patterns, generate new ideas, perceive common ground, and become sensitive to subtle meanings (Gerard & Teurfs, as cited in Kurt, 1999).

As people gather to dialogue, they commit to a common set of guidelines: listening and speaking without judgement; acknowledging each speaker; respect for differences; role and status suspension; balancing inquiry and advocacy; avoiding cross-talk; a focus on learning; seeking the next level of understanding; releasing the need for specific outcomes; and "speaking when moved" (Gerard & Teurfs, as cited in Kurt, 1999). Hargrove (1995) states that "[a] dialogue is a conversation where there is a free flow of meaning in a group and diverse views and perspectives are encouraged".

> Reusser (2001) refers to the term 'co-construction' as the process of learning and enculturation as a fundamentally social activity, embedded in a society and reflecting its knowledge, perspectives and beliefs. People construct their knowledge and their higher mental functions, not only from direct personal experience, but by being shaped through dialogic interaction in a social and cultural space. (p. 2058)

3.3.6. Collaborative learning as a dimension of team dialogue

According to Reusser (2001), co-construction is a fragile process where

… two or more individuals collaboratively construct and maintain a shared understanding or a joint problem space by constant negotiations and recreations of meaning. At the heart of this concept of co-construction are two coexisting activities: collaboratively solving the problem, and constructing and maintaining a joint problem space. Both activities require constant negotiations and recreations of meaning, i.e., trying to find out what can reasonably be said about the task in hand, and occur in structured forms of conversation and discourse utilising language and physical actions as their most important mediators and resources. (p. 2058)

Reusser (2001) also states the following:

Probably the most important single feature of a culture of collaborative learning is dialog as opposed to, e.g., solo learning and teacher monologs. Emphasis on joint learning and instructional conversation among peers, and between teachers and students, is associated with the internal mediating processes that are essential for an understanding of how co-construction through discourse operates and influences outcomes. The pedagogical cultivation of processes such as negotiation of meaning, reciprocal sense-making, revising one's cognitions in situations of sociocognitive conflict, precise verbalisation of reasoning and knowledge, listening to others' lines of argumentation, tuning one's own information to that of a partner, giving and receiving help, or modeling cognitive and metacognitive activities to be internalised by the participating individuals should, thus, be placed at the core of instructional design. (p. 2060)

3.4. THEORETICAL INTEGRATION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND TEAM DIALOGUE

To conclude this chapter it is necessary to investigate the relationship between employee engagement and team dialogue. The antecedents of employee engagement, as discussed in section 2.5, are particularly useful in attempting to determine the relationship between teams and, specifically, team dialogue and employee engagement.

According to (Maslach et al., 2001), a breakdown of community amongst staff members belonging to a team will weaken their commitment to each other. Without a sense of community a work team lacks the synergies required of an integrated work group. Moreover, a weak sense of community will directly affect productivity and create a vulnerability to conflict between the group members. Unresolved conflict is an emotional drain on the team members and will influence the emotional commitment of the team members.

Erikson (2004) indicates eight factors that consistently emerge as drivers of employee engagement; of these, teamwork, involvement and belonging, open two-way communication, trust and confidence in leadership are directly linked to the team.

Saks (2006) proposes six drivers of employee engagement. Of these, perceived organisational and supervisor support are particularly important in the team context. Employees gain a sense of psychological safety when they feel that they are able to reveal their true selves without negative consequences; this stems from the amount of support that they perceive to be provided by their direct supervisor, their work colleagues and the organisation (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; May et al., 2004).

Robinson et al. (2004) concur with this and state that employees are more engaged in circumstances where they have a strong relationship with their manager, have clear communication from their manager, have a clear path set for focusing on what they do

best, and have strong relationships with and feel a strong commitment to their co-workers, thus enabling them to take risks and stretch for excellence.

May et al. (2004) define employee engagement in terms of psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability. The workplace dimensions of psychological safety include supervisory relations, co-worker relations, work role insecurities and behavioural norms, which are directly applicable to the team context.

The nine environmental vitamin features identified by Warr (1987) as being significant for psychological wellbeing, also include the team dimension of the opportunity for interpersonal contact, where quantity of interaction (e.g. contact with others, adequate privacy) and quality of interaction (e.g. good relationship with others, social support) are important dimensions in the team context.

In teams, effective dialogue directly influences the functioning of a team, the communication within a team, the relationships between the team members in a team and the relationship team members have with their supervisor. "One of the basic and most persistent problems of organisational life is that different people see situations, issues, or goals differently, depending on their particular perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and biases – yet everyone typically assumes that everyone else sees things as they do" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99). Schein (1993, p. 44) states that "dialogue aims to build a group that can think generatively, creatively, and most importantly, together" and argues that dialogue is discovered when the interpretation that someone else puts on a concept is recognised as being different from one's own; that is, there is a willingness to accept differences in the way that people reason and act under conditions of high uncertainty and high task interdependence can lead to greater levels of understanding of alternative ways of thinking and dedication to a particular worldview or Weltanschauung.

The above discussion provided the basis on which the researcher was able to formulate hypotheses on the relationship between employee engagement and team

dialogue. In order to test these hypotheses, a suitable and appropriate research design had to be selected. The next chapter will focus on the selection of a research design that enabled the researcher to test the hypotheses formulated for the study.

The variables identified in the literature review that are applicable in the team context, that have an influence on employee engagement and that are measurable in the employee engagement surveys conducted before and after the organisational development intervention are discretionary effort, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived supervisory support and perceived team support. These will be discussed in the sections that follow.

3.4.1. Discretionary effort

Employee engagement is often defined as emotional and rational commitment to the organisation (Baumruk, 2004; Richman, 2006; Shaw, 2005, in Saks, 2006), or the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their jobs and the length of time they intend to stay employed by the organisation (CLC, 2004; Frank et al., 2004). Increased discretionary effort is both an outcome and an indicator of employee engagement.

3.4.2. Turnover intention

Turnover intention is defined as the intention of the employee to remain employed by the organisation or their intention to leave the organisation (CLC, 2004). Tett and Meyer (1993) define turnover intention as the "conscious and deliberate willingness to leave the organisation" (p. 262). It has also been described as "the last in a sequence of withdrawal cognitions, a set to which thinking of quitting and intent to search for alternative employment also belong" (Tett & Meyer, 1993, p. 262). Withdrawal behaviour is the primary way in which employees deal with issues in the employment relationship (Lo & Aryee, 2003). Decreased intention to leave the organisation is both an outcome and an indicator of employee engagement.

3.4.3. Rational commitment

Rational commitment may be defined as the extent to which employees believe that managers, teams and organisations are in their own financial, developmental or professional self-interest (CLC, 2004). The success of the team dialogue session is linked to the extent to which team members are willing to create shared meaning, rather than gaining agreement on one meaning, and are more able to learn from each other and to '"criss-cross" their views with each other, thus enhancing their understanding of the sorts of issues that are impeding their ability to perform (Jabri, 2004). The success of the team dialogue session should become manifest in higher levels of intellectual commitment.

3.4.4. Emotional commitment

Emotional commitment is the degree to which an employee believes in, values and enjoys their job. Highly engaged employees show marked improvement in performance levels and are much less likely to leave the organisation than employees with low engagement levels (CLC, 2004). Consequently, the team's creation of a shared meaning could influence the emotional commitment of individual team members, and would improve rational commitment where a shared understanding is created (Jabri, 2004).

3.4.5. Communication

Communication dialoguing is one way to overcome contradictory expectations by bringing similarities and differences in perspective out into the open. They can then be discussed, modified by other data or new interpretations, and shared … Such exchange is the foundation for understanding, trust, and thus

effective working relations, and successful managers and employees use it frequently. (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99)

Schein (1993, p. 47) considers dialogue to be a basic process for building common understanding in that it allows one to see the hidden meanings of words, first by revealing these hidden meanings in our own communication.

The success of the team dialogue session should manifest itself in higher levels of communication. The process of dialogue according to Schein (1993) has a purpose to enable groups that are able to think together creatively and generate new ideas.

3.4.6. Perceived supervisory support

Dick (2007) stresses the important role that the first-line superior plays in employee engagement and refers to research conducted by Benkoff (1997), who found that where employees felt that their supervisors were competent, liked their management style and trusted their superior, they shared the values of the company and were proud to be employed there. May et al. (2004) also found that co-worker relations and supervisor relations were positive predictors of employee engagement. An improved perception of supervisory support should be the result of successful team dialogue sessions.

3.4.7. Perceived team support

May et al. (2004) found that co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors of employee engagement. "One of the basic and most persistent problems of organisational life is that different people see situations, issues, or goals differently, depending on their particular perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and biases – yet everyone typically assumes that everyone else sees things as they do" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99). Schein (1993, p. 44) maintains that "dialogue aims to build a

group that can think generatively, creatively, and most importantly, together". Moreover, he (1993) argues that dialogue is discovered when the interpretation that someone else puts on a concept is recognised as being different from one's own. That is, a willingness to accept differences in the way that people reason and act under conditions of high uncertainty and high task interdependence can lead to greater levels of understanding of alternative ways of thinking and dedication to a particular worldview or Weltanschauung.

