



**EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES ON  
EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN IN THE  
PRIVATE SECTOR: CASE OF MT & T COMMUNICATIONS (PSEUDONYM)**

**RESEARCH REPORT**

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## DECLARATION

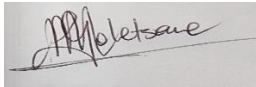
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**Date: 23 December 2023**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Research has highlighted that employee engagement has dual benefits for both personal well-being and organisational profitability and suggests that a communication perspective is valuable for deepening the understanding of employee engagement in organisational life. However, with the widespread shift to work remotely due to COVID-19, it was important to explore contextual opportunities for how employees can communicatively demonstrate engagement in a remote work environment. This study sought to analyse the antecedents of employee engagement and how employee engagement affects employee performance at MT & T Communications. A quantitative research approach was employed, and data was collected using a survey questionnaire. A final sample of 30 employees of MT & T Communications was randomly selected in this study. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that work environment, job fit, and leadership were the factors that influence employee engagement. It was found that leadership and work environment had the strongest influence on employee engagement. Further, the study revealed that employee engagement positively correlates with work environment, job fit and leadership. Thus, a healthy and positive work environment, effective leadership and good job fit are associated with higher employee engagement. Lastly, the study sought to determine the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and employee performance. Therefore, it was concluded that high levels of employee engagement are important to the productivity of an organisation. This study recommended that strategies should focus on improving aspects of the work environment and leadership to improve employee engagement and in turn improve the performance of employees. It is important for management of MT & T Communications to constantly make sure that flexible work arrangements are in place for employees especially in challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. This level of flexibility accommodates the illusive work-life balance that employees want. The organisation should also invest in leadership training on employee engagement best practices.

Key words: Employee engagement practices, Covid-19, employee performance

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCM	Job Characteristics Model
JDR	Job Demands- Resources
OCB	Organisational Citizenship Behaviour
POB	Prosocial Organisational Behaviour
SET	Social Exchange Theory

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 Introduction

The COVID19 pandemic has created not only a crisis for systems for healthcare around the world, but also created the economic and social instability, characterized by lockdowns nationally, severe restrictions on social distancing, school closures, destruction of industries and millions of jobs (Chanana, 2021). The ILO says that the number of full-time jobs lost worldwide reached 400 million in the second quarter of 2020 (ILO, 2020), with separation from family and loved ones, loss of freedom and feelings of helplessness increasing the stress levels and anxiety (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). The social and economic changes brought about by COVID19 also pose challenges to the daily lives of organisations (Adhitama & Riyanto, 2020). For many organisations, a pandemic means being in the hands of government decision-making and more vulnerable to instability in national and global markets (Gallup, 2021). Economic instability has forced organisations to ensure continued organisational operations while coping with unexpected layoffs, leading to a dramatic shift to remote work.

This broad transition to remote work is a unique event in organisational history that symbolizes a paradigm shift in how and when work is performed (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). The coexistence of organisations and their members will also face new difficulties and opportunities as a result of this change. Engagement among employees, or whether people are enthusiastic, devoted, and interested in their work and workplace, is a well-known factor that influences organisations when migrating to remote work. Gallup, 2021). One of the main concerns during the pandemic was the influence of remote work on employee engagement, therefore the move to remote work because of COVID19 seems to have had some effect.

In addition, engaged employees are conceptualized as engaged employees and have been previously shown to generate organisational success and personal fulfilment (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). Employee engagement practices have been applied in several areas of research, from psychology to management and communication studies, and has become a useful tool in corporate life as a way of understanding how

employees understand their role in an organisation (Gallup, 2021). An emerging approach in the field of employee engagement is the study of how engagement is communicated among members of an organisation. However, employee engagement also exists among remote workers, but studies have not yet explored how remote workers communicate without a physical presence.

Considering that COVID19 has led to a significant increase in remote work and that remote work styles are expected to continue after the pandemic, learn how employees can be engaged in a remote work environment (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). Involving employees has many clear benefits, both employees can do a good job of improving the overall performance of the organisation and research that can deepen understanding of the topic can lead to different level benefits. The insights on how employee engagement is communicated can provide guidance for managers on the challenges of creating engagement in a remote work environment (Adhitama & Riyanto, 2020). It can support management decisions by helping to detect engagement displays over distance to support actions that enable employees to participate.

Be that as it may, the organisations attempted to keep the employees engaged during the pandemic regardless of the practices remaining fundamentally unexamined in terms of effectiveness. Therefore, the study evaluated the impact of employee engagement practices on employee performance during the COVID-19 lockdown in the private sector drawing from MT & T Communications.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Due to Covid-19, businesses have been forced to transition to a remote workplace, using virtual tools to communicate, plan and work to achieve organisational goals. In order for MT & T Communications to continue its business and achieve its goals, a remote workplace solution is no longer just an alternative, but a necessity. However, employees are cited for lack of motivation and monitoring, and distraction, which limits their delivery to the organisation, thus ultimately leading to low productivity and low morale.

MT & T Communications have also been forced to adapt, which has allowed them to investigate opportunities for digital communications and the benefits of the remote workplace. Nonetheless, despite the potential opportunities that remote work can present, the pandemic has put stress on employees, as mandated remote work is a stressor leading to uncertainty (Pass & Ridgway, 2022).

Although a variety of antecedents of employee engagement practices are used, some are believed to affect employee performance in an organisation. As the impact of mandated remote work on employee engagement is relatively unexplored at MT & T Communications and a unique opportunity to study it has emerged due to the pandemic, antecedents of employee engagement and their impact on engagement, employee engagement activities practiced and their impact on the employee performance can be assessed while drawing inferences from MT & T Communications.

### **1.3 Research Question**

#### **1.3.1 Main Question**

- What is the impact of employee engagement practices on employee performance during the COVID-19 lockdown at MT & T Communications?

#### **1.3.2 Sub Questions**

- What is the relationship between employee engagement and its antecedent at MT & T Communications?
- What is the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance at MT & T Communications?
- What strategies can be adopted to improve the employee engagement practices during remote networking at MT & T Communications?

## **1.4 Research Objectives**

### **1.4.1 Primary Objective**

- The main objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of employee engagement practices on employees' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown at MT & T Communications.

### **1.4.2 Sub Objectives**

- To assess the relationship between employee engagement and its antecedent at MT & T Communications
- To assess the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance at MT & T Communications
- To recommend strategies that can be adopted to improve the employee engagement practices during remote working at MT & T Communications.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Previous research highlighted that employee engagement has dual benefits for both personal well-being and organisational profitability and suggests that a communication perspective is valuable for deepening the understanding of employee engagement in organisational life. However, with the widespread shift to remote work due to COVID-19, it is helpful to explore contextual opportunities for how employees can communicatively demonstrate engagement in a remote work environment (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). This research will provide insight into employee engagement when the possibilities for physical presentation are severely limited, while the intersection between employees, organisations, supervisors and colleagues is digital.

The study is critical because it adds to the existing literature on employee engagement practices and their impact on organisational employee performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help lay the groundwork for understanding the pros and cons of employee engagement practices that telecommunication can use as MT & T Communications.

More importantly, the research may enable managers, stakeholders and employees to make actionable recommendations on employee engagement practices and how to foster them for high operational efficiency, productivity and higher performance. As such, the research will lead to more opportunities for those who want to consistently engage their employees, and for those who don't want to make remote work more receptive to their employees.

## **1.6 Chapter Organisation**

The study was structured in five sections:

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

Chapter one introduced the study by outlining the objectives of the research, research problem, the study aims and its significance. This serves as the building block upon which the study is built.

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

The literature that is currently available on remote working habits and organisational performance was evaluated in this chapter. Journals, essays, and books that had been published on the subject were reviewed.

### **Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology**

This is the discussion of the primary study's methodology and research strategy. The chapter included the framework for qualitative research, exploratory research methods, non-probability sampling, and qualitative data analysis techniques. The activities included gathering data, analysing it, and presenting the findings.

### **Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis**

The chapter covered the study's key findings. The discussion addressed the objectives of the study by combining key findings from the main research with the ideas developed for the literature review.



## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations**

Chapter five focuses on the discussion around the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The study's conclusions and potential areas for further research will be discussed in the same chapter. The chapter summarises the research and provides an outline of the conclusions that are gained by the study.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

The chapter was an introductory to the broader study where the problem statement, research questions, research objectives and the significance of the study are outlined. The chapter sets the scene and parameters that guide the progression of the study. The thrust is to introduce the impact of employee engagement practices on employee performance during the COVID-19 lockdown in the private sector while drawing inferences from MT & T Communications. The literature review is the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents key theoretical underpinnings of the concept of employee engagement practices and draws from various literature in the area of strategy. The chapter also gives an overview of employee engagement practices and also discusses various elements of employee engagement.

### **2.2 Conceptualisation of Employee Engagement**

The concept of employee engagement originated in the mid-20th century. Herzberg et al. (1957) revealed certain factors that affect employee performance. These factors include working conditions, compensation, supervision, employee recognition, responsibility, promotion and achievement. Motyka (2018) shows that employees provide three distinct aspects in the performance of their job responsibilities. These three dimensions include emotional attributes, cognitive behaviour, and physical fitness. The work of Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019), who reasoned that when individuals have these three conditions, personal engagement is set, while in the absence of these conditions, personal disengagement persists.

Schaufeli, Salanova, González-romá and Bakker (2002) propounded the employee engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related mental state that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption. The employee engagement concept, especially job engagement, is well established in academia and consulting firms (Schroeder & Modaff, 2018). While the concept of employee engagement has become very popular and widely used, uncertainty remains about its precise definition. The concept was introduced by Kahn (1990) needs to clarify the degree to which employees are personally engaged and disengaged from work. Kahn conceptualized "work engagement" as "the application of the self of members of an organisation to their work roles, during which people express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally" (Gallup, 2021). This definition infers participation as "at work", which requires a specific state of mind (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Gallup (2021) defines employee engagement as individuals who are passionate about, committed to, and engaged with their work and workplace. Over the past two decades, the concept of employee engagement has become popular among both academia and practitioners. According to Motyka (2018), the popularity of employee engagement lies in its dual commitment to improving organisational performance and personal well-being, provided that highly engaged employees do better at their jobs, while also enjoying the work they do. In addition, research shows that organisations with engaged employees benefit from productivity and profitability as employees strive to be part of the organisation's success and thus do their best every day.

The literature on employee engagement states that participation is easy to identify in practice but difficult to define in theory, and the widespread use of employee engagement is one reason why it is difficult to agree on a definition (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). According to a systematic review of employee engagement by Welch (2021), the three most prominent areas of research using employee engagement are psychology, understood as having the mental resources needed to engage oneself in a job role, business and management and organisational behaviour (Mone & London, 2018). Chanana (2021) also pointed out that employee engagement is related to the field of communication and believed that communication has the potential to improve the level of employee engagement within an organisation.

Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) define employee engagement as personal engagement, job satisfaction, and enthusiasm for work. The engagement is posited as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by energy, dedication, and focus. Chanana (2021) defines employee engagement as the degree to which an employee feels attached to the organisation he or she works for, believes in its goals and supports its values. The definitions of employee engagement may sometimes have similar characteristics to other aspects such as employee commitment. However, it remains a distinct and unique concept that embraces cognitive, emotional and physical elements related to the performance of an individual's character.

From the definition given, employee engagement is the physical and psychological performance of an employee to understand their role in the organisation and the managerial commitment to demonstrate the highest level of productivity in their work.

## **2.2.1 Elements of Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement can be influenced by the following three factors: physical, cognitive, and emotional characteristics.

### ***2.2.1.1 Physical engagement:***

Schroeder and Modaff (2018) define physical engagement as directing an individual to use their bodily energies to perform their tasks. Also, Martins and Nienaber (2018) defined physical engagement as the energy an individual works to carry out the work. According to Motyka (2018), physical engagement as employees working hard to make appropriate efforts to improve work efficiency and productivity. In this perspective, physical engagement as the functional state of an employee, related to the physical energy he/she exhibits while performing tasks. On the other hand, Antony (2018) uses the word enthusiasm to express physical engagement, which means focusing on work, demonstrating high levels of energy at work, and sticking to tasks and challenges.

### ***2.2.1.2 Cognitive Engagement:***

Welch (2021) defines cognitive engagement by employees' level of awareness of organisational and management conditions and the work they do. Antony (2018) proceeded from human capital theory to define cognitive engagement, considering that most countries that trade large amounts of labour in exchange for lack of physical capital must focus on human resources transformation into effective human capital, providing them with the acquisition of knowledge to qualify them into performing with high business efficiency. This can be done by promoting cognitive engagement, which means that workers abilities must be directed intellectually into the performance of work tasks. According to Martins and Nienaber (2018), cognitive engagement results from a worker's understanding of the organisation's nature, which includes a variety of factors like the leadership style used and the organisational culture. The passages referred to by Welch (2021) for measuring cognitive engagement include employees' mental attention to functional tasks, and employees' attentional engagement during job performance. Regarding the relationship with employee performance levels, some of the scholars found that employee development is the most important variable

affecting employee engagement. The findings suggest that employee development affects employee engagement, which in turn affects employee performance levels.

