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Exploring Leaders' Strategies for Employee Engagement in the South African Mining Industry

Le-Marlie Marais
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

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Le-Marlié Marais

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Review Committee
Dr. Gergana Velkova, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Jorge Gaytan, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Julia East, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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Le-Marlié Marais

MBA, UNISA School for Business Leadership, 2013

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Abstract

Research suggests that disengaged employees have contributed to the 28.5% reduction in the mining industry's contribution to South African gross domestic product. Some South African mining leaders lack strategies for engaging employees. Using the employee engagement framework, the purpose of this single case study was to explore successful strategies that South African mining leaders use to engage employees. The target population was mining leaders, purposefully selected because of their success with engaging employees at a typical South African mining company. Data collection was through face-to-face interviews with 4 leaders; a focus group interview with 9 employees; and a review of archived organizational documents, including internal case organization surveys, reports, emails, and Facebook posts. Data were analyzed using inductive coding of phrases and words from interviews while additional data gathered from participants' displays, websites, and other documents supported theme interpretation through methodological triangulation. Within this group of South African leaders, findings revealed that leader behavior improved employee engagement, situationally relevant employee engagement strategies improved employee engagement, and communication strategies improved employee engagement. Improving employee engagement contributes to social change by shaping employees' experience of their work environment, thereby improving their personal well-being and living conditions while maintaining a balance between work and personal interests.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study, first and foremost, to my most amazing husband, Izak, for his continuous and relentless support and encouragment throughout this endeavor. Also, to my parents Frans and Linda, who were instrumental in shaping my values and beliefs and teaching me the value of perseverance, even in the face of adversity. To Dr. Gergana Velkova, without whom I would have lost myself many a time in endless sentences and paragraphs that ultimately became this research study – thank you for your advice and encouragement and for keeping me on track. Lastly, to my Creator, for giving me the strength and opportunity to embark on and complete this program.

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I thank my committee members for their respective efforts to guide me through this process. To my chair and mentor, Dr. Gergana Velkova, for providing timely replies and feedback, guidance, and encouragement and keeping me engaged, particularly in frustrating periods. To my second committee member, Dr. Jorge Gaytan, for sparking reflective thinking and providing new perspective on my interpretations. To the University Research Reviewer, Dr. Julia East, for shaking the boat, thereby ensuring that my research study complied with the requirements of the university and the research community as a whole. Without the three of you and various other professors, this journey would not have been successful. The learning experience was a rich and rewarding one, which ultimately opened up my mind to countless new possibilities.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The global decline in productivity caused by disengaged employees affects organizations from all types of industries (Anitha, 2014; Robertson, Birch, & Cooper, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2014). The continued decline in gold production in the South African (SA) gold mining industry is just one example of this global productivity decline (Statistics South Africa, 2014). A 2013 research study revealed that only about 13% of employees worldwide reported feeling felt engaged at work (Crabtree, 2013). Organizational investment in employees through employee engagement initiatives is imperative for increased productivity, organizational performance, and increased competitiveness (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). The SA mining industry leaders currently face various challenges, including the need for improved productivity and performance to remain competitive locally and globally (Botiveau, 2014; Ghadi, 2013; Krüger, 2013; Mafini & Pooe, 2013).

Despite an abundance of available labor, several obstacles to organizational competitiveness remain. Examples of such obstacles include finding suitable strategies to engage and retain employees (Nujjoo & Meyer, 2012), overcoming the challenges of a 25% unemployment percentage (Statistics South Africa, 2014), and coping with only having 10% of the skills available in South Africa 20 years ago (Horwitz, 2013). High unemployment, skill shortages, and a labor-intensive mining industry heavily reliant on employees (Statistics South Africa, 2014) resulted in fierce competition among organizations to retain suitably skilled and qualified labor. According to experts, practitioners and researchers need to develop a deeper understanding of employee engagement to improve productivity and competitiveness (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Geldenhuys, Łaba, & Venter, 2014; Ghadi, 2013; Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013).

Background of the Problem

The SA mining industry leaders currently face various challenges, such as labor unrest (Boutiveau, 2014; Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014; McLaggan, Bezuidenhout, & Botha, 2013), political and economic instability (Botiveau, 2014), and a consistent decline in gold mining production (Mineral Resources, 2015). These challenges highlight the need for mining leaders to understand the skills and strategies used to improve productivity and performance to remain competitive locally and globally.

Several researchers found a positive relationship between higher levels of employee engagement and both productivity and competitiveness (Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2013; Shuck, Ghosh, Zigarmi, & Nimon, 2013; Shuck & Reio, 2011) and underscored the need for additional research (Kim et al., 2013; Shuck, 2013; Shuck & Rose, 2013). Assuming that higher levels of employee engagement lead to improved performance and increased competitiveness, mining leaders need to develop a deeper understanding of the strategies and skills needed to engage their workforce (Ghadi, 2013) in the SA mining industry. Understanding the skills and strategies leaders need to engage employees in the SA mining industry through research serves a dual purpose. Firstly, conducting this research study enabled me to address employee engagement as a business problem and, secondly, to contribute to qualitative research on employee engagement.

Problem Statement

Gold mining production volumes in South Africa decreased by 25% from 2008 - 2013 (Mineral Resources, 2015). Disengaged employees are less productive and contributed to the 28.5% reduction in the mining industry's contribution to SA gross domestic product (Statistics South Africa, 2014). The general business problem is that disengaged employees contribute to low productivity and hinder organization performance in the SA mining industry. The specific business problem is that some leaders in the SA mining industry lack strategies to engage employees.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that SA mining industry leaders use to engage employees. The target population consisted of four leaders and nine employees with successful employee engagement strategies at a typical gold mine in SA's Gauteng province. By creating a work environment that is conducive to employee engagement, mining leaders might assist in bringing about social change through helping employees to improve their personal well-being, living conditions, and maintaining a balance between work and personal lives.

Nature of the Study

Quantitative researchers examine prevalence rates, relationships, and cause-and-effect relationships between variables; these studies are confirmatory in nature (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). Mixed methods research consists of a sequential or concurrent combination of qualitative and quantitative research (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Through mixed methods research, a researcher addresses both exploratory (qualitative) and confirmatory (quantitative) research questions (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Neither a quantitative nor a mixed methods approach was suitable for this study because my purpose was to explore the strategies that mining leaders need to engage employees. Qualitative researchers collect open-ended and emerging data that they develop into themes (Campbell, 2014). Researchers whose goal is gaining an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon conduct qualitative research (Dworkin, 2012). Qualitative research was appropriate for exploring different participants' experiences through thick descriptions of their experiences (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012a). Gaining a better understanding of the underlying meaning of a situation by using a qualitative approach (Fritz, 2014) was appropriate for my study because I set out to explore the strategies leaders use to engage employees.

Researchers often use case study, ethnographic, or phenomenological designs to conduct business research (Petty et al., 2012a). In case study research, researchers explore a program, organization, process, or event by collecting data from various sources, and use triangulation to achieve convergence between the different sources (Yin, 2014). In ethnography, the researcher studies shared behavioral patterns, beliefs, and language of cultural groups (Petty et al., 2012a). Additionally, the researcher spends an extended period with the cultural group, acting as an observer or participant (Petty et al., 2012a). I determined that an ethnographic research approach was not appropriate because my focus was not on understanding behavioral patterns for which an extended period of time in the field would be necessary. In a phenomenological study, the researcher reiteratively works through collected interview data to find the underlying meaning of the lived experiences of participants (Gill, 2014). A phenomenological research approach was not appropriate for this study because my goal was not to focus on understanding the meaning of participants' lived experiences. I determined that a case study research approach was appropriate because I explored a situation, employee engagement, at a single organization, a gold mine in South Africa's Gauteng province.

Research Question

The central research question for this study was, What strategies do SA mining leaders use to engage employees?

Interview Questions

Individual Interview Questions (Leaders)

I used the questions in semistructured, face-to-face interviews, which I conducted with mining leaders to collect data.

1. What is your role in engaging your employees?
2. What strategies have you used to engage your employees?
3. How did your employees respond to those strategies?
4. What strategies were most effective in engaging your employees?
5. What are some examples of successful strategies to engage subordinates?
6. Which of the strategies were least effective?
7. What role does leadership play in engaging employees?
8. What are some of the benefits of successful employee engagement strategies?
9. What are some of the consequences of not having employee engagement strategies?

10. How important is it for mining leaders to develop and implement employee engagement strategies?
11. What additional information would you like to share about employee engagement?

Focus Group Interview Questions (Employees)

I used the questions in a focus group I conducted with employee participants to collect data.

1. How important is it to you to have a leader who commits to employee engagement strategies?
2. What engagement strategies or techniques are best for engaging you at work?
3. How do engagement techniques affect your productivity at work?
4. Which engagement methods are least effective engaging you at work?
5. What do you consider an effective engagement strategy that your leaders are not using to engage employees?
6. What would you recommend to your leadership team when it comes to employee engagement?
7. What additional information would you like to share about employee engagement?

Conceptual Framework

The theory that served as the conceptual framework for this study was Shuck and Reio's (2011) engagement framework. Shuck and Reio identified cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement as key concepts of their framework. Cognitive engagement refers to the level of focus demonstrated by employees while at work (Kumar & Sia, 2012). Cognitively engaged employees understand their mission and role in their work environment (Zhang, Avery, Bergsteiner, & More, 2014). Emotional engagement is a function of employees' willingness to invest personal resources at work (Shuck & Rose, 2013). It includes establishing meaningful connections with coworkers and supervisors (Zhang et al., 2014). Personal resources include pride, belief, and knowledge (Shuck, Twyford, Reio, & Shuck, 2014). Finally, behaviorally engaged employees manifest their engagement through performance and alignment with organizational objectives (Alagaraja & Shuck, 2015). Employees express behavioral engagement through discretionary effort, which refers to their willingness to go beyond the call of duty (Kumar & Sia, 2012).

I chose Shuck and Reio's (2011) engagement framework because it underpins the strategies mining leaders use to achieve employee engagement. A better understanding of employee engagement may assist SA mining leaders in the development of strategies and skills to engage their employees. Engaged employees contribute to increased productivity (Anitha, 2014; Shahid & Azhar, 2013).

Operational Definitions

Behavioral engagement: Behavioral engagement refers to the most physical form of engagement (Kumar & Sia, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2011). Behavioral engagement is visually observable when an employee exercises discretionary effort and a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty (Kumar & Sia, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2011).

Cognitive engagement: Cognitive engagement refers to an employees state of mind following a mental positive appraisal of meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources (Shuck & Reio, 2011).

Emotional engagement: Emotional engagement refers to an employee's felt emotional connection at the workplace, manifested through a strong sense of belonging and meaning (Shuck & Reio, 2011)

Employee disengagement: Employee disengagement occurs when an employee decides to distance him or herself from his or her work environment (Kahn, 1990).

Employee engagement: Employee engagement refers to a state where employees feel involved in the organization and feel motivated on a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral level to achieve organizational goals (Shuck & Wollard, 2010).

Leadership: Leadership is a process which places the leader at the center of the process of influencing followers to achieve a common goal (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Personal engagement: Personal engagement refers to an employee's willingness to invest themselves at work and in their work role on a physical, cognitive, and emotional level (Kahn, 1990).

Work engagement: The term work engagement refers to an employee's state of mind toward his or her work absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, & Bakker, 2002). Characteristics of work engagement are vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al. 2002).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions are specific beliefs related to the study that a researcher believes to be true or valid for the purpose of the study (Valentin, 2014). Limitations are those aspects of a study that a researcher cannot control (Rohr, 2012). Delimitations refer to the scope and boundaries of a study, as set by a researcher (Rohr, 2012).

Assumptions

Assumptions held by a researcher about the research topic influence the research study (Kirkwood & Price, 2013). According to Greenwood (2012), the inability to identify and acknowledge research assumptions indicates a lack of competence and integrity on the part of a researcher. It also casts doubt on the ethicality of a study (Greenwood, 2012). I assumed that data collected during interviews and the focus group interview would accurately reflect participants' experiences. Another assumption was that the engagement numbers quoted in the purpose statement applied to the SA context. The unemployment statistic for the United States is 5.6% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014) while the unemployment statistic of SA is 25% (Statistics South Africa, 2014). SA is an emerging economy and a developing country (Ketkar, 2014). Approximately 13% of employees feel engaged at work, and the percentage of engaged employees in SA is between 4% and 15% (Crabtree, 2013). Therefore, it was reasonable to assume that the engagement figure for SA was much lower than in developed countries with established and stable economies. Furthermore, I assumed that the use of the concept of employee engagement was universal across industries, cultures, and organizations. I also assumed that data collected from the leader and employee participants interviewed assisted in answering the research question. Additionally, I assumed that leaders and employees were willing to participate in the study and that documents for review would be accessible. Another assumption was that engaged employees contribute to increased performance and competitiveness.

Limitations

Limitations may result in bias, which may influence the way in which the reader interprets the findings of the study (Svensson & Doumas, 2013). By clearly stating study limitations and weaknesses of a study, researchers create a frame of reference for the reader (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2012). A limitation of this study was that leaders and employees from one mining company participated in this study. Conducting a study at a single organization prevented the application of findings across the SA mining industry. Additionally, some leaders and employees with employee engagement knowledge and experience chose not to participate in the study, which was yet another limitation of the study. Furthermore, the time limit for interviews was another limitation of the study.

Delimitations

By delimiting a study, the researcher provides the reader with the particular boundaries of the study (Svensson & Doumas, 2013). In this study, I conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with the senior management and a focus group interview with their subordinates at a single mining operation. I interviewed only selected participants that met the eligibility criteria. The leader and employee participants were members of a leadership group that consisted of senior managers and employees responsible for production from underground operations and support functions in a mining organization in the Gauteng Province of South Africa.

Significance of the Study

Research findings indicated that engaged employees were more productive than disengaged employees (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). The consistent decrease in SA gold mining production volumes between 2008 and 2013 (Mineral Resources, 2015), was indicative of the need for mining leaders to gain a better understanding of the skills and strategies used to engage employees. This study might contribute to improving productivity and organizational performance in the labor-intensive SA mining industry. Additionally, several researchers recommended conducting additional qualitative research on the topic of employee engagement and improved productivity (Kim et al., 2013; Shuck, 2013; Shuck & Rose, 2013). In the sections below, I elaborate on the possible contributions of my study to business practice and social change.

Contribution to Business Practice

Some business leaders lack the skills and strategies necessary to keep employees engaged, resulting in high employee turnover, decreased productivity, and a loss of competitiveness (Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Statistics South Africa, 2014). Crabtree (2013) found that the percentage of engaged employees at work is only about 13% globally, and the percentage of engaged employees in SA is between 4% and 15%. South Africa’s gold mining production volumes have declined by 25% between 2008 and 2013 (Mineral Resources, 2015). Disengaged employees are less productive and contribute to the 28.5% decrease in the mining industry’s contribution to the SA Gross Domestic Product

(Statistics South Africa, 2014). Disengaged employees contribute to low productivity and hinder organization performance in the SA mining industry. Therefore, it is imperative for business leaders to understand the skills and strategies leaders use to engage employees leading to improved employee performance and organizational competitiveness (Bedarkar & Padita, 2014; Shuck et al., 2014).

In contrast with previous quantitative studies focusing on quantifying outcomes of engagement (Jose & Mampilly, 2014; Kim et al., 2013), I concentrated on exploring the strategies used by mining leaders to engage their employees. Understanding how employees experience their work environment (Khan, 1990; Shuck & Reio, 2013) was just one of the challenges of unraveling the required skills and strategies to engage employees. The potential benefits of understanding the skills and strategies needed to facilitate engagement might result in improved productivity, increased profit, and an engaged workforce (Bedarkar & Padita, 2014; Shuck et al., 2014).

Implications for Social Change

Organizational leaders who effectively engage employees could reduce employees' intention to leave and improve productivity (Shuck et al., 2014). Employee engagement results in an improvement in living conditions and emotional well-being (Guest, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014; Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). The potential for social change lies in the development of strategies that promote employee engagement (Shuck & Rose, 2013). Particularly, from the perspective of improving the way employees perceive their work environment, as opposed to focusing on improving performance or competitiveness (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

I reviewed the literature on employee engagement published in various journals and seminal scholarly books. Google Scholar, linked to Walden University Library's website, served as the primary source for accessing journal articles. Walden University Library allows students access to various databases. Databases used to obtain literature for this study included Business Source Complete, ABI/INFORM Complete, Emerald Management, Sage Premier, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Central. In addition, I searched various open-access journals to obtain literature related to employee engagement, specifically relateding to the SA contex. AOSIS OpenJournals provides open access to peer-reviewed scholarly journals from various academic disciplines. ScienceDirect provides both pay and open access to its full-text scientific database containing journal articles and book chapters. In some instances, I accessed government websites to obtain information about demographics, industry statistics, and regulations about the mining industry.

The strategy for searching these resources entailed the use of keywords and phrases, including employee engagement, work engagement, Khan and employee engagement, antecedents of employee engagement, consequences of employee engagement, theories of employee engagement, and strategies of employee engagement. I applied filters to database searches to narrow search results. When using Google Scholar, I gave preference to articles published in or after 2012 to ensure that the literature I obtained was topical and relevant.

I gave preference to articles that were available in Walden University Library. Crossref and Ulrich's Periodicals Directory are tools to verify that literature is peer-reviewed. The literature review includes 92 references. The publication date for 83 (i.e., 90%) of these references is within the past 5 years. Eighty-two of the 83 references (89%) are peer-reviewed articlesand excludes website and non-scholarly articles.

Organization of Literature Review

The literature review section begins with an introduction, which includes information about the strategy for searching the literature, the frequencies, and percentages of peer-reviewed articles as well as publication dates. In the next section, I focus on the application of the literature to the research question and include a brief description of the purpose of the study. The themes I discuss in this literature review are employee engagement theories, employee engagement as a construct, and employee engagement and leadership. Throughout the literature review, I compare and contrast different points of view and relationships between previous research and findings with this study.

The employee engagement theories theme includes a critical analysis and synthesis of the framework for employee engagement using supporting and contrasting theories from relevant literature on the topic of employee engagement. The first theme includes a review of other relevant theories such as Kahn's (1990) needs satisfying approach, social exchange theory (SET), job demands-resources model, and the broaden-and-build theory. Following a discussion of popular employee engagement theories, I consider the applicability of Shuck and Reio's (2011) employee engagement framework.