3.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the influence and dimensions of team dialogue were discussed within a context of team learning and co-constructivism. This chapter then concluded with a theoretical integration and a synthesis of the two constructs of employee engagement and team dialogue. A team dialogue is facilitated by an HR practitioner, who is an employee of the organisation and whose role is to ensure that the dialogue remains within the confines of the drivers of employee engagement, that there is a free flow in the discussion and that no one team member dominates the proceedings to the exclusion of others. In the context of this research, team dialogue is defined as the process that occurs when a natural team and its immediate superior meet to discuss and socially co-construct an understanding of the drivers of employee engagement.

The variables, discretionary effort, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived team support and perceived supervisory support, which were identified in the literature review as being applicable in the team context and which have an influence on employee engagement, were measured by the employee engagement surveys conducted before and after the organisational development intervention. In the next chapter the design of the empirical study will be presented.

CHAPTER 4 EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the research methodology that was used to conduct this study will be addressed. The various components and issues that are dealt with include the research design, the reliability and validity of the research, the research population, the instruments used in the research and the data collection methods applied. The statistical analysis will also be discusses in terms of method and procedure.

4.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design reflects the type of study that was undertaken in order to provide acceptable answers to the research problem (Mouton, 2001). The aim of the research design, according to Mouton and Marais (1993, p. 33), is to plan and structure a given research project in such a way that the eventual validity of the research findings is maximised. The design of this research is therefore structured in such a way as to best answer the research question. According to Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins, and Van Wyk (2005, p 82), a research design is the plan that is followed to realise the research objectives or hypothesis. It is the master plan which specifies the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the information required.

In this study, a quantitative research approach was used which, according to Schurink and Schurink (2001), is based on positivism and takes scientific explanation to be nomothetic (i.e. based on universal laws). The main aims of quantitative research are to measure the social world objectively and to test hypotheses. The study also included a quasi-experimental approach in terms of which an experimental group was exposed to an organisational development intervention of team dialogues over a period of time and then compared to a control group that had not been exposed to the

organisational development team dialogue intervention. Both the experimental group and the control group participated in the employee engagement surveys that were conducted in 2008 and in 2010.

4.3. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of the participants in the experimental group are reflected in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1 *Characteristics of the Experimental Group*

		Number of respondents	% of respondents
Gender	Male	481	72.88
	Female	179	27.12
Ethnicity	White	395	59.85
	Coloured	94	14.24
	Indian	54	8.18
	Black	117	17.73
Age	22 to 30	51	7.73
	31 to 40	239	36.21
	41 to 50	296	44.85
	51 to 60	74	11.21

Length of Service	0 to 10	183	27.73
	11 to 20	172	26.06
	21 to 30	245	37.12
	31 to 40	60	9.09
Level	Operational	293	44.39
	Supervisory	248	37.58
	Management	119	18.03

In this type of research it is very important to ensure that the demographic characteristics of the experimental group and the control group are as similar in nature as possible. The experimental group had a gender distribution of 72.88% male to 27.12% female, while the ethnicity distribution of the group was 59.85% white, 14.24% coloured, 8.18% Indian, and 17.73% black. The age distribution showed the highest concentration, 44.85%, in the 41 to 50 age group, with 36.21% falling into the 31 to 40 age group, 7.73% into the 22 to 30 age group, and 11.21% into the 51 to 60 age group. The length of service distribution of the experimental group was 27.73% with 0 to 10 service years, 26.06% with 11 to 20 service years, 37.12% with 21 to 30 service years, and 9.09% with 31 to 40 service years. The job levels of the experimental group were distributed as follows: 44.39% was operational, 37.58% was supervisory, and 18.03% was from the management level.

The characteristics of the participants in the control group are reflected in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2

Characteristics of the Control Group

		Number of respondents	% of respondents
Gender	Male	511	77.42
	Female	149	22.58
Ethnicity	White	360	54.55
	Coloured	80	12.12
	Indian	58	8.79
	Black	162	24.55
Age	22 to 30	52	7.88
	31 to 40	247	37.42
	41 to 50	306	46.36
	51 to 60	55	8.33
Length of Service	0 to 10	194	29.39
	11 to 20	167	25.30
	21 to 30	250	37.88
	31 to 40	49	7.42
Level	Operational	312	47.27
	Supervisory	211	31.97
	Management	137	20.76

The demographic characteristics of the control group show a gender distribution of 77.42% male to 22.58% female, while the ethnicity distribution of the group was 54.55% white, 12.12% coloured, 8.79% Indian and 24.55% black. The age distribution showed the highest concentration, 46.36%, in the 41 to 50 age group, with 37.42% falling into 31 to 40 age group, 7.88% into the 22 to 30 age group, and 8.33% into the 51 to 60 age group, while the length of service distribution of the control group was 29.39% with 0 to 10 service years, 25.30% with 11 to 20 service years, 37.88% with 21 to 30 service years, and 7.42% with 31 to 40 service years. The job levels of the control group were distributed as follows: 47.27% operational, 31.97% supervisory, and 20.76% from the management level.

As can be seen in Figure 4.1 below, the demographic distribution characteristics of the experimental group and the control group are very similar. The implication of this is that the differences between the experimental group and the control group can be measured accurately in order to determine the influence that team dialogue sessions may have on the antecedents of employee engagement and employee engagement. This also means that the research can reliably use nonparametric tests for comparing the control group and the experimental group.
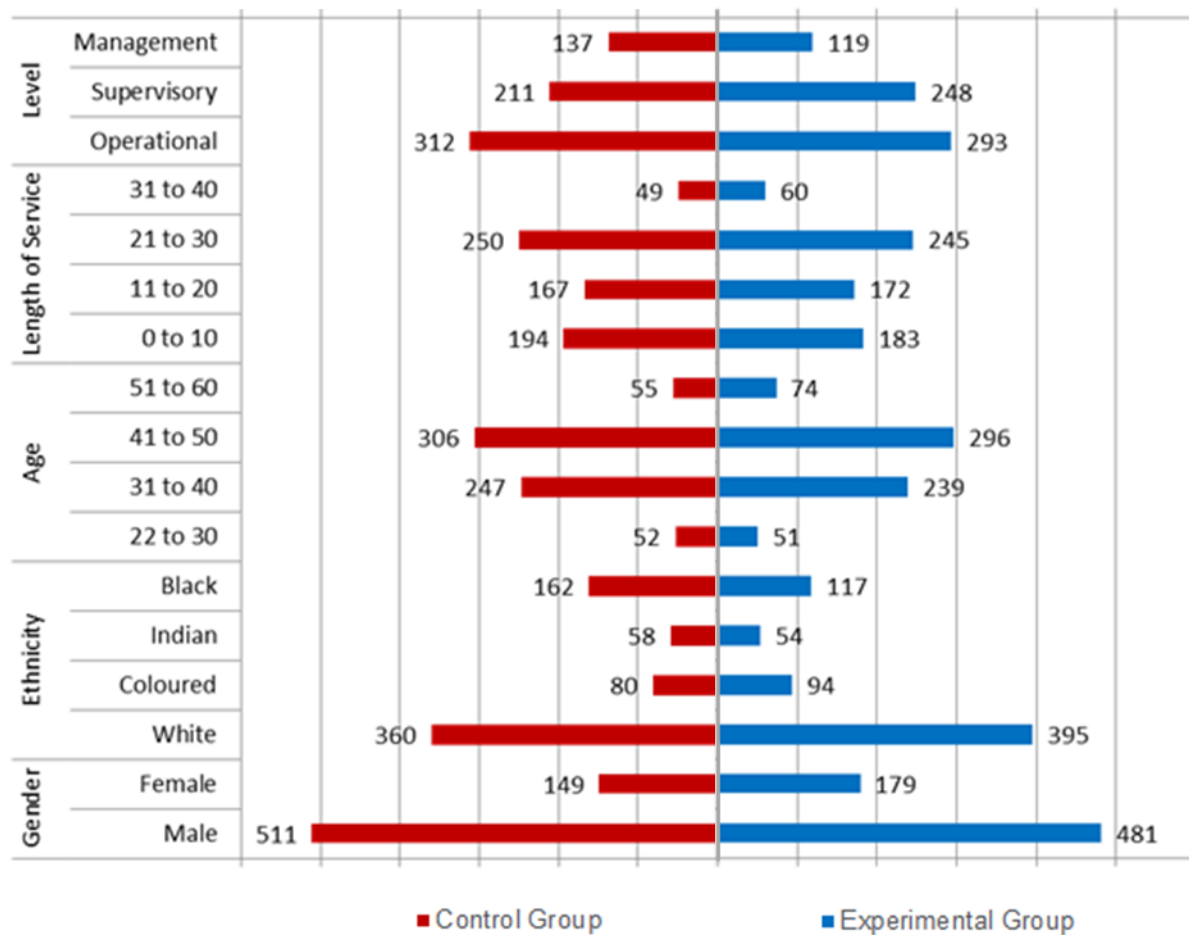
Graph 4.1. Biographical Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups

4.4. INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES

In terms of this research the independent variable is team dialogue sessions, while the dependent variable is employee engagement and this will be measured by means of the survey conducted before the intervention and the subsequent survey conducted after the intervention.
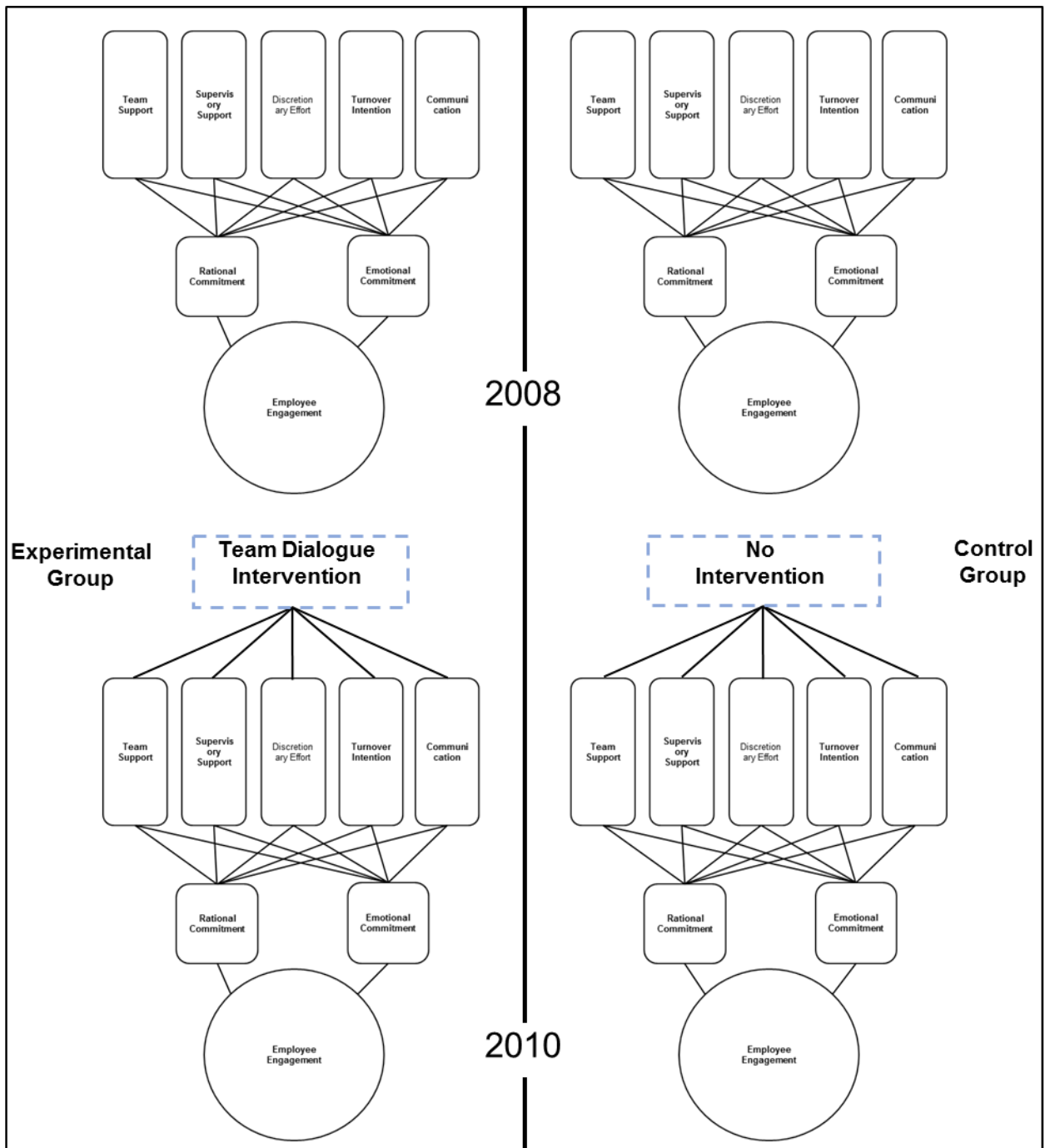
Figure 4.1 Model of Independent and Dependent Variables

4.5. DESCRIPTION OF THE TEAM DIALOGUE INTERVENTION

Team dialogues are conducted with a supervisor and his or her direct reporting work team. Each session is facilitated by an HR specialist facilitator who is responsible for ensuring that the dialogue is conducted as a true dialogue and that each of the participants are allowed to participate fully in it. The facilitator also ensures that the dialogue session takes place along the dimensions of dialogue discussed in chapter 3.3; these dimensions being thinking together, suspending judgement, identifying assumptions, listening, inquiring and reflecting and, finally, collaborative learning. The topic and content of the dialogue centres on the company mission and vision, as well as the core values, but also includes dialogue around perceived team support, communication, team functioning, team relationships and relationships with the supervisor. Team dialogue sessions are conducted on a monthly basis and last for approximately two hours but this may vary depending on the dialogue that is taking place. The facilitator takes notes during the session, which the team can refer to in the following session.

4.6. POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The population for this study comprised all the 23 000 individual full-time employees of the ICT organisation. A personal invitation was sent out by email, with the Universal Resource Locator (URL) address of the online survey attached, to the entire population. When administering the four employee engagement surveys, a census-based approach was used with the intention of surveying all employees in the heterogenic population (everybody in the target population had an equal opportunity to participate in the survey). These surveys were conducted over a period of one month in February 2008 as well as in February 2010.

The sample or unit of analysis for this study was the 660 individual full-time employees of the ICT company that participated in all the employee engagement surveys conducted between 2008 and 2010, and who also participated in the organisational intervention of team dialogue sessions – this group will be referred to as the experimental group. The control group consisted of 660 randomly selected individual full-time employees of the ICT company who participated in all of the employee engagement surveys conducted by the ICT company between 2008 and 2010, but who did not participate in the organisation intervention of team dialogue sessions. A personally addressed email was sent to each of these employees with the URL address of the web-based online survey attached to the email.

4.7.   MEASURING INSTRUMENT

The employee engagement scale used in this study was a scale developed by the Corporate Leadership Council (CLC) for the ICT company where the study was conducted. To validate this survey, the CLC has conducted various studies of employee engagement levels using this survey questionnaire with over 50 000 employees across the globe and has reported overall Cronbach's alpha of over 0.70 (CLC, 2004). This scale was selected because it measures both the antecedents of employee engagement that may be influenced by team dialogues, namely, emotional commitment and rational commitment communication, perceived team support, and perceived supervisory support, and the two main constructs, intention to leave or turnover intention and discretionary effort, that indicate the level of employee engagement. This enables the relationship between the antecedents of employee engagement and the engagement level itself to be measured. It is then possible to measure the influence of dialogue sessions on the antecedents of employee engagement and, subsequently, employee engagement itself. The constructs and examples of the questions asked are presented below:

- **Turnover intention** was measured by questions such as "I plan to stay with ITC", "It would take a serious event for me to consider leaving ITC", and "I actively search for job opportunities at other companies."

- **Discretionary effort** was measured by questions such as "I am willing to work many additional hours over the next year if it helps ITC achieve its goals", and "I often go the extra mile."

- **Rational commitment** was measured by questions such as "All in all, I am satisfied with my current job", "This job meets my needs", and "All in all it I would say 'it is worth it' for my family, my career and for me personally to work here".

- **Emotional commitment** was measured by questions such as "Working with ITC has a great deal of personal meaning to me", "I feel emotionally attached to ITC", and "I trust ITC".

- **Communication** was measured by questions such as "Overall how would you rate ITC's employee communications?", "More specifically …", "Explain how the organisation's vision, goals, and strategy apply to your work", and "Giving you the straight story on issues facing this organisation".

- **Perceived team support** was measured by questions such as "Being in a section/team you have a strong personal attachment to", and "Being in a section/team you are proud to work for".

- **Perceived supervisory support** was measured by questions such as "Overall how you would rate your immediate supervisor", "more specifically …", "Having a good day-to-day working relationship with you", "Treating employees with respect", and "Providing the right amount of supervision and guidance".

4.8. DATA COLLECTION

A web-based survey questionnaire was used to collect the data for the employee engagement surveys conducted in the ICT company in 2008 and 2010. The data collected from these surveys was captured from the online questionnaire and stored in a database. Each online survey questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section one contained the questions required to capture the biographical and demographic information of the participants, while section two contained scale information used to measure the selected variables.

Employees who participated in all the employee engagement surveys conducted by the ICT company from 2008 to 2010 and who also participated in the intervention of team dialogue sessions will be classified as the experimental group.   Employees who participated in all the employee engagement surveys conducted by the ICT company from 2008 to 2010, but who did not participate in the intervention of team dialogue sessions, will be classified as the control group.

The company's HR system contains a complete biographical data report of each employee and makes use of a system whereby each employee is allocated a unique seven-digit number called a salary reference number when they are appointed. The salary reference numbers were used as unique identifiers to monitor and control employee participation in the web-based surveys, and were used to link the participating employees to the organisation's headcount report and to obtain the biographical data required for the study. The company's HR system contains a complete demographic data report on each employee and the salary reference numbers were used to link the participating employees to the organisation's headcount report and to obtain the demographic data required for the study.