### **2.2.1.3 Emotional Engagement:**

Emotional engagement is defined as employees' positive attitudes and how they feel about the organisation and organisation's values (Antony, 2018). Other scholars have emphasized this definition, as Shrotryia and Dhanda (2019) describes emotional engagement or how employees feel about their organisation, managers and their colleagues. Depending on the nature of these feelings, employee engagement can describe employees' positive or negative feelings toward colleagues, managers, and the organisation (Martins & Nienaber, 2018). Welch (2021) mentions a number of passages that measure emotional engagement, including employee enthusiasm for work, employee dynamism in performing job duties, employee pride at work, employee positive emotions, and enjoyment of work.

## **2.2.2 Employee Performance measurement**

Many researchers agree that employee performance is a variable that is multidimensional. Generally speaking, employee performance includes two dimensions: contextual performance and task performance where promotion and decisions for reward are based on the relative values set by managers and subordinates for behaviours related to task performance and reflected in contextual performance (Kalogiannidis, 2020).

### **2.2.2.1 Task performance**

Iskamto (2021), define task performance as the functional behaviour associated with key activities in an organisation, such as goods production, the provision and sale of services, maintenance activities, management, and service delivery. According to Pawirosumarto, Sarjana and Muchtar (2017), the nature of an organisation's work, can be directly or indirectly affected by task performance behaviours, the methods used by organisations to produce goods and services, and task performance behaviours are predetermined in job descriptions, task performance. The behaviours are related to the knowledge, experience, skills, and abilities that employees have, depending on the job itself.

Task performance is the ability of an employee to perform tasks that are formally accepted as being a part of their job and typically not part of at least some other jobs in the organisation. These tasks either directly support the organisation's technical core by implementing a portion of its technical processes or indirectly support it by providing it with the materials or services it needs. (Bunchapattanasakda, 2019).

Numerous effectiveness studies incorrectly associate the performance of one task with that of the entire job. (Kalogiannidis, 2020). This perspective ignores the fact that a wide range of behaviours, including cooperation and organisational citizenship, are also important for the smooth operation of teams and organisations even though they are not necessarily necessary to complete work tasks but are smooth functioning of the organisation.

#### **2.2.2.2 Contextual performance**

Contextual performance is defined as functional behaviours related to organisational culture and climate, or in other words, the context in which the organisation's main activities are performed (Brhane & Zewdie, 2018). Examples of contextual performance include collaborating and helping others work, complying with rules and regulations, and supporting organisations (Kalogiannidis, 2020). Contextual performance behaviour affects the social and psychological environment in which an organisation prevails, that is, the environment in which goods and services are produced, while contextual performance behaviour is not defined in job descriptions but belongs to and is associated with the employee himself.

According to Iskanto (2021), contextual performance refers to the extent to which incumbents engage in activities that improve organisational effectiveness and influence the social, psychological, and organisational environments that serve as catalysts for task activities.

Martins & Nienaber (2018), believes that the contextual performance description draws heavily on three schools of research, that is Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB); Prosocial Organisational Behaviour (POB); and the Soldier Effectiveness Model

In conclusion, the predictive validity of personality measures will be higher than that of overall performance, according to general findings from earlier studies, when the contextual components of overall performance can be evaluated separately. Specifically, there is strong evidence, namely, that personality correlates with performance more with context than with task or overall performance. Task performance is the behaviour that is directly related to finishing the work, according to the definitions that were elicited. A person's behaviour in the task performance area is frequently regarded as a formal requirement of their role. In the same perspective, contextual performance is defined as an individual's performance that upholds and improves the social network of an organisation and the psychological environment that facilitates technical activities. Therefore, contextual performance encompasses actions that might not be conventional work assignments but nevertheless significantly impact an organisation's effectiveness.

### **2.2.3 Typologies and Models of Employee Engagement**

The typologies and models that underpin employee engagement include JD-R model, Zinger model, Deloitte model, Gallup Employee Engagement model and AON Hewitt model.

#### **2.2.3.1 *The JD-R model***

by Arnold Bakker and Evangelia Demerouti, established the JD-R employee engagement model in 2006, as a predictor or an alert to companies of signs of employee burnout encourage engagement (Serenko, 2019). The JD-R model separates the components of a worker's function into two groups: job demands and job resources. The organisational, psychological, emotional, and physical strain exerted on an individual is referred to as the job-demand. They can range from demanding workloads or time-sensitive jobs to interpersonal workplace dynamics. The tools of trade, support structure, systems, and processes that employees can use to address these needs are known as job resources. (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018). These resources include helpful feedback, mentoring, training, clearly defined goals and employee benefits.

The JD-R strategy, in brief, aims to strike a balance between job demands and job resources so that employees feel challenged and valued while still receiving adequate assistance to produce their best work and prevent burnout. (Serenko, 2019). Managers and team leaders are urged to keep track of needs and resources, aggressively address needs, and either generate resources or point people toward available resources in order to achieve this balance.

### ***2.2.3.2 The Zinger model***

David Singer designed the Zinger employee engagement model. The theory is founded on years of research into the psychology of employees, as well as engagement, burnout, and assistance (Serenko, 2019). The model emphasizes the significance of relationships between employees and others within the organisation, with consumers, with the general public, and with their own performance. In the Zinger theory of employee engagement, the basis of the ten-block pyramid is made up of four basic employee needs: the need for meaning, improved well-being, active energy, and leverage strength (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). This cornerstone row ensures that workers are given meaningful employment and chances to demonstrate their abilities, they are taken care of and motivated,

The second row is the cooperation within the organisation which consists of three parts. This is the level of building relationships, fostering recognition, and mastering the moment (Chaudhary, 2017). The objective is to establish connections and make space so that workers may focus on their work and be present. The third line, increase performance, is made up of the blocks path progress and maximize performance. These three lines work together to create the core category of employee engagement, which serves as the cornerstone for the top-level block, which is the ultimate objective of attaining results. (Bredgaard, 2018). The Zinger model contains a number of moving pieces that assist organisations, and their executives maintain constant and continuous communication with employees.

### ***2.2.3.3 The Deloitte model***

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu CPA Limited, one of the world's four largest accounting firms developed and promoted The Deloitte model (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). The Deloitte model was created after in-depth interviews with employees. According to



their research, the following five factors are essential to engagement: meaningful work, practice management, a supportive workplace culture, growth possibilities, and leadership you can trust. (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018). Each aspect in the model has four important tactics and activities, which together make up the twenty factors that determine employee engagement in an organisation (Bredgaard, 2018).

The Deloitte's engagement model consists of elements such as:

- **Meaningful work:** Employees must be hired in the appropriate positions, given the freedom and resources to work effectively as a support team, and made to feel that their efforts are valued.
- **Hands-on management:** Teams succeed when given specific, attainable goals and ongoing guidance. To make sure that leaders have the abilities to keep their people motivated, businesses must invest in development management.
- **Positive work environment:** Employees feel at home in an inclusive and varied workplace where benefits and flexibility promote their well-being and a work-life balance helps them feel valued.
- **Growth Opportunities:** Employees that do well require room to develop. In order to reduce turnover, an organisation must provide possibilities for career advancement.
- **Trust in leadership:** Organisations require a common purpose where staff members may take pride in their work. Strong leadership, honesty, and integrity are essential for inspiring people and promoting participation (Serenko, 2019).

#### ***2.2.3.4 The Gallup Employee Engagement model***

The Gallup employee engagement model was established focusing on engagement-related productivity (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). The Q12 model comes with a pyramid and a 12-question survey on employee engagement. The pyramid is divided into four need categories linked to growth, development, and performance for employees. (Celestine & Yeo, 2021). From the bottom, they are: basic needs, personal needs, teamwork and growth, which is both the Q12 model's objective and a crucial element of employee engagement.

This brief survey may seem to be a straightforward method, but Gallup created it to precisely measure what they believe to be the twelve components of employee engagement. (Bredgaard, 2018). The answers to these 12 questions give managers and team leaders direction and context, enabling them to precisely pinpoint obstacles to employee engagement and areas for development. (Serenko, 2019).

### **2.2.3.5 The AON Hewitt model**

Most employee engagement models assume that engagement is critical to a successful organisation. (Eldor & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017). The AON Hewitt model takes a step farther by incorporating this connection directly through the idea of participation outcomes into their model. (Celestine & Yeo, 2021).

According to the model, organisations should target three engagement outcomes:

- **Say:** Employees that participate become brand advocates for the company. Both their internal and external assessments of the business show their enthusiasm and confidence.
- **Retention:** Any organisation that experiences high employee turnover also experiences high employee disengagement rates. If workers remain with the company, they form relationships with it that go beyond merely accepting a salary.
- **Effort:** When workers are motivated, they go above and above for the organisation and feel invested in the organisation. (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018).

To achieve desired engagement outcomes, organisational leaders must match six engagement drivers (Bredgaard, 2018). These drivers can be divided into basic engagement and differentiated engagement drivers.

Basic engagement drivers:

- **Basic needs:** Employees desire a healthy work-life balance and to be taken care of. Ensuring basic requirements are met may enhance retention.
- **Company Practices:** Daily operations, strategies, and objectives of an organisation should motivate staff to stick around and put in a lot of effort.

- **Work:** To perform at their best, employees need to feel challenged at work and have access to the necessary resources (Celestine & Yeo, 2021).

Differentiate engagement drivers:

- **Brand:** The perception of an organisation is important for employee engagement. To get engagement results, it is essential to maintain a positive brand image.
- **Leadership:** Employees are more willing to speak up, stick around, and work when the organisation's leadership is actively interested in the company's mission and corporate life.
- **Performance Evaluation:** A key component of employee engagement is recognition. Employees need to feel valued regardless of their precise role if they're going to stick around and work hard (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018).

Businesses using the AON Hewitt methodology can routinely achieve desired engagement levels and enhance total employee engagement by coordinating and improving these six sources of engagement (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018).

## **2.2.4 Antecedents to employee engagement**

Organisational factors, job factors and individual factors are the three antecedent variables of employee engagement. According to Antony (2018), employee engagement is influenced by task characteristics, role characteristics, job interactions, group and intergroup dynamics, management styles and processes, and organisational norms.

### **2.2.4.1 Job Characteristics**

Khodakarami and Dirani (2020) refer to the antecedents of engagement as job resources, which they define as the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of work that correspond to Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model (JCM). JCM places a strong emphasis on the task-level motivating potential of resources including autonomy, feedback, and task relevance. Organisational, interpersonal, job-specific, and task-level job resources are all possible (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Some of these components, which have been linked to employee

engagement, are known as meaningful work environments or meaningful work. (Pawirosumarto, Sarjana & Muchtar, 2017).

In the study by Motyka (2018), job characteristics in terms of job autonomy was associated with engagement over time. However, this effect may be due to the fact that long-serving employees tend to take on more responsibilities and therefore have more autonomy, as giving autonomy implies that supervisors have some degree of influence on the employee's abilities as professional and competent employees (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Greater autonomy is all about participation, whether directly through autonomy or through a relationship to responsibility.

#### ***2.2.4.2 Collaboration/Team Work***

The ability for employees to voice their opinions on issues that have an impact on their jobs is one of the key factors in employee engagement. According to analysts at the Gallup Organisation, employee opinions refer to whether or not employee perspectives are taken into consideration, for example in a collaborative work setting (Pawirosumarto, Sarjana & Muchtar, 2017). These trusting and collaborative work settings may outperform teams with no positive relationships (Tokareva & Baronene, 2019). Horizontal communication, information exchange across and within organisational levels, and collaborative problem-solving through critical appraisal of current organisational processes underpinned by a commitment to continuous development are all made possible and enhanced by teamwork (Motyka, 2018). Employees are more likely to be more engaged and consumed by their work when they feel at ease working in a team. Employee engagement, increased work efficiency, improved mental health, and long-term viability will result from this.

#### ***2.2.4.3 Perceived Social Support (Supervisory/Organisational)***

The perceived social support is an antecedent of employee engagement. The aspect underpins the aspect of safety stems from employees' perceptions of the care and support provided by their organisation and their immediate supervisors. A feeling of being able to express and utilize oneself without suffering consequences is a component of psychological safety. (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). In fact, Motyka (2018) discovered that supportive management, trustworthy interpersonal relationships, and psychological safety are all factors that contribute to individual engagement. When

working in a supportive and open environment, organisation members feel secure and engaged.

An environment is supportive when it allows its members to try new things and experiment and even failing, without fear of the outcome. (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). In their Kahn model empirical test, Motyka (2018) also discovered that psychological safety and engagement were positively correlated with supportive supervisor interactions. Social support is also one of the conditions of Maslach et al. (2001) model and a study by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that measures of job resources, including peer support and predicted engagement. Lack of social support has also been found to be associated with burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

#### ***2.2.4.4 Employee Development***

Motyka (2018) argue that learning opportunities and talent management systems involving employee and organisational development programs are prerequisites for engagement. One of the main factors influencing engagement, according to the Gallup model, is employee development. They assert that assistance from co-workers who help employees improve through hard and fulfilling job is a part of development (Tokareva & Baronene, 2019). Development may also include supervisor recognition and mentoring for training and development. Growth prospects boost employee engagement and motivation, therefore a work environment where employees have many opportunities for development offers a valuable workforce (Tokareva & Baronene, 2019).