The second theme, employee engagement, starts with a brief overview of the development of the employee engagement construct over time. I discuss common concerns relating to the construct as well as various definitions, antecedents, and consequences of employee disengagement. The section concludes with a discussion of disengagement.

The third and final theme for discussion is employee engagement and leadership. The theme starts with a general discussion of leadership and leadership styles as it relates to employee engagement. Leadership styles reviewed include transactional leadership, leader-member exchange, and transformational leadership. Moving away from specific leadership styles, I review the use of four leadership paradigms and their relationship to employee engagement.

Application to the Applied Business Problem

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that SA mining industry leaders use to engage employees. Researchers have found that only approximately 20% of SA employees feel engaged at work, though they note that engagement varies across industries and countries (Rothmann & Welsh, 2013). My primary focus during this research study was not to assess engagement levels; it was to develop a deeper understanding of employee engagement strategies needed in the SA mining industry. Developing an understanding of such strategies required a qualitative approach, more specifically an exploratory single case study. The findings from this study might provide insight into the lived experiences and the underlying meaning of employee engagement from a group of leaders' perspectives.

The findings of the study might assist leaders with the development of industry appropriate strategies. Once an understanding of the underlying meaning emerges, industry-appropriate strategies might equip leaders with the skills to improve employee engagement levels in the industry. Improved engagement levels lead to improved productivity and competitiveness (Claxton, 2014; Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015; Kataria, Rastogi, & Garg, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014). The findings from the study might improve business practice by identifying industry appropriate strategies, leading to increased productivity and organizational competitiveness. The potential for social change rests in the development of strategies to improve employees' engagement levels and personal well-being.

According to research findings, more than 80% of employees worldwide do not experience engagement at work leading to negative implications for profitability and productivity, and ultimately competitiveness (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015; Rana, Ardichvili, & Tkachenko, 2014; Valentin, 2014). Crabtree (2013) suggested that active engagement is as low as 13%, and in South Africa active engagement ranged between 4 - 14%.

Employee Engagement Theories and Conceptual Framework

Researchers accept that the first mention of employee engagement (as applied by researchers and practitioners currently) was in the work of Kahn in 1990 (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014). Khan (1990) explored how participants' personal and work experiences affected their personal engagement and disengagement. Khan based his needs-satisfying approach on the early 1960s work of Goffman and the later (1980s) work of Hackman and Oldham. Goffman developed the theory around employees' attachment and detachment from their roles while Hackman and Oldham developed research around job-design (Kahn, 1990). From data he collected, Kahn induced that an employee will only feel engaged at work with the meeting of all three psychological conditions. The three conditions are meaningfulness, emotional safety, and availability of resources (Kahn, 1990).

Kahn (1990) suggested that supervisors engage employees through these three different but related conditions. The level of meaning employees experience in their work determine their engagement at work (Kahn, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Similarly, the level of emotional safety employees experience will determine how engaged that employee is at work (Kahn, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Finally, the availability of resources, both personal and work-related, determines the level of engagement an employee will experience (Kahn, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014). In their study, Rothmann and Welsch (2013) found that employees' perception of meaningfulness at work indirectly affected their engagement in terms of the availability of personal resources.

Besides the three conditions for engagement, there are also three facets of engagement namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Shuck & Reio, 2011). Shuck and Reio (2014) noted that the level of cognitive engagement depended on an employee's appraisal of his or her work climate. Employees cognitively appraise their work environment using the three conditions for engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2014). Therefore, an employee first needs to positively experience meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources before progressing to cognitive engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2014). Cognitive engagement precedes emotional engagement.

Emotional engagement occurs when employees perceive their organization as providing necessary support and when they are willing to invest their personal resources at work (Shuck et al., 2014). In deciding whether to involve themselves emotionally at work, employees rely on their perceptions of the work environment and on the outcomes of their cognitive appraisals (Shuck et al., 2014). Research findings provide evidence that an emotional connection exists between employees' interpretation of their working place, the outcomes of cognitive appraisals based on SET, and the subsequent emotional engagement (Shuck et al., 2014). Emotional engagement precedes behavioral engagement.

The last facet of engagement, behavioral engagement, manifests itself through the display of discretionary effort and willingness to improve performance out of one's own free will (Cross, Gray, Gerbasi, & Assimakopoulos, 2012; Shuck et al., 2014). Shuck et al. (2014) confirmed that employee engagement manifested through behavior at and toward work. In their study, Shuck et al. (2014) found that employees who experienced cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement were less likely to resign, which is the ultimate form of disengagement.

Rees, Alfes, and Gatenby (2013) posited that there were three dimensions of engagement, including intellectual, affective, and social. Characteristics of intellectual engagement are employees' absorption in their work and engaging in thought processes about improving his or her role performance (Rees et al., 2013). When employees feel a positive emotional connection with their work, they experience affective engagement (Rees et al., 2013). Lastly, Rees et al. posited that social engagement occurs when employees discuss with other employees work improvements and changes. These dimensions are comparable to the three facets of engagement respectively based on what employees require to achieve full engagement (Rees et al., 2013; Shuck & Reio, 2011).

Comprehending the complexity of employee engagement requires a review of other theories regularly associated with explaining or understanding employee engagement. Pertinent theories include the needs satisfying approach (Kahn, 1990), SET (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Shuck et al., 2014; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013; Soieb, Othman, & D'Silva, 2013; Truss et al., 2013), job demand-resources (JD-R) model (Botha & Mostert, 2014; De Beer, Pienaar, & Rothmann, 2013; Rana et al., 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014), and broaden-and-build theory (Bakker, Demerouti, & ten Brummelhuis, 2012; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013; Botha & Mostert, 2014; Park, Song, Yoon, & Kim, 2014). I selected these theories following a search of the literature from which I concluded that these were the most popular theories researchers associated with the concept of employee engagement. Other theories regularly used to explain employee engagement include burnout antithesis, engagement-satisfaction approach, conservation of resources, organizational support theory, self-determination theory, and social identity theory. The discussion about the applicability of Shuck and Reio's (2011) framework for engagement as the conceptual framework underpinning this study is pertinent.

Needs satisfying approach. In his needs-satisfying approach, Kahn (1990) explored engagement in terms of the three underlying conditions that must be present for engagement to occur. Personal engagement theory is synonymous with the needs-satisfying approach (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Shuck, 2013). Kahn's three conditions for engagement are meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources. Shuck and Reio (2014) deduced that employees' experiences of engagement related directly to their perception and interpretation of their work environment. According to Kahn, employees can only experience behavioral engagement at work after meeting all three conditions (Rana et al., 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014).

Meaningfulness relates to how employees experience their purpose at work, which, in turn, contributes to the level of engagement they experience (Kahn, 1990; Saks & Gruman, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014). This concept refers to the amount of energy and effort individuals are willing to put into satisfying personal needs in order to have a purpose and meaning at work (Kahn, 1990; Rothmann & Welsh, 2013). According to Kahn (1990), task characteristics, role characteristics, and work interactions had the most influence on meaningfulness at work. Rothman and Welsch (2013) found that availability of personal resources affected employee engagement indirectly through the perception of meaningfulness at work. Rana et al. (2014) suggested that existing literature indicates that meaningfulness showed the most significant positive relation with engagement.

Safety relates to how comfortable individuals are expressing themselves at work (Kahn, 1990). When there is a risk to a person's self-esteem, social status, or career development, individuals are less likely to engage (Kahn, 1990). When employees feel safe, they can be true to themselves because they do not fear that others will make fun of them (Rothmann & Welsh, 2013; Truss et al., 2013). Interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and process, and organizational norms contribute to how an employee experiences safety at work (Kahn, 1990).

Availability of resources refers to people's ability and readiness to engage, given the demands placed on them by their everyday work and personal lives (Kahn, 1990). Having resources available implies that people better equipped to handle daily distractions are more likely to be willing to make an effort in their work roles (Kahn). Kahn (1990) identified physical energy, emotional energy, individual security, and outside lives as the four distractions that can reduce a person's availability to engage. Saks and Gruman (2014) posited that job resources and demands were antecedents for meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources.

Antecedents, which are also referred to as drivers of engagement, are those aspects of engagement that researchers and practitioners believe cause engagement (Rees et al., 2013). Sahoo and Sahu (2009) identified eight key drivers of employee engagement. The key drivers are (a) trust and integrity, (b) nature of the job, (c) line of sight, (d) career growth opportunities, (e) pride about the company, (f) coworkers/team members, (g) employee development, and (h) relationship with one's manager. One could classify these drivers under Kahn's (1990) three conditions for engagement by analyzing the drivers and sorting them under the most appropriate category of meaningfulness, safety, and availability (Rana et al., 2014).

To better understand the role of cognitive appraisal in the engagement process, one might categorize the eight drivers in terms of Kahn's (1990) three conditions to determine readiness for cognitive engagement. Considering Kahn's description of the three conditions, *trust and integrity* would fall under safety because it relates to how comfortable employees are expressing their thoughts and opinions in the workplace. *Nature of the job* would fall under meaningfulness because it is most likely to determine if employees experience any meaning or feeling of purpose in their work. *Career and growth opportunities* would fall under resources because building a career and the opportunity for personal growth are important resources helping employees feel more engaged. *The importance of feeling valued and involved*, in addition to the aforementioned key drivers, is important for establishing engagement (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009). One could categorize *importance of feeling valued and involved* under meaningfulness. In some instances, a driver might fall under more than one condition, such as *coworkers and team members*, which might relate to safety and availability of resources.

Similarly, Anitha (2014) identified several factors required to drive Kahn's (1990) three conditions for engagement. The factors are work environment, leadership, team and co-worker relationship, training and career development, compensation, organizational policies, and workplace well-being. Again, it is possible to categorize these drivers under the three conditions of engagement needed to achieve cognitive engagement. Under meaningfulness, one could include *compensation* and *workplace well-being*. Under safety, one could include *work environment*, *leadership*, *team and co-worker relationship*, and *organizational policies* while *training and career development* fall under resources.

In an empirical study, psychological empowerment serves as a predictor of employee engagement and a measure of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Psychological empowerment relates to the level of competency experienced by employees, where those that felt more empowered were more productive and satisfied at work (Jose & Mampilly, 2014). Other antecedents of employee engagement include job design and characteristics, supervisor and co-worker relationships, workplace environment, and human resource development (HRD) practices (Anitha, 2014; Jose & Mampilly, 2014; Rana et al., 2014).

Building on Kahn’s (1990) work, Shuck and Herd (2012) posited that experiencing meaningfulness, safety, and availability drove the first of three engagement facets, cognitive engagement. In the absence of meaningfulness, safety, and availability, cognitive engagement cannot commence (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Research findings indicated that employees’ experiences of meeting Kahn’s three conditions determined their cognitive appraisal outcome, which preceded the decision to engage cognitively (Shuck et al., 2014).

Rees et al. (2013) plausibly suggested that the facilitation of *employee voice* might improve engagement within organizations. When employees feel that they cannot add value, make a difference, or bring about change, they tend to hold their *voice* (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Employees withholding their *voice* serve as an example of a negative appraisal of the safety and resource conditions (Shuck & Herd, 2012). *Employee voice* originally referred to collective bargaining and unionized association (Rees et al., 2013). Furthermore, researchers associate *employee voice* with employees’ ability and willingness to speak up, make suggestions, and give their opinions (Rees et al., 2013). Specifically, employees voice their views about matters they perceive to influence the better management of the organization or that would contribute to achieving organizational goals (Rees et al., 2013). Research findings indicated a significant positive relationship related to employees' *voice* (Rees et al., 2013). The relationships include voice and (a) engagement, (b) trust in senior management, and (c) the employee-line manager relationship (Rees et al., 2013). Additionally, Rees et al. (2013) found that trust and the employee-line manager relationship mediated engagement. These findings implied that employees able to exercise their voice were more likely to feel engaged at work (Rees et al., 2013).

In addition to the role of Kahn's (1990) three conditions, Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage's (2014) research findings indicated that experiencing engagement was reliant on a workplace environment that was conducive to engagement. An environment conducive to engagement includes an appropriate organizational culture, which facilitates reciprocity based on social exchange processes (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014). Engaging employees is not a short term, single action; it requires a commitment from leaders and managers over an extended period (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Additionally, Shuck and Herd posited that engagement is not something leaders can demand from employees.

The underlying principles of Kahn's (1990) needs-satisfying approach set the scene for engagement by identifying the three conditions needed to develop engagement. The principles of this theory do not provide insight into the facets of engagement.

Instead, they alert to the conditions required before engagement develops. This approach might be valuable for gaining a better understanding of the skills and strategies needed by leaders to engage employees.

Social exchange theory. In 1958, George Homans introduced social exchange theory (Soieb et al., 2013). However, the work of Peter Blau and Richard Emmerson further developed the social exchange theory. The underlying principles of the theory suggested that social exchange processes result in social behavior (Soieb et al., 2013).

The fundamental principles applicable to social exchange theory (SET) revolved around cost and benefit, particularly when related to human behavior or social interaction (Soieb et al., 2013). As with most exchange processes, people tend to abandon or avoid exchanges with high cost and little benefit (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013; Soieb et al., 2013). Various researchers have linked SET to employee engagement (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013; Alfes, Shantz, Truss, & Soane, 2013; Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Reissner & Pagan, 2013; Shuck et al., 2014; Soieb et al., 2013; Ugwu, Onyishi, & Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2014; Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

In the case of employee engagement, SET involves the exchange of certain obligations and the reciprocation between individuals (Jose & Mampilly, 2012; Shuck et al., 2014). Rothmann and Welsch (2013) confirmed that employees who perceived the organization as supportive experienced and felt an obligation to reciprocate by assisting the organization to achieve its objectives. This finding is in line with the principles of SET.

According to SET, relationships between persons develop over time based on mutually agreed rules (Jose & Mampilly, 2012). A frequently cited example of engagement in terms of SET is whenever employees receive resources from their employer, they reciprocate by displaying engaged behavior (Jose & Mampilly, 2012; Shuck et al., 2014). The mutually agreed rules involve a certain amount of trust on the part of the employee that both parties will honor their obligation in the exchange process (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). In addition, Wang and Hsieh (2013) asserted that the trust relationship between employee and supervisor was one of the important aspects of employee engagement. Similarly, when the trust breaks down, the cost of the relationship becomes too high, and one can expect one of the parties in the exchange process to withdraw.

Researchers confirmed that employees' perception of management's commitment influenced employees' level of engagement (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014). Therefore, employees perceiving commitment by the company or organization as beneficial, repay the gesture by showing commitment of their own in the form of engagement. Accordingly, employee perception influenced employee experience of engagement (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014). Shuck, Zigarmi, and Owen's (2015) findings highlighted the importance of employees' psychological needs as a driver for engagement. Employees made decisions about their future based on how they perceived their working environment (Shuck et al., 2015). Furthermore, Shuck et al. confirmed the complexity of engagement and that every individual's engagement experience was unique.

Effectively, one could apply SET to understand employees' decision whether to engage at work (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013; Andrew & Sofian, 2012). Based on the principles of SET, employee engagement consisted of the psychological and emotional connection between the employer and the employee (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013). Andrew and Sofian (2012) confirmed the emotional and psychological relationship between employer and employee in their study. Therefore, engagement as an action is an active decision taken by employees, based on their perception of the *organization's* level of commitment (Alfes et al., 2013; Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Ugwu et al., 2014).

Presumably, managers or leaders represent the organization as an entity since the organization is not a living organism. Zhang et al. (2014) suggested the use of the term *supervisor*, as it combines characteristics of the manager and the leader. Therefore, a more accurate statement would be that employees base their decision of active engagement on the relationship with and the commitment shown by their immediate supervisor (Alfes et al., 2013; Reissner & Pagan, 2013).

Ugwu et al. (2014) posited that employees needed to trust the *organization* before reciprocating with engagement in their work. Trust, therefore, seems to be a prerequisite for engagement in a social exchange scenario (Ugwu et al., 2014). Rees et al. (2013) posited that in organizations where high-quality social exchange relationships exist, employee engagement is higher. The social exchange relationship was dependent on the trust relationship between employees and supervisors and the quality of the employee-supervisor relationship (Rees et al., 2013).

From a social exchange perspective, the relationship between the organization and its employees serves as the reasoning behind employees' decision to engage at work (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). Wang and Hsieh (2013) confirmed employees' expectation of fair treatment resulted in improved engagement. In instances where employees perceive leaders or supervisors to withhold the truth, there was a decline in their engagement at work (Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

Reissner and Pagan (2013) established that both employee and *organization* played a role in establishing engagement within an organization. Therefore, leaders need to understand the strategies and skills required to actively engage employees at work. In fact, there seems to be a disparity between organizational commitment to establish employee engagement and employees' perception and, more specifically, their experience of engagement (Reissner & Pagan, 2013).

Researchers have called for further research into employees' perception of organizational commitment as part of the social exchange process (Alfes et al., 2013). SET relates to organizational leadership, moreover the relationship between leaders and followers (Soieb et al., 2013) in the organizational context. I addressed leadership and employee engagement in a different section in the literature review. Importantly, employees' perception of organizational commitment rather than the organizational leaders' *intention to commit*, forms the driver behind employees' decision to engage (Alfes et al., 2013). These research findings supported the assertion that cognitive and emotional engagement precede behavioral engagement.

Antecedents of engagement affect the way in which employees interpret their employer's commitment (Alfes et al., 2013; Guest, 2014). Therefore, employee perception does not relate to employer's intentions but rather to employer's actions (Alfes et al., 2013). Rai (2012) alluded to the reciprocal relationship between the employee and the leader or supervisor (representing the organization) for establishing higher levels of employee engagement. Alfes et al. (2013) found that leaders who facilitated social exchange processes established reciprocity between employees and leaders (organization) increasing the likelihood of engagement.

Wang and Hsieh (2013) found that employees perceiving their treatment as fair and feeling supported by their organizations increased their level of engagement. In instances where employees perceived to have support from co-employees and received development training, such employees reciprocated with more engaged behavior toward the organization (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). Research findings revealed a positive relationship between employee engagement and supervisor authenticity; supervisors expressed authenticity through consistency in words and actions (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Additionally, Wang and Hsieh found that when employees feel that they could trust their supervisors, they were more likely to engage in work.

A better understanding of employee engagement at the hand of SET might hold benefits to organizational leaders. Understanding the role of employees' perceptions and experiences of their work and its environment may assist managers and leaders in engaging employees at work (Shuck et al., 2014). Additionally, the application of SET in employees' perceptions and experiences might shed light on the connection between engagement and improved performance.