4.9.   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

An integral part of the study was the assurance of confidentiality. Accordingly, the invitation letter requesting participants to participate contained a confidentiality clause. This clause assured the participants that all information collected would be treated in the strictest confidence and that no individual responses would be revealed. Ethical considerations were also assured by regulating access to the data and not allowing individual records to be revealed; at no time were employee names and surnames stored in the database. Moreover, the survey administrator had access to the survey data only and was required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

4.10. DATA ANALYSIS

Data obtained from responses captured from the online web-based surveys was subjected to statistical analysis using the Windows program version 17 of SPSS International (Pallant, 2007). This was done for each respondent. The data will be divided into a number of data sets:

- data set 1, containing the biographical and demographic details of the respondents from the experimental group

- data set 2, containing the responses of the participants in the experimental group to the individual survey questions and scales of the 2008 employee engagement survey

- data set 3, containing the responses of the participants in the experimental group to the individual survey questions and scales of the 2010 employee engagement survey

- data set 4, containing the biographical and demographic details of the respondents from the control group

- data set 5, containing the responses from participants in the control group to the individual survey questions and scales of the 2008 employee engagement survey

- data set 6, containing the responses from participants in the control group to the individual survey questions and scales of the 2010 employee engagement survey.

The participant responses to the web-based surveys were analysed and the results of the experimental group and the control group compared over the period February 2008 to February 2010. The difference between the experimental group, which included participants in the organisational intervention of work team dialogues, and the control group that did not participate, was then computed.

4.11. FORMULATION OF HYPOTHESIS

The literature reviews in the preceding chapters, and specifically the integration of the theory from these chapters in chapter 3, provided a basis on which the researcher was able to formulate two hypotheses based on the relationship between employee engagement and team dialogue; this relationship became empirically pertinent. In conjunction with the specific aims of the research, as stated in Chapter 1, the following research (alternative) hypotheses are formulated:

H0 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on employee engagement.

H1: Team dialogues have a significant influence on employee engagement.

H2 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on turnover intention.

H3: Team dialogues have a significant influence on turnover intention.

H4 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on discretionary effort.

H5: Team dialogues have a significant influence on discretionary effort.

H6 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on rational commitment.

H7: Team dialogues have a significant influence on rational commitment.

H8 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on emotional commitment.

H9: Team dialogues have a significant influence on emotional commitment.

H10 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on communication.

H11: Team dialogues have a significant influence on communication.

H12 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on perceived team support.

H13: Team dialogues have a significant influence on perceived team support.

H14 (null hypothesis): Team dialogues have no influence on perceived supervisor support.

H15: Team dialogues have a significant influence on perceived supervisor support.

4.12. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the research design with specific reference to the population and the sample, the measuring battery, the procedure followed, the statistical analyses, and the formulation of hypotheses. In chapter 5, the results of the data analyses will be reported.

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1.   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the results of the empirical investigation are reported on and investigated. In addition, the differences between the descriptive statistics and the biographical statistics of the experimental group and the control group are discussed. Non-parametric independent sampling tests and non-parametric paired sample tests were conducted on both the experimental and the control groups. Nonparametric statistics or distribution-free tests are those that do not rely on parameter estimates or precise assumptions about the distribution of variables. The results are reflected in the tables below:

5.2.   RELIABILITY OF THE TEST INSTRUMENT

An overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient score of 0.778 was achieved by the measuring instrument as a whole. The Cronbach's alpha individual coefficient scores for the factors measured in the questionnaire are shown in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient Scores of the Measuring Instrument

Factor	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Employee Engagement	0.832
Discretionary Effort	0.754
Turnover Intention	0.770
Rational Commitment	0.746
Emotional Commitment	0.744
Communication	0.749
Perceived Supervisory Support	0.753
Perceived Team Support	0.749

A Cronbach's alpha score of 0.7 is regarded as acceptable reliability while a score of 0.8 is regarded as high reliability (Pallant, 2007).

5.3. NON-PARAMETRIC INDEPENDENT SAMPLING TESTS

The Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney test is one of the most powerful of the nonparametric tests for comparing two populations (Easton & McColl, 2004). It is used in this research to test the null hypothesis that two populations have identical distribution functions against the alternative hypothesis that the two distribution functions differ only with respect to location (median), if at all. The Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney test does not require the assumption that the differences between the two samples are normally distributed. In many applications, where the normality assumption is questionable, the Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney test is used in place of the two sample t-test. When the observations in a sample of data are ranks, that is, ordinal data rather than direct measurements, this test can also be applied (Easton & McColl, 2004).

Table 5.2

Descriptive Statistics of Employee Engagement

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Experimental-2008	660	3.40	.757	1	5
Experimental-2010	660	3.51	.736	1	5
Control-2010	660	1.75	1.212	1	4
Control-2008	660	1.88	1.186	1	4
Total Group	1320	1.50	.500	1	2

The distribution of the experimental group for 2010, as shown in Table 5.2, is normal with a mean of 3.51 and a standard deviation of 0.74. This is greater than the

distribution of the experimental group for 2008, which is normal with a mean of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 0.76. This indicates that there is a significant difference between and improvement in the scores for 2010 in comparison with 2008.

5.4.   NON-PARAMETRIC PAIRED SAMPLING TESTS

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used when there are two samples of data in order to test whether or not these two samples may reasonably be assumed to come from the same distribution; this test does not require the assumption that the population is normally distributed (Easton & McColl, 2004). The purpose of using this test is to ensure that the two samples for the experimental group come from the same distribution.

Table 5.3

Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1	The distribution of experimental group 2008 normal with mean 3.40 and standard deviation of 0.76	One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis
2	The distribution of experimental group 2010 normal with mean 3.51 and standard deviation of 0.74	One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	0.000	Reject the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .00 which is significant.

The Wilcoxon signed ranks test is designed to test a hypothesis about the location (median) of a population distribution. It often involves the use of matched pairs, for example in before and after data, in which case it tests for a median difference of zero. It is for this reason that this test is particularly applicable in measuring the differences in the means between the experimental group and the control group. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test does not require the assumption that the population is normally distributed (Easton & McColl, 2004).

Table 5.4

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Group		Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Experimental	AEngage-2010-	Negative Ranks	106 a	134.38	14244
	AEngage-2008	Positive Ranks	168 b	139.47	23431
		Ties	386 c		
		Total	660		
Control	AEngage-2010-	Negative Ranks	103 a	129.04	13291
	AEngage-2008	Positive Ranks	163 b	136.32	22220
		Ties	394 c		
		Total	660		

a. AEngage-2010 < AEngage-2008

b. AEngage-2010 > AEngage-2008

c. AEngage-2010 = AEngage-2008

Test Statistics ᵃ

Group				AEngage-2010 - AEngage-2008
Experimental	Z			-3.943ᵇ
	Asymp.	Sig.	(2-tailed)	.000
Control	Z			-3.927ᵇ
	Asymp.	Sig.	(2-tailed)	.000

The negative ranks score in the test statistics in Table 5.4 above, for both the experimental group and the control group, shows a significant difference between 2008 and 2010 and an improvement in the employee engagement rating. The negative ranks score for the experimental group shows a higher score than that of the control group, and the extent of the difference between 2008 and 2010 for the experimental group is also greater. This shows that there was a greater improvement in the employee engagement rating for the experimental group between the years.

5.5. DIMENSION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND THE CONTROL GROUP FOR 2008 AND 2010

The differences in the scores of the dimensions of discretionary effort, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived supervisor support and perceived team support between the years 2008 and 2010 for the experimental group are presented in Table 5.5 and Graph 5.1 below.

Table 5.5

Experimental Group Comparison between 2008 and 2010

	2008	2010	% Improvement
Discretionary Effort	525	601	11.5%
Turnover Intention	304	289	-2.3%
Rational Commitment	386	430	6.7%
Emotional Commitment	387	399	1.8%
Communication	104	139	5.3%
Perceived Supervisor Support	268	281	2.0%
Perceived Team Support	256	259	0.5%

The differences in the scores of the dimensions of discretionary effort, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived supervisor support and perceived team support between the years 2008 and 2010 for the control group are presented in Table 5.6 and Graph 5.1 below.

Table 5.6

Control Group Comparison between 2008 and 2010

	2008	2010	% Improvement
Discretionary Effort	544	591	7.1%
Turnover Intention	281	332	7.7%
Rational Commitment	406	438	4.8%
Emotional Commitment	379	417	5.8%
Communication	119	141	3.3%
Perceived Supervisor Support	278	281	0.5%
Perceived Team Support	234	265	4.7%
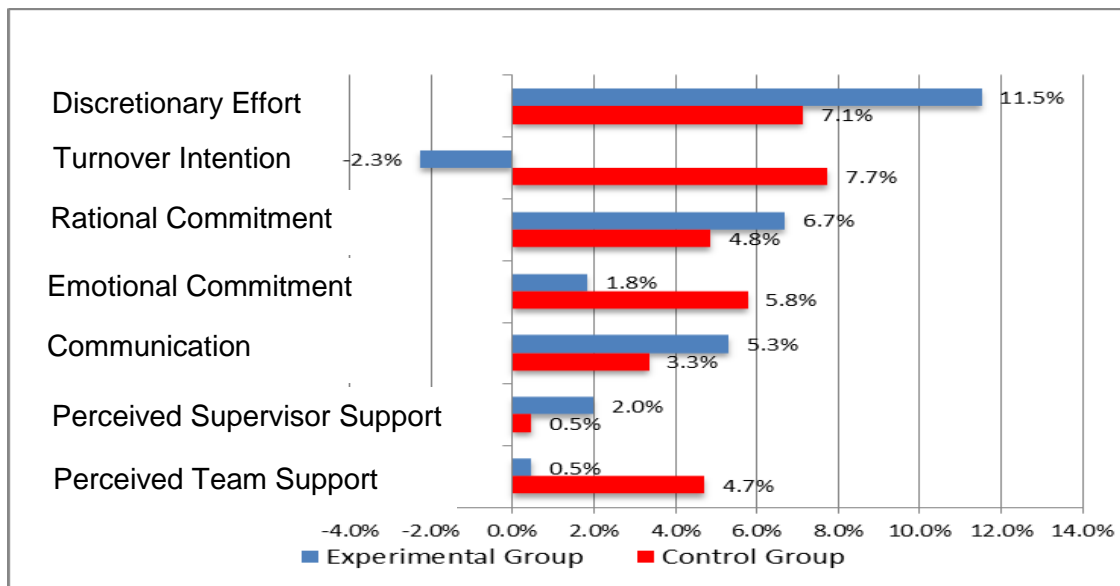
Graph 5.1. The percentage improvement between the years 2008 and 2010

The extent of the differences between the experimental group and the control group in the scores of the dimensions of discretionary effort, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived supervisor support and perceived team support are presented in Table 5.7 and in Graph 5.2 below.