#### ***2.2.4.5 Role Clarity (Expectations)***

The role clarity refers to the degree to which employees receive and understand the information they need to perform their jobs (Tokareva & Baronene, 2019). Role clarity expectations are important employee engagement prerequisites. Schroeder and Modaff (2018) studied it under the idea of communicating leaders' explicit employees' job-related expectations. Buckingham & Coffman (1999) and Harter et al found that role clarity was positively correlated with engagement. Chanana (2021) adds that when there is a lack of clear roles between employees who are in contact with customers, negative outcomes can occur, for example, related employees may mislead customers by providing incorrect information, leading to poor service quality.

As a result, when employees who come into contact with customers are clear about what their jobs are supposed to do, they are more likely to adopt a positive work attitude, demonstrate greater perseverance in handling job challenges, and demonstrate higher dedication when serving customers.

### **2.2.5 Employee engagement activities and its measurement**

The employee engagement activities are practiced by the management within the organisation. The activities are discussed as per below:

#### ***2.2.5.1 Setting Goals***

According to goal setting theory, setting goals that have the greatest impact on performance are some of the roles of the management to ensure employee engagement (Serenko, 2019). That is, when employees are clear about what they are supposed to do and be challenged, they perform well than when they receive simple vague goals. The goal importance and commitment to goals are two key moderators of goal influence. Thus, employee self-confidence can also increase the likelihood of achieving goals and ensure that goals fit into the elements of goal-setting theory to have the desired impact on the employees' engagement.

#### ***2.2.5.2 Providing Feedback***

Chanana (2021) argue that feedback is a key component and activity that improves employee engagement. Chanana and Sangeeta (2020) identified feedback as one of five characteristics that improve job performance and employee engagement. In both cases, employees tended to respond positively to feedback based on their performance against specific goals (Serenko, 2019). Just as setting goals can reduce the ambiguity of an employee's role, feedback can provide clarity for employees which improves the relationship with the management who represent the organisation. This allows employees to commit and dedicate to the organisation and its goals which is fundamental towards achieving employee engagement.

#### ***2.2.5.3 Establishing Trust***

The establishing of trust benefits organisations because when employees trust their supervisors, they become more engaged in the relationship (Chanana, 2021). Once a

relationship of trust is established, managers are able to influence employees more than without a relationship of trust, thereby improving working relationships. When senior managers build a level of trust within an organisation, they can help encourage full employee engagement (Serenko, 2019). This, in turn, can help build employee confidence in the systems and processes supported by the leadership team, such as performance management. Therefore, if managers build a climate of trust by communicating with employees more often and working with employees to help meet their needs, then both parties experience a more positive performance appraisal conversation which is fundamental towards employee engagement prevalence in the organisation.

Chanana (2021) argues that there is a link between employee trust and employee engagement. The study surveyed more than 300 employees and found a positive relationship between a climate of trust and employee engagement. In this perspective, a performance management process that does not include trust between employees and their supervisors is unlikely to benefit the organisation or increase employee engagement (Serenko, 2019). Therefore, employee engagement is higher when managers are consistent with their words and deeds and are honest with their employees.

### **2.3 Conceptualisation of Employee Performance**

The term "performance" according to Business Dictionary (2016,) relates to executing duties in a precise, thorough, and economical manner. Iskamto (2021) supports this; Employee actions that result in favourable outcomes in terms of effectiveness and efficiency as well as meeting deadlines are a part of this performance. Furthermore, competency-related acts' quality is taken into account while rating performance. As a result, the term "performance" refers to change and improvement programs as well as a method of allocating resources cost-effectively to achieve desired results.

Employee performance is the result of effort, competence, and mission awareness. The factors that affect the employee performance dimension are inspiration, ability, and opportunity to benefit (Iskamto, 2021). There are many variables that affect employee performance, and work environment conditions have the greatest impact on their inspiration dimension, followed by their performance. Many of the survey results

depicted some variables representing "execution" achievement. These variables include physical environment, equipment, meaningful work, performance expectations, performance feedback, poor systems, to mention a few. Armstrong (2019) believes that in order to have a standard performance, employers need to fulfil the commitment of employees on track to achieve organisational goals.

## **2.4 Drivers of Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement levels results from factors such as emotional commitment, psychological factors and well-being (Antony, 2018). However, organisations can take action to increase engagement by using different human resources practices. Without strategic human resources practices, organisations run the risk of demoralizing employees, leading to lower levels of efficiency, productivity, and resignations (Khodakarami & Dirani, 2020). Therefore, it is very important for the organisation to ensure the participation of all employees.

The literature shows that scholars in the field have identified many drivers of employee engagement. The understanding of these drivers can really be used to develop employee engagement management strategies. Chanana and Sangeeta (2020) found that in order to engage people, organisations and their leaders must assume accountability and inspire them to reach future goals. The following drivers are relevant to this study and were used: leadership style, HR policies and procedures, commitment to employee wellbeing, communication, and training and development.

### **2.4.1 HR policies and practices**

Human resource planning (HRP) and assuring staff productivity in public organisations in Nigeria were the subjects of a study by Pawirosumarto, Sarjana, and Muchtar (2017). This comes after learning about problems with human resource planning. According to the report, public organisations should implement human resource planning if they want to guarantee worker productivity. To boost staff productivity, a public organisation's human resource strategy must align with its strategic plan. Nigerian public organisations ought to learn about the trend in human resource management known as outsourcing, which is thought to guarantee an organisation's



productivity. Organisational rules should be adaptable such that they appear to consider employees' well-being.

#### **2.4.2 Commitment to employee well being**

To support the point above, in a report conducted by Motyka (2018), a comparison of chronic disease status, which has a long-term link with productivity, with total employee well-being as a relative contributor to on-the-job productivity. 2,629 employees with or without a chronic illness were employed in the study. The findings demonstrated that in cross-sectional models of productivity that included sickness status and demographic traits, well-being was the most significant predictor of allies. Beyond what is explained by the existence of chronic disease or other permanent features, longitudinal changes in welfare result in changes in productivity.

#### **2.4.3 Communication (two-way)**

Pass and Ridgway (2022) identified leadership, communication, and work-life balance as drivers of employee engagement. In line with a related concept, Schroeder and Modaff (2018) suggest that regular feedback between managers to employees, a culture of respect, counselling, and mentorship are important factors in determining employee engagement. Tokareva and Baronene (2019) state that if any level of engagement is to take place, there needs to be a clear communication of employees' core values and beliefs. The goals and objectives of the organisation should be transparent, according to Motyka (2018). Managers and supervisors should show interest in the health and welfare of their staff members. In order to position people in their areas of expertise, there should also be a person-job fit. For staff to remain motivated and productive, managers should have faith in them and provide them with growth possibilities.

#### **2.4.4 Leadership style by immediate management**

The idea that transformational leadership styles are superior to transactional leadership styles by fostering employee well-being, enhancing work-life quality and life satisfaction, raising organisational commitment and lowering employee burnout was

examined in a study by Schroeder and Modaff (2018). 443 participants from Turkey's five-star hotels were used in the study. The results show that transformational leadership has a favourable effect on the hospitality sector, suggesting that hotel managers should receive training in using these leadership philosophies to enhance staff well-being, a critical determinant of productivity. According to theory, demonstrating sincere and encouraging leadership raises employee engagement.

#### **2.4.5 Training and development**

Key factors influencing employee engagement and its connection to production predictability were identified by Chanana (2021) in another study. 383 of the 700 questionnaires that were given out as part of this causal investigation yielded valid results. According to the study, workplace well-being, leadership, salary, training, and growth are all important predictors of employee engagement. The most significant predictors of employee engagement were found to be training and development. It can be claimed that these elements influence how engaged employees are at work.

### **2.5 Empirical Research: Employee Engagement**

There are several research conducted regarding the employee engagement in organisation and how it affects the performance and productivity of both employees and the organisations.

Empirical findings on employee engagement activities, employee engagement, and employee performance

#### **2.5.1 Empirical findings on employee engagement activities and employee engagement**

In a study by Kumar and Pansari (2015), a comprehensive scorecard was created to analyse employee engagement activities within an organisation and how they affect employee engagement levels. Companies are categorized in the survey along a continuum ranging from "not involved" to "very engaged." A total of 208 managers from 52 different companies participated. 75 businesses in three continents—North

America, Europe, and Asia—then adopted the scorecard. The findings demonstrated that employee engagement activities, such as trust, leadership practices, and communication relationships, which result in employee satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, and performance, have a direct impact on an organisation's total degree of employee engagement.

By particularly analysing three management activities—communication, work-life balance, and leadership—Nazir and Islam (2017) performed a literature analysis to investigate the idea of employee engagement and shed light on the major drivers of employee engagement. This study also examines how employee performance levels and workplace wellbeing are impacted by various engagement initiatives. According to the study's findings, employees are a company's most valuable asset, and if they do not have the appropriate time and space to balance work and play, they may get disengaged. Employee engagement should not be a once-off event because organisations and employees are similar but should instead be incorporated in organisational culture. According to the report, employee involvement should involve ongoing learning, progress, and action. Today's organisations should therefore actively strive to live up to their employees' expectations, as doing so will have an impact on their performance, which in turn will have an impact on the organisation's performance.

Celestine and Yeo (2021) study aimed to comprehend the effects of job shaping on individuals—job fit and job meaning. Their research suggests that if workers increase the demands of their professions, such as assistance and autonomy, they might create a need-ability match. Employees can maximize their personal job fit in this way to find purpose in their work. According to Serenko (2019), high levels of employee engagement contribute to the foundation of the organisation when people believe their work to be meaningful and motivating, as assessed by managerial engagement activities. Their research suggests that when psychological meaning is present, organisational commitment is satisfied, and as a result, work engagement results.

From the standpoint of social exchange theory, Kwon and Kim (2020) investigated the usage of internal communication as employee engagement activities applied to optimize employee engagement. The research not only bases its findings on employee engagement activities but also links it to increased productivity and enhanced

organisation reputation. According to the study, perceived support, work features, value alignment, and internal communication are the main factors that influence employee engagement. To test their models, they gathered data on 200 non-executive individuals and used linear and mediation regression. According to their findings, organisations that communicate internally are not the only ones that need to be considered in order to increase employee perceptions of support and, thus, generate the highest levels of employee engagement.

Why should businesses worry about employee engagement? That was the main question addressed in a study conducted by Saks in 2019. More than 200 HR and marketing managers from 52 firms in different industries across North and South America, Asia, Africa, and Europe were interviewed for the qualitative study. Their investigation uncovered serious worries about high attrition rates that affect all managers, about workers who leave their positions and then pack for customers, and about an increasing proportion of senior staff whose productivity is dropping. In the same study, employee engagement practices that are prevalent in the workplace and employee performance as a component of employee engagement were examined.

### **2.5.2 Empirical findings on employee engagement and employee performance**

There are also several empirical studies regarding the employee engagement construct and its linkage to employee performance.

Kumar & Pansari (2015) conducted a follow-up study of 75 organisations to ascertain how it influences employee performance in order to demonstrate the advantages of assessing employee engagement and establishing methods to promote employee engagement. According to survey findings, businesses with higher levels of employee engagement have better rates of productivity profit because of excellent staff performance. Eight businesses experienced low employee engagement (disengagement) in the first year and then experienced an average EPS growth of 19% in the following year. Employee engagement increased for both businesses, moving from a mid-range level in the first year to the highest level in the following year, and earnings per share increased by an average of 132%.

Putra, Cho, and Liu (2017) investigated the influence of successful employee engagement on organisational success in a case study. Employees who are "satisfied" and "dedicated" to accomplishing organisational goals are referred to as engaged employees since they are the driving force behind an organisation's success. Their findings are in line with those of Anita (2014) and Guest (2014) and other researchers who have examined the relationship between the workplace environment and other elements like job satisfaction, employee supervisors, and organisational culture. It has been determined that employee involvement affects employee performance favourably.

In a study conducted Islam and Tariq (2018), they investigated whether job engagement could operate as a mediating factor between the effects of high-performance work practices (HPWP) and out-of-role customer service. 110 frontline hotel staff members and their managers from the Romanian province of Poiana Braşov participated in the study. According to the findings, job engagement completely mediates how HPWP affects both job performance and out-of-role customer service.

A study by Sahni (2019) describes the concept of participation and its uniqueness and its diminishing nature. Their research acknowledges the positive behaviours associated with engaged employees and suggests ways to increase engagement. They also suggested that because employees differ in their personalities, interests and abilities, there is a need to properly manage employee engagement in the organisation. The way they recommend managing employees is by managing their stress levels and promoting employee well-being. In their paper, they point out that job, organisational factors and past experience influence employee engagement. A model developed by the Blessing White organisation classifies employee engagement into five levels based on how much individuals contribute to the organisation. The five levels are:

- Happiest, most productive engaged employees
- Almost engaged employees are satisfied and do enough for the organisation
- Honeymooners with low contribution to organisational success
- Breakers who lack self-satisfaction despite high productivity
- Disengaged employees with high levels of dissatisfaction and negative reviews of the organisation

Ababneh (2021) investigates the discussion and data surrounding employee engagement and how it impacts productivity. His study's objective is to determine whether engagement can be successfully integrated into routine HRM activities. His findings have highlighted the need to boost organisational engagement and employee well-being in order to boost productivity. According to their research, greater involvement was associated with improved supervisor-related job performance and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB).