Shuck et al. (2014) agreed that SET is suitable for understanding employee engagement because it explained how employees experienced their relationships with coworkers and supervisor and how these experiences affected engagement levels. In contrast with SET, Shuck and Wollard (2010) argued that engagement, as a reciprocity-based process, undermines the complexity of the engagement process by ignoring the underlying psychological processes first pointed out by Kahn (1990). Shuck and Wollard asserted that employee engagement is a state of motivation rather than a "reciprocally based process" (p. 244). Applying SET as an explanatory theory for employee engagement distracted from the true value, significance, and complexity of the engagement action (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Engagement is a psychological process happening within employees and manifesting through behavior (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). SET ignores the antecedents necessary for engagement to occur (Kahn, 1990; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck & Wollard, 2010) and, therefore, does not fully explain why employees choose to engage or to disengage.

Job demands-resources model. Initially, researchers associated the job demands-resources (JD-R) model with the burnout-antithesis framework and used it to measure burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). According to Opie and Henn (2013), engagement often serves as the opposite for burnout. In 2004, Schaufeli and Bakker introduced their extended JD-R model for measuring engagement and burnout as independent and separate processes rather than direct opposite states (Brauchli, Schaufeli, Jenny, Füllemann, & Bauer, 2013; Opie & Henn, 2013).

According to the underlying principles of the JD-R model, employees experience burnout because of two separate but related processes (Opie & Henn, 2013; Saks & Gruman, 2014). These two processes are energetic and associated with job demands, leading to burnout and motivational processes related to job resources, which, in turn, lead to work engagement (De Beer et al., 2013). Job demands typically refer to aspects of the job that require physical, psychological, social, or organizational input from employees (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Job demands could result in work overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Saks & Gruman, 2014). In contrast, job resources initiated by organizations, supervisors or peers; participative leadership; and autonomy assist the employee to reach work goals (Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013; Rana et al., 2014; Saks & Gruman, 2014).

There are four *core* components of the JD-R model categorized as job characteristics and employee well-being (Brauchli et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The job characteristics category consists of job demands and job resources (Brauchli et al., 2013). The employee well-being category consists of engagement and burnout (Brauchli et al., 2013).

Research findings revealed that the availability of job resources in the form of self-efficacy and resiliency led to work engagement (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). A fundamental assumption of the JD-R model is that provision of resources results in work engagement through motivational processes (De Beer et al., 2013; Ouweneel, Le Blanc,

& Schaufeli, 2012). Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage (2014) pointed out that engaged employees performed better when they matched job demands to personal resources.

It is important to give employees autonomy and allow them the opportunity to solve work problems and challenges on their own because it leads to the development of intellectual and affective engagement (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014). Shuck et al. (2015) found that employees experiencing higher levels of autonomy, relatedness, and competence reported higher levels of engagement, in line with Kahn's conceptualization of engagement. Botha and Mostert's (2014) findings indicated a significant relationship between employees, their supervisor, and work engagement only. Contrary to Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage's (2014) findings, Botha and Mostert found no significant relationship between work engagement and job resources, such as autonomy, relationship with colleagues, and participation.

The JD-R model holds that job resources facilitate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational processes, leading to higher engagement and lower risk for burnout on the part of the employee (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012). Satisfying personal needs, such as personal development, personal growth, and autonomy, form part of an employee's intrinsic motivation related to building job resources (Ouweneel et al., 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Conversely, external motivation relates to job resources that lead to goal achievement (Ouweneel et al., 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2014). Essentially, adequate provision of job resources assists employees in dealing with the job demands (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Millar, Menger, & Rothmann, 2013). Provision of adequate job resources reduces the chance of burnout and increases the likeliness for engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014; Steger et al., 2013).

The underlying application of the JD-R model to employee engagement lies in the relationship between job resources and engagement (Rana et al., 2014). Saks and Gruman (2014) posited that a positive relation existed between job resources and work engagement. After conducting a literature review, De Beer et al. (2013) deduced that engaging South Africans and providing them with adequate resources led to increased productivity and commitment.

The provision of sufficient resources and elimination of demands resulted in engaged employees (Menguc et al., 2013; Steger et al., 2013). Hindering and challenging job demands, as distinguished by Tims, Bakker, Derks, and van Rhenen (2013), relate to employee well-being. Hindering job demands might result in demands that may prevent employees' engagement (Rana et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2013). Tims et al. suggested that hindering job demands prevent employees from achieving goals while challenging job demands leads to positively perceived outcomes. The associated outcomes of challenging job demands (e.g., personal growth) remain a positive experience for employees, despite initially putting the employee under pressure (Tims et al., 2013).

Similarly, supervisory support (i.e., job resource) in the context of the JD-R model motivates employees and, thereby, improves engagement (Botha & Mostert, 2014; Menguc et al., 2013). The relationship between employees and their supervisor was an important job resource that affected work engagement (Botha & Mostert, 2014). Therefore, employees experienced higher levels of engagement when a positive relationship existed between themselves and their supervisors, leading to performance improvements (Botha & Mostert, 2014).

Researchers that apply the JD-R model to employee engagement research focus on work engagement because of the balance between job demands and job resources. Assumptions associated with the JD-R model (Menguc et al., 2013; Steger et al., 2013) might present a suitable conceptual framework for understanding engagement at work. Leaders might use job resources, such as increasing supervisory support (Botha & Mostert, 2014) increasing autonomy, and reducing hindrances (Ouweneel et al., 2012; Saks & Gruman, 2014) as an engagement strategy framework.

Guest (2014) noted that using the JD-R model to predict levels of engagement was questionable because personality characteristics, not job demands or resources, pre-disposed some individuals to higher or lower levels of engagement. Similarly, Saks and Gruman (2014) suggested that the JD-R model provided a narrow approach to explaining employee engagement because of its application as a framework to classify job demands and resources. In the SA mining industry context, which is notoriously labor-intensive, with monotonous and routine work, and little opportunity for autonomy or self-directed work, the JD-R model may not be the best option. The SA mining methods and conditions do not lend themselves to autonomy or for deviation from the monotony and routine nature of the work. The basic assumption of the JD-R model is that with adequate resources, employees deal better with demands, leading to work engagement. The provision of sufficient resources to address demands does not guarantee engagement among employees; it merely creates an environment in which engagement among employees becomes likely and possible.

Broaden and build theory. In the early 2000s, Fredrickson introduced the Broaden and Build (B&B) theory. A core assumption of the B&B theory is that positive emotions allow people to be more open to increasing their personal resources (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). This process is a repetitive positive spiral leading to more positive emotions and, subsequently, the development of personal resources and cognitive development (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). The continuous broadening of experiences at work leads to the building of personal resources (Botha & Mostert, 2014). Therefore, employees experiencing positive emotions are likely to show increased performance because they are willing to embrace new experiences (Bakker et al., 2012).

Researchers found that positive emotions lead to improved engagement (Ouweneel et al., 2012; Shantz, Alfes, Truss, & Soane, 2013). According to the B&B theory, positive emotions expand thought-action ideas (Culbertson, Mills, & Fullagar, 2012; Lu, Wang, Lu, Du, & Bakker, 2014; Ouweneel et al., 2012). Positive emotions lead to the creation of development opportunities, achievement of goals, and formation and accumulation of resources (Culbertson et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2014; Ouweneel et al., 2012). Positive emotions include experiencing joy, interest, and contentment (Bakker et al., 2012).

Researchers conducting B&B research tend to focus on the antecedents and outcomes of work engagement (Culbertson et al., 2012; Kane-Frieder, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2013; Lu et al., 2014; Ouweneel et al., 2012; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013) rather than focusing on employee engagement. Botha and Mostert's (2014) research revealed that both employees and the organization played a role in establishing work engagement. Positive emotions influence both work and employee engagement (Botha & Mostert, 2014). Similarly, Simbula and Guglielmi (2013) posited that a relationship between engagement and outcomes exists in line with the principles of positive emotions and personal resources. In the expression of these positive emotions, which Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage (2014) referred to as *positive psychology*, may rest another possible theory for explaining employee engagement. Understanding employees' positive emotional responses to and relationship with their work may assist leaders in identifying possible strategies for improving employee engagement.

Framework for employee engagement. Shuck and Reio's (2011) framework for employee engagement evolved from Kahn's (1990) three pre-conditions for engagement. The framework for employee engagement distinguishes between the three facets of engagement, namely cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Shuck et al., 2014). Shuck et al. pointed out that the three facets of engagement are dependent on each other. That is, cognitive engagement precedes emotional engagement, which, in turn, precedes behavioral engagement.

Shuck and Reio (2011) theorized that Kahn's (1990) three conditions for engagement form the basis of cognitive engagement. Shuck and Reio (2014) noted that cognitive engagement depended on the outcome of an employee's appraisal of meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources. Therefore, an employee needed a positive appraisal to satisfy the psychological conditions needed for cognitive engagement (Shuck et al., 2014). Shuck et al. noted that repeated failure to engage might cause an employee to disengage altogether, resulting in resignation, which is the ultimate form of disengagement.

According to Shuck and Rose (2013), emotional engagement is a function of employees' willingness to invest themselves in their work and its environment. Emotional engagement follows cognitive engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2014) and involves the investment of "personal resources such as pride, trust, and knowledge" (Shuck & Reio, 2014, p. 47). Employees are not willing to invest themselves in their work if they do not experience meaning, safety, and availability of resources at work (Zhang et al., 2014). While the decision whether to engage at work remains with the employee, this facet does not involve the physical manifestation of engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Supervisors more readily achieve emotional engagement with cognitively engaged employees (Zhang et al., 2014). It is worth noting that emotional engagement shapes an individual's behavioral engagement, the third facet of engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Behavioral engagement is visually observable and only manifests itself when employees engage on a cognitive and emotional level (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Behavioral engagement manifests through a physically observable action referred to as *discretionary effort* (Shuck & Reio, 2011), an action some researchers associate with improved performance and productivity (Alfes et al., 2013; Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015; Shuck & Herd, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2014). Employees exhibiting discretionary effort are willing to go the extra mile, showing an emotional and intellectual commitment, despite having no formal requirement or obligation (Hess, 2014; Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013; Onyishi & Ogbodo, 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2011). When applying discretionary effort, employees engage in activities that fall outside their specified job (Francis, Ramhony, Reddington, & Staines, 2013) to ensure the achievement of organizational goals.

Shuck and Reio's (2011) framework for employee engagement applies to this study because these researchers apply the framework to describe the process necessary for achieving employee engagement. A better understanding of the process of employee engagement will assist in the understanding of the strategies and skills leaders need (Rees et al., 2013) in SA mining companies. The purpose of Shuck et al.'s (2014) research was to elaborate on Shuck and Reio's framework of engagement. I anticipate Shuck and Reio's three facets of engagement to form the foundation for any useful and efficient strategy or set of guidelines that may assist mining leaders in the development of employee engagement initiatives.

I will explore the phenomenon of employee engagement as experienced by leaders in the SA mining industry, using Shuck and Reio's (2011) framework for engagement as an underlying and guiding framework. Gaining a better understanding of the way leaders can foster the various facets of engagement (Shuck & Rose, 2013) will assist mining companies in developing and maintaining a more engaged workforce. The outcomes of an engaged workforce include more satisfied and fulfilled employees and an overall improvement in productivity (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015).

Employee Engagement

In the early 1960s, Goffman first referenced engagement in an employee and work context with his work on role theory. The next prominent and well-cited reference is Kahn's definition of personal and work engagement in 1990. Kahn (1990) referred to personal engagement rather than employee engagement. Since Kahn's work, various researchers have explored the topic in varying levels of detail and different fields of business (Kim et al., 2013). Fields included are organizational development, human resource management, human resource development, and general business (Kim et al., 2013).

According to Kumar and Sia (2012), there are varying degrees of engagement consisting of engaged, unengaged, and disengaged. Engaged employees are passionate about their organization and work hard toward achieving organizational objectives (Anitha, 2014; Kumar & Sia, 2012). Unengaged employees continue to go to work and, despite being unhappy at work, they are indifferent to the organization (Anitha, 2014; Kumar & Sia, 2012). Disengaged employees actively display their unhappiness at work, often to the detriment of their colleagues and the organization (Anitha, 2014; Kumar & Sia, 2012). The underlying cause of disengagement is important because employees' disengagement might be a justified response to unfair working conditions or demands (Valentin, 2014). Therefore, leaders need to understand the cause of the disengagement if they intend to address the problem rather than the symptom.

Similarly, some researchers suggested measuring engagement on a continuum, where employees can range from engaged to actively disengaged (Griffiths & Karanika-

Murray, 2012; Valentin, 2014). Disengagement unfolds in stages; cognitive, emotional, and physical or behavioral components are the primary causes of disengagement of employees (Wollard, 2011). HRD professionals are responsible for contextualizing engagement and disengagement because there is no universal solution to developing engagement (Wollard, 2011).

Contrasting to the potential benefits of employee engagement for both the employee and the organization is the potential unintended consequences of employee engagement in the form of over-engagement (Banihani, Lewis, & Syed, 2013; Valentin, 2014). Over-engagement may manifest itself as over involvement at work, leading to conflict between work and home life and a reduction in flexibility (Karatepe, 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012; Valentin, 2014). Extended over-engagement leads to the development of workaholism (Griffiths & Karanika-Murry, 2012). In contrast with actively engaged employees, workaholics do not enjoy their work (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014). Truss et al. (2013) noted that employees might experience high engagement negatively, particularly when it causes an imbalance between work and personal life. In support of the distinction between workaholism and active engagement, Shimazu, Schaufeli, Kubota, and Kawakami (2012) pointed out that an irresistible, obsessive inner drive motivates workaholics. In contrast, intrinsic drivers motivate actively engaged employees (Shimazu et al., 2012).

Saks and Gruman (2014) posited that there are several concerns about the construct of employee engagement. These concerns are that there is not (a) one accepted definition of employee engagement, (b) one agreed measure of employee engagement, and (c) one accepted theory for employee engagement. Researchers agree on the existence of an overlap between employee engagement and other related constructs, such as organizational citizenship behavior (Alfes et al., 2013; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013; Soieb et al., 2013; Wang & Hsieh, 2013) and job satisfaction (Alfes et al., 2013, Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014; Shuck et al., 2013; Yalabik, Popaitoon, Chowne, & Rayton, 2013).

Some researchers question the notion that employee engagement is a construct in its own right (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013) due to an overlap with other popular constructs, such as organizational citizen behavior (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Robertson et al., 2012; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013; Valentin, 2014), organizational commitment (Anitha, 2014; Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Robertson et al., 2012; Shuck et al., 2013; Valentin, 2014), job involvement (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Shuck et al., 2013), job satisfaction (Anitha, 2014; Shuck et al., 2013), organizational outcomes (Robertson et al., 2012) and motivation (Valentin, 2014). Swarnalatha and Prasanna (2013) pointed out that there is no exact match between definitions for employee engagement and related constructs, supporting the notion that employee engagement is, in fact, a construct in its own right. In other instances, research findings clearly distinguish between the employee engagement construct and that of individual factors and outcomes of engagement (Andrew & Sofian, 2012). Andrew and Sofian (2012) identified employee communication, development, and co-employee support as individual factors that drive employee engagement, manifesting in the form of job and organization engagement. The execution of these factors drives specific outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organization commitment, intention to resign, and organizational citizen behavior (Andrew & Sofian, 2012).

Carasco-Saul, Kim, and Kim (2015) posited that researchers often used the terms employee engagement, personal engagement, role engagement, work engagement, and job engagement interchangeably. Most often in the literature, researchers specifically use the terms work engagement and employee engagement interchangeably (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015; Kim et al., 2013). Kanten and Sadullah (2012) used the two terms interchangeably but concluded that work engagement resulted in engaged employees embracing goals that aligned with the goals of the organization. Kahn (1990) conceptualized job and organization engagement as dominant roles of employee engagement.

Kaliannan and Adjovu (2015) distinguished between employee engagement and work engagement. These researchers defined work engagement as focusing on motivation and work-related well-being with a particular emphasis on the relationship between employees and work outcomes (Kim et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014). Conversely, employee engagement referred to organizational outcomes and the relationship between employees and their organizational role, jobs, or the organization (Kim et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2014). Yalabik et al. (2013) posited that in the academic literature work engagement was the most discussed and empirically validated form of engagement.

Saks and Gruman (2014) highlighted the importance of distinguishing between the different types of engagement to avoid possible contextual confusion. For instance, employee engagement antecedents and consequences are likely to differ from work engagement antecedents and consequences. These differences between types of engagement and its respective antecedents and consequences imply that the strategies and skills leaders need for engaging employees might be dependent on the type of engagement pursued by organizations (Saks & Gruman, 2014). Yalabik et al. (2013) found that job satisfaction and affective commitment shaped work engagement, indicating that job satisfaction and affective commitment were antecedents of work engagement.

The different *types* of engagement are not the same as the various *facets* of engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2014). The distinction between types and facets of engagement is important, particularly given the confusion over establishing a single definition of employee engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2014). Cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement are all facets of engagement (Shuck & Reio, 2011). Andrew and Sofian (2012) reviewed different types of engagement including employee engagement, job engagement, and organization engagement. In fact, Andrew and Sofian distinguished specifically between job engagement and organization engagement, both commonly referred to as employee engagement. Similarly, Guest (2014) pointed out the differences between work engagement and organizational engagement. While the main outcome of work engagement is employee well-being, the main outcome of organizational engagement is improving organizational performance (Guest, 2014).

Some researchers support the notion that employee engagement relates directly to business outcomes (Robertson et al., 2014). Therefore, employee engagement is closely associated with the many business or organizational benefits it brings, such as improved performance and increased output, productivity, and competitiveness (Anitha, 2014; Claxton, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Shuck & Reio, 2014). An alternative and opposing view on the employee engagement construct is that of Shuck and Rose's (2013), which holds that there should be a mutually beneficial relationship between the employer and the employee.

Organizational leaders investing in their employees by engaging them will experience the organizational benefits associated with engaged employees (Shuck & Rose, 2013; Valentin, 2014). Guest (2014) noted that one of the concerns of employee engagement is employees' reluctance to engage. Another concern of employee engagement arises when organizations drive engagement for the sake of improved performance, thereby ignoring the personal needs of the employee (Guest, 2014).

Guest (2014) suggested that organizational leaders base engagement initiatives on principles of reciprocity, such that the organization meets the needs of the employee. The basic assumptions of SET hold that when the organization offered the employee something positive, the employee feels obliged to reciprocate through engagement at the workplace, leading to improved organizational performance (Guest, 2014). Essentially, organizations afford employees the opportunity to benefit from what the employee perceives as beneficial and not what the organization considers beneficial for the employee (Guest, 2014). This notion connects with establishing meaningfulness, safety, and availability at work through the employees' voices (Guest, 2014).