Table 5.7

Extent of the Differences between the Improvement in the Experimental Group and Control Group Survey Dimensions between 2008 and 2010

	Experimental Group	Control Group	% Difference
Discretionary Effort	11.5%	7.1%	4.4%
Turnover Intention	-2.3%	7.7%	-10.0%
Rational Commitment	6.7%	4.8%	1.8%
Emotional Commitment	1.8%	5.8%	-3.9%
Communication	5.3%	3.3%	2.0%
Perceived Supervisor Support	2.0%	0.5%	1.5%
Perceived Team Support	0.5%	4.7%	-4.2%
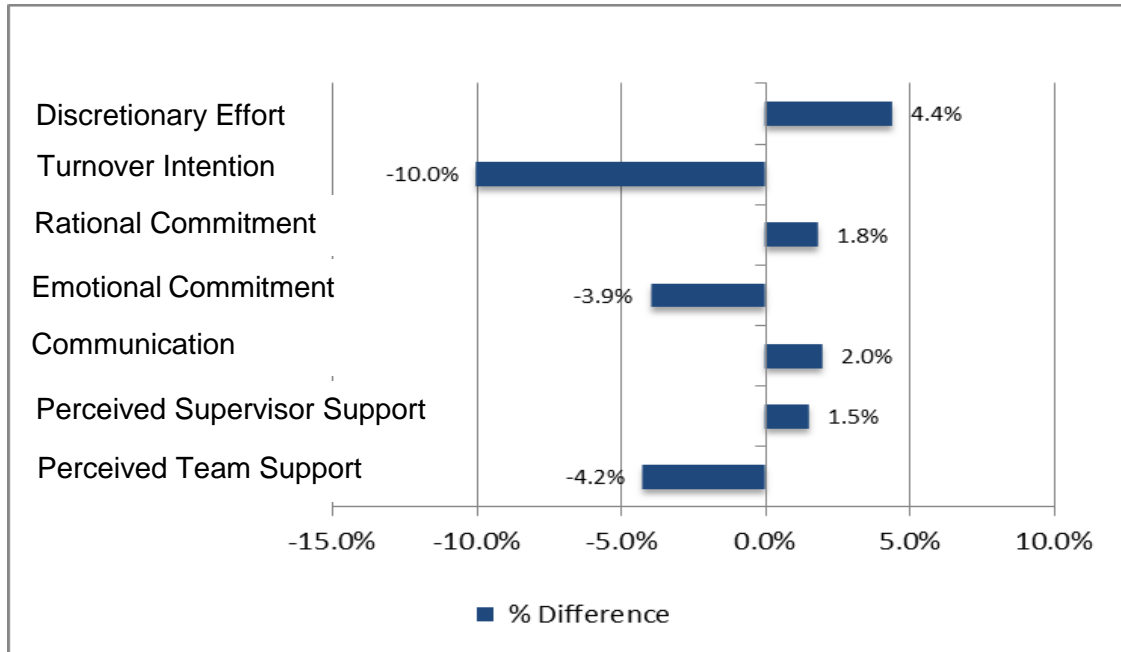
Graph 5.2. The Extent of the Differences between the Improvement in the Experimental Group and Control Group Survey Dimensions between 2008 and 2010

Between the years 2008 and 2010 the experimental group showed a 5.8% greater improvement in the dimension of discretionary effort, a 23.1% greater improvement (a greater intention to stay) in the dimension of turnover intention, a 3.5% greater improvement in the dimension of rational commitment, a 15.2% greater improvement in the dimension of communication and a 3.8% greater improvement in the dimension of perceived supervisor support.

The control group, on the other hand, showed a greater improvement between the years of 2008 and 2010 in the dimensions of emotional commitment at 6.9% and perceived team support at 12.1%. The score for the dimension of turnover intention deteriorated for the control group.

5.5.1. Discretionary effort

According to Erikson (2004), discretionary effort is behaviour in terms of which an employee has the discretion as to whether to do his/her very best and put in extra effort or to just go through the motions. For the survey dimension of discretionary effort, the experimental group showed an improvement of 11.5% compared to the control group, which showed an improvement of 7.1%. The extent of this difference between the experimental group and the control group is 4.4%. This appears to indicate that there was greater discretionary effort on the part of the participants in the team dialogue sessions compared with the survey participants who did not participate in the team dialogue sessions. Increased discretionary effort is both an outcome and an indicator of employee engagement.

5.5.2. Turnover intention

Turnover intention refers to the intention of the employee to remain employed by the organisation or their intention to leave the organisation (CLC, 2004). The survey dimension of turnover intention shows a greater improvement in the experimental group where the intention to leave reduced by 2.3%, whereas the control group showed a greater turnover intention and the intention to leave increased by 7.7%. The extent of this difference between the experimental group and the control group is 10%. This appears to indicate that there was a greater intention to stay with the organisation for the participants in the team dialogue sessions compared to the survey participants who did not participate in the team dialogue sessions. Withdrawal behaviour is the primary way in which employees deal with issues in the employment relationship (Lo & Aryee, 2003). Decreased intention to leave the organisation is both an outcome and an indicator of employee engagement.

5.5.3. Rational commitment

Rational commitment refers to the extent to which employees believe that managers, teams or organisations are in their financial, developmental or professional self-interest (CLC, 2004). The rational commitment dimension of the survey shows a greater improvement in the experimental group, with an improvement of 6.7%, compared to the control group which showed an improvement of 4.8%. The extent of the difference between the experimental group and the control group is 1.8%. This appears to indicate that there was greater rational commitment for the participants in the team dialogue sessions compared to the survey participants who did not participate in the team dialogue sessions. Rothbard (2001, p. 656) refers to "cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role", while engagement includes the cognitive resources to engage the self at work (Kahn, 1990). Victor Frankl (as cited in May et al., 2004) argued that individuals have a primary motive to seek meaning in their work. Thus, a greater rational commitment is both an outcome and an indicator of employee engagement.

5.5.4. Emotional commitment

The survey dimension of emotional commitment shows greater improvement in the control group, which displayed an improvement of 5.8%, compared to the experimental group which showed an improvement of 1.8%. The extent of the difference is 3.9% and this would appear to indicate that the survey participants who did not take part in the team dialogue sessions had greater emotional commitment than the survey participants who did take part in the team dialogue sessions. According to May et al. (2004, p. 12), employee engagement involves the active use of "emotions and behaviours". It can therefore be said to include a dimension that is referred to as emotional commitment. The team's creation of a shared meaning could influence the emotional commitment of individual team members but it would also improve the rational commitment where a shared understanding is created (Jabri, 2004).

5.5.5. Communication

The survey participants that took part in the team dialogue sessions showed a greater improvement in the survey dimension of communication, with an improvement of 5.3%, compared to the control group which showed an improvement of 3.3%. According to Lau and Shani (1992, p. 99), one way to overcome contradictory expectations is by bringing similarities and differences in perspective out into the open through communication and dialogue. In this way, issues can be discussed, can be modified by other data or new interpretations, and can be shared. The extent of the difference is 2% and this appears to indicate that there was an improvement in communication among the participants in the team dialogue sessions compared to the survey participants who did not participate in the team dialogue sessions.

5.5.6. Perceived supervisory support

For the survey dimension of perceived supervisory support, the experimental group showed an improvement of 2% compared to the control group where the improvement was 0.5%. Dick (2007) stresses that the first-line superior plays an important role in employee engagement and refers in this regard to research conducted by Benkoff (1997a in Dick, 2007), who found that where employees felt that their supervisors were competent, liked their management style and trusted their superior, they shared the values of the company and were proud to be employed there. The extent of the difference between the experimental group and the control group is 1.8%. This appears to indicate that there was an improvement in perceived supervisory support among the participants in the team dialogue sessions compared to the survey participants who did not participate in the team dialogue sessions.

5.5.7. Perceived team support

The results of the survey dimension of perceived team support appear to correspond with the finding that the control group showed greater improvement in perceived team support, that is, 4.7%, compared to the experimental group, which showed a much smaller improvement in this dimension of 0.5%. May et al. (2004) found that co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors of employee engagement. According to Lau and Shani (1992, p. 99), team members see situations, issues and goals differently, depending on their particular perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and biases but that teams typically assume that team members will see things as they do. Dialoguing in teams would counter this assumption. The extent of this difference between the experimental and the control groups is 4.2%, and this would appear to indicate that the survey participants who did not take part in the team dialogue sessions show greater team support than the survey participants who did take part in the team dialogue sessions.