## **2.6 Underpinning Theory**

The Social Exchange Theory (SET) will be heavily used in current research to define the antecedents of employee engagement, such as team and peer relationships, work environment, leadership and training, and the relationship between career advancement and employee engagement (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Social exchange theory offers a chance to explain the connection between teammate relationships, work environment, leadership and training, career growth, and employee engagement in the current study.

### **2.6.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

According to Ferm and Thaichon (2021), the foundation of social exchange theory (SET) is that it fosters a sense of teamwork in terms of personal responsibility, trust, and thankfulness. An academic foundation for why employees choose to be more or less devoted to their professions is provided by the social exchange theory's underlying tenets. According to the Social Exchange Theory's criteria, employees should follow Kahn's (1990) theory by investing more fairly in their cognitive, emotional, and physical fitness to meet organisational goals if an organisation invests time, effort, and money in training and development.

As pointed out by Duthler and Dhanesh (2018), a better theoretical rationale for employee engagement can be found in Social Exchange Theory (SET). Social exchange theory holds that obligations arise through interactions between parties in an interdependent relationship. A fundamental tenet of social exchange theory is that relationships evolve over time into trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment as long as parties obey certain "rules of exchange" (Jahan & Kim, 2020). Such rules often involve

reciprocity or repayment rules, which make the actions of one party respond to the responses or actions of the other party. For example, when individuals receive economic and socio-emotional resources from their organisations, they feel obligated to respond in kind and repay the organisation. This is consistent with Ferm and Thaichon (2021) describing engagement as a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

The conditions for employees to perform effectively, make full use of their skills, and provide high-quality capacity, knowledge, and available resources for services are provided by an improved workplace environment, which also promotes helpful and trusting interpersonal relationships and helpful teams (Jahan & Kim, 2020).

From the perspective of social communication, workers appear to exhibit more gratitude for the organisation's investment in and support by acting positively toward the organisation. According to academics, workers desire monetary compensation in kind (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). Similar to this, Ferm and Thaichon (2021) contend that, to some extent, establishing long-term connections with employees will depend more on their situational behaviours.

Consistently, employee engagement with a developmental focus such as training and career development, employee engagement was found to correlate with employee engagement, while non-developmental, shorter-term concerns were associated with employee engagement irrelevant (Ferm & Thaichon, 2021). Furthermore, with regard to social exchange theory (SET), there is a balanced correlation between employers and employees, leading to mutual benefits for both.

### **2.6.2 Employee Engagement through Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is widely accepted as the dominant concept for understanding workplace behaviour and is considered a powerful framework for analysing the relationship between employees and organisations (Yin, 2018). Cortez and Johnston (2020) linking employee engagement and SET is critical to understanding employee engagement from a communication perspective, as SET provides deep insights into workplace relationships and their impact on engagement. Specifically, SET is an analytical framework that conceptualizes relationships as

building on social exchange, including a series of obligatory interactive behaviours (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). These social exchanges are based on certain rules that serve as guidelines for the communication process.

A theoretical premise of SET is that, over time, social communication between parties develops into a relationship of trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment, if both parties adhere to the rules of communication (Kang & Busser, 2018). Social exchange can be guided by different types of rules, with reciprocity or reward rules being the most studied exchange rules in organisational behaviour and management research (Shaik & Makhecha, 2019). However, there are other rules that guide social exchange, such as negotiation, rationality, altruism, group gain, status alignment, and competition.

Duthler and Dhanesh (2018) used SET to study employee engagement built on the rule of reciprocity; the practice of exchanging something with others for mutual benefit. Social exchange relationships that obey the rules of reciprocity are characterized by mutual interdependence of both parties, thus emphasizing interpersonal transactions, that is, the actions of one party elicit appropriate responses from the other party (Shaik & Makhecha, 2019).

In an organisational context, reciprocity is understood as employees gain economic and socio-emotional resources from their organisation and therefore feel obligated to give back to the organisation. According to Cortez and Johnston (2020), employee engagement is a form of reward that employees can use to comply with the rules of reciprocity in their relationship with the organisation, and the level of employee engagement will vary depending on the resources employees receive from the organisation.

## **2.7 Gaps in the Literature**

This study fills a gap in the literature that needs to address the antecedents and consequences of engagement in network and telecommunication settings, while at the same time; job engagement and performance-based outcomes have recently emerged in academic research (Mone & London, 2018). Thus, this study provides an important theoretical contribution to understanding the link between job resources, engagement, and employee engagement, leveraging the existing engagement



theories in the telecommunications environment. The key working resources emerging from systematic reviews of the literature were included in the study for empirical validation and ultimately to help increase engagement in the private sector settings. The new findings in the specific context of the study were that only supervisor support contributed to increased engagement, in contrast, increased autonomy and feedback mechanisms among organisational personnel did not have any significant effect on job engagement. Therefore, the study mitigates the gap on what impacts does antecedents of employee engagement have on employee engagement practices. Also, the impact of employee engagement practices on employees' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown requires more evaluation given the novelty of the pandemic and the effect it has on various operational processes. Against such a background, existent literature is multiplied regarding the strategies that can be adopted to improve the employee engagement practices during remote working.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The chapter's main objective was to review the existing literature on employee performance and engagement. The chapter opened with a conceptualization of employee involvement, outlining the construct's history, aspects, and underlying models. The chapter discussed the factors that affect employee engagement and how it relates to different organisational elements. The main goal was to guarantee a thorough comprehension of the topic being studied. The next chapter focuses on the primary study's methodology and research design.

# **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter deliberates the research design and methodology adopted in the primary study. The chapter covers the research strategy, target population and sampling and data collection methods. The chapter also unpacks the data analysis and the limitations and delimitations of the study as well as the ethical considerations. The study sought to measure the impact of employee engagement practices on employee performance during the COVID-19 lockdown at MT & T Communications.

## **3.2 Research Philosophy**

The beliefs that guide the creation of knowledge in a research enquiry are known as the research philosophy (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenological and positivist paradigms are the two most prevalent types of research paradigms in terms of research philosophy.

### **3.2.1 Positivist paradigm (Quantitative research)**

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015:388), positivism is a logical ideology that enables scientists to objectively find all data related to causal relationships within the corporate world. In the study, popular theories may be used to generate hypotheses by employing positivism to develop a research plan to collect data. According to Cazeaux (2017), the positivist paradigm is a research ideology whose goals are served by science and mathematics. The paradigm, knowledge and information must be unbiased due to the use of scientific, technological and software tools to study the relationship between variables (Flick, 2014).

### **3.2.2 Reasons for choosing a positivist paradigm**

This study used the positivist method since it allows for experimentation on causal relationships (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The data acquired allows researchers to maintain their objectivity because empirical research is impartial. Scientific hypotheses are supported by facts from quantitative research. The study is more experimentally accurate as it requires fewer modifications and also follows clear guidelines while utilizing unbiased scientific and mathematical techniques.

## **3.3 Research Approach**

According to Kumar (2018), a research strategy is the rational and convincing system of ideas, beliefs, and values that directs a researcher's decision-making. A research method is a plan of action or procedure that includes everything from general hypotheses to specific instructions for gathering, analysing, and interpreting data (Cazeaux, 2017). The research strategy used in the study was quantitative.

### **3.3.1 Quantitative Research Approach**

According to Basias and Pollalis (2018), the quantitative research technique uses mathematics, statistics, and the manipulation of numerical data to study phenomena in a systematic and empirical manner. According to this viewpoint, the estimation process in quantitative research provides the crucial connection between empirical facts and the mathematical representation of quantitative connections (Cazeaux, 2017). Data are frequently chosen from and analysed in numerical form in quantitative research. In order to gain a general understanding of behaviour and other occurrences across a variety of contexts and groups within MT & T Communications, quantitative approaches were employed to conduct this study.

### **3.3.2 Rationale for Using Quantitative Research Approach**

The study used quantitative research methods with a focus on statistical measurement, numerical analysis, and processing of statistical data gathered by electronic or computerized means, such as data obtained from surveys or opinion polls.

Additionally, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2017) noted that closed-ended problems are utilized in quantitative research and that selecting a method for utilization is simple. This study's findings are supported by a sizable sample size that is representative of the general population. Accordingly, Cooper and Schindler (2014) point out that quantitative research analyses inanimate stuff as well as species, so it is not just focused on studying living things. As a result, the significance of quantitative observational research is frequently predetermined.

### **3.4 Research Design**

To ensure efficacy in addressing the research objectives, a research design involves a thorough alignment of the research approach, research questions, and data gathering techniques (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). The research topic and the execution or implementation of the research strategy are connected by the research design, which is seen from a similar angle as a strategic framework for action (Zikmund, 2015)

In a descriptive research study, information is gathered through collection of data to define the subject's characteristics. The researcher has no influence over the variables in this regard. The descriptive survey's raw data collection was of a descriptive nature (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). According to Cooper (2015), descriptive research aims to identify a topic by gathering data and organizing it according to frequency to describe a person, an issue, or an event.

### **3.4.1 Rationale for Using Descriptive Research**

Descriptive research was used in this study as this allowed the researchers to be as objective as possible (Couper, 2017). It collects data describing the quality of a person, event or situation. The study describes the impact of employee engagement practices on employee performance during the COVID-19 lockdown at MT & T Communications. Additionally, researchers can characterize variables and do numerical comparisons using descriptive statistics.

### **3.5 Research strategies**

The two primary research strategies in research, positivist and phenomenological can be used separately or in combination, according to Saunders et al. (2019).

#### **3.5.1 Positivist research strategy**

The quasi-experimental design, experimental design, and survey research strategies are the main connections between positivist research methodologies (Coyle, 2016). However, because uncontrolled variables could provide faulty information, experimental studies can produce false conditions that do not consistently reflect the real reality (Flick, 2014). This study did not use a quasi-experimental approach because there was no causal task in the outcomes of the test groups in the non-equivalent test groups, which limits application to broader populations.

The survey was the positivist research design taken into consideration for the study. Survey research evaluates answers to predetermined questions (Kiyala, 2019). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), the participant is asked a series of questions by the investigator. The researcher then compiles the participant's replies into

frequency counts, percentages, or even more numerical categories, and uses this information to evaluate the responses from the sample as it relates to a certain demographic.

### **3.5.2 Reasons for choosing positivist research strategy**

This study used a survey strategy for the following reasons:

- Survey research can examine a broad collection of topics from different perspectives.
- Researchers can utilize a range of programs to simplify data collection, such as sending mail or email questionnaires.
- A well-produced random sample survey can provide reliable and convincing data on a large population from a moderately sized sample.
- Survey data can be used to classify associations between variables by means of arithmetic inspection methods, leading to a variety of powerful conclusions.
- Information created from the survey can be assessed by different researchers other than the primary researcher through secondary data analysis.

### **3.6 Population and Sample Framework**

According to Ørngreen and Levinsen (2017) a study population is composed of the total number of units from which a research sample can be drawn. The study population of this study was composed of 60 organisational members within MT & T Communications located at the MT & T Communications headquarters. Thus, a census sample was the target population for the study.

#### **3.6.1 Sampling**

The sample should be a true representative of the entire population if inference is to be drawn from it; otherwise, the results would be biased, according to Ahmed, Dannhauser, and Philip (2018).

### **3.6.2 Sampling Procedure**

For this investigation, a probability sampling technique was employed. Since a probability sampling framework uses statistics to select a subset from the whole collection of components defining the research phenomena, it is classified as a quantitative research approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). Furthermore, Neuman (2017) emphasized that probability sampling procedures and processes are designed to make sure that different parts of the targeted population have equal chances of being chosen for the sample. In this regard, census sampling, cluster sampling, and strata sampling procedures are used to pick the respondents. In general, the sampling approach use numerical methods to calculate the likelihood of inclusion in the sample.

### **3.6.3 Rationale for selecting probability sampling**

The study drew out each component of the population using a census sampling technique. Probability sampling, according to Maree (2017), includes each person in the population equally. To establish how far the sample results depart from population norms, probability sampling was used in the study. The population as a whole is chosen for the study through the use of a census. More crucially, the sample frame enables assessing the accuracy of the results' veracity and validity (Morgan, 2017). In general, sample frames enable researchers to avoid imposed individual biases.

### **3.6.4 Sample Size**

The actual number of participants selected from the target group constitutes a sample size (Flick, 2016). In this study, a survey was issued to 60 MT & T Communications organisation members, including managers, supervisors, and employees. According to Creswell (2014), a sample of at least 60% may be sufficient to fully saturate the data findings in quantitative research.

### **3.7 Data Collection Method**

The gathering of viewpoints and opinions from respondents within the target demographic is known as data collection. Either primary or secondary data collecting is possible. A questionnaire is the most important method for acquiring quantitative primary data, according to Flick (2016). A questionnaire is required to gather quantitative data consistently, internally consistent, and coherently for analysis.