A business-accepted definition for the employee engagement construct remains elusive, as it is evident from the various proposed and in-use definitions in research and practice (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Ludwig & Frazier, 2012; Robertson et al., 2012; Shuck & Reio, 2011; Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). A further complication to pinning a universally accepted definition to employee engagement is the fact that researchers study employee engagement in different contexts (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Robertson et al., 2012). The engagement construct is highly dependent on context; therefore, it makes sense to define employee engagement in terms of the nature of the study or research (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015).

Despite the considerable difficulty in finding one acceptable definition of employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2014), it is worthwhile considering popular definitions. Kahn's (1990) definition of employee engagement as a multifaceted or multidimensional construct remains a popular one (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014; Rai, 2012). Kahn defined personal engagement as "harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performance" (p. 694). Another popular and frequently cited definition is that of Schaufeli et al. (2002). They defined engagement as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind … characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (p. 74). Saks and Gruman (2014) suggested that Kahn's definition of engagement is a more comprehensive and inclusive one than that offered by Schaufeli et al. because the latter was similar to the definition of burnout.

It is important to note the definitions of vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to the high levels of energy and motivation employees experience about investing themselves in their work (Ouweneel et al., 2012). Dedication relates to feelings experienced, such as pride and commitment toward work (Ouweneel et al., 2012). Lastly, absorption refers to how immersed employees are in their work (Ouweneel et al., 2013).

Shuck and Wollard (2010) provided a broader definition of employee engagement, arguing that their definition satisfies the requirements of both scholars and practitioners. They defined employee engagement definition as “the process of positively motivating employees cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally toward fulfilling organizational outcomes” (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 103). Shuck and Wollard’s definition aligns with Kaliannan and Adjovu’s (2015) suggestion that researchers should define employee engagement in terms of the nature of their research.

The relationship between employee engagement antecedents and consequences is a structural relationship (Kim et al., 2013). Researchers identified antecedents as job and personal resources while consequences are performance and employees’ intention to resign (Kim et al, 2013). In the past, researchers and practitioners considered engagement to be an outcome in itself and, as such, little research focused specifically on outcomes of engagement (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). In more recent studies, researchers focused on the relationship between engagement and its possible outcomes (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). In their study, Rees et al. (2013) associated consequences or outcomes with the effects of engagement. Rana et al. (2014) found that three organizational outcomes related to employee engagement, including job performance, inversion of turnover intention, and organizational citizenship behavior.

Consequences or outcomes can apply to the organization and the individual in the form of improved performance and personal development, respectively (Rees et al., 2013). Shuck and Rose (2013) pointed out that “engagement, to be useful in practice, [it] must influence performance for the betterment of the organization” (p. 343). However, Shuck and Rose cautioned organizational leaders against making performance improvement the only focus of employee engagement. Kahn’s (1990) original intent with developing engagement was in the context of meaning and purpose for the employee.

Ugwu et al. (2014) confirmed the findings of other studies that employee engagement was the responsibility of both the employee and the organization through the role of the supervisor. Furthermore, Shuck and Rose (2013) proposed a mutually dependent dual responsibility between the organization and the employee to achieve employee engagement. Similarly, the distinction between two separate streams of outcome supports the notion that engagement is not an outcome in itself, rather a construct with its own sets of outcomes. The streams of outcome are the employee and the organization, respectively. Shantz et al. (2013) found evidence that performance at the individual and group level is an outcome of work engagement. Andrew and Sofian (2012) found that employee engagement mediated employees’ behavior, intentions, and attitudes toward improving performance.

Various researchers noted that there is no single strategy leading to engagement because, for engagement to be effective, there needs to be an understanding of organizational interactions (Fearon, McLaughlin, & Morris, 2013; Townsend, Wilkinson, & Burgess, 2014). Organizational interactions include leadership style, trust, and goal alignment, both on a personal and work level (Fearon et al., 2013). Additionally, employee engagement is relevant to different disciplines including HRM, HRD, organizational research, business, organizational psychology, and management (Kim et al., 2013). Each of these disciplines brings a unique perspective to employee engagement. From an HRD perspective, organizational leaders' strategies focus not only on the outcomes of engagement but also on how to create a work environment that is conducive to employees becoming engaged (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

Research findings suggested that organizational leaders base employee engagement strategies on building and maintaining a trust relationship between the employee and the supervisor (Ugwu et al., 2014). The underlying premise is that when the work environment is conducive to organizational trust, employees reciprocate with engagement at work (Ugwu et al., 2014). Findings from both developed and developing countries indicated that organizational leaders should build employee engagement strategies on organizational trust reciprocation (Ugwu et al., 2014). Shuck and Rose (2013) noted that employees voluntarily offer their engagement and, therefore, supervisors should not demand or falsely fabricate employee engagement. Another possible solution to developing a suitable strategy for employee engagement is for leaders to focus on Kahn's (1990) safety condition for engagement. Safety could serve as a strategy for engagement due to its potential through leadership to influence the work environment, thereby allowing employees the freedom and opportunity to engage at work (Xu & Thomas, 2011).

Developing employee engagement requires a certain amount of *organizational investment* on the part of the organization and its leaders (Shuck & Rose, 2013). Increasing the level of engagement may seem like a logical way to increase the outcomes of engagement (i.e., increased performance). However, finding suitable strategies is difficult because organizational leaders might expect more engagement than what they are capable of developing (Shuck & Rose, 2013). Alternatively, organizational leaders might expect more engagement relative to their level of investment made in employees (Shuck & Rose, 2013). The focus of leaders should, therefore, not be outcome based but, rather, on a combination of conditions for engagement and the facets of engagement that benefit both the organization and the employee (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

An obstacle to developing a suitable strategy is the difficulty organizational leaders experience when attempting to measure engagement (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Swarnalatha and Prasanna advised organizational leaders to develop context-specific ways to measure engagement in their organizational operating environment. Most measures do not distinguish between antecedents and outcomes of engagement, which complicates the development of focused strategies (Swarnalatha & Prasanna, 2013). Organizational leaders should distinguish between strategies focusing on aspects that lead to engagement (i.e., antecedents) and aspects that are a result of engagement (i.e., outcomes). These findings further suggest that organizational leaders must evaluate employees and their specific needs for engagement and meet these needs if such an organization desires to have an engaged workforce.

A review of the literature revealed that there are five effective employee engagement strategies (Kaliannan & Adjovu, 2015). They are (a) work environment, (b) HRM practices, (c) employee-supervisor relationship, (d) job satisfaction, and (e) organizational culture. Researchers also identified communication as an essential aspect of developing engagement among employees (Mishra, Boynton, & Mishra, 2014). Internal communication, in particular, is an important part of building a relationship between the employer and the employee (Mishra et al., 2014). Shuck and Reio (2014) added to these strategies (a) work-life balance and (b) meaningful work or intrinsic motivators. This collection of strategies discussed above supports the idea that there is no single universal strategy for employee engagement. The underlying principles of these strategies highlight the dual responsibility for engagement on the part of the employee and the organization represented by the supervisor (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Chalofsky and Krishna (2009) investigated the role of deep intrinsic motivation, referred to as meaningfulness in employee engagement in the organizational context. This research study aligned with the original intention of Kahn’s (1990) work around personal engagement. To this extent, meaning at work involves both commitment and engagement on the part of the employee (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). Similarly, research on the topic of employee engagement must consider the potential dependency of the two constructs upon one another, particularly in the context of organizational success. With this in mind, Chalofsky and Krishna considered commitment and meaningfulness as tools that practitioners could use to develop strategies to promote the development of employee engagement in the organizational context.

Employee Engagement and Leadership

Leadership, defined as a process, happens between a leader and followers, placing the leader at the center of the process of influencing followers to achieve a common goal (Ashford & DeRue, 2012; Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Researchers established the role of organizational leaders in increasing employee engagement as an important one (Alfes et al., 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012; Soieb et al., 2013). An accepted definition of a leader is someone influencing followers to achieve common goals (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). Gillam and Siriwardena (2013) distinguished between a leader and a manager, pointing out that the two concepts are not synonymous. A manager handles the creation of order and consistency while a leader handles effecting change and motivating followers to achieve organizational goals (Gillam & Siriwardena, 2013). Zhang et al. (2014) suggested the use of the term supervisor as it combines characteristics of the manager and the leader. Accepting that leaders have the ability to influence employees' engagement by shaping the work environment (Breevaart, Bakker, Hetland, Demetrouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014; Shuck & Herd, 2012), the natural question that follows relates to the type of leadership that most effectively engages employees at work (Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Shuck and Herd (2012) noted that no single leadership style applies to all contexts because each leadership style has its advantages and limitations. Interestingly, Xu and Thomas (2011) asserted that when a leader creates an environment that supports the employee and allows the employee to feel safe, such a leader creates an opportunity for an employee to feel engaged. Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage (2014) found that the manager's approach to facilitating engagement in some instances differed depending on the economic success of the organization. Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage based their findings on the experiences of a group of participants from an economically successful organization when compared to the experiences of groups of participants from two economically strained organizations. These findings suggested that managers showed less belief in the value of engagement when economic conditions were unfavorable (Keemble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014).

There is a variety of leadership approaches that lead to employee engagement (Xu & Thomas, 2011). Over time, different styles of leadership emerged, including transactional (Breevaart et al., 2014; McLaggan et al., 2013), leader-member exchange (Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014; Hill, Kang, & Seo, 2014), and transformational (Breevaart et al., 2014; McLaggan et al., 2013). Including a comprehensive discussion of all the different leadership styles is beyond the scope of this study. Saks and Gruman (2014) posited that specific leadership styles, such as transformational and empowering leadership, combined with job resources and demands form antecedents of engagement because they influenced how employees experienced safety at work. Oswick (2015) cautioned readers to guard against a simplistic assumption of a direct causal relationship between leadership style and employee engagement.

Oswick (2015) further noted that the situational context influenced this causal relationship between leadership style and employee engagement. Oswick suggested that leaders considered employee engagement as something to enable rather than something to manage directly. Therefore, employees decide to engage or disengage, and leaders cannot demand employee engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012; Shuck & Rose, 2013). Similarly, employees decide to offer engagement as part of a reciprocal process (Oswick, 2015; Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Various researchers studied the relationship between leadership styles and engagement (Carasco-Saul et al., 2013; Soieb et al., 2013). Zhang et al. (2014) provided an alternative perspective on the leadership construct related to employee engagement when they analyzed the relationship between four leadership paradigms and employee engagement. The four leadership paradigms are classical, transactional, visionary, and organic (Zhang et al., 2014). These paradigms allow researchers to categorize leadership styles (Zhang et al., 2014). Researchers associate the classic paradigm with instructive autocratic leadership and the transactional paradigm with transactional leadership, based on a transaction between leader and follower. They associate the visionary paradigm with transformational leadership and the organic paradigm with various leaders within a single group (Zhang et al., 2014).

Rose, Shuck, Twyford, and Bergman (2015) confirmed that leadership style influenced the engagement levels of employees. While researchers found a negative relationship between classical and transactional leadership paradigms and employee engagement, they found a positive relationship between visionary and organic leadership paradigms and employee engagement (Soieb et al., 2013). Bakker and Xanthopoulou’s (2013) findings indicated that subordinates considered their engaged leaders to be charismatic, which implied that engaged leaders have a better chance of engaging followers. In a different study, Rothman and Welsch (2013) found that leaders considering both antecedents and psychological conditions of engagement might be more successful in establishing employee engagement amongst followers.

Transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is the exchange of task completion by followers for a reward by leaders (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013). Leaders with a transactional leadership style focus on the exchange relationship between the leaders and followers, where both parties pursue their respective interests (Strom, Sears, & Kelly, 2014). A mutual understanding exists where employees provide required performance in exchange for financial gain (Strom et al., 2014). Leaders practicing a transactional leadership style use *contingent reward* and *management by exception* to achieve goals (Breevaart et al., 2014). The use of contingent reward entails leaders rewarding followers once followers achieve goals (Breevaart et al., 2014). Therefore, the contingent reward serves as a motivator for followers to achieve organizational goals (Breevaart et al., 2014). When leaders manage by exception, they impose certain rules to prevent unwanted outcomes (Breevaart et al., 2014). Therefore, a leader's power develops because of hierarchy and position (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013) and not due to visionary leadership. Zhang et al. (2014) found that leaders practicing a transactional leadership style did not have higher levels of employee engagement amongst followers. Zhang et al. attributed this finding, consistent with existing literature, to the nature of transactional leadership, which relies on the exchange of task completion for a reward.

Leader-member exchange (LMX). In this type of leadership style, leaders focus on the relationship between themselves and their respective followers that develop during the interactions between the leader and the follower (Hill et al., 2014; O'Donnel, Yukl, & Taber, 2012). Leaders develop individual and unique relationships with their respective followers (O'Donnel et al., 2012). Characteristics of a high-quality LMX relationship between a leader and followers are trust, personal attention, and supervisory support (Hill et al., 2014). Similarly, a low-quality LMX relationship between a leader and the followers exhibits less trust and treatment in accordance with the employment contract only (Hill et al., 2014).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leaders' power develops from the creation of an understanding of goals, sharing a common vision, and building a trust relationship with followers (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013). The four characteristics of transformational leadership are (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Leaders displaying these four characteristics serve as role models to followers, inspiring and influencing them to improve continually their work and personal lives (Kopperud, Martinsen, & Humborstad, 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Transformational leaders develop and communicate a vision that motivates and inspires followers to strive beyond simple organizational goals (Breevaart et al., 2014; Kopperud et al., 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Breevaart et al. (2014) pointed out that idealized influence allows followers to associate with leaders, building a trust relationship with mutual respect. Shuck and Herd (2012) suggested that idealized influence through relational identification between follower and leader increased cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. Through inspirational motivation, leaders influence emotional engagement because they believe in followers' ability to achieve their vision and goals, despite these being challenging in nature (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Leaders practicing transformational leadership also recognize that each follower is unique and, therefore, requires an individualized approach (Breevaart et al., 2014; Kopperud et al., 2013).

Transformational leaders invest in followers by understanding and appropriately responding to the needs and ambitions of each follower (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Individualized consideration plays a crucial role in the development and maintenance of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012). By believing in intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders require followers to take an active role in problem-solving processes by challenging conventional thinking (Breevaart et al., 2014; Shuck & Herd, 2012). The intellectual stimulation aspect of transformational leadership relates specifically to cognitive engagement, as it requires followers to apply their intellect to make sense of challenges and problems and, subsequently, solving such challenges and problems (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Shuck and Herd (2012) suggested using transformational leadership theory to conceptualize behavioral engagement. Shuck and Herd proposed a conceptual relationship exist between transformational leadership behavior and employee engagement development in organizations.

Leadership and engagement. Ugwu et al. (2014) posited that engagement replaced control in the contemporary organization, which requires leaders to focus on strategies to achieve engagement. Employee engagement requires more than just leadership by position; it requires leaders to take a sincere and authentic interest in understanding the requirements of employee engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Similarly, employees perceiving their leaders as supportive and sincere, reciprocate with engagement at work (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Kahn (1990) identified meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources as the three psychological conditions leaders need to meet to engage employees. Leaders need this understanding of employee engagement to ensure the development of organizational strategies cognizant of the organization's future (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Understanding employee engagement is important because of the relationship between performance and improved competitiveness, as discussed by Shuck and Herd (2012).

Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) noted that no leader uses only one leadership style in daily activities. Following a review of 20 articles, Carasco-Saul et al. pointed out that researchers focused on a single leadership style and its relationship to engagement only. This practice constituted a limitation to findings because none of the researchers studied the relationship between a mixed leadership style and engagement. Researchers accept that leaders may have a dominant leadership style (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). However, everyday leadership requires leaders to adapt their leadership style to situational requirements (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Shuck & Herd). Interestingly, most of the articles Carasco-Saul et al. reviewed consistently found a significant direct or mediated correlation between leadership style and employees' work engagement. Carasco-Saul et al. cautioned and reminded readers that the findings of reviewed articles were narrowly focused and inconclusive due to the lack of longitudinal studies to confirm these findings.

The role of leadership behavior in employee engagement requires further investigation (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Shuck and Herd's (2012) proposed conceptual model combined aspects of transactional leadership, the emotional intelligence of leaders, and transformational leadership to improve employee engagement levels. This model pointed to the importance of leadership behavior, as opposed to a particular leadership style, when considering employee engagement in the organizational context. Xu and Thomas (2011) found that the association between leader behavior and engagement related to specific leadership behaviors, such as clarifying expectations for performance and providing a shared vision and goal. These behaviors relate to the idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which are characteristic of transformational leadership (Xu & Thomas, 2011).

The nature of transformational leadership implies that leaders practicing this type of leadership are best equipped to increase an employee's level of engagement at work (Soieb et al., 2013). Followers perceive transformational leaders as supportive of organizational goals rather than power figures pursuing their self-interests (Tse, Huang, & Lam, 2013; Zhu, Newman, Miao, & Hooke, 2012). In their study, Zhang et al. (2014) found that transformational leadership resulted in higher employee engagement because of the employee engagement antecedents associated with transformational leadership. These antecedents include: (a) expansive communication, (b) trust and integrity, (c) a rich and involving job, (d) highly effective and supportive direct supervisors, (e) high career advancement opportunities, (f) high contribution to organizational success, (g) high pride in the organization, and (h) supportive colleagues (Zhang et al., 2014). Another possible explanation is that the outcomes of transformational leadership are conducive to higher levels of employee engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Therefore, transformational leadership links to behavioral engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) found a positive relationship exists between transformational leadership and employee engagement on an individual level.

Researchers suggested that supervisors consider leader behavior rather than leadership style when focusing on employee engagement (Tuckey et al., 2012). Tuckey et al. investigated the impact of leader behavior on employee engagement with a specific focus on empowering leadership. In contrast, other researchers found that a gap remains in understanding which leader behaviors enhance levels of engagement and recommended that researchers continue investigations (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Shuck & Herd, 2012; Soieb et al., 2013). Vincent-Hoper, Muser, and Janneck (2012) found that a need exists for additional longitudinal research to substantiate a causal relationship between leader behavior and employee outcomes.