5.6.   BIOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP AND THE CONTROL GROUP FOR 2008 AND 2010

The biographical differences between the groupings of gender, ethnicity, age, length of service and grade level provide valuable perspectives and insights into the differences between the experimental group and control group and between the years 2008 and 2010.

Table 5.8 below presents the differences in the employee engagement scores for the experimental group between the years 2008 and 2010.

Table 5.8

Experimental Group Comparison between 2008 and 2010 Engagement Scores for Biographic Categories with a Score of Engaged

		2008	2010	% Improvement
Gender	Male	279	323	9
	Female	108	141	18
Ethnicity	Black	79	96	4
	Coloured	54	71	18
	Indian	33	38	9
	White	221	259	32
Age	22 to 30	22	32	20
	31 to 40	139	163	10
	41 to 50	174	203	10
	51 to 60	52	66	19%
Length of Service	0 to 10	102	138	20
	11 to 20	106	113	4
	21 to 30	140	165	10
	31 to 40	39	48	15
Level	Operational	74	92	6
	Supervisory	141	167	10
	Management	172	205	28

Table 5.9 below presents the differences in the employee engagement scores for the control group between the years 2008 and 2010.

Table 5.9

Control Group Comparison between 2008 and 2010 Engagement Scores for Biographic Categories with a Score of Engaged

		2008	2010	% Improvement
Gender	Male	319	353	7
	Female	84	109	17
Ethnicity	Black	115	120	1
	Coloured	55	63	10
	Indian	36	43	12
	White	197	236	24
Age	22 to 30	19	33	27
	31 to 40	133	173	16
	41 to 50	213	217	1
	51 to 60	38	39	2
Length of Service	0 to 10	106	134	14
	11 to 20	96	114	11
	21 to 30	167	177	4
	31 to 40	34	37	6

Level	Operational	89	93	1
	Supervisory	134	145	5
	Management	180	224	32

Table 5.10 shows the extent of the difference between the percentage improvements of the experimental group compared to the control group.

Table 5.10

The Extent of the Difference between the Percentage Improvement of the Experimental Group and the Control Group

		% Improvement
Gender	Male	2.00
	Female	2.00
Ethnicity	Black	3.00
	Coloured	8.00
	Indian	-3.00
	White	8.00
Age	22 to 30	-7.00
	31 to 40	-6.00
	41 to 50	8.00
	51 to 60	17.00

Length of Service	0 to 10	5.00
	11 to 20	-7.00
	21 to 30	6.00
	31 to 40	9.00
Level	Operational	5.00
	Supervisory	5.00
	Management	-4.00

Graph 5.3 below displays the percentage improvement by biographical category between the years 2008 and 2010 for the experimental group compared to the control group.

Graph 5.3 The Percentage Improvement by Biographical Category between the Years 2008 and 2010 for the Experimental Group and the Control Group

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Graph 5.4 below shows the extent of the difference between the percentage improvements of the experimental group compared to the control group.
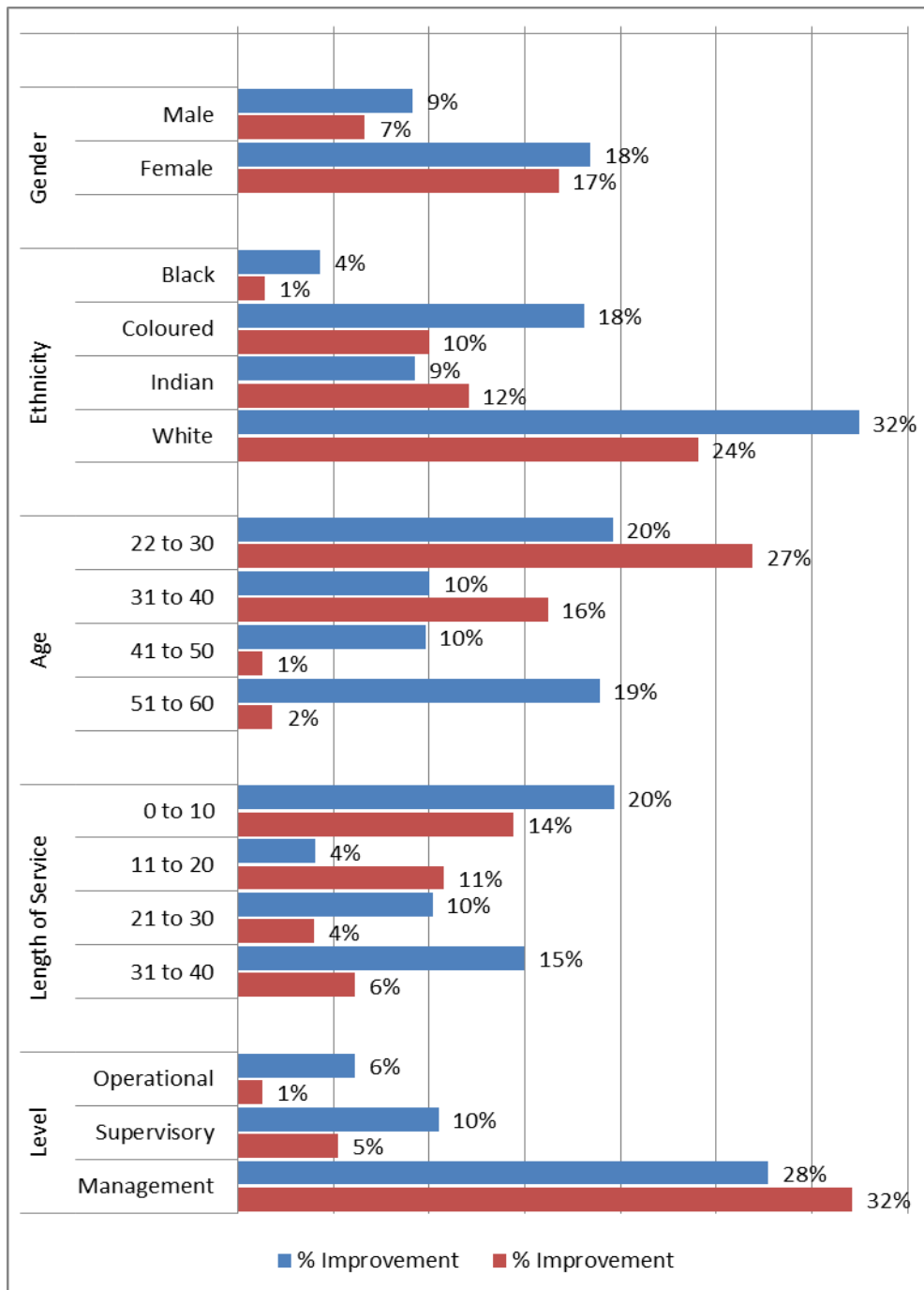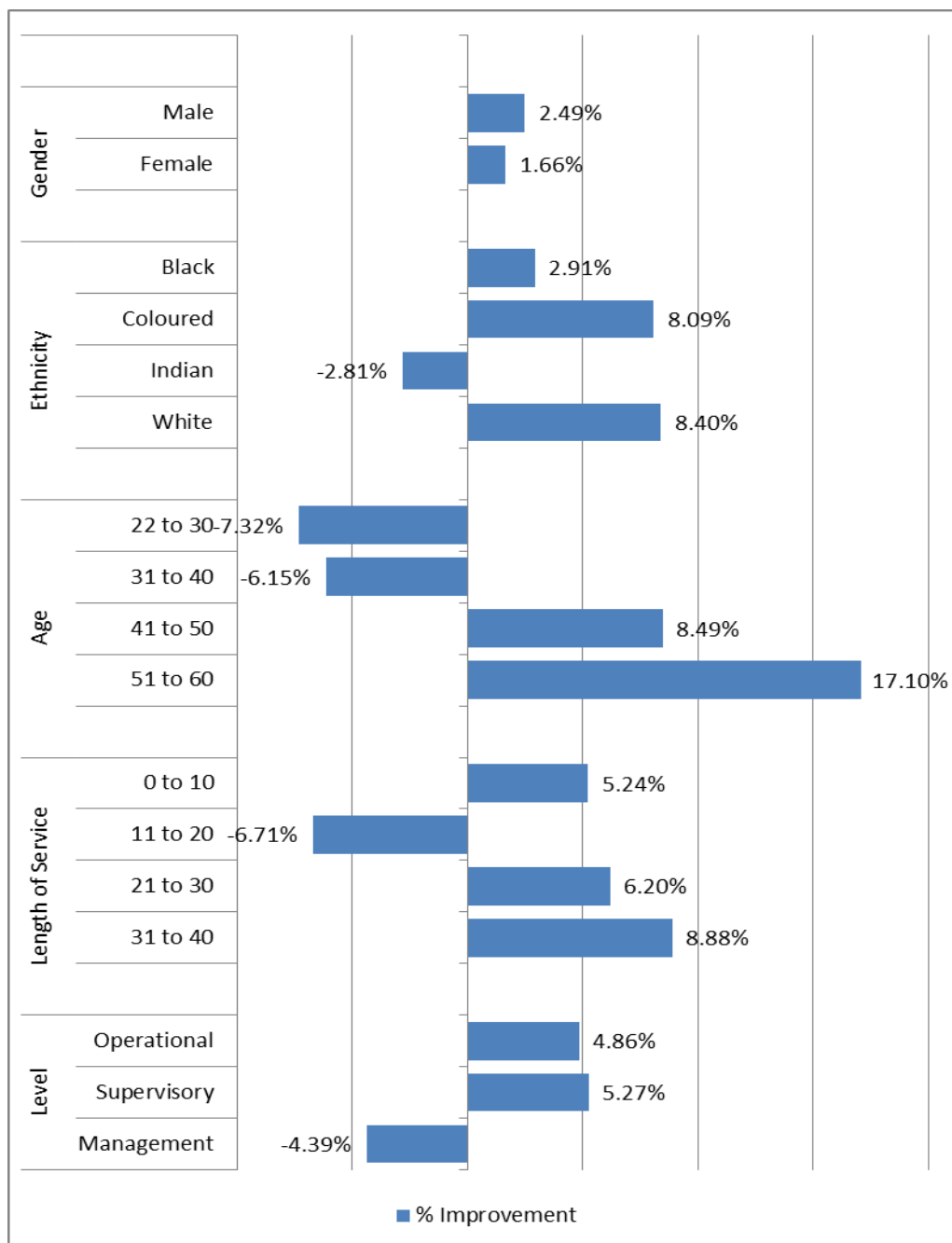