A questionnaire, under the definition provided by Patel and Patel (2019), is a document that includes questions and other components that are intended to interrogate legal research data. According to Salkind and Van Zyl (2014), a questionnaire can be used in one of two ways: either the respondents independently complete the questionnaire, or the interviewer asks the questions and records the respondents' responses. The study used questionnaires, which can be sent to large groups of people.

However, according to Leedy and Ormrod (2015), respondents had the option to participate anonymously to the survey. Thus, it is ensured that researchers won't use their responses to them afterwards. This encourages participants to be honest in their responses, unlike personal interviews. The use of questionnaires reduces prejudice and is acknowledged by the majority of people (Sileyew, 2019).

The questionnaire applied a five-point Likert Scale, broadly used in survey research. The Likert-Scale is as follows: 1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree.

A self-designed instrument that was built in accordance with the Gallup Q12 created by Dr. Clifton in the 1950s and extensively tested by Gallup's researchers throughout the years was used to measure employee engagement. The Q12 is the best tool for assessing employee engagement and its effects on the most important business outcomes, according to Gallup (2016). Therefore, using the Q12 poll to measure engagement directly supports Gallup's initiatives for increasing productivity, profitability and performance. The enablers of engagement were measured as per below:

- **Relationship between Work Environment and Employee Engagement**

The measurement posits work environment as an enabler of employee engagement. The nature of the work environment is responsible for the performance of the employees.

- **Relationship between Job-fit and Employee Engagement**

To ascertain how well a job matched engagement practices, the relationship between job-fit and employee engagement was measured. The relationship between employee engagement and job-fit is assessed.

- **Effect of Communication and Leadership Style on Employee Engagement**

When employees are involved in decisions affecting their jobs, it increases employee engagement and productivity, according to research on communication and leadership styles as an enabler of employee engagement.

- **Employee Engagement and Performance**

The last measure on the instrument is the relationship between employee engagement and performance of the organisation.

### **3.7.1 Administration of questionnaires**

The questionnaire was uploaded online on a survey monkey site. The survey site was texted to the respondents as well as reminders to attend the survey questionnaires. Surveys are provided directly to respondents by researchers, eliminating any potential bias and protecting respondents' privacy and anonymity (Sileyew, 2019).

### **3.8 Data Analysis Methods, Techniques, and Instruments**

The process of obtaining and analysing data to provide information that can be used in decision-making is known as data analysis (Creswell, 2014). Data analysis, according to Silva (2017), is the process of assessing the evidence generated by the research. The statistical methods, percentages, means, and standard deviations are used in quantitative data analysis.



### **3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used in the quantitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014). As a result, it formalizes a common strategy, searching for extra associations in data, that the research was not initially designed to examine.

The descriptive statistics used to describe the scores that were obtained, such as the average score for a given variable or how distinct one score is from others (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). When determining how the data acquired relate to a hypothesis and how to generalize it, inferential statistics are beneficial (Walliman, 2017). Finding discrepancies, mistakes, and illegibility in the raw data after initial data collection is necessary for a transparent and fair analysis. Manual editing, data entering, and consistency checks were carried out to prevent errors. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 24 computer application from International Business Machines (IBM) is used to analyse data using quantitative numerical description techniques such frequency tables, percentages, standard deviations, and averages.

### **3.9 Validity and Reliability**

The stratagem of this study endorsed accuracy (validity) and consistency (reliability) of the study.

#### **3.9.1 Reliability**

Consistency in estimations is a component of reliability; a method or estimation repeated under a variety of conditions or by a comparable person must produce essentially identical results (Cheng & Ma, 2017). One identical poll is to be used for the overview collection in order to assure consistency for the research being conducted. To manage the dependability of measuring tools, researchers employ the following strategies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015: 117):

The degree to which two descriptions of the same tool produce the same outcomes is shown by parallel forms. The researchers did not utilize the reliability measurement tool because it was not accessible for this survey.

The degree to which a single instrument yields results that are comparable to those of the average person in various situations is known as test-retest reliability (Walliman, 2017). The researchers examined data from different days of the surveys and distributed the questionnaires on the same day in the same demographics but at different times in order to establish test-retest reliability.

The degree to which two or more people evaluating comparable subjects come to identical conclusions is known as inter-rater dependability (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). Respondents rate the overall impact on a 1 to 5 Likert scale as part of a continuous measurement. On equally spaced scales, the researchers gave respondents the option to submit independent judgments. The dependability or consistency of ratings are ensured by correlation.

In this study, none of the aforementioned will be used. We shall only employ internal consistency. Internal consistency reliability measures how consistently a tool's items provide the same outcomes (Silva, 2017). Consistency problems resulted from the data being gathered by the same interviewer. Tools for collecting data overcome these problems because researchers employ a similar technique (questionnaire). Prior to the primary study, pilot testing was done to assess and improve the data collection procedure. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) was used to gauge internal consistency.

### **3.9.2 Validity**

Validity concerns whether a test or estimation measures the construct it was designed to measure (Cheng & Ma, 2017). To ensure that subjective data on health management, culture, and performance includes expansive sentiment, assertion, and resistance to specific articulations, a combination of open and public inquiries is to be used.

According to Salkind and Van Zyl (2014), the primary standard used to evaluate measuring techniques is validity. How well a measurement tool measures what it is supposed to measure is referred to as its validity. Validity outcomes may be internal or external. Internal validity: refers to a review of the accuracy of the produced results (Cheng & Ma, 2017). An evaluation of the generalizability of study findings is known

as external validity (Flick, 2014). The developed various methods for assessing the validity of measurements, as follows (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017):

How successfully a tool's content measures the things it is supposed to measure is referred to as content validity. Ten individuals who had been notified about the study were given a questionnaire as part of the pilot project, and a number of these participants had a substantial influence on the questions.

How well a test measures its expected variable is referred to as face validity (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Experts in the field of research evaluated the face validity of the questionnaire and made adjustments to ensure that it measured the desired characteristics.

The degree to which an instrument captures a representative sample that cannot be seen by the general public but is thought to derive from people's behaviour is referred to as construct validity (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Variations of face validity are:

- Convergent validity tests how related constructs are indeed related.
- The discriminant validity test structure must be irrelevant.

The content validity and face validity were used only in the study.

### **3.10 Elimination of Bias**

Scientific research, according to Sanders et al. (2019), is subject to bias. However, the researchers maintained their objectivity and gender-neutral language throughout the entire investigation. No statements emphasizing gender supremacy, according to the report, were utilized at any point during the investigation. To avoid bias, a straightforward random sampling technique was used. The study avoided utilizing racial or ethnic categorizations, gender terms, stereotyped terminology, and assumptions about certain age groups.

The study may have some technical limitations, despite the researchers' best efforts to make it as rigorous as possible, as is frequently the case with many other scientific investigations. Every study has restrictions on its approach and its scope.

### **3.11 Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are those factors that are out of the researcher's control (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The effect of employee engagement strategies on worker performance during the COVID-19 lockout at MT & T Communications limited the study's scope. This hinders theoretical comparisons of research-related thoughts and inputs as well as a thorough comprehension of the subjects covered. However, a significant study that compared the key findings with theories and viewpoints from a literature survey resolved this problem. The study was constrained by the respondents' reticence to provide truthful responses, which could have led to inaccurate data. The researcher is constrained to the material that is available and reasonably priced because the majority of the current books and journals that are linked to the topic are scarce and not free.

### **3.12 Ethical considerations**

Information that was revealed within MT & T Communications was likely to be very sensitive as it could affect all structures within the sector and hence special written permission was sought from relevant authorities. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form after a thorough explanation of what the research is about. Confidentiality of identity was also guaranteed. The study obtained ethical clearance to conduct the study for the Unisa Graduate School of Business Leadership. The ethical clearance is attached in appendices.

#### **3.12.1 Ensuring informed Consent**

Informed Consent suggests that participants are totally aware of the possibility of the investigation, and still participate (Tobi & Kampen, 2018). It is concerned about the participant's autonomy and adaptability of choice, and the participant's qualification to be taught about any plain or shrouded systems (Cheng & Ma, 2017). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the examination at any time and were not required or obligated to participate. They also received clear and accurate information regarding the examination and any potential hazards. The results of the test were handled as confidential information and could be provided to the organisation.

### **3.12.2 Ensuring protection from Harm**

It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the research participants are not caused any psychological harm or distress. Participants were protected from any physical or mental harm. Using qualitative data collection method also reduced any physical harm to the participants.

### **3.12.3 Ensure right to Privacy**

The researcher was extremely discreet when handling the participant's information. Names of specific people and organisations were handled in complete secrecy, and their trust was not compromised.

### **3.12.4 Ensuring anonymity and confidentiality**

Confidentiality means how the information about responders is treated in a confidential manner (Babbie, 2014). This component focuses on the idea of trust and provides participants with reassurance that their trust was not abused for personal advantage. The participants' personal information was kept private.

## **3.13 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a comprehensive account of the research philosophy, research strategy, and methodology used for this study. Due to the objectivity of the investigation, a positivist methodology was used. The target population and the sample strategies used in the study were also covered in the chapter. Regarding the distribution of the questionnaire and the execution of the pilot study, the research instrument was also discussed. Finally, the restrictions and moral issues were also emphasized. The presentation, discussion, and interpretation of data will be covered in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of employee engagement practices on employees' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown at MT & T Communications. Specifically, the study sought to determine the impact of antecedents of employee engagement on employee engagement practices at MT & T Communications and to recommend strategies that can be adopted to improve the employee engagement practices during remote working at the organisation. This chapter focuses on the presentation of the findings from the data analysis conducted. The study targeted a sample of 60 management and non-management employees of MT & T Communications. However, data utilised in this study was collected from 30 respondents, giving a response rate of 50%.

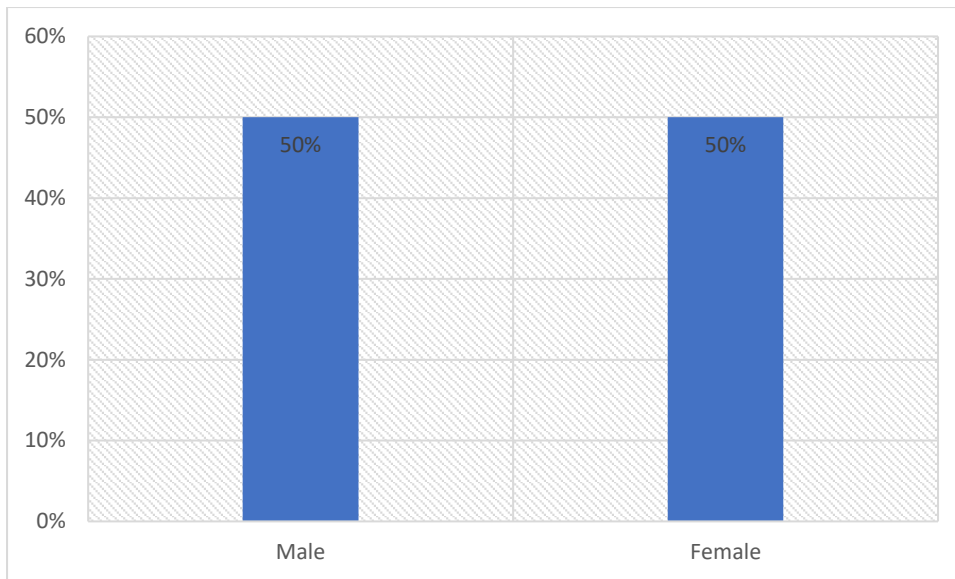
This chapter is structured as follows: The first section focusses on the sample demographic information, followed by discussion of reliability and validity of the instrument. Thereafter, descriptive, and inferential statistical analysis is conducted consistent with the research questions posed in this study.

### **4.2 Sample characteristics**

The presentation and discussion of the sample demographic data are the main topics of this section. Data on age, gender, education level, job title, and length of service with the organisation were gathered for this study. These details are presented and discussed in the sections that follow.

#### **4.2.1 Gender**

The gender statistics are reported in the following figure.



**Figure 4.1: Gender**

The figure above shows the gender distribution of the sample. The figure shows that there was an even distribution in the sample in terms of gender, with half of the sample (50%) being male and the other half being female. Therefore, the distribution was even, implying that there was balance in terms of opinions from both genders. Age distribution statistics are reported in the following section.

#### 4.2.3 Age

The following table provides a summary of the age distribution of the sample.