Through their research, Shuck and Herd (2012) drew a conceptual relationship between leadership behavior and improved employee engagement. Shuck and Herd asserted that the engagement process starts with engaged leaders who are aware of the needs and requirements of their followers. Therefore, leaders must understand how their words and actions affect employees' engagement (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Furthermore, high levels of engagement occur when leaders provide a work environment that is conducive to employee engagement (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Additionally, Oc and Bashshur (2013) cautioned that followers could also affect leader behavior, suggesting there is a fine balance between the effects of leader behavior and employee engagement. Leadership behaviors do not occur in isolation; they are context dependent (Hechanova & Cementina-Olpoc, 2013; Nübold, Muck, & Maier, 2013). Researchers confirmed the need for additional research on the relationship between leader behavior and its impact on followers' engagement (Nübold et al., 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012).

Transition

In this section, I introduced the business problem and provided context for the study. The section included the problem statement and the purpose statement as well as a discussion of the nature of this study, the research and interview questions, the conceptual framework underpinning this study, and the contribution the research makes toward social change and improvement in business practices. Provision of operational definitions pertinent to the study as well as the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study provided context to the study. The information in the literature review section included a comparison and contrasting of employee engagement theories and provided a brief history of the development of the employee engagement construct, including current thinking and gaps in research. Lastly, discussing the role of leadership in employee engagement provided a conclusion for the literature review. Section 2 contains a restatement the purpose of the study, a discussion of the role of the researcher, and a description of the participants. Other topics included in Section 2 are the research methodology and design, population and sampling, ethical matters, and data collection, organization, and analysis. Lastly, I identified and discussed strategies for increasing reliability and validity. In Section 3, I will discuss the findings of the research study as well as the applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, and the reflections and conclusion.

Section 2: The Project

An organization's employee engagement levels affect organizational productivity and competitiveness (Shuck & Rose, 2013). The purpose of conducting this qualitative case study was to explore the strategies that SA mining leaders use to engage employees. I purposively selected participants based on their years of experience working in the mining industry. I begin Section 2 with a restatement of the purpose statement. This is followed by a discussion of my role in the research process and an overview of my participants. Included in this section are the research methodology, research design, population and sampling, participants, ethical matters, data collection method, data organization technique, data analysis, and reliability and validity of the research.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that SA mining industry leaders use to engage employees. The target population consisted of four leaders and nine employees with successful employee engagement strategies at a typical gold mine in SA's Gauteng province. By creating a work environment that is conducive to employee engagement, mining leaders might assist in bringing about social change through helping employees to improve their personal well-being, living conditions, and maintaining a balance between work and personal lives.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes the research instrument (Granot, Brashear, & Motta, 2012). Researchers conducting case study research collect a variety of data using interviews, observation, and document analysis (Petty et al., 2012b). In my role as the researcher, I served as the research instrument by personally conducting semistructured face-to-face interviews and a focus group interview with participants as well as reviewing relevant documents. Researchers can collect qualitative data by conducting interviews with participants, particularly if the aim is to understand the meaning that participants attach to a phenomenon (Granot et al., 2012). The researcher pays particular attention to the spoken words participants use when describing a phenomenon under study to provide a contextually appropriate account of the underlying meaning (Pettigrew, 2013).

I conducted this study at my workplace. Unluer (2012) highlighted the importance of researchers clarifying their research roles, especially in the case where the researcher is an *insider-researcher.* An advantage of conducting insider-research is that the researcher already has an understanding of the organizational context (Unluer, 2012). Conducting insider-research also has disadvantages, such as role confusion and loss of objectivity (McDermid, Peters, Jackson, & Daly, 2014; Unluer, 2012). Therefore, to ensure credible research, it is critical that insider-researchers address both the advantages and disadvantages of using this approach (Unluer, 2012).

McDermid et al. (2014) suggested that conducting research that adheres to ethical requirements mitigates the possible risks of conducting research in one's workplace. There is a professional relationship between the prospective study participants and myself. Additionally, the risk of potential exploitation due to similar roles and responsibilities (McDermid et al., 2014) was minimal due to differing roles and responsibilities. Establishing a working relationship with the participants is critical to qualitative research (Eide & Kahn, 2008). I have worked in the mining industry for the past 16 years in various management roles. At the time of the study, I held a managerial position responsible for organizational development, an advisory role while serving as a *care parent* for a small group of employees.

During the data collection process, it is important that researchers explicitly state their underlying assumptions (Greenwood, 2012). Researchers' inability to identify and acknowledge their research assumptions are indicative of a lack of competence and integrity, and might cause readers to doubt the ethicality of the study (Greenwood, 2012). Ethical considerations that researchers should take into account when conducting social research are readily available in the form of guidelines, codes, and regulations enforced by professional associations and review boards (Crockett, Downey, Firat, Ozanne, & Pettigrew, 2013; Hammersley, 2014).

Researchers are under a moral obligation to conduct their research in an ethical manner (Eide & Kahn, 2008) and in line with the guidelines provided by the Belmont Report protocol (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). The three basic ethical principles of research involving humans are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Researchers honoring the respect for persons principle acknowledge participants' autonomy; they must also recognize that some participants may have diminished autonomy and should act accordingly (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Under the beneficence principle, researchers undertake to bring no harm to participants while maximizing benefits (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Applying the justice principle requires researchers to treat participants fairly in terms of potential benefits and burdens brought about by the research (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.).

The Belmont Report protocol also provides researchers with information on the application of ethical principles. This application of principles relates to the securement of informed consent, assessment of risks and benefits, and selection of subjects. Most notable here, the section on informed consent revolves around the disclosure of information, the comprehension of such information, and the voluntariness of participation (Crockett et al., 2013; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). It was my responsibility to conform to (a) the ethical principles of the Belmont Report protocol, (b) requirements of research partners' Institutional Review Board (IRB), and (c) additional ethical requirements of the participating organization. I only commenced with the research study after obtaining permission from the IRB. Explaining the informed consent principle to participants and obtaining participants' signed consent forms before conducting my research was one way of ensuring the ethicality of the research study. Additionally, I treated all participants fairly, reminded participants that participation was voluntary, allowed participants to withdraw at any stage of the study, and ensured confidentiality of information.

Avoiding bias in the research process is difficult (Malone, Nichol, & Tracey, 2014) because researchers may be inclined to favor evidence supporting their underlying beliefs (Kaptchuk, 2003). Confirmation bias occurs when researchers favor evidence that supports their underlying beliefs over evidence contrary to their underlying beliefs

(Kaptchuk, 2003). Malone et al. (2014) warned researchers to guard against introducing another form of bias in an attempt to eliminate a specific bias. To avoid bias, researchers often include member checking in their research design (Elo et al., 2014; Killawi et al., 2014; Reilly, 2013; Whiteley, 2012). Using member checking affords participants an opportunity to review the researcher's descriptions of the participants' experiences (Elo et al., 2014; Killawi et al., 2014; Reilly, 2013; Whiteley, 2012). I allowed participants to review and comment on their interview transcripts. By documenting my assumptions and the limitations of this study, I provide readers with information to evaluate the reliability and validity of this study.

An interview protocol includes information such as interview procedures, a script of the introduction and the conclusion, prompts for obtaining consent from participants, and interview questions and prompts (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Researchers use an interview protocol as a procedural guide (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I used an interview protocol (Appendix B) to assist and guide me through the interview process and to ensure that I consistently shared the same information with all participants.

Participants

Before researchers commence with data collection, they need to identify suitable participants (Kapoulas & Mitic, 2012; Namageyo-Funa, Brace, Christiana, Fowles, & Davies, 2014). Researchers define the eligibility criteria for participants (Hillhouse et al., 2011) to ensure alignment with the research question. Some of the challenges facing researchers are finding a suitable organization and negotiating access to the organization with the gatekeeper. Another challenge is obtaining agreement from participants to take part in the research study. Eligibility criteria for participation in studies are the parameters (e.g., age and employment status) researchers set to ensure that participants qualify for participating in a study (Strom et al., 2014). Participants are eligible if they have experience and knowledge relating to the phenomenon under investigation (Limburgh et al., 2013).

I set participant eligibility criteria based on participants' experience with employee engagement in the mining industry. Eligible participants had at least one direct report, possessed at least 2 years of experience with employee engagement, and represented different leadership levels in the organization. I purposively identified participants for this study from the middle to senior level leadership group (i.e., 150 employees) of a gold mining company in SA's Gauteng Province. These participants were appropriate for this study because of their collective range of experience and expertise working with employees in the mining industry.

Gaining access to participants and organizations for research is a challenge (Kapoulas & Mitic, 2012). To overcome this challenge, Namageyo-Funa et al. (2014) suggested researchers consider collaborating with gatekeepers, using additional recruitment tools, and understanding the target population. Reybold, Lammert, and Stribling (2012) posited that accessing participants revealed more than just the researcher's assumptions but also reflected the milieu in which the researcher chose to conduct his or her research. Working with gatekeepers was a suitable strategy for this study because I discussed my intention to conduct the study at the mining operation with members of the company's executive team.

Researchers must also gain the trust and acceptance of participants (Al-Yateem, 2012). Researchers establish rapport with participants to collect rich data (Kennedy-Macfoy, 2013). Prolonged engagement with participants is one strategy for gaining participants' trust and building rapport (Al-Yateem, 2012). Conducting research at the researcher's workplace could be advantageous because of pre-existing familiarity and rapport between the researcher and the participants (McDermid et al., 2014). I gained the trust and acceptance of participants through prolonged engagement with them, which assisted in the collection of rich data.

Researchers ensure alignment between the overarching research question and participants by selecting an appropriate research design (Gill, 2014). Participant eligibility criteria should result in the selection of participants that can contribute to answering the overarching research question (Sousa, 2014). Selecting eligible participants that have experience and knowledge relating to the phenomenon under investigation (Limburgh et al., 2013) assisted me to maintain alignment between participants and the research question.

Research Method and Design

Researchers base their decision on a suitable research method and design on the nature of the research question (Petty et al., 2012a; Venkatesh et al., 2013). Research methods include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The researcher's choice of research method will inform the decision for research design. I will discuss the reasoning behind the research method and design that I selected for this research study below.

Research Method

I selected a qualitative research method for this study. The researcher should consider the nature of the research question when deciding on a suitable research method (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Qualitative research is an appropriate research method for researchers exploring new fields of study because researchers collect open-ended and emerging data that they develop into themes (Campbell, 2014). Additionally, conducting qualitative research allows researchers to explore the experiences of different participants through thick descriptions of participants' experiences (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012b). Jenkins and Delbridge (2013), Shuck et al. (2014) and Truss et al. (2013) explored employee engagement in different workplace contexts. The work of these authors supported the use of a qualitative research method for exploring employee engagement. Conducting qualitative research allows researchers to explore employee engagement in a real-world context rather than testing employee engagement hypotheses. Understanding the phenomenon in terms of the meaning it holds adds more value both from a business improvement and a social change perspective (Cichello, Leibbrandt, & Woolard, 2014; Krüger, 2013). In the SA mining context, the contribution to business practice stemmed from understanding employee engagement from the perspective of the meaning it held for leaders within the mining industry. The situational context of organizational research and the need to gain a better understanding of the construct in a particular organizational context (Fritz, 2014) contributed to the appropriateness of selecting a qualitative research method.

As evidenced in the literature, various researchers have conducted quantitative research on employee engagement, including the work of Jose and Mampilly (2014) and Kim et al. (2013). Conducting quantitative research related to employee engagement within the business research context was important when seeking evidence-based outcomes driving performance (Shuck & Rose, 2013). In quantitative research, researchers focus on prevalence rates, relationships, and cause-and-effect relationships; quantitative research studies are confirmatory in nature (Frels & Onwuegbuzie, 2013). However, when deciding on a research design, researchers should consider the nature of the overarching research question (Venkatesh et al., 2013). Therefore, quantitative research was not suitable for this study because the purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that mining leaders use to engage employees.

A mixed-methods research approach was not appropriate for this particular study because the quantitative design component would not assist me in answering the exploratory research questions. Mixed-methods research requires more resources to ensure that the researcher meets the requirements of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the respective methods. Mixed-methods research consists of a sequential or concurrent combination of qualitative and quantitative research, through which researchers address both exploratory (i.e., qualitative) and confirmatory (i.e., quantitative) research questions (Griensven, Moore, & Hall, 2014; Guest, 2012; Venkatesh et al., 2013).

Research Design

I chose an explorative single case research design approach for this study. Researchers can employ various strategies of inquiry as part of the qualitative research design. Strategies often used for business research include a case study, an ethnography, and a phenomenology (Petty et al., 2012b). In case study research, researchers collect a variety of data from various sources and use triangulation to achieve convergence between the different sources (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013; Yin, 2014). Data sources for case study research include interviews, observations, and document analysis (Petty et al., 2012b).

Researchers, conducting an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon based on participant experiences, conduct face-to-face semistructured interviews (Petty et al., 2012b) while semistructured group interviews or focus group interviews allow the researcher to collect a range of views from a group of 10 individuals on a specific topic (Petty et al., 2012b; Wahyuni, 2012). When conducting document review, the researcher reviews and analyzes written documents and publications pertaining to the phenomenon (Petty et al., 2012b). Additionally, De Massis and Kotlar (2014) stated that researchers used case study research because it was suitable for answering *how* and *why* questions. When studying a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context, case study research is ideal (Wahyuni, 2012). Therefore, a case study was an appropriate research design approach for this study because I collected data from mining leaders and employees through semistructured interviews, a focus group interview, and document review.

Through an ethnography, the researcher focuses on shared behavioral patterns, beliefs, and language of cultural groups (Petty et al., 2012b; Shover, 2012). In ethnographical research, the researcher spends an extended period with the cultural group as an observer or a participant (Petty et al., 2012b) collecting data from various sources such as participant observation, field notes, and interviews (Khoo, Rozaklis, & Hall, 2012; Shover, 2012). Ethnography was not an appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study because I did not intend to explore the shared behavioral patterns, beliefs, and language of mining leaders.

Through a phenomenology, the researcher investigates the universal and underlying meaning of the phenomenon under study by gaining an understanding of the individuals' lived experiences of the phenomenon (Petty et al., 2012b). Moustakas (1994) asserted that through a phenomenology, researchers focus on the description of experiences as opposed to the explanation or analysis of experiences. A phenomenology is best suited for business studies where the researcher reiteratively works through the collected data to find the essence of the participants' lived experiences and their meaning (Gill, 2014). Phenomenology was not appropriate because researchers focus on understanding the lived experiences of participants, which was not the purpose of my study because I explored strategies used by mining leaders to engage their employees.

Precise data saturation guidelines for qualitative research remain lacking (Marshal, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Therefore, researchers collect data until no new themes emerge from new data (Dworkin, 2012; Elo et al., 2014; Marshal et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Without a specific data saturation formula for qualitative research, researchers often collect data past the saturation point to ensure redundancy (Dworkin, 2012; Elo et al., 2014; Marshal et al., 2013; White, Oelke, & Freisen, 2012). Following four leader interviews and one focus group interview with nine employees, no new information emerged from the data.

Population and Sampling

When sampling purposively, researchers must have access to participants that can provide the researcher with rich data about a particular phenomenon (Farrelly & Greyser, 2012; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2013). The underlying principle of purposeful sampling is for the researcher to collect rich data and gain an understanding of the phenomenon from specifically selected participants (Palinkas et al., 2013). When researchers employ purposive sampling, they include participants that meet predetermined criteria in the study (Robinson, 2013). For this study, I used purposeful sampling to select study participants.

Guidelines for determining an adequate sample size for qualitative research remains elusive (Elo et at., 2014; Marshal et al., 2013). The sampling size associated with qualitative research is relatively small because the focus is not on the generalizability of the findings but rather an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Palinkas et al., 2013; Robinson, 2013). In a recent explorative single case study using semistructured face-to-face interviews and a focus group interview, the researcher's sample size for interviews was three participants while the focus group included six participants (Campbell, 2015). Marshal et al. (2013) pointed out that qualitative researchers should specify a minimum number of samples for a specific research study. Robinson (2013) stated that including an estimated sample size afforded researchers the flexibility to collect additional data at a later stage to ensure saturation. Theoretical and practical considerations are important influencers of sample size in qualitative studies (Robinson, 2013). Specifying the inclusion and exclusion criteria improves the sample homogeneity (Robinson, 2013).

The individuals in the sample population varied in terms of years of experience, types of qualifications, age, gender, the field of expertise, and the number of subordinates that they supervise. I interviewed four leaders and conducted a focus group interview with nine employees. I extended separate invitations to the leaders and employees for voluntary participation in this study. By interviewing four leaders and conducting a focus group interview with nine participants, I collected enough data to ensure data saturation.

Despite the frequent association between data saturation and the quality of qualitative research, precise data saturation guidelines remain lacking (Marshal et al., 2013). Researchers establish data saturation when the introduction of new participants yields no new and relevant data (Dworkin, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013). Following the face-to-face interviews with four leaders and the focus group interview with nine employees, no new information emerged. Therefore, I did not extend the interview process to include additional participants. Similarly, I did not conduct another focus group interview.

Participant eligibility criteria are the parameters researchers set to ensure that participants qualify for participation in a study (Strom et al., 2014). Participants with experience and knowledge of the phenomenon are eligible to participate (Limburg et al., 2013). Participant selection may introduce bias in terms of the exclusion of participants based on specific criteria resulting in selection bias (Rothstein & Shoben, 2013). Consent bias occurs when selected participants refuse to consent to participation (Rothstein & Shoben, 2013). The researcher can address these types of bias by ensuring proper research design (Rothstein & Shoben, 2013).

I determined the eligibility criteria based on participants' experience with employee engagement in the mining industry. Participants were eligible if they had experience and knowledge related to the phenomenon under investigation (Limburg et al., 2013). I purposively selected the participants for this study from the middle-to-senior level leadership group (150 employees) of a gold mining company in SA's Gauteng Province. These participants were appropriate for this study because of their collective range of experience, expertise working with employees in the mining industry, diverse demographical characteristics, and roles fulfilled (managers and employees).

A suitable interview setting is one that is available, comfortable, and accessible while providing privacy and without the risk of interruption (McDermid et al., 2014). The choice of the interview setting influences the data collected by the researcher in terms of the content shared and the direction of the interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Vahasantanen & Saarinen, 2012). I used the boardrooms available at the mine to conduct face-to-face interviews and the focus group interviews with participants because its location provided privacy while remaining accessible and convenient for participants. The location was important because it allowed flexibility and privacy, both requirements essential for conducting a successful interview.