Graph 5.4 The Extent of the Difference of the Percentage Improvement between the Experimental Group and the Control Group

In the experimental group, the gender category of female, the ethnicity category of coloured, the age category of 51 to 60 years, the length of service category of 0 to 10 years, and the level category of management showed the greatest improvement. For the control group the gender category of female, the ethnicity category of Indian, the age category of 31 to 40 years, the length of service category of 0 to 10 years, and the level category of management showed the greatest improvement.

5.6.1. Gender

In both gender groupings the experimental group showed an improvement in the employee engagement score. The male category score improved by 9% between 2008 and 2012 compared to 7% for the control group. The female category score improved by 18% for the experimental group whereas the control group improved by 17% between 2008 and 2012. Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) highlight several demographic variables in their study on work engagement and in the conceptualisation of work engagement that may impact on levels of work engagement. A number of researchers have explored the link between gender and employee engagement with varied results from marginal differences to significant gender sensitivity differences (Mostert & Rothmann, 2006; Peter, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), and have shown female employees to have higher engagement scores than that of their male counterparts.

This study supports the findings that there are gender differences between male and female, with females exhibiting greater engagement scores. This is supported by the fact that the results of both the experimental group and the control group showed greater improvement in engagement scores for female participants. The female participants in the experimental group did, however, show greater improvement than the control group and the male participants in the experimental group similarly showed more positive improvement than did the control group.

5.6.2. Ethnicity

The coloured ethnic group in the experimental group showed the greatest improvement of 18% between 2008 and 2012 compared to the control group, which had a 10% improvement. The black ethnic group showed a similar trend, with the experimental group displaying an improvement of 15% between 2008 and 2012 compared to the control group which displayed a 3% improvement. However, the white ethnic group and the Indian ethnic group showed a contradictory trend. In both of these ethnic groupings the control group showed greater improvement between 2008 and 2012 than the experimental group, with the white group showing a 10% improvement for the experimental group versus an 11% improvement for the control group, and the Indian group showing a 9% improvement for the experimental group versus a 12% improvement for the control group. From these results it may be concluded that the coloured and black ethnic groups are more accepting of the concept of team dialogue than are the white and Indian ethnic groups. The societies into which individuals are born also contribute to this, as different ethnic groups have different mental models about work (Béteille, 2002; Stets, 2005).

5.6.3. Age

In the experimental group, age groups 22 to 30 years and 51 to 60 years showed the greatest improvement between 2008 and 2012 compared to the control group. Age group 22 to 30 years for the experimental group showed a 20% improvement versus a 15% improvement for the control group, while the age group 51 to 60 years for the experimental group showed a 30% improvement versus an 18% improvement for the control group. In contrast, age groups 31 to 40 and 41 to 50 showed the opposite trend. For both age groups, the control group showed a greater improvement between 2008 and 2012 than the experimental group. Age group 31 to 40 in the experimental group showed a 16% improvement versus the 22% improvement of the control group, while age group 41 to 50 in the experimental group showed a 13% improvement

versus a 16% improvement for the control group. Young employees lack job experience and are more tolerant of the working conditions; however, these views change over time and as employees become more experienced they subsequently start looking for better job opportunities (Allan, Bamber & Timo, 2006). Jacobs (2005) reported a statistically significant, positive relationship between tenure and turnover intention. In a meta-analysis of employee turnover, Cotton and Tuttle (1986) reported that organisational tenure was negatively related to employee turnover, mainly because of the risks associated with leaving. This finding is supported by Karatepe and Aleshinloye (2009), who reported a significant negative relationship.   From these results it is possible to deduce that the age groups of 22 to 30 years and 51 to 60 years are more accepting of the concept of team dialogue than are the age groups 31 to 40 years and 41 to 50 years.

5.6.4. Length of service

The length of service category of 0 to 10 years for the experimental group showed the greatest improvement between 2008 and 2012 compared to the control group. In the length of service categories 11 to 20 years and 21 to 30 years, the control group showed greater improvement between 2008 and 2012 compared to the experimental group.   From these results it is possible to deduce that the length of service category of 0 to 10 years is more accepting of the concept of team dialogue than are the length of service categories 11 to 20 years, and 21 to 30 years. The length of service category of 31 to 40 years showed the same improvement of 20% between 2008 and 2012 for both the experimental group and the control group.

In a meta-analysis of employee turnover, Cotton and Tuttle (1986) reported that age was negatively related to employee turnover. This finding is supported by Karatepe and Aleshinloye (2009), as well as Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003), who found a relationship between employees' ages at the time of appointment and turnover intention; the lower the age of the appointee, the higher the probability of turnover

(Jacobs, 2005). In a meta-analysis of the antecedents and correlates of employee turnover, Griffeth, Hom, and Gaertner (2000), reported that age moderated the tenure–turnover relationship.

The results in this study support the findings of (Griffeth et al., 2000) that age moderated the turnover relationship, as the length of service category of 0 to 10 years for both the experimental group and the control group showed the most improvement, but the experimental group showed the greatest improvement.

5.6.5. Level

The level category of management for the control group showed a greater improvement of 32% between 2008 and 2012 than the experimental group which reflected a 28% improvement. On the other hand, the level category of operational for the experimental group showed a greater improvement of 6% between 2008 and 2012 than the control group with a 1% improvement. In addition, the level category of supervisory for the experimental group showed a greater improvement at 10% than the same level in the control group 5%. From these results it is possible to deduce that the level category of supervisory was more resistant to the concept of team dialogue than the management category, where the experimental group showed a greater improvement, and the operational category, where the improvement was equal.

Research on the link between job levels and work engagement remains sparse. However, in their work on conceptualising the UWES, Schaufeli and Bakker (2003), found differential influences between white collar workers or managers and blue collar workers. This study found differences in the improvement in the engagement scores of the various level groupings, with the operational and supervisory levels showing a greater improvement in engagement scores than the management group.

5.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the results of the empirical study were reported and investigated, and presented in the form of graphs, tables and statistical analysis. The biographical differences in the engagement scores between the experimental group and the control group were analysed and discussed; as were the differences in the scores in the survey dimensions between the experimental group and the control group. A number of conclusions emerged regarding the influence that team dialogues may have on employee engagement and these will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a presentation of the conclusions, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research in this field.

6.1. CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the influence that the introduction of an intervention of team dialogues may have on employee engagement. It included a literature review of the existing body of knowledge on employee engagement and team dialogue in order to provide a contextual background and perspective to support the empirical investigation.

6.1.1. Theoretical conclusions

The theoretical objectives of the study were to describe and define the related concepts and theories that form the building blocks, or foundation, for understanding the key concept of employee engagement. In this study, employee engagement was defined in terms of the extent to which an employee demonstrates discretionary effort (willingness to go 'above and beyond' the call of duty), as well as their intention to remain employed by the organisation (CLC, 2004). Employee engagement also includes the extent to which an employee displays, firstly, rational commitment, that is, the degree to which an employee feels that managers, teams, and the organisation have their interests at heart, and secondly, emotional commitment, which is the degree to which an employee believes in, values and enjoys their job (CLC, 2004).

The objectives were also to describe and define the key concept of team dialogues/dialoguing in work teams, with the emphasis on a theoretical framework and the dimensions of this construct. This study defined team dialogue as the process in terms of which a natural team and its immediate superior meet to dialogue and socially co-construct an understanding of the drivers of employee engagement. This team dialogue session is facilitated by an HR practitioner whose role is to ensure that the dialogue remains within the context of the drivers of employee engagement. Lastly,

the objective was to theoretically determine the influence of team dialogues/dialoguing in work teams on employee engagement.

Theoretically, it can be concluded that effective dialogue in teams directly influences the functioning of a team, the communication in a team, the relationships between the team members, and the relationship they have with their supervisor. According to (Lau & Shani)(1992) people view situations depending on their own particular perspectives, experiences and backgrounds but they tend to believe that other people perceive things in the same way that they do. One of the main objectives of dialoge is to create an environment that enables people to see things differently and from other people's point of view. Schein (1993) argued that when the interpretation that someone else puts on a concept is recognised as being different from one's own then dialogue can start to take place. Greater levels of understanding of alternative ways of thinking and dedication to a particular view can be generated when there is, a willingness to accept differences in the way that people reason and act under conditions of high uncertainty and high task interdependence.