**Table 4.1: Age group**

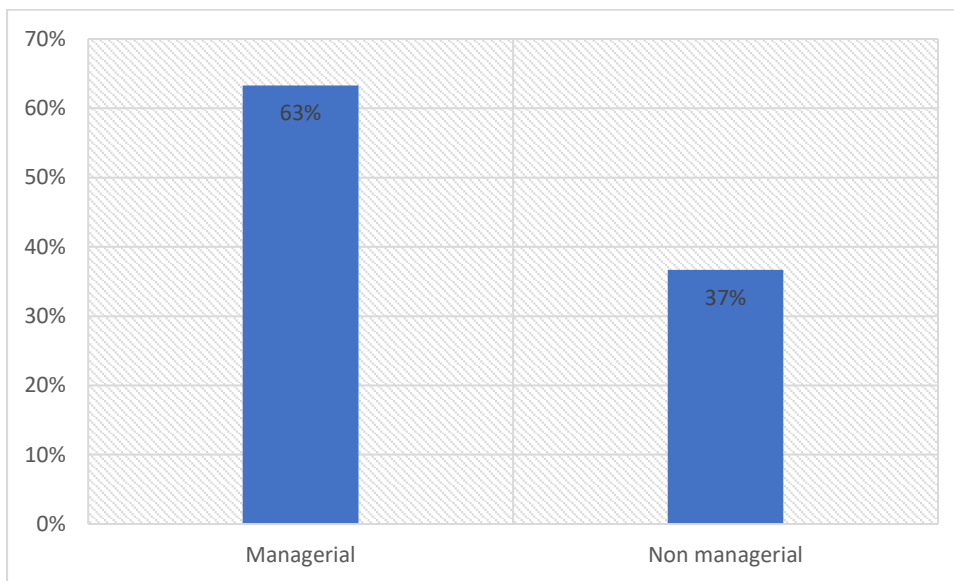
Age group		Frequency	Percent
Valid	20 – 30 years	10	33.3%
	31 – 40 years	11	36.7%
	41 – 50 years	9	30.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Results in Table 4.2 show the sample distribution in terms of the age groups. It is shown from the table that 36.7% of the respondents were in the 31 to 40 years age group, constituting the majority of the sample. In addition, 33.3% were in the 20 to 30 years age group and 30% of the respondents were in the 41 to 50 years age group.

Results show that the respondents were 50 years and below and the dominant group was within 31 to 40 years.

#### 4.2.3 Position in the organisation

The position of respondents in the organisation was categorised as managerial for those in management positions and non-managerial for those in non-management positions. The following figure illustrates the sample distribution in terms of position in the organisation.



**Figure 4.2: Position in the organisation**

Figure 4.2 above shows that the sample was dominated by respondents who were occupying managerial roles, accounting for 63% of the sample. Non managerial respondents accounted for 37% of the sample. Therefore, perceptions of both management and non-management employees were considered. However, the higher number of managerial employees suggests that the organisation has a top-heavy organisational structure.

#### 4.2.4 Education qualification

The following table presents a summary of the sample distribution in terms of the highest education qualification attained by respondents.



**Table 4.2: Education qualification**

<b>Education qualification</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Honours Degree	16	53.3%
	Bachelor's Degree	7	23.3%
	Diploma	4	13.3%
	Master's degree	3	10.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

It is shown in Table 4.2 above that the sample was dominated by respondents with honours degrees, accounting for 53.3% of the sample. Further, 23.3% of the sample had bachelor's degrees, 13.3% had diplomas and only 10% of the respondents had master's degrees. These results suggest that this may be a typical information technology (IT) organisation.

#### **4.2.5 Number of years with the organisation**

The following table provides a summary of the sample distribution according to the number of years the respondent has had with the current employer.

**Table 4.3: Tenure**

<b>Tenure</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	5 years and below	17	56.7%
	6 to 10 years	6	20.0%
	More than 15 years	4	13.3%
	11 to 15 years	3	10.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table above shows that most of the respondents (56.7%) had 5 years and below working with the current organisation. Further, 20% of the sample had 6 to 10 years with the current employer, 13.3% had more than 15 years and only 10% ha 11 to 15

years. The following section discusses reliability and validity of the research instrument.

### 4.3 Reliability and validity analysis

This study evaluated the validity and reliability of the scales that were used to measure the study's measurement constructs. The constructs include leadership style, work atmosphere, job fit, employee engagement, and employee performance. This section discusses the validity and reliability of these measurement scales.

#### 4.3.1 Reliability analysis

The validity and reliability of the scales used to measure the study's measurement constructs were evaluated in this investigation. The constructs include employee performance, job fit, employee engagement, and leadership style. The validity and reliability of these measurement scales are covered in this section.

**Table 4.4: Cronbach's alpha coefficient**

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Employee engagement	8	0.85
Work environment	7	0.81
Employee performance	7	0.73
Job fit	7	0.84
Leadership style	7	0.76

It is shown in Table 4.4 that all the measurement scales reported high values of the Cronbach' alpha coefficient, with all above the 0.7 cut-off (Field, 2018). Therefore, the results confirm that the scales utilised were reliable and were appropriate to use for further analysis in this study. Factor analysis results are discussed and presented in the following section.

#### 4.3.2 Validity analysis

In this work, factor analysis was used to evaluate the reliability of the measurement scales. A statistical technique known as factor analysis is used to explain variation among associated, observable variables in terms of a conceivably smaller set of unseen variables known as factors (Field, 2018). In this study, convergent validity was evaluated using factor analysis. The degree to which one test is related to others that

assess the same (or related) constructs is known as convergent validity (Blumberg et al., 2014).

A test for sample adequacy was performed to determine whether the study's sample size was adequate before doing factor analysis (Watkins, 2018). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was calculated, and results are reported in the table below:

**Table 4.5: Test for sample adequacy**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.758
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	130.166
	Df	28
	Sig.	<.001

From Table 4.5 above, the KMO statistic is 0.758. According to Watkins (2018), the sample size is considered adequate for factor analysis if the KMO is at least 0.5. Therefore, in this case, it was appropriate to proceed to conduct factor analysis.

Having decided on the adequacy of the sample, the next step was to decide on the factor extraction method. Field (2018) recommends that Principal Components Analysis (PCA) is appropriate with small sample sizes. Therefore, PCA was used in this study. The extraction of the components or factors was based on the criteria of eigenvalues, whereby only components with eigenvalue above 1 are extracted. Five factors were extracted in this study, and the extracted factors explained a total variance of 65.5%. This is shown in the table below:

**Table 4 6: Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	12.015	32.472	32.472	12.015	32.472	32.472	7.030	19.000	19.000
2	3.977	10.749	43.221	3.977	10.749	43.221	5.849	15.808	34.808
3	3.132	8.465	51.686	3.132	8.465	51.686	4.864	13.147	47.955
4	2.702	7.302	58.988	2.702	7.302	58.988	3.837	10.371	58.326
5	2.403	6.495	65.483	2.403	6.495	65.483	2.648	7.157	65.483

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The shaded figure is the cumulative total percentage of variance explained by the extracted factors. To confirm the presence of convergent validity, the extracted factors were rotated. Rotation minimises the complexity of the factor loadings to make the structure simpler to interpret. Thus, it enables each item to load on its respective factor if there is convergent validity (Field, 2018). Watkins (2018) recommends that the minimum acceptable factor loading is 0.4. Therefore, in this study, only items with factor loadings above 0.4 were retained, and those below 0.4 were removed. The rotated component matrix is shown in the following table.

**Table 4.7: Rotated Component Matrix**

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>					
Item	Component				
	Employee Engagement	Work Environment	Employee performance	Job Fit	Leadership
L1					.546
L2					.650
L3					.614
L4					.516
L5					.720
L6					.625
L7					.496
JF1				.883	
JF2				.688	
JF3				.650	
JF4				.585	
JF5				.497	
JF6				.614	
JF7				.722	

EP1			.757		
EP2			.742		
EP3			.619		
EP4			.808		
EP5			.726		
EP6			.526		
EP7			.798		
WE1		.597			
WE2		.750			
WE3		.630			
WE4		.623			
WE5		.655			
WE6		.534			
WE7		.627			
EE1	.801				
EE2	.678				
EE3	.615				
EE4	.655				
EE5	.810				
EE6	.606				
EE7	.756				
EE8	.638				
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.					
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.					
a. Rotation converged in 13 iterations.					

The table above shows the five extracted components and the respective item factor loadings. It is shown that the only items with factors loadings that are greater than 0.4 were retained. The items measuring employee engagement (EE) loaded on Factor 1, items measuring work environment (WE) loaded on Factor 2, items measuring employee performance (EP) loaded highly on Factor 3, items measuring job fit (JF) loaded highly on Factor 4 and lastly, items measuring leadership (L) loaded highly on Factor 5. Therefore, all the items had high factor loadings on the right factors and there were no low factor loadings. This confirms that there was convergent validity.

Therefore, having confirmed the validity of the scales, the variables were used for further analysis in this study. Total scores of the variables were thus computed for correlation and regression analysis. However, before conducting correlation and

regression analysis, descriptive statistical analysis per item was conducted and the analysis is presented in the following section.

#### 4.4 Descriptive statistical analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to assess employee perceptions of employee engagement and its antecedents as well as the perceptions of respondents on employee performance. Morgan (2017) notes that descriptive statistical analysis does not seek to find reasons for results but simply describes the existing phenomena. The analysis focused on the mean scores (M) and the standard deviation (SD), focusing on the extent to which the respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements presented. Reference is made to the items with the highest and lowest mean scores.

##### 4.4.1 Employee engagement

The job engagement scale was used to measure employee engagement. Respondents were asked the extent to which they are engaged in their job. The following table show descriptive statistics of the employee engagement.

**Table 4.8: Descriptive statistics: Employee engagement**

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
At my work, I feel bursting energy	3.60	.770
I find the work I do full of meaning and purpose	3.83	.747
I am enthusiastic about my job	4.10	.845
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	3.73	.640
Time flies when I am working	3.77	.728
When I am working, I forget everything else around me	3.07	.872
My job inspires me	3.93	.828
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	3.33	.884
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.67</b>	<b>0.782</b>

The green highlight indicates the item with the highest mean score and the yellow highlight indicates the item with the lowest mean score. It is shown in the table above that on average, most respondents agreed with the statement that “I am enthusiastic about my job” (M= 4.10, SD=0.845). On the other hand, the lowest mean score is 3.07,

indicating that most respondents indicated that they were neutral about the statement that “When I am working, I forget everything else around me”. The low standard deviations, that is, less than one, implies that there was less variability in the responses. Overall, the composite mean for the employee engagement scale was 3.67 with standard deviation 0.782. This suggests that on average, respondents agreed with most of the items measuring employee engagement, indicating that respondents had positive perceptions of employee engagement.

#### 4.4.2 Work environment

Work environment is one of the antecedents of employee engagement. The following table shows descriptive statistics on the employee perceptions of their work environment.

**Table 4.9: Descriptive statistics: Work environment**

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
I achieve the correct balance between my home and work lives	2.97	1.189
My organisation provides me to support to help meet my work-life balance	3.50	1.075
I often think about other things when I'm doing my work	3.27	1.081
I am rarely distracted when I'm doing my job	2.83	1.206
I often feel no emotion when I perform my job	2.57	.774
I exert a lot of energy in my job	3.90	.759
I stay until the job is done	3.83	.986
Average	3.26	1.01

Results in Table 4.9 highlight that the highest mean score is 3.90, with standard deviation 0.759. This shows that on average, most respondents agreed that they exert a lot of energy in their jobs. Most respondents also agreed that their organisation provides them with support to help them achieve work-life balance ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SD=1.075$ ). However, the high standard deviations and the low composite mean ( $M=3.26$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ) suggests that most respondents had negative perceptions about their work environment.

#### 4.4.3 Job fit

Job fit is another antecedent of employee engagement. Respondents were asked their perceptions on how well they fit in their job. Results are shown in the table below.

**Table 4.10: Descriptive statistics: Job-fit**

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am satisfied with my job	3.53	.973
My job may be stressful sometimes	3.80	.961
I would speak highly speak of the organisation I work for	3.87	.900
I like to speak and get involved with other organisational activities, other than my job	3.10	1.029
I am committed to serving my organisation	3.97	.718
I am engaged in my job	4.03	.765
I often avoid working too hard	2.27	.868
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.51</b>	<b>0.887</b>

It is shown in Table 4.10 above that the highest mean score is 4.03, with a low standard deviation of 0.765. This suggests that most respondents indicated that they are engaged in their jobs. However, respondents disagreed that they often avoid working too hard ( $M=2.27$ ,  $SD= 0.868$ ). Overall, the composite mean is 3.51, suggesting that most respondents had positive perceptions about their job fit.

#### 4.4.4 Leadership

Leadership is one of the antecedents of employee engagement. Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions about their leadership. The following table presents descriptive statistics for leadership.



**Table 4.11: Descriptive statistics: Leadership**

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership discusses my training and developmental needs with me	3.63	1.159
Leadership keeps me in touch with what is going on in the organisation	4.23	.568
Leadership is supportive if I have a problem	3.93	.785
Leadership makes it clear to me what is expected of me from my job	3.80	.847
Leadership listens if I have a suggestion to make	3.57	1.104
Leadership communicates well with each other	3.73	.785
Leadership treats me fairly	3.40	1.070
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>0.90</b>

As reported in Table 4.11 above, the highest mean score is 4.23 with standard deviation of 0.568. This implies that on average, most respondents strongly agreed that their leadership keeps them in touch with what is going in within the organisation. However, most respondents could neither agree nor disagree that their leadership treats them fairly ( $M=3.40$ ,  $SD= 1.07$ ). Overall, the composite mean (3.75) shows that most respondents had positive perceptions of their leadership.

#### **4.4.5 Employee performance**

The following table presents descriptive statistics on the perceptions of employees about their performance.