Ethical Research

The purpose of obtaining informed consent is to protect participants from exposure to unethical research practices (Rothstein & Shoben, 2013). Informed consent is the process through which researchers (a) provide participants with information, (b) ensure that participants comprehend such information, and (c) ensure that participants take part in the study voluntarily (Crockett et al., 2013). Aspects researchers should include as part of the information component of the informed consent are a proper description and explanation of the research procedure and purpose (US Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). Researchers must alert participants to the possible risks and benefits of the research as well as provide participants opportunities to seek additional clarification and information throughout the research process (US Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.).

Participants completed and signed the informed consent form before they participated in the study. Despite providing informed consent before commencing the study, participants still have the option to withdraw their consent at a later stage (Gupta, 2013), such as during or after an interview. Participants have the right to withdraw from a research study at any stage of the process without an obligation to provide a reason and without the fear of facing any consequences (Gupta, 2013; McDermid et al., 2014; van Wijk, 2014). Interviews or focus group interviews only began after I explained the informed consent process to participants and subsequently obtained their completed and signed consent forms.

Some researchers may opt to offer participants an incentive to participate in a study, such as a gift card (Namageyo-Funa et al., 2014). Offering participants an incentive to participate in the study may compromise the voluntariness of participation (US Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). I did not offer participants incentives for participating in the research study. Eligible participants contributed to the study by sharing their experiences about the phenomenon under investigation in its real world context.

I conducted the research ethically by respecting the three guiding principles set out in the Belmont Report Protocol, following any code of conduct prescribed by the organization, and obtaining IRB approval before commencing the study. The IRB approval number for the study is 05-25-16-0472244. The three guiding principles are respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013). Complying with the requirements of the Belmont Report includes treating participants as autonomous individuals; researchers are responsible for protecting participants from unethical research practices (Cseko & Tremaine, 2013).

Research data protection legislation brought about various best practices researchers can adopt to ensure adequate data protection during and after conducting research (Casteleyn et al., 2013). These best practices include identifying the purpose of collecting data, (b) obtaining informed consent, (c) collecting only information needed for the study, (d) using the data only for the purposes of the research study, (e) retaining the information only as long as required, and (f) keeping the information secure. I kept any data collected from participants, including the audio recordings of interviews, on a flash drive during the completion of the study and for 5 years thereafter. After the 5-year period, I will physically destroy the flash drive and any additional information. To keep participant information confidential, I assigned each participant a unique participant code, and refrained from using the organization's name or specific location. I used any personal data collected for the purpose of the research study only, and did not disclose this information to any other person.

Confidentiality refers to maintaining the information participants share with researchers secret from everyone but the researchers (Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2014). Saunders et al. (2014) asserted that anonymity is a form of confidentiality where the researcher keeps the participant's identity secret (Saunders et al., 2014). I anonymized all data to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants during the research process.

Data Collection Instruments

In the 1980s, Lincoln and Guba introduced the concept of the researcher as the primary research instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In qualitative research, researchers accept that the researcher becomes the research instrument (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). In their role as the research instrument, researchers conducting case study research collect a variety of data through interviews, observations, and document analysis (Petty et al., 2012b).

Researchers most often use semistructured interviews consisting of open-ended questions for qualitative research (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Rowley, 2012). By conducting interviews with participants, researchers gain an understanding of participants' perspective of the phenomenon under investigation (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The various types of interviews available to researchers for collecting data include structured, semistructured, and unstructured interviews (Rowley, 2012). Conducting semistructured interviews allows researchers to ask follow-up interview questions leading to the creation of interpretive context (Granot et al., 2012; Reuben & Bobat, 2014). The purpose of conducting semistructured qualitative interviews with participants is to collect data from experts of the case organization on the explored phenomenon (Wahyuni, 2012).

I used semistructured interview questions to collect data from participants purposively selected from a leadership group at a gold mine in South Africa. Researchers facilitate the collection of rich data (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012), by collecting detailed information about the target site from participants. Collecting rich data through semistructured interviews might lead to the discovery of new themes in the data (Gioia et al., 2012). Researchers using semistructured interviews utilize predetermined questions but with the option of asking participants clarifying questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Rowley, 2012). Conducting semistructured interviews with participants enabled me to ask clarifying questions during the interview and contributed to the collection of rich data.

As the primary research instrument, I collected data by conducting, recording, and transcribing semistructured face-to-face interviews and a focus group interview, using an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to direct the interview processes. During the interviews, participants answered all the questions (see Appendix B) as established in the interview guide. At the end of the interview, participants had the opportunity to give any parting thoughts on employee engagement. Asking for parting thoughts afforded participants the opportunity to disclose any thoughts or experiences of employee engagement that may not have emerged from the interview (Anyan, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Additionally, qualitative researchers, as the research instrument, play an essential role in the creation and understanding of the intricacies of qualitative research (Xu & Storr, 2012). Xu and Storr (2012) pointed out that qualitative researchers, as the research instrument, can acquire interviewing skills resulting in the collection of richer and thicker data. As a result, the researcher inevitably brings bias to the study (Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013). Researchers address this bias through practicing researcher reflexivity (McDermid et al., 2014; Peredaryenko & Krauss, 2013).

Another data collection technique often utilized by researchers is document analysis (Owen, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013; Yin, 2014). The qualitative data found in documents are in a textual, graphical, or pictorial format (Yilmaz, 2013). Using document analysis in conjunction with interviewing allows researchers to further explore the phenomenon under investigation (Owen, 2014) and improve rigor of the study because interviewing and document analysis enables the researcher to perform data triangulation (Gelderman, Semeijn, & Bruijn, 2015; Yilmaz, 2014). Researchers may analyze various documents including annual reports, financial statements, and budget justifications (Owen, 2014; Yin, 2014). Additionally, documents may be helpful in providing specific information pertaining to the case study such as the spelling of names or details of events

(Yin, 2014). I analyzed internal surveys, internal emails, Facebook posts, and management reports related to engagement strategies.

Researchers use member checking to allow participants to correct, confirm, add, and or clarify specific aspects of the data collected, thereby increasing study trustworthiness (Houghton et al., 2013; Reilly, 2013; Elo et al., 2014; Killawi et al., 2014). In member checking the researcher asks participants to review coded transcripts to verify research interpretations (Reilly, 2013). With member checking, I increased the trustworthiness of the data collected during interviews.

Additionally, recording thoughts and the decisions I made throughout the interview process enhanced the reliability and validity of the interviews. Researcher reflexivity is a process whereby a researcher reflects on thoughts and decision about the data collected (Houghton et al., 2013). Reflexivity is important because it addresses researcher's bias and transparency of the research process (Houghton et al., 2013).

Data Collection Technique

Interviewing is a widely accepted method for qualitative data collection because it enables the researcher to grasp participants' experiences (Al-Yateem, 2012; Englander, 2012; Granot et al., 2012; Petty et al. 2012a). Qualitative researchers conduct structured, unstructured, or semistructured interviews to collect data (Petty et al., 2012a). Qualitative interview questions are open-ended, allowing participants to describe the phenomenon in their own words (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Granot et al., 2012). During in-depth interviews, researchers use the overarching research question to guide the direction of the interview process, while using supporting questions to elaborate on the phenomenon

(Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). A focus group interview is a type of semistructured interview and consists of a moderator and a small group of participants (Yin, 2014). Researchers conduct focus group interviews to collect data from a group of participants (Sutton & Arnold, 2013; Yin, 2014). During focus group interviews researchers guide participation through pre-determined open-ended questions, which participants use to raise their own observations while building on or from the ideas of other participants (Sutton & Arnold, 2013).

When using semistructured interviews to collect data, researchers steer the interview process by asking predefined questions and prompting participants to elaborate on the fields of interest (Petty et al., 2012a). Conducting semistructured interviews affords researchers more flexibility regarding adapting research questions to ensure the data collection process yields rich and thick data (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Researchers normally record and transcribe interviews for analysis (Al-Yateem, 2012; Petty et al., 2012a).

Using interviewing as the data collection method holds various advantages for both participants and researchers. The use of semistructured interviews means participants can elaborate on their answers (Anyan, 2013; Doody & Noonan, 2013; McDermid et al., 2014). Similarly, researchers have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Englander, 2012; Elo et al., 2014; Petty et al. 2012a). Additionally, researchers can develop a relationship with participants and answer questions participants may have about the study (Al-Yateem, 2012; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Englander, 2012). Developing rapport with participants, affords participants the opportunity to ask researchers clarifying questions (Al-Yateem, 2012; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Englander, 2012). Conducting face-to-face interviews, allows researchers to observe participants' reaction (i.e., nonverbal communication) when responding to questions or describing their experiences with the phenomenon (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Englander, 2012; Petty et al., 2012a). Similarly, conducting a focus group interview allows the researcher to collect rich data over a short period (Sutton & Arnold, 2013).

Interviewing as a data collection method is not without disadvantages (McDermid et al., 2014). Disadvantages of interviewing affect the quality of data collected by researchers. One common disadvantage of using interviews to collect data is that participants may be uncomfortable and nervous about the idea of recording their responses (Al-Yateem, 2012; Doody & Noonan, 2013). Adding to this nervousness is the fact that participants often perceive interviews as invasive (Doody & Noonan, 2013). From researchers' perspective, a common disadvantage is that novice researchers might struggle with the interview process due to a lack of experience (Al-Yateem, 2012; Rowley, 2012). Interviewing is a time-consuming method of data collection (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Englander, 2012; Rowley, 2012). Additionally, interviewing may introduce bias into the study, when participants attempt to please the researcher or provide *pleasing* answers rather than honestly speaking about their experiences (Al-Yateem, 2013; Doody & Noonan, 2013; Rowley, 2012). Similarly, during focus group interviewing group interaction behavior and group conforming behavior may negatively impact the quality of data collected (Sutton & Arnold, 2013). Participants may feel obliged to provide an answer to a question, even when the answer is off topic (Doody &

Noonan, 2013; Rowley, 2012). Researchers' views and body language might influence participants' responses (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

Researchers use pilot interviews to test their interview protocol (Rowley, 2012; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012) and obtain feedback from participants about the overall structure and participants' experience of the interview (Condie, 2012; Sinkovics & Alfondi, 2012). Researchers apply this feedback to refine the interview protocol and improve the quality of the data collected (Condie, 2012; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Rowley (2012) indicated that researchers should conduct at least one pilot interview with a participant from the pool of eligible participants. Upon receipt of IRB approval, I conducted two pilot interviews with leader participants and one focus group interview with three employees to test the interview protocol. I used the feedback from the pilot interview to make any necessary adjustments to the interview protocol.

The purpose of member checking is to allow participants an opportunity to review their interview transcripts for correctness and accuracy (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Killawi et al., 2014; Reilly, 2013). Through the member checking process, participants have an opportunity to offer clarifying information (Reilly, 2013). Researchers use member checking to improve the credibility of data (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). Reilly (2013) warned of the pitfalls of member checking, such assuming that no comments from participants mean consent when participants may not have read the transcript at all. Another disadvantage of member checking is that participants may not know how to express disagreement with text in the transcript or participants may feel obliged to accept the transcript as correct and accurate (Reilly, 2013).

I used face-to-face, semistructured interviews to collect data from mining leaders and a focus group interview to collect data from employees. The respective interview guides for mining leaders and employees aligned with the overarching research question. Given that each participant interview was unique, the interview questions served as a guide. I recorded and transcribed all participant interviews and asked participants to review their respective coded transcripts for correctness. In addition, affording participants an opportunity to take part in member checking increased the trustworthiness of the study.

In addition to collecting interview data, document analysis served as a second source of data. There are various research methods available to researchers when collecting data including document analysis (Owen, 2014; Yilmaz, 2013; Yin, 2014). Generally, qualitative data found in documents are in a textual, graphical, or pictorial format (Yilmaz, 2013). Using document analysis in conjunction with interviewing allows researchers to develop a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Owen, 2014) and improves rigor of the study because it enables the researcher to perform data triangulation (Gelderman, Semeijn, & Bruijn, 2015; Yilmaz, 2014). Important documents that may be useful for document analysis include annual reports, financial statements, and budget justifications (Owen, 2014; Yin, 2014).

Owen (2014) warned researchers that collecting data through document analysis might be challenging because there might be a risk of encountering an interested witness that authored a document due to a specific interest. The researcher, therefore, needs to take into account the purpose for which organizations generated documents (Owen, 2014; Yin, 2014). Yin further cautioned researchers against assuming that documents portrayed an accurate recording of events because documents inevitably contain the author's perspective. Another challenge of using documents as a source of data is that in some instances it may be difficult to obtain or access relevant documents (Yin, 2014).

Advantages of using document analysis in case study research is that researchers can use documents to triangulate other data collected through interviews or observations (Gelderman et al., 2015; Yilmaz, 2014; Yin, 2014). Additionally, Yin (2014) pointed out that documents are useful sources of data for researchers because they allow researchers to discover new themes or areas that require additional research and exploration. Also, documents may be helpful in providing specific information pertaining to the case study such as the spelling of names or details of events (Yin, 2014).

I asked the appropriate individuals for access to documents with the case organization following IRB approval of the study. The document review included internal emails, internal surveys, Facebook posts, and management reports related to engagement strategies. Scanning and storing all selected case documents with other collected data facilitated the review and analysis process.

Data Organization Technique

Yin (2014) suggested that qualitative researchers create a suitable system to organize data before beginning with data analysis. Researchers that organize their data are more likely to conduct rigorous research (Yin, 2014). It is useful to compile data in an orderly way, similar to quantitative data in a database (Yin, 2014). After a researcher ordered the data, the process of establishing a consistent form begins (Yin, 2011).

I conducted semistructured, face-to-face interviews with four leaders and a focus group interview with nine employees using the respective predetermined interview questions (see Appendix B). Each participant had a unique participant code to ensure confidentiality (McDermott & Lanahan, 2012). Participant codes for leaders consisted of the letter L and a number between 1 and 4. Participant codes for employees taking part in the focus group consisted of the letters DF and a number between 1 and 9. The code DF designated discussion forum. After the pilot focus group, it emerged that participants were more comfortable with the term discussion forum as opposed to focus group. I removed all identifying information from the transcripts. Saunders et al. (2014) posited that changing participants' names, the names of others mentioned by participants, and the names of places mentioned is one way of ensuring anonymity. I transcribed each leader participant's interview and the focus group interview, removed participant identifying information, and allocated the relevant participant identification number to the relevant participant in the interview transcript.

Each interview transcript constituted a record with a unique identification number. Therefore, face-to-face interviews each constituted a separate record while the entire focus group interview (containing nine participants) constituted a separate record. Designated password-protected folders kept on an external hard drive housed the electronic transcripts, notes, and observations. The unique participant identification number reflected on all notes related to that specific participant. A unique focus group identification number similarly reflected on all relevant notes relating to the focus group interview. Data protection and safe keeping included scanning and converting paper files to pdf images, thereby ensuring data security.

All documents obtained for documentary review received a document identifier number. Converting paper documents to electronic documents by scanning was the first step toward organizing documentary data. Subsequent filing of electronic documents to a dedicated folder facilitated data organization and retrieval. Additionally, these scanned documents also contained annotated bibliographies to improve indexing and retrieval as proposed by Yin (2014).

Furthermore, I stored electronic data in the relevant folder on the external hard drive. Importing raw data from the external hard disk into a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program improved data organization. CAQDAS allows researchers to organize and analyze data more efficiently (Goble et al., 2012; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Goble et al. (2012) pointed out that although CAQDAS enhances the data analysis process, it does not replace the researcher's role in organizing and analyzing data. DeDoose is an inexpensive, cloud-based, password protected, web application for qualitative and mixed methods research that is easily accessible and intuitive to use (www.dedoose.com). I used DeDoose to import, file, and organize audio recordings of the leader and focus group interviews, leader and focus group interview transcripts, documents for review, and any relevant notes or memos. Keeping all data in a central location facilitated data retrieval and analysis.

Keeping a reflective journal assists researchers to demonstrate research process transparency (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012; Renert, Russel-Mayhew, & Arthur, 2013; Tufford & Newman, 2012) and assists researchers in the bracketing process (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Keeping a reflective journal assists researchers to record the research process and to capture thick descriptions, such as reactions to interviews or descriptions of the interview setting (Van Wijk, 2014; Nickson & Henriksen, 2014). I kept an electronic reflective journal, documenting aspects such as reactions to the interview process and setting, thoughts and ideas during documentary review, decisions about coding, and decisions about theme identification to ensure transparency.

Casteleyn, Dumez, Van Damme, and Anwar (2013) highlighted the importance of not retaining data longer than required as well as the importance of keeping the information secure. Research data protection legislation brought about various best practices researchers can adopt to ensure adequate data protection during and after conducting research (Casteleyn et al., 2013). These best practices include identifying the purpose of collecting data, (b) obtaining informed consent, (c) collecting only information needed for the study, (d) using the data only for the purposes of the research study, (e) retaining the information only as long as required, and (f) keeping the information secure. When not in use, I stored all raw data on an external hard drive, and hardcopies remained in a locked safe to restrict access. Various researchers used similar strategies to ensure secure storage throughout the research process (Cooper, Fleischer, & Cotton, 2012; Nickson & Henriksen, 2014; West, Usher, Foster, & Stewart, 2014). Additionally, Wahyuni (2012) stated researchers must consider ethical requirements for data collected during field research including storing hard copies in a locked filing cabinet and electronic copies on the researcher's password protected computer. Following the completion of the study and according to the requirements of Walden University, raw data remained locked in the safe for 5 years. After the 5 years, I will destroy the raw data by physically destroying the hard drive and shredding the hard copies.

Data Analysis

One of the characteristics of case study research is the use of multiple sources of data (Yin, 2014). Researchers conducting case study research use one of the four types of triangulation for data analysis (Yin, 2014). The four types of triangulation are data, investigator, theory, and methodological (Yin, 2014). Methodological triangulation refers to the use of at least two data collection procedures such as interviews and documentary review (Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012). By triangulating data, the researcher explores a phenomenon from different perspectives and levels such as interview data and documentary review (Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used methodological triangulation to analyze collected data. Applying methodological triangulation allows the researcher to display the richness and depth of the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process that often occurs parallel to data collection (Chenail, 2012a; Petty et al., 2012a; Petty et al., 2012b). Some of the various methods for qualitative data analysis are thematic, content, and discourse analysis (Petty et al., 2012b). Thematic analysis requires the researcher to read the interview transcripts more than once to develop a feel for the text (Petty et al., 2012b). Researchers use

CAQDAS, such as DeDoose, to assist with the classification, ordering, and analysis of data (West et al., 2014). CAQDAS also facilitates theme identification and the identification of relationships between themes (West et al., 2014).