The variables identified in the literature review that are applicable in the team context, that have an influence on employee engagement, and that are measurable in the employee engagement surveys conducted before and after the organisation development intervention were discretionary effort, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived supervisory support and perceived team support. The comparative analysis shown in Table 2.1 of the drivers of employee engagement also formed a basis for the selection of these variables.

The above discussion provided the basis for the hypotheses, which postulated the relationship between employee engagement and team dialogue. These hypotheses were evaluated and measured as part of the empirical study.

6.1.2. Empirical conclusions

The conclusions are framed within the objectives of the empirical findings of the study, which measured the differences in employee engagement scores between the experimental group (which was exposed to the team dialogue intervention) and the control group (which was not exposed to the team dialogue intervention). The results of the employee engagement survey conducted in 2008 and the results of the employee engagement survey conducted in 2010, for both the experimental group and the control group, were compared in terms of the variables that had been identified as being influenced by team dialogues. This is discussed below.

6.1.2.1.   *Discretionary effort*

For the survey dimension of discretionary effort, the experimental group showed an improvement of 11.5% compared to the control group, which showed an improvement of 7.1%. The extent of this difference between the experimental group and the control group is, thus, 4.4%. This appears to indicate that there was greater discretionary effort on the part of the participants in the team dialogue sessions (the experimental group) than the survey participants who did not participate in the team dialogue sessions (the control group). According to Erikson (2004), employee engagement is about discretionary effort, where the employee makes a decision on whether to do his/her very best and put in extra effort or to do just the bare minimum of what is expected in the job. This finding supports the notion that the team's creation of a shared meaning could influence the emotional commitment of individual team members, but that it would improve the rational commitment where a shared understanding is created (Jabri, 2004). Accordingly, the existence of a greater sense of meaning could be linked to additional effort being displayed by the employee.

6.1.2.2.   Turnover intention

The survey dimension of turnover intention showed a greater improvement in the experimental group, where the intention to leave reduced by 2.3%, in contrast with the control group, which showed a greater turnover intention and the intention to leave increased by 7.7%. The extent of the difference between the experimental group and the control group is, thus, 10%.   This appears to indicate that there was a greater intention to stay with the organisation for the participants who participated in the team dialogue sessions compared to the survey participants who did not participate in the team dialogue sessions. Withdrawal behaviour is one of the main ways in which employees deal with issues in the employment relationship (Lo & Aryee, 2003). Consequently, decreased intention to leave the organisation is both an outcome and an indicator of employee engagement. A greater sense of belonging may therefore lead to a decrease in withdrawal behaviour by employees.

6.1.2.3.   Rational commitment

The rational commitment dimension of the survey shows greater improvement in the experimental group than in the control group; the extent of this is 1.8%.   Rational commitment relates to the extent to which employees believe that managers, teams and organisations are in their financial, developmental or professional self-interest (CLC, 2004). It would appear that the results of the study support the findings and that there was greater rational commitment for the participants in the team dialogue sessions than the survey participants who had not participated in the team dialogue sessions. The success of the team dialogue session is linked to the extent that team members were willing to create shared meaning, rather than gaining agreement on one meaning; they were accordingly more able to learn from each other and to 'criss-cross' their views with each other, thus enhancing their understanding of the sorts of issues that impede their ability to perform (Jabri, 2004).

6.1.2.4.   Emotional commitment

The survey dimension of emotional commitment shows a greater improvement in the control group than the experimental group. From the results it can be concluded that there is a possibility that the team dialogue sessions were, from an emotional commitment perspective, viewed less positively by the experimental group than the control group. This finding supports the notion that the team's creation of shared meaning could influence the emotional commitment of individual team members and, that where a shared understanding is created, it would in turn improve rational commitment (Jabri, 2004).

6.1.2.5.   Communication

The communication dimension of the survey showed a 2% greater improvement in the experimental group over the control group and this corresponds with the expectation that team dialogue will improve communication among the members of the team. Contradictory expectations can be overcome by bringing similarities and differences in perspective out into the open and dialogue enables a place where discussion is modified by other data or new interpretations, and shared (Lau & Shani, 1992). "Such exchange is the foundation for understanding, trust, and thus effective working relations, and successful managers and employees use it frequently" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99).

Schein (1993, p. 47) considers dialogue as a basic process for building common understanding, in that it allows one to see the hidden meanings of words, first by revealing these hidden meanings in our own communication. Schein (1993, p. 44) wrote that "dialogue aims to build a group that can think generatively, creatively, and most importantly, together".

6.1.2.6.   Perceived supervisory support

Perceived supervisory supports showed greater improvement in the experimental group, with an improvement of 2%, compared to the control group where the improvement was 0.5%. Dick (2007) stresses the important role that the first line superior plays in employee engagement and refers to research conducted by Benkoff (1997a, cited in Dick, 2007), who found that where employees felt that their supervisors were competent, liked their management style and trusted their superior, they shared the values of the company and were proud to be employed there. May et al. (2004) also found that co-worker relations and supervisor relations were positive predictors of employee engagement and the results of this study support this.

6.1.2.7.   Perceived team support

The control group showed a greater improvement in perceived team support over the time period measured compared to the experimental group. May et al. (2004) found that co-worker norms and self-consciousness were negative predictors of employee engagement. "One of the basic and most persistent problems of organisational life is that different people see situations, issues, or goals differently, depending on their particular perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and biases – yet everyone typically assumes that everyone else sees things as they do" (Lau & Shani, 1992, p. 99). Schein (1993, p. 44) wrote that "dialogue aims to build a group that can think generatively, creatively, and most importantly, together". Schein (1993) argued that dialogue is discovered when the interpretation that someone else puts on a concept is recognised as being different from one's own. That is, there is a willingness to accept differences in the way that people reason and act under conditions of high uncertainty, and high task interdependence can lead to greater levels of understanding of alternative ways of thinking and dedication to a particular worldview or Weltanschauung. This supports the findings of the study that the control group, in

which no team dialogues had taken place, showed a greater improvement in scores related to perceived team support than the experimental group.

In conclusion, the evidence presented by the empirical study strongly suggests that team dialogues have a positive influence in terms of improving employee engagement levels within an organisation. Moreover, team dialogue sessions would appear to have a significant influence on the level of employee engagement experienced by participants in that dialogue.   Team dialogues involve and influence the major dimensions of discretionary effort, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived supervisory support and co-worker relations/perceived team support that contribute to employee engagement. It is therefore possible to conclude that the coloured and the black ethnic groups are more accepting of the concept of team dialogue than are the white and Indian ethnic groups. Mostert and Rothmann (2006) found the influence of race to produce a marginal difference in terms of vigour and dedication and, consequently, the results of this study show that there are variances between ethnic groupings in their response to team dialogues.

6.2. LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the research are discussed with regard to the literature review and the empirical study.

6.2.1. Literature review

Extensive academic studies and a comprehensive body of knowledge on team dialogue and the relationship between employee engagement and team dialogue are not readily available, especially in the South African context. This limited the researcher's efforts to find more varied research data.

6.2.2. Empirical study

The language employed in the web-based survey may be considered to be a limitation as the survey was administered in English, the official business language of the ICT company. For many employees, however, English is a second language and this could have had a negative effect on their understanding of the scale items.

A further possible limitation of this study is that both the experimental group and the control group were drawn from the same ICT sector population. Accordingly, any generalisation to populations outside the ICT sector should be done with caution.

6.3. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the conclusions and limitations of the overall results of this study discussed above, the following recommendations are made for future research:

The results of the study show that team dialogue sessions can have a significant influence on the level of employee engagement experienced by the participants in these sessions. Team dialogues involve and influence the major dimensions of

employee engagement, including commitment, turnover intention, rational commitment, emotional commitment, communication, perceived supervisory support and co-worker relations/perceived team support. The introduction of team dialogue sessions would therefore directly benefit the organisation.

It is possible to conclude that the coloured and the black ethnic groups are more accepting of the concept of team dialogue than the white and Indian ethnic groups. This requires further research as ethnicity remains a relevant dimension in South Africa given the country's history. Mostert and Rothmann (2006) found that race had a marginal influence on vigour and dedication, and the results of this study show that there are variances between ethnic groupings in their response to team dialogues.

From the results of this study it is possible to deduce that the age group 22 to 30 years and 51 to 60 years are more accepting of the concept of team dialogue than the age groups 31 to 40 years and 41 to 50 years. This finding is an opportunity for further research.

6.4.   CHAPTER SUMMARY

The aim of this research was to determine the relationship between team dialogue sessions and employee engagement and to ascertain whether dialoguing in teams improves employee engagement. This final chapter focused on drawing conclusions from the results in terms of both the literature review and the empirical study. This was followed by a consideration of the limitations of the study. A final review of the research confirms that all the theoretical and empirical research objectives, as defined at the beginning of the study, have been achieved. This study makes a unique contribution to understanding the relationship between team dialogues and employee engagement and how such team dialogues can improve employee engagement. The chapter concluded with recommendations for future research that were based on the findings of this study.

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