**Table 4.12: Descriptive statistics: Employee performance**

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
I took on extra responsibilities	3.73	.885
I started new tasks myself when my old ones were finished	4.07	.583
I took on challenging work tasks, when available	4.17	.461
I worked on keeping my job knowledge up to date	4.13	.860
I came up with creative solutions to new problems	4.03	.718
I kept looking for new challenges in my job	3.87	.776
I actively participated in work meetings	4.10	.885
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>0.73</b>

It is shown that 4.17 is the highest mean score, with standard deviation 0.461, indicating that respondents strongly agreed that they take on challenging tasks if available. Overall, the standard deviations are low, and the composite mean is 4.01. This implies that most respondents had positive perceptions about their performance. The following section presents analysis of the research question, focusing on inferential statistics.

#### **4.5 Correlation and Regression analysis**

This study sought to determine the antecedents of employee engagement as well as to investigate the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance at MT & T Communications. This objective was achieved by conducting correlation and regression analysis. The study involved five variables, that is, employee engagement, work environment, job-fit, leadership and employee performance. Correlation analysis was conducted on assessing the relationship between employee engagement and its antecedents as well as the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance.

##### **4.5.1 Correlation analysis**

This study utilised the Pearson correlation matrix to assess the correlations. The following table shows the correlation matrix, assessing employee engagement and its antecedents.

**Table 4.13: Correlation analysis: Employee engagement and its antecedents**

		Employee engagement	Work environment	Job fit	Leadership
Employee engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	.694**	.684**	.790**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001
Work Environment	Pearson Correlation	.694**	1	.372*	.510**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.043	.004
Job fit	Pearson Correlation	.684**	.372*	1	.757**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.043		<.001
Leadership	Pearson Correlation	.790**	.510**	.757**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.004	<.001	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).					

The green highlight shows the correlation coefficients and the statistical significance of the variables of interest. It is shown that employee engagement and work environment significantly correlate. The correlation coefficient is positive, and the magnitude is medium ( $r= 0.69, p<.001$ ). Therefore, the work environment has a medium positive relationship with employee engagement. This result conforms to the Deloitte model of employee engagement which identifies the work environment as a key antecedent of employee engagement (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018). In support of this result, Bredgaard (2018) found that a positive work environment promotes employee engagement. Tokareva and Baronene (2019) highlight that a positive work environment makes employees feel at home, where flexibility and benefits support their well-being, and a work-life balance makes them feel valued.

Further, it also shown that employee engagement and job fit significantly correlate. The correlation coefficient is positive, and its magnitude is medium ( $r=0.68, p<.001$ ). Therefore, job fit, and employee engagement have a positive relationship. This result is consistent with the job characteristics model which emphasises the motivational

potential of work resources at the task level, including autonomy, feedback, and task importance (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Thus, the characteristics of the job determine how well the employee fits in the job (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). A positive job-fit is associated with high employee engagement (Motyka, 2018).

Lastly, it is shown that leadership is strongly correlated with employee engagement ( $r=0.79$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Thus, there is a strong positive relationship between employee engagement and leadership. Consistent with this result is the study of Modaff (2018) which revealed that exercising genuine and supportive leadership increases employee engagement. In line with this result, Pass and Ridgway (2022) argue that supportive environment allows members to experiment and try new things, even failing, without fear of consequences. Further, in their empirical test of the Kahn model, Motyka (2018) also found that a supportive leadership was positively associated with psychological safety and engagement.

The study also sought to determine the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance. The following table show the corelation matrix for the two variables.

**Table 4.14: Correlation matrix: Employee engagement and Employee performance**

		Employee performance	Employee engagement
Employee performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.548**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
Employee engagement	Pearson Correlation	.548**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Results show that there is a medium and significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee performance ( $r=0.55$ ,  $p<.01$ ). This result is supported by the findings of Kumar & Pansari (2015) who conducted a follow-up study of 75 companies to determine how employee engagement affects employee performance. Their results show that companies with higher employee engagement have higher levels of profit from productivity due to high employee performance.

Further, the result is also in line with Anita (2014) and Guest (2014) who also established that employee engagement has a positive effect on the employee performance. In addition, Ababneh (2021) also found a positive relationship between engagement and performance, concluding that that improving employee well-being and employee engagement is the way to improving employee performance in every organisation.

Regression analysis was conducted to determine which of the variable has the greatest influence on employee engagement. Results are presented and discussed in the following section.

#### 4.5.2 Regression analysis

The regression model was run with employee engagement as the dependent variable and work environment, job fit, and leadership were the independent variables. The correlation matrix shown in Table 4.13 above show that the correlations among the independent variables. Thus, correlation analysis helps in testing for a possible problem of multicollinearity. According to Field (2018), multicollinearity becomes a serious problem in multiple linear regression if there are highly correlated independent variables ( $r > .80$ ). Therefore, as shown in Table 4.13, all the correlations among the independent variables were less than 0.8, suggesting that there was no serious problem of multicollinearity in the regression model. As such, the model was run.

The objective was to determine the extent to which the independent variables predict the variations in the dependent variable. The model summary is presented in the table below.

**Table 4.15: Regression model summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.871 <sup>a</sup>	.759	.731	.30661
a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership, WE, JF				

In the model summary above, it is shown that the regression model has R-square of 0.759. The R-square suggests that leadership, work environment and job-fit explain

about 76% of the variations in employee engagement. Thus, the model was of good fit and the independent variables strongly predict employee engagement. The regression coefficients are shown in the following table, showing the significance and contribution of each independent variable to employee engagement.

**Table 4.16: Regression coefficients**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.785	.854		-2.090	.047
	WKE	.115	.032	.398	3.553	.001
	Leadership	.389	.145	.426	2.681	.013
a. Dependent Variable: Employee engagement						

It is shown in Table 4.16 above that work environment has a positive and significant coefficient ( $\beta=0.398, p<.01$ ). The result confirms that work environment is a significant predictor of employee engagement. It also confirmed that leadership significantly predicts employee engagement ( $\beta= 0.426, p<.05$ ). However, the coefficient of job fit is not statistically significant, suggesting that job fit is not a strong predictor of employee engagement ( $\beta =0.213, p>.05$ ). Therefore, based on the regression results, it can be concluded that leadership and work environment are the two antecedents of employee engagement with a strong influence. This conclusion is consisted with Nazir and Islam (2017), Chernyak-Hai and Rabenu (2018) and Ferm and Thaichon (2021).

#### 4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of the primary study conducted. To answer the research questions posed in this study, data was collected from 30 employees of MT & T Communications out of target of 60 respondents. Thus, the response rate of the study was 50%. The demographic characteristics of respondents were analysed in the first section, focussing on the representivity of the sample. Reliability and validity of measure employed were conducted and it was revealed that the scales were both reliable and validity. Data analysis followed, guided by the research questions. Firstly,

the study sought to determine the antecedents of employee engagement. Results showed that work environment, job fit, and leadership were the factors that influence employee engagement. However, it was found that only leadership and work environment had the strongest influence on employee engagement. Second, the study sought to determine how the antecedents relate with employee engagement. It was revealed that employee engagement positively correlates with work environment, job fit and leadership. Lastly, the study sought to determine the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance, Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and employee performance. Summary and conclusions of the study are provided in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The main objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of employee engagement practices on employees' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown at MT & T Communications. Specifically, the study sought to determine the impact of antecedents of employee engagement on employee engagement practices at MT & T Communications and to recommend strategies that can be adopted to improve the employee engagement practices during remote working at the organisation. In this chapter, key findings from the literature and primary study are provided. In addition, recommendations are made guided by the findings of the study. The limitations of the study are discussed at the end of the chapter, together with suggestions for further study.

### **5.2 Conclusions on literature review**

This study conducted a review of literature to understand employee engagement, its antecedents, and the impact on employee performance. There exist a number of studies that have explored the concept of employee engagement and how it influences the performance of employees in an organisational context. For example, Motyka (2018) concludes that employee engagement lies in its dual commitment to improving organisational performance and personal well-being, provided that highly engaged employees do better at their jobs, while also enjoying the work they do. In addition, Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) showed that organisations with engaged employees benefit from productivity and profitability as employees strive to be part of the organisation's success and thus do their best every day.

This study sought to understand the antecedents of employee engagement. From the review of literature, it was found that the antecedents of employee engagement can be divided into three categories: organisational factors, job factors and individual factors (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). Further, Antony (2018) proposed that task characteristics, role characteristics, job interactions, group and intergroup dynamics, management styles and processes, and organisational norms have an impact on employee engagement.



Khodakarami and Dirani (2020) refer to the antecedents of engagement as job resources, which they define as the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of work that correspond to Hackman and Oldham's (1980) job characteristics model (JCM). JCM emphasizes the motivational potential of work resources at the task level, including autonomy, feedback, and task importance. In this instance, the job fit was identified as an antecedent of employee engagement. Job resources may be at the organisational level, the interpersonal level, job specific and task level (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Further, some of these aspects are referred to as meaningful work environments or meaningful work and have been found to be related to employee engagement (Pawirosumarto et al, 2017).

Pawirosumarto et al. (2017) also note that one of the important drivers of engagement is the opportunity for employees to have a voice on matters that affect their work. These collaborative work environments are often characterized by trust and cooperation and may outperform teams that lack positive relationships (Tokareva & Baronene, 2019). Thus, literature review identified work environment as a key factor influencing employee engagement.

Literature also highlighted leadership as a factor that influences the engagement levels of employees. Pass and Ridgway (2022) argue that supervisors should provide social support to their subordinates to improve employee engagement. Leaders should provide psychological safety to employees. Psychological safety includes a sense of being able to display and use the self without negative consequences (Pass & Ridgway, 2022). Motyka (2018) found that supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships and supportive management promote psychological safety that is positively related to individual engagement. Pass and Ridgway (2022) identified leadership, communication, and work-life balance as drivers of employee engagement. Under a similar concept, Schroeder and Modaff (2018) infers that a culture of respect, ongoing feedback from managers to employees and vice versa, counselling and mentoring are key drivers of employee engagement. Tokareva and Baronene (2019) state that if any level of engagement is to take place, there needs to be a clear communication of employees' core values and beliefs.

Therefore, from the literature review, there is evidence to support that work environment, job characteristics and leadership are key factors that influence

employee engagement. In addition, evidence from literature also suggests that high levels of employee engagement are associated with improved employee performance. A primary study was conducted to validate these prior findings. A summary of findings from the primary study is provided in the following section.

### **5.3 Conclusions from the primary study**

The primary study sought to answer two research questions. This section discusses the key findings per each research objective.

#### **5.3.1 To assess the relationship between employee engagement and its antecedents**

In line with the literature review, the study identified three antecedents of employee engagement, which are work environment, job fit and leadership. Correlation and regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationships between these variables and employee engagement as well as to ascertain the most significant determinants of employee engagement among the three variables.

Correlation results showed that employee engagement and work environment significantly correlate. The correlation coefficient was positive, and the magnitude was medium ( $r= 0.69, p<.001$ ). Therefore, the work environment was found to have a medium positive relationship with employee engagement. This result conforms to the Deloitte model of employee engagement which identifies the work environment as a key antecedent of employee engagement (Reinartz & Berkmann, 2018). In support of this result, Bredgaard (2018) found that a positive work environment promotes employee engagement. Tokareva and Baronene (2019) highlight that a positive work environment makes employees feel at home, where flexibility and benefits support their well-being, and a work-life balance makes them feel valued.

Further, it was also found that employee engagement and job fit significantly correlate. The correlation coefficient was positive, and its magnitude was medium ( $r=0.68, p<.001$ ). Therefore, job fit, and employee engagement have a positive relationship. This result is consistent with the job characteristics model which emphasises the motivational potential of work resources at the task level, including autonomy, feedback, and task importance (Chanana & Sangeeta, 2020). Thus, the characteristics

of the job determine how well the employee fits in the job (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017). A positive job-fit is associated with high employee engagement (Motyka, 2018).

Correlation results also showed that leadership was strongly correlated with employee engagement ( $r=0.79, p<.001$ ). Thus, there is a strong positive relationship between employee engagement and leadership. Consistent with this result is the study of Modaff (2018) which revealed that exercising genuine and supportive leadership increases employee engagement. In line with this result, Pass and Ridgway (2022) argue that supportive environment allows members to experiment and try new things, even failing, without fear of consequences. Further, in their empirical test of the Kahn model, Motyka (2018) also found that a supportive leadership was positively associated with psychological safety and engagement.

Regression results confirmed that the most significant determinants of employee engagement were work environment and leadership. The influence of job fit on employee engagement was found to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, it can be concluded that to improve employee engagement, management should focus on improving aspects of the leadership and the work environment.