I imported leader and focus group interview recordings, and transcripts notes, following the Interview Protocol (see Appendix A) into DeDoose. The meaningful unit analysis was the data analysis method used. A meaningful unit consists of a letter, a word, or a phrase (Chenail, 2012b). Meaningful unit analysis may be more useful than simply following a line-by-line or word-by-word analysis because the researcher identifies meaningful units irrespective of length (Chenail, 2012b). The researcher assigns labels to meaningful units of a transcript and applies or assigns these labels to all transcripts (Petty et al., 2012b). Chenail (2012b) suggested that using the *Insert Comment* function in Microsoft Word on all transcripts and notes would ensure an audit trail and improve the trustworthiness of the analysis process. The use of this feature allows researchers to identify, highlight, and tag each meaningful unit with a description that an external party could verify (Chenail, 2012b). Keeping a reflective journal during interviews is another option for researchers to capture possible themes, background information, and context for later review (McDermott & Lanahan, 2012).

The second source of data for triangulation is documents pertaining to the study organization. There are various data analysis methods available for document review data analysis (Petty et al, 2012b). These include thematic analysis and content analysis (Petty et al., 2012b; Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). I used content analysis to analyze documents relevant to the study. Using content analysis to analyze data requires the researcher to systematically classify identified codes and identifying emerging themes (Sultana, Rashid, Mohuiddin, & Mazumder, 2013). Content analysis as a data analysis approach for document analysis consists of three phases of preparation, organization, and reporting (Elo et al., 2014). After locating relevant documents and converting these documents to pdf by scanning, I imported these files into DeDoose for preparation, organization, and reporting. The preparation phase included sense making and selecting a suitable unit of analysis while the organization phase included assigning codes to the data followed by categorizing of the data.

I took notes during the interviews to provide context and background to interviews, which later assisted in forming a better understanding. It is important for researchers to engage in memo writing to keep track of reflections and thoughts while moving between analyzes of transcripts (Petty et al., 2012b). By grouping similar labels together, researchers begin to form themes from the data (Petty et al., 2012b). Researchers use concept mapping and mind maps to assist with the analysis and interpretation of data. Mapping of concepts such as themes provides researchers with a map indicating possible connections between concepts and themes (Baugh, McNallen, & Frazelle, 2014; Umoquit, Tso, Varga-Atkins, O'Brien, & Wheeldon, 2013). I used concept and mind mapping to identify key themes, illustrate connections between themes and relevant literature, and show how the themes related to the conceptual framework supporting the study. Potential themes from existing literature include meaningfulness, safety at work, availability of resources, cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, behavioral engagement, discretionary effort, and organizational investment (Kahn, 1990;

Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014; Rothmann & Welsch, 2013; Shuck & Reio, 2011; Shuck & Rose, 2013; Shuck et al., 2014; Shuck et al., 2015).

Reliability and Validity

In qualitative research, researchers establish reliability and validity by addressing Lincoln and Guba's (1985) commonly accepted criteria of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Many researchers refer to these four criteria collectively as trustworthiness (Houghton et al., 2013; Reilly, 2013). By ensuring the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, researchers address the equivalent of reliability and validity aspects of a quantitative study.

Reliability

Ensuring the dependability of a qualitative research study is comparable with ensuring reliability in a quantitative study (Houghton et al., 2013; Reilly, 2013). In qualitative research, researchers establish dependability by accurately and meticulously recording the research methodology and decision making (Houghton et al., 2013; Prion & Adamson, 2014; Reilly, 2013). There are different ways to ensure dependability including keeping a reflective diary and memos to justify and record decisions (Dierckx de Casterle, Gastmans, Bryon, & Denier, 2012; Houghton et al., 2013; Wahyuni, 2012).

Another technique researchers use to increase dependability is verifying data with CAQDAS (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Houghton et al., 2013; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Member checking, which allows participants the opportunity to verify their transcripts, is yet another tool researchers use to increase dependability (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Kilawi et al., 2014; Reilly, 2013). I ensured the dependability of this study by combining member checking, using DeDoose queries to verify the existence and recurrence of meaning units, and keeping reflective notes and memos during interviews and data analysis.

Validity

The credibility of qualitative research, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), refer to how accurately the researcher represents the truth in his or her analysis and interpretations. Researchers enhance credibility by making accurate observations and spending sufficient time with participants in the field (Houghton et al., 2013). Similar to achieving dependability, the researcher improves credibility by exercising reflexivity during the entire research process and importantly recording this reflexivity (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013).

Establishing credibility requires the researcher to perform member checking and verification of the recurrence of meaning units (Prion & Adamson, 2014). White et al. (2012) posited that the integrity of participant selection and recruitment process was key for credibility. Elo et al. (2014) confirmed the importance of proper identification and description of participants to establish credibility. Additionally, the appropriateness of the interview questions to answering the overarching research question was another consideration for establishing credibility (White et al., 2012). I defined participant eligibility as well as provided a description of the recruitment process of participants to enhance credibility. To ensure that the interview questions adequately answered the overarching research question, I conducted two pilot interviews with leaders and one focus group interview with 3 employees. Following the pilot interviews, I amended the interview questions, and referred to the focus group as a discussion forum, because it emerged that employee participants were more comfortable with the terminology. Member checking allows participants to verify correctness and provides an opportunity to offer additional explanations (Elo et al., 2014; Killawi et al., 2014; Reilly, 2013). I afforded participant the opportunity to comment on their coded transcripts.

One can associate transferability of a qualitative study with the extent to which one can apply the findings of one study to another similar context without changing the meanings (Houghton et al., 2013; Elo et al., 2014; Prion & Adamson, 2014; Reilly, 2013). Researchers enable readers to transfer the findings from one study to another by providing adequately thick and detailed descriptions of essential aspects (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al, 2013; Prion & Adamson, 2014; Reilly, 2013). Essential aspects include the research method, participant descriptions, thought processes, and decisions taken during analysis (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al, 2013; Prion & Adamson, 2014; Reilly, 2013). Researchers use interview protocols to ensure interview consistency with regards to questions asked (Farrelly & Greyser, 2012). The interview protocol serves as a procedural script for the interview process (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The interview protocols (see Appendix A) allowed for reflection and debriefing after the interview, which assisted in providing insight into my thought processes and observations. To improve transferability, I attempted to provide thick descriptions of thought processes and decisions made throughout this study. These descriptions enabled readers to make informed decisions about the transferability of the findings to other similar contexts.

Processes for establishing confirmability are similar to processes required to ensure dependability and include internal audit trials and reflexivity (Houghton et al., 2013). Additionally, researchers establish confirmability when they adequately eliminate bias and assumptions by providing thick descriptions of decisions and thought processes related to data analysis and interpretation (Elo et al., 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Prion & Adamson, 2014; White et al., 2012). Researchers often reinforce confirmability by providing direct quotations from transcripts to support findings or conclusions (Elo et al., 2014). I established confirmability by using member checking and CAQDAS to identify the recurrence of meaning units. Other actions to establish confirmability are keeping reflective notes and memos, defining participant eligibility criteria and selection, pilot studies, and the inclusion of direct quotations from transcripts in the discussion of findings.

Reaching data saturation or the point where no new themes emerge from new data is critical to the quality of qualitative research (Dworkin, 2012; Elo et al., 2014; Marshal et al., 2013; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Because there is no specified formula for calculating data saturation for qualitative research, researchers often collect data past the saturation point to ensure redundancy (Dworkin, 2012; Elo et al., 2014; Marshal et al., 2013; White et al., 2012). To this effect, and in accordance with my undertaking, I conducted four semistructured face-to-face interviews with leaders and conducted a focus group with nine participants. The sample size of a recent explorative single case study (Campbell, 2015) aligned with this sample size. I did not extend data collection through interviews, focus groups, and documentary review because no new information emerged from the data. Elo et al. (2014) warned against the possibility of missing opportunities to link concepts when working with an unsaturated data set. Similarly, Marshal et al. found that the quality of qualitative research continues to increase to the point of saturation. Collecting data after the saturation point may prevent researchers from conducting deep and rich analysis of the data (Marshal et al., 2013). Therefore, the need for the researcher to aim for achieving data saturation is a necessity to achieve high quality qualitative research.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I provided an accurate account of the qualitative research study process, including the justification for a qualitative case study research design and methodology. I described the role of the researcher, participants, and the sampling technique for the study. I presented the meaning and application of ethical research and provided an overview of the data collection instrument and techniques I will use for data organization analysis. Lastly, I discussed the importance of data reliability and validity in qualitative research as well as strategies to enhance the study’s reliability and validity. In Section 3, I present the results of the research study, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and future studies, and share pertinent reflections on the research study. Finally, Section 3 includes a summary, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In Section 3, I provide an overview of the purpose of the study, state the research question, and present the findings. Also, included in this section are the applications of my research to professional practice, implications for social change, and recommendations for action and further study, and reflections. Finally, the conclusion encompasses the closing statements for the study.

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, single case study was to explore the strategies that SA mining industry leaders use to engage employees. I conducted individual face-to-face interviews with four leaders who (a) had at least one direct report and (b) had worked in the case organization for at least 2 years. I also conducted a focus group interview with nine employees who had worked in the case organization for at least 2 years. Other sources of data included were internal reports, internal emails, Facebook posts, and internal surveys of employee engagement conducted between June 2013 and December 2015. Analysis of data resulted in three themes, namely leader behavior improved employee engagement, situationally relevant strategies improved employee engagement, and communication improved employee engagement. Theme 1 includes three subthemes, which demonstrates the multifaceted nature of the theme and the findings.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question for this qualitative, explorative single case study was, What strategies do SA mining leaders use to engage employees? To answer the overarching research question, I conducted semistructured interviews with leaders and employees at the case organization. Following the coding and triangulation process, three themes emerged from data:

- leader behavior improved employee engagement,
- situationally relevant strategies improved employee engagement, and
- focused communication improved employee engagement.

Theme 1: Leader Behavior Improved Employee Engagement

The first theme that emerged from analyzed data was that leader behavior improved employee engagement. From analysis of focus group interview data, I identified three prominent leader behaviors associated with employee engagement. Three of the leader participants (L1, L3, and L4) shared that these three prominent behaviors improved employee engagement. The three leader behaviors are quality of interaction, competency of leaders, and creating an environment conducive to engagement. Some of the aspects that comprised a behavior are a combination of interrelated and intertwined concepts, such as the quality of interaction finding which consisted of three aspects.

Quality of interaction. Quality of interaction, as a behavior that improved employee engagement, consisted of the (a) personal interaction with employees, (b) ability to create a participative environment for employees, and (c) ability to create understanding amongst employees. Three of the leader participants (L1, L3, and L4) articulated that strategies leaders used for improving employee engagement are personal interaction with subordinates in order to create a participative environment as well as an understanding of the requirements of the work environment amongst employees. Some employee participants (DF2, DF3, DF6, DF7, and DF8) noted that their engagement increased when their leaders showed a personal interest in employees, allowed them to participate in problem-solving, and helped them to understand requirements of the work environment and clarify information shared.

One of the leaders (L4) noted that personal interaction with subordinates was key to improving engagement, citing an extensive example of the way he went about creating participation and understanding through personal interaction with his subordinates. Furthermore, participant L1 pointed out that making time to interact with employees improved employees' understanding and participation in problem-solving, which, in turn, contributed toward working to achieve a common goal and improving performance. A third leader (L3) stated that "disallowing them [employees] from thinking for themselves" was not conducive to creating a participative environment where employees could take part in problem solving and decision making. Shuck and Reio (2013) deduced that employees' experiences of engagement related directly to their perception and interpretation of their work environment. In their study, Behrendt, Matz, and Göritz (in press) proposed that leadership behavior perception or the way followers perceive their leader's behavior, often differed from the leader behavior itself.

Overall, employee participants shared that the two separate but interrelated aspects of leader behavior that contribute to employee engagement are personal interaction and the quality of the personal interaction. Some participants (DF6, DF7, and DF8) referenced the behavior of a specific leader noting that the leader understood how his words and actions affected their experience of engagement based on their interactions with him. Shuck and Herd (2012) pointed out the importance of leaders understanding how their words and actions affect employee's engagement, while Al Mehrzi and Singh (2016) asserted that leadership significantly affects employee engagement. Three employees (DF6, DF7, and DF8) mentioned that their engagement increased when leaders (a) took a personal interest in employees, (b) displayed consistent and fair behavior, and (c) were approachable. One participant (DF8) shared an example of the behavior of one specific leader, which included the positive personal interaction of the leader on a daily basis with a wide group of people on an individual basis. Building on participant DF8's example, two other participants (DF6 and DF9) elaborated on their interaction with the leader while other focus group participants expressed verbal and nonverbal agreement with the example. In their study, Sahoo and Sahu (2009) identified employees' relationship with their manager as a key driver of employee engagement. Similarly, Anitha (2014) identified, among others, work environment and leadership as factors required to satisfy Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions for engagement.

In contrast to respondent DF8's example, another respondent (DF3) provided an example of a leader who limited his decision-making power, which in turn reduced his participation in the department and described how it decreased his engagement, "I can't make any choices, that is the biggest thing… choices can't be made... I don't know, know why they signed me on as a senior? If I can't even make any choices. That's… my biggest problem." Later in the focus group discussion, employee DF3 elaborated on the limited decision-making imposed on him by his leader, adding that his supervisor simply overruled any decision he made, "So if I [DF3] give them [employees] an instruction, then they don’t really follow it out because they know it is going to be overruled [by DF3’s the line manager].”

Another employee (DF6) pointed out that leaders who took the time to ensure that employees understood what to do with the information they received in meetings assisted in improving engagement. Participant DF2 shared that it was important for employees to understand the purpose of sharing information to improve the overall focus and contribute to achieving the company’s common goal. Another employee (DF8), building on the thoughts of two other employees (DF2 and DF6), added that leaders increased employee engagement when ensuring that their employees understood and participated in decision making and problem solving through improving role interaction and clarifying role and responsibility frameworks. The quality of the interaction between managers and employees or leaders and followers affected employee engagement. Botha and Mostert (2014) found that where a positive relationship exists between leaders and followers, engagement levels are higher, which leads to improved performance. Furthermore, researchers found that an environment conducive to engagement includes an appropriate organizational culture that facilitates reciprocity based on social exchange processes (Keeble-Ramsay & Armitage, 2014).

After reviewing company documents, entitled *Engagement Profile Questionnaire* (DR2) and *Successful People* (DR6), both of which show survey results, I gained a better understanding of the significance participants attached to the quality of interaction as a leader behavior that improved employee engagement. The survey results revealed that members of the case organization felt strongly about regular personal interaction with their leaders and they placed a high value on participating in problem-solving activities. For example, survey results (DR2) to one of the survey questions (question 1.1) indicated that 50% and 39% of the 44 participants *agreed strongly* and *agreed*, respectively, with the statement that it was important to have personal interaction with one's leader at least once a week. In addition, responses to another survey question (question 3.3) indicated that 57% and 39% of 44 participants that took part in a survey (DR2) *agreed* and *strongly agreed*, respectively, that it felt really good when managers implemented one of their ideas at work. Furthermore, survey results (DR6) also revealed that while more than 89% of the 53 participants enjoyed being part of the problem-solving process, the remaining 11%, although sometimes struggling to find solutions, were making an effort to find solutions to make the team more successful. Keeble-Ramsay and Armitage (2014) asserted that it was important to allow employees autonomy and the opportunity to solve problems and challenges on their own because it led to the development of intellectual and affective engagement. The findings from a study by Rees et al. (2013) indicated that trust and the employee-line manager relationship mediated engagement.

Competency of leaders. All leaders (L1, L2, L3, and L4) believed that competency of leaders increased employee engagement. Similarly, some participants (DF5, DF7, and DF8) shared that the competency of their leaders was essential for employee engagement. *Leading from the front* related to ability and competence of the leader because followers looked toward their leader for guidance. Employee DF3 shared that the main characteristic of a leader is "someone you can look up to… that is the main part of the role of [Organizational Leader], people look up to him… he is a great leader for us." Therefore, leader and employee participants deemed reasonable to expect leaders to be able and competent to perform the tasks leaders expected their subordinates to perform.

Leader participants (L1, L2, L3, and L4) believe that leaders must demonstrate experience through their ability and competence to situations in the present. One leader (L2) pointed out that *ability* was important "because you cannot dictate to somebody, or tell somebody that they [he or she is] are doing a bad job if you don't know how to do the job yourself." Participant L2 shared that leaders who instructed followers to do work that leaders cannot perform themselves decreased followers' engagement. Similarly, another leader (L4) referred to leaders having the ability to *show and tell*, noting that one could only use the show-and-tell approach if you were able and competent to perform the task yourself. Participant L4 noted that employees felt engaged when they believed their leader was able and competent. Respondent L1 shared that being competent to carry out the work herself made it easier to explain to and get buy-in from subordinates because she was speaking from experience. Moreover, participant L1 believed that speaking from experience increased employees' engagement. Furthermore, another leader (L3) talked about the importance of guiding subordinates rather than "telling people what to do." Xu and Thomas (2011) asserted that leaders creating an environment that supported the employee and allowed employees to feel safe also created an opportunity for engagement. Similarly, Keating and Heslin (2015) found that psychological safety resulted from a trusting relationship between employees and supervisors. Furthermore, Wang and Hsieh (2013) found that the trust relationship between employee and supervisor was one of the important aspects of employee engagement.

When asked what decreased their engagement, two employees (DF7 and DF8) identified having leaders who were not able and competent to perform the tasks expected of the employees as the main reason. One participant (DF8) referred to the frustration of working with a leader not possessing the necessary experience and competence in all fields of the business to understand why the participant prefers doing specific tasks in one way, as opposed to another. Another participant (DF7) believes that working in a specialized field and having a leader without competence and experience in that area caused an employee to feel alone,

> Experience [leader with expertise] does actually help in terms of keeping engaged… So coming to him [leader] and engaging him on what I'm doing on a daily basis is a lecture on its own. And he, he disengaged himself because the information is too overwhelming and we end up feeling that but I am alone here… that's what I feel disengaged people… but having somebody at least who has some form of knowledge in terms of the running of the department helps in keeping motivated.

Jose and Mampilly (2014) found that psychological empowerment related to the level of competency experienced by employees, and employees who felt more empowered, were more productive and satisfied at work. Psychological empowerment served as a predictor of employee engagement and a measure of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Jose & Mampilly, 2014).