### **5.3.2 To assess the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance**

Correlation analysis was conducted to achieve this objective. Results showed that there was a medium and significant positive relationship between employee engagement and employee performance ( $r=0.55, p<.01$ ). This result is supported by the findings of Kumar & Pansari (2015) who conducted a follow-up study of 75 companies to determine how employee engagement affects employee performance. Their results show that companies with higher employee engagement have higher levels of profit from productivity due to high employee performance. Further, the result is also in line with Anita (2014) and Guest (2014) who also established that employee engagement has a positive effect on the employee performance. In addition, Ababneh (2021) also found a positive relationship between engagement and performance, concluding that that improving employee well-being and employee engagement is the way to improving employee performance in every organisation. Sun and Bunchapattanasakda (2019) also showed that organisations with engaged employees

benefit from productivity and profitability as employees strive to be part of the organisation's success and thus do their best every day.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

This study sought to recommend strategies that can be adopted to improve the employee engagement practices at MT & T Communications. Results showed that the work environment and leadership are the most significant determinants of employee environment. Thus, strategies should focus on improving these aspects to improve employee engagement. Therefore, the following recommendations were made guided by the results of the study as presented above.

### **5.4.1 Providing employees with flexibility**

It is important for management of MT & T Communications to constantly make sure that flexible work arrangements are in place for employees especially in challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. Flexible work schedules increase employee engagement (Serenko, 2019). This level of flexibility accommodates the illusive work-life balance that employees want. To show that the organisation appreciates its team members on a personal level, management should allow employees to change their work hours to meet other family responsibilities, or passion projects. Employees will remain engaged if they are treated with respect and consideration.

### **5.4.2 Leadership training on employee engagement best practices**

The organisation should invest in training its management on the best practices of employee engagement. Training managers and holding them to high standards are two of the most important components in fostering employee engagement (Tokareva & Baronene, 2019). Apart from assuring management engagement, the organisation should provide its senior and middle managers with the resources they need to interact with and empower their subordinates. To properly prepare managers for their jobs, the organisation should provide training programmes and leadership development seminars. A manager should function as a coach for their reports, giving encouragement, constructive criticism, and opportunities for advancement in addition to their particular responsibilities. Proper training helps that managers understand how to engage their teams effectively, but it does not replace the critical step of talking to people.

### **5.4.3 Prioritising employee wellbeing**

It is important for management of MT & T Communications to invest in employee wellbeing to improve employee engagement. Employees are more likely to engage with their job when the organisation strives to improve their overall well-being. A company-wide wellness programme is an effective method to boost employee engagement. To encourage healthy living outside of the workplace, the organisation should offer workout classes as company outings and consider providing fitness subsidies. Furthermore, the organisation should provide meditation sessions and encourage employees to take mental health days when they need to get away from the office and focus on themselves.

### **5.4.4 Feedback should be prioritised**

According to Modaff (2018), employees seek feedback, and their degree of engagement is influenced by it. Starting with check-ins with each employee's manager, the organisation should urge middle management to organise regular review meetings with their teams as an ongoing effort to promote employee engagement. Managers should discuss with their subordinates their preferred means of obtaining feedback to engage employees in a meaningful way.

## **5.5 Limitations of the study**

- This study is limited in that the findings of the study can only be applied MT & T Communications. Thus, the results may not be generalised to other organisations.
- The small sample size utilised in this study also limits generalisation of the findings to the population under study.
- Further, the study only focussed on work environment, job fit and leadership as the only factors influencing employee engagement. However, several factors affect employee engagement, for example, organisational culture, human resources practices, among other factors (Antony, 2018).

- The study utilised a quantitative approach, relying on data collected using a questionnaire with closed ended questions. This approach is limited in that it does not provide an in-depth exploration of a research problem (Kumar, 2018).

## **5.6 Suggestions for further study**

- Further research could be conducted on employee engagement utilising a sample of organisations across South Africa. Thus, generalisation could be made to the whole South African context.
- Future studies could also consider exploring the many determinants of employee engagement such as organisational culture to improve the validity and fitness of the model.
- Lastly, further study on employee engagement could be conducted utilising mixed methods approach. This could enhance the depth of the findings by triangulating quantitative and qualitative results.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Research has highlighted that employee engagement has dual benefits for both personal well-being and organisational profitability and suggests that a communication perspective is valuable for deepening the understanding of employee engagement in organisational life. However, with the widespread shift to remote work due to COVID-19, it was important to explore contextual opportunities for how employees can communicatively demonstrate engagement in a remote work environment. This study sought to analyse the antecedents of employee engagement and how employee engagement affects employee performance at MT & T Communications. A quantitative research approach was employed, and data was collected using a survey questionnaire. A final sample of 30 employees of MT & T Communications was randomly selected in this study. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results showed that work environment, job fit, and leadership were the factors that influence employee engagement. However, it was found that only

leadership and work environment had the strongest influence on employee engagement. Further, the study sought to determine how the antecedents relate with employee engagement. It was revealed that employee engagement positively correlates with work environment, job fit and leadership. Lastly, the study sought to determine the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance. Results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between employee engagement and employee performance. Therefore, it was concluded that high levels of employee engagement are important to the productivity of an organisation. Employees may lose motivation to perform work and fulfil goals if they feel neglected or do not believe their organisation cares about them. This study recommended that strategies should focus on improving aspects of the work environment and leadership to improve employee engagement and in turn improve the performance of employees. It is important for management of MT & T Communications to constantly make sure that flexible work arrangements are in place for employees especially in challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic. This level of flexibility accommodates the illusive work-life balance that employees want. The organisation should also invest in leadership training on employee engagement best practices.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Permission to conduct the study

**MOBILE TELEPHONE NETWORKS PROPRIETARY LIMITED**  
**Registration number: 2003/0242650/07**  
236 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Fairland, 2195  
Private Bag 9955, Crossa, 2118, South Africa  
Tel +2721 912 3000 Fax +2721 912 4670



# memo

**TO :** GRACE MOLETSANE  
**DATE :** 31 MAY 2022  
**FROM :** TEBOGO MAENETJA  
**SUBJECT :** GRANTING OF INSTITUTIONAL PERMISSION FOR RESEARCH

Dear Grace Moletsane  
I, Tebogo Maenetja the Chief Human Resources Officer of MTN grant you permission to collect data at this site for your research project titled:

Evaluating the employee engagement practices during Covid-19 lockdown at MTN SA

I grant this permission as the authorized person to so in this company and am aware of the following,


1. The study is conducted as a UNISA researcher and remains the property of UNISA
2. You cannot use the name of the company (MTN SA) in your research project
3. All the survey questions must be approved by the CHRO before they are shared with the participants.
4. You can use some of the questions that were used in the previous surveys internally
5. All data and information collected will be solely in the possession of the researcher
6. I will require feedback of the research.

**Directors:** MJ Harper (Chairman), CS Malopisi (Chief Executive Officer), D Molefe (Chief Financial Officer), MJ Rosman, SA Fokie, N Khan, T Leoka, TLE Molefe, FJ Moalman, RT Mupha, PD Norman, R Ramashia, J Schulte-Bockum, and SA Zinn  
**Company Secretary:** PT Sishuba-Bonoyi  
**Reg. No.:** 1993/0014264/07  
**BNF Reg:** 4630140434

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7. The research may be published in the public domain under the supervision of the supervisor

I wish you the best and success in your research

Permission granted by	SIGNATURE	DATE (YYYY-MM-DD)
Tebogo Maenetja Chief Human Resource Officer		07/07/2022
<b>Contact number:</b> +27 83 200 6014 <b>Email address:</b> Tebogo.Maenetja@mtn.com		



## Appendix B: Research Instrument

### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

#### Age group

Please indicate your age group

20 years to 30 years	
31 years to 40 years	
41 years to 50 years	
51 years and above	

#### Management level

Please indicate your position the organisation

Management	
Non-management	

#### Level of education

Please indicate your highest level of academic qualification

Diploma	
Undergraduate degree	
Master's degree	

Doctorate degree	
------------------	--

**Tenure of employment**

5 years and below	
6 years to 10 years	
11 years to 15 years	
Above 15 years	

**Section A – Employee engagement**

UWES – work engagement scale – Likert Scale – 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree

**Section E: Job engagement – UWES - scale**

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
At my work, I feel bursting energy					
I find the work I do full of meaning and purpose					
Time flies when I am working					
At my job, I feel strong and vigorous					
I am enthusiastic about my job					
When I am working, I forget everything else around me					

My job inspires me					
When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work					

### Relationship between Work Environment and Employee Engagement

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I achieve the correct balance between my home and work lives					
My Organisation provides me to support to help meet my work-life balance					
I often think about other things when I'm doing my work					
I am rarely distracted when I'm doing my job					
I often fell no emotion when I perform my job					
I exert a lot of energy in my job					
I stay until the job is done					

### Section C Contextual Performance

CPS– Contextual Performance – Likert Scale – 1 – Strongly Disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 – Strongly Agree

### Section C: Contextual Performance – CPS - scale

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I took on extra responsibilities					
I started new tasks myself when my old ones were finished					
I took on challenging work tasks, when available					
I worked on keeping my job knowledge up to date					
I came up with creative solutions to new problems					
I kept looking for new challenges in my job					
I actively participated in work meetings					

### Relationship between Job-fit and Employee Engagement

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am satisfied with my job					
My job is stressful					
I would speak highly of the organisation I work for					
I like to speak and get involved with other organisational activities, other than my job					
I am committed to serving my organisation					

I am engaged in my job					
I avoid working too hard					

### Leadership Style and Employee Engagement

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Leadership discusses my training and developmental needs with me					
Leadership keeps me in touch with what is going on in the organisation					
Leadership is supportive if I have a problem					
Leadership makes it clear to me what is expected of me from my job					
Leadership listens if I have a suggestion to make					
Leadership communicates well with each other					
Leadership treats me fairly					

## Appendix C: Consent to Submit Report

MBLREP / MBL5913 / MBA5929

### CONSENT TO SUBMIT RESEARCH REPORT FOR EXAMINATION 2022

Consent is hereby given to:

Student name: ... Grace Mmantsudu Moletsane

...

Student number: ... 30813506 ..


to submit his research report in its final form.

Supervisor Signature: ...  ....

Date: ...22 December 2022 ...

Supervisor Name: ...Renier Steyn ...

The student acknowledges that sufficient feedback was provided by the supervisor and that s/he took the responsibility to attend to the feedback in a way that satisfies the requirements for a research dissertation on the MBA and MBL level.

Student signature...  .....

Date: 23/12/2022.....

## Appendix D: Ethical Clearance

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003, South Africa  
Cnr Janzies and Alexander Avenues, Midrand, 1685, Tel: +27 11 652 0000, Fax: +27 11 652 0299  
E-mail: sbl@unisa.ac.za Website: www.unisa.ac.za/sbl

### SCHOOL OF BUSINESS LEADERSHIP RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (GSBL CRERC)

21 November 2022

Ref #: 2022\_SBL\_MBA\_098\_FA  
Name of applicant: Ms GM Moletsane  
Student #: 30613506

Dear Ms GM Moletsane

Decision: Ethics Approval

Student: Ms GM Moletsane (30613506@unisa.ac.za, 0725666196)

Supervisor: Prof Renier Steyn (rsteyn@unisa.ac.za, 011 652 0254)

Project Title: Evaluating the impact of employee engagement practices on employee performance during the COVID-19 lockdown in the private sector: MTN SA

Qualification: Master in Business Administration (MBA)

Expiry Date: December 2023

Thank you for applying for research ethics clearance. SBL Research Ethics Review Committee reviewed your application in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.

Outcome of the SBL Research Committee: Approval is granted until December 2023

The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee on the 18/11/2022

The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:

- 1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached
- 2) The researchers will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
- 3) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the SBL Research Ethics Review Committee.
- 4) An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.
- 5) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.

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BUSINESS LEADERSHIP  
UNISA

Graduate School of Business Leadership, University of South Africa, PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003, South Africa  
Cnr Janzies and Alexander Avenues, Midrand, 1685, Tel: +27 11 652 0000, Fax: +27 11 652 0299  
E-mail: sbl@unisa.ac.za Website: www.unisa.ac.za/sbl

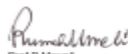
Kind regards,



Prof N Mbita

Chairperson: SBL Research Ethics Committee

011 - 652 0381 | [nmbita@unisa.ac.za](mailto:nmbita@unisa.ac.za)



Prof P Msweli

Executive Dean: Graduate School of Business Leadership

011- 652 0299 | [pmsweli@unisa.ac.za](mailto:pmsweli@unisa.ac.za)

# Appendix E: Turn It In Report

## Turnitin Originality Report

Document Viewer

Processed on: 22-Dec-2022 18:47 SAST  
ID: 1985915624  
Word Count: 23143  
Submitted: 1

GM Moletsane 30813506 Chapter 1-5-REVISED TI... By  
GRACE MMANTSUDU MOLETSANE

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2% match (student papers from 11-Jan-2018) <a href="#">Submitted to Mancosa on 2018-01-11</a>					
2% match (Internet from 08-Apr-2020) <a href="https://ucudir.ucu.ac.ug/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11951/138/Owor_Thesis_2015.pdf?isAllowed=y&amp;sequence=1">https://ucudir.ucu.ac.ug/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11951/138/Owor_Thesis_2015.pdf?isAllowed=y&amp;sequence=1</a>					
1% match (student papers from 19-Oct-2022) <a href="#">Submitted to Mancosa on 2022-10-19</a>					
1% match (student papers from 08-Mar-2022) <a href="#">Submitted to Mancosa on 2022-03-08</a>					