Reviewing an archived organizational document related to strategic decision making and direction, I gained a better understanding of the case organization's leadership approach, strategy, and views on employee engagement. Relying on the combined leadership experience, the organizational leader appointed a human resource professional responsible for employee engagement. The below excerpt from document DR0 states that the purpose of appointing a human resource professional responsible for employee engagement was,

> …to ensure employee engagement from the top down and from the bottom up in the organization, within the bounds of the leadership rings in the organization. This includes addressing what is traditionally referred to as "soft issues." It is the responsibility of Organizational Development to ensure that the entire [company name] team is aligned to the [company] strategy, to assist [middle management and supervisory levels] with the challenges they are facing and to overcome stumbling blocks.

Following the review of additional supporting documents (DR15 and DR16), it emerged that the case organization implemented a leadership development program (LDP) to assist middle management and the supervisory level. Through the LDP, middle-managers and supervisors received assistance in improving decision making abilities, developing leaderships skills, and identifying personal and professional development needs. Participation in the LDP increased their ability to deal with challenges and stumbling blocks. Shuck et al. (2015) found that employees who experienced higher levels of autonomy, relatedness and competence reported higher levels of engagement.

Researchers found that employees base their decision of active engagement on the relationship with and the commitment shown by their immediate supervisor (Alfes et al., 2013; Reissner & Pagan, 2013).

Creating an environment conducive to engagement. Another behavior that emerged from data analyses was leaders' ability to create an environment conducive to engagement. An analysis of the interview and focus group interview data revealed two specific actions regarding leaders' ability to create an environment conducive to engagement. These actions are (a) building a trusting relationship with employees and (b) facilitating the sharing of a common goal amongst employees. From the data analysis, it emerged that these two actions are codependent, meaning that without trust sharing a common goal carried no weight and vice versa.

Two leaders (L2 and L4) believed that it was the leader's responsibility to create an environment in which employees felt safe and engaged. Participant L4 felt that he was responsible for setting the tone or the environment in which the employees operated while participant L2 shared that the leader was to blame if something in the employee's environment was not working. Moreover, participant L2 shared an example of building and maintaining the trust of an employee, citing his interaction with a "problem child" employee who displayed inconsistent behavior. Due to the nature of the work environment and the relationship established with the employee, the employee had the opportunity to correct the behavior without the risk of victimization. Another leader (L4) believed that by creating a suitable environment, employee engagement followed,

> …a good leader [can] create an environment where people want to work in… Because if there is a, a good environment for a guy to work in, he wants to work… [when it is a] you do it or you are gone [environment], then you will only do what is required of you, he [such a person] won't go that extra 10cm for you.

Some employees (DF1, DF2, DF6, and DF9) believe that building a trust relationship is essential for creating an environment conducive to employee engagement. One employee (DF6) shared that it is important to trust your leader or manager because it assists employees to distinguish between questioning a decision and just executing a decision. Another employee (DF1) elaborated on the trust relationship, noting that when there is uncertainty about roles and responsibilities, employees have more questions and more frequently redirected decisions to their managers of leaders. Participant DF2 shared his preference for one-on-one meetings to build trust between himself and his manager because the one-on-one meeting environment provided a safe environment for discussion. Elaborating on the role of one-on-one meetings to build trust, one employee (DF9) noted that one-on-one meetings are not always practical and depend on the section or department size. In contrast, another participant (DF6) believes that managers or leaders should always make time for one-on-one discussions, especially when it comes to sensitive issues employees want to discuss. Building a trust relationship between a leader and follower requires an environment that is conducive to employee engagement, which allows employees to offer their engagement freely (Shuck & Rose, 2013).

All four leaders (L1, L2, L3, and L4) believe that leader behavior that supports an environment conducive to employee engagement includes facilitating the sharing of a common goal amongst employees. Respondent L4 shared that the most successful employee engagement strategy is to have “a common goal. And then help them to develop a strategy. I’m not forcing my stuff [ideas and solutions] onto them. They must come back to me and I will… just guide them.” When asked about the benefits of having successful employee engagement strategies, participant L4 provided an example of the importance of ensuring that employees share a common goal, “Firstly, they, they understand… They got a common goal then. They know what is your goal and, and what you expect from them. And then the other thing is there is no miscommunication.” Similarly, participant L3 believes that it was “paramount” for leaders to develop and implement employee engagement strategies. More specifically, “There must be only one goal… if you speak to everybody in the organization, they all become the same goal driven people” (L3). Additionally, leader L3 shared that “…it takes all those, all the different employees and the different departments that you need to achieve your goal and, and it brings them all together on the same wave length.” These findings are in line with Rothmann and Welsch’s (2013) findings that employees who perceive the organization as supportive experience and feel an obligation to reciprocate by assisting with the achievement of organizational goals. Additionally, Daneshgari and Moore (2016) found that team work and learning together created standardized processes that improved profitability.

Some employees (DF6, DF7, DF8, and DF9) believe that sharing a common goal is important for employee engagement. Employee DF7 noted that awareness of the company’s direction and goals allayed fears that, in turn, improved employee engagement because people had confidence in the company. Similarly, employee DF6 believes that it is critical for a person to understand the direction of the company, further sharing “you know where, that we are moving into a certain direction, you can participate and work to that certain direction.” Two other employees (DF8 and DF9) shared their agreement with employee DF6’s belief that people become part of the movement when they understand it. These findings are consistent with Rees et al.’s (2013) conclusions that employees voiced their views about matters that they perceive to influence the better management of the organization or that contribute to achieving organizational goals.

The review of survey results revealed case organization members’ sentiments about sharing a common goal. The results of the survey entitled *Engagement Profile* (DR2) aligned with the findings from the interview and focus group interview data. For example, of the 44 participants that took part in the survey, 80% of participants *strongly agreed* with the statement *knowing my company’s goals is extremely important to me* while the remaining 20% *agreed* with the same statement. Furthermore, from the same survey, it emerged that 59% of participants *strongly agreed* with the statement *I need to know how my work contributes to my company’s goals*. A further 36% of participants *agreed* with the same statement while the remaining 5% felt *neutral* toward the same statement, meaning they have no specific view. Sharing a common goal with employees is a characteristic of transformational leaders having developed their power by creating a clear understanding of the organizational goals, sharing a common vision, and building a trust relationship with followers (Javadi & Ahmadi, 2013).

Correlation to the literature. The findings noted in Theme 1, aligned with the findings of Tuckey et al. (2012) that leadership behavior rather than leadership style was important for employee engagement. Furthermore, Raelin (2016) noted that the role of leadership in engagement was less about the action of leading and more about leaders facilitate the required activities expected of followers. Other researchers suggested there is a need for additional research to understand better which leadership behaviors enhance levels of engagement, calling for longitudinal studies to improve the validity and reliability of findings (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Joo, Lin, & Kim, 2016). Rees et al. (2013) asserted that having a better understanding of the process of employee engagement would assist in the understanding of the skills and strategies leaders need to engage employees.

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Theme 1 relates to Shuck and Reio's (2011) framework for employee engagement because the three facets of engagement are reliant on a positive appraisal of Kahn's (1990) three psychological conditions for engagement. In the context of this study, leader behaviors, such as quality of interaction, competency of leaders, and ability to create an environment conducive to engagement, influenced how employees appraised their work environment. Kahn's (1990) psychological conditions for engagement form the basis of Shuck and Reio's (2011) framework for employee engagement. Shuck and Reio (2014) noted that the psychological conditions for engagement provide the basis for cognitive engagement. By identifying those leader behaviors that bring about a positive cognitive appraisal, leaders might be able to develop their strategies for employee engagement more efficiently.

There exists an emotional connection between employees' perception of their work environment and their willingness to engage at work (Shuck et al., 2014). Emotional engagement or the desire to engage at work, is a function of a positive cognitive appraisal of their work environment (Shuck & Reio, 2011) and the perception that the organization will provide the necessary support (Shuck et al., 2014).

Theme 2: Situationally Relevant Strategies Improved Employee Engagement

The second theme that emerged from the analyzed data was that situationally relevant strategies improved employee engagement. All four leaders (L1, L2, L3, and L4) articulated that successful employee engagement strategies took cognizance of situational context. Seven focus group participants (DF1, DF2, DF5, DF6, DF7, DF8, and DF9) shared that contextual awareness was a key influencer of developing employee engagement strategies. The success of employee engagement strategies depended on the specific context from which it originated and in which a leader applied it. Leaders (L1, L2, L3, and L4) articulated that there was not one specific employee engagement strategy that was used, rather the strategy depended on the situational context.

Participants (L1, L2, L3, and L4) believed that employee engagement increase when the strategy suits the situation and when the work environment is conducive to engagement. To this effect, leader L2 shared his beliefs on the most effective strategy for engaging employees,

> …it almost sounds as if there's, there's a specific strategy that I employ, but I think it's just given my experience about dealing with people. And having said that, …I've got three people reporting directly to me, each one of those people,

> you have got to deal with differently. So, you can't employ one single strategy to deal with each of them… It also depends on, on the type of result that you are looking for and the type of problem that you are facing.

Furthermore, leader L2 shared that the manner in which employees experience their work environment influence their state of engagement, noting that his previous employer treated him as "just a number" and he was "at work on time and I left on time. I didn't see any value, any value in doing anything more." Some leaders (L1, L2, and L3) believed that being just another number resulted in employees feeling unengaged. One leader (L2) further elaborated on sufficing behavior in employees when there were no proper employee engagement strategies in place, noting that employees would be demotivated, continually watched the clock, and that the employees cannot wait to leave work and go home. To this effect, another leader (L4) explained how creating a suitable environment influenced employees' state of engagement, "If it is that you do it or you are gone, then you will only do what is required of you, he won't go that extra 10cm for you." Similarly, participant L1 believed that the state of the work environment influences the manner in which employees experience engagement.

Some participants (L3 and L4) associated autocratic leadership with disengaging at work. When talking about his role in engaging employees, participant L3 shared that he did not "like a bombastic approach," noting that in instances where he interacted with an autocratic leader his "first thought would be: well, you are now not going to get anything out of me… I'll do as little as possible for you and I won't go the extra mile." Leader L4 shared that the consequences of not having proper engagement strategies contribute to an unhappy workforce and that labor unrest is the most significant consequence of not having proper engagement strategies in place. Participant L4 articulated his experience at a previous company, noting, “I have worked for difficult managers… I worked for a guy that it’s my way or no way. It is difficult to work like that. Eventually, 17 mine overseers resigned and it cost the mine dearly.” Wang and Hsieh (2013) found that employees who perceive their treatment as fair and feel supported have increased levels of engagement. Therefore, it follows that where these perceptions were lacking, the opposite might be true. Valentin (2014) pointed out that disengagement might be a justified response to unfair working conditions or demands. Disengaged employees actively display behaviors that are often detrimental, not only to their colleagues, but also to the organizations (Anitha, 2014; Kumar & Sia, 2012).

During the focus group interview, various employees (DF1, DF2, DF5, DF6, DF8, and DF9) shared that they need authentic and sincere strategies from their leaders or managers to bring about a feeling of engagement. Some participants (DF1, DF5, and DF8) articulated their specific needs for experiencing engagement. Specifically, employee DF8 referred to her leader acknowledging what she is doing, noting that if “he doesn’t give two hoots, what do I care?” Various focus group participants (DF2, DF3, DF4, DF6, and DF7) related positively to employee DF8 either verbally or by displaying nonverbal behavior, such as nodding their heads in agreement. Another employee (DF5) further extended the discussion noting that “obviously, it is going to affect you [negatively]” coming to work every day without any acknowledgement or involvement in the business. Participant DF1 further elaborated on the topic of acknowledgement by sharing the way emotions and the state of engagement affect a person, both at work and at home,

> I think you will still do the work, but you will feel there's [are] two sides to the fence. Either you feel like the whole world is against me and it's not, I don't enjoy the work, and you go home with that whole depressed mind set, you go back home and, it's difficult to get up in the morning. Where if you feel engaged, although you are working hard, you know that this fulfills me… You still get the job done both ways… but it is just the way… you conduct it. And also, the emotions that you take away from work.

Additionally, employee DF1 believes that merely "rubber stamping stuff, or just doing, not being responsible for doing something really," made it difficult for him to take full responsibility and ownership. Employee DF1 further noted that knowing that the task an employee is performing is not adding any value and that it is only a waste of that employee's time causes the employee to feel disengaged.

From the focus group interview data, it emerged that both *taking responsibility* and *ownership* are actions the focus group associated with engaged employees (DF1, DF2, DF5, DF6, DF7, DF8, and DF9). Furthermore, another participant (DF6) believes receiving information directly from the leader of the company at a mass meeting is important because it creates an environment where employees experience engagement. Monthly mass meetings are one of the employee engagement strategies implemented in the company as discussed in organizational documentation (DR9). A survey entitled *Winning Hearts and Minds Initiatives* (DR9), conducted in July of 2013, in which 50 participants took part, revealed that 90% of participants thought it is a good idea to have a mass meeting. Another employee (DF9) shared the belief shared by employee DF6, noting that this type of engagement strategy leads to one feeling like “you are part of a family” while employee DF8 noted that “it comes down to being a number or not.”

Some participants (DF2, DF6, DF8, and DF9) believe that being just another number in an organization results in employees feeling unengaged, as if they do not belong. Participant DF2 emphasized that being *involved* and having a *sense of belonging* give employees “the sense that makes them feel their presence and their role in the company, it is not overlooked…, we are part of the company.” Similarly, another employee (DF6) shared that involvement resulted in experiencing a sense of belonging, particularly when employees are aware of the company’s vision and mission. Therefore, when employees feel involved at work, they are more likely to take ownership of their work and their role at work. Kahn (1990) asserted that task characteristics, role characteristics, and work interactions have an influence on meaningfulness at work.

When there is a negative appraisal of the psychological conditions, it is unlikely that engagement will take place (Shuck et al., 2014). Shuck and Reio (2011) asserted that a positive appraisal of the psychological conditions is a pre-requisite for cognitive engagement. Researchers found experiencing involvement and feeling valued were key drivers of engagement but noted that the strength of these drivers were organization and context specific (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). To this effect, Rees et al. (2013) pointed out the characteristics of intellectual engagement included employees’ absorption in their work and engagement in thought processes about improving role performance. The characteristics of social engagement included discussing work improvements and changes with other employees (Rees et al., 2013). Actively engaged employee behavior relates to the overarching research question because it provides leaders with insight into the context-based strategies that improve employee engagement.

Participant DF1 shared that his level of engagement decreased when his manager or leader did not recognize the efforts he made and only focused on the shortcomings. Employee DF1 noted that completing 99% of the work and being in trouble about the 1% that was not completed, despite going above and beyond, “make[s] me feel like you know what, leave the other 30% as well, 70% is good enough rather than my 99%.” Similarly, another respondent (DF6) shared that his engagement decreased when his supervisor did not listen to what he was saying. Several participants (DF3, DF4, DF8, and DF9) related to participants DF1 and DF6’s examples sharing their agreements, both verbally and nonverbally, that leaders who did not recognize their efforts decreased their level of engagement.

Additionally, respondent DF1 believes that employee engagement is important to decrease labor turnover. Specifically, participant DF1 articulated that when an employee experience engagement, such individual is less likely to consider leaving the organization. Similarly, participant DF7 shared his experience at a previous mining company that eventually closed “…if there is no engagement like, like what happened next door, engagement and communication was very poor. So it, it ended up, people going on strike and then, then the whole operation was lost.” Another employee (DF9) added to the discussion on disengagement, noting that when her leader or manager yelled at her, she "shut down" because of how it made her feel. The findings align with Bhuvanaiah and Raya's (2016) suggestion that the research focus for employee engagement have shifted from determining the drivers to understanding the aspects that increase or decrease employee engagement. Therefore, organizational leaders need to understand their employees' work context when considering the nature of employee engagement strategies (Bhuvanaiah and Raya's (2016). Employee participants provided information relating to the aspects that increase and decreased their engagement at work.

Correlation to the literature. Theme 2 findings highlighted the importance of understanding the context in which the leader wishes to bring about engagement. The efficacy of employee engagement strategies differs according to context, specifically, leader, department, and employees' level of engagement. Additionally, Ghorbannejad and Esakhani (2016) found that employees' individual traits influenced employees' engagement. Different individual traits had different capabilities for engagement, highlighting the importance of understanding the employee and the context where the engagement occurred (Ghorbannejad & Esakhani, 2016). Leaders implementing successful employee engagement strategies take cognizance of situational context based on the leaders' understanding of the organization and its interactions, including employees' state of engagement. Bhuvanaiah and Raya (2016) suggested that employee expectations about their work and work environment were key to developing employee engagement strategies.

Theme 2 findings are similar to Fearon et al.'s (2013) conclusion that there is no one single strategy for engagement because leaders need an understanding of organizational interactions. Organizational interactions included leadership style, trust, and goal alignment, both on a personal and work level (Fearon et al., 2013). Additionally, some researchers suggested that practitioners and leaders measure employee engagement on a continuum (Griffiths & Karanika-Murray, 2012; Valentin, 2014).

Correlation to the conceptual framework. Contextual awareness and sensitivity on the part of the leader when selecting suitable employee engagement strategies directly relate to Shuck and Reio’s (2011) suggestion that cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement requires a positive cognitive appraisal of the psychological conditions for engagement. It also highlighted the iterative process involved in engagement, as opposed to a once of action performed or carried out by a manager or leader. Supervisory support, considered a job resource, motivates employees thereby increasing engagement and ultimately improving performance (Botha & Mostert, 2014; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). The iterative nature of engagement means that it is not a once off action performed by a leader. Rather, engagement as a process required the leader to maintain certain key aspects of the organization and work environment to ensure the meeting of the psychological conditions for engagement. Without employees’ positive cognitive appraisal of these psychological conditions, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement would not be possible (Shuck & Reio, 2011). Continued failure to feel engaged ultimately results in disengagement through resignation (Shuck et al., 2014).

Theme 3: Communication Improved Employee Engagement

The third theme that emerged from the analyzed data is that communication improved employee engagement. During the face-to-face interviews, all four leaders (L1, L2, L3, and L4) referred to communication almost as synonymous with employee engagement, indicating an inherent entrenchment of communication in their employee engagement strategies. During the focus group interview, it emerged that many employees (DF1, DF2, DF3, DF5, DF6, DF7, DF8, and DF9) shared leader participants' belief that communication improved employee engagement. From the analyzed data, two prominent aspects of communication and engagement emerged, namely the level of communication and downward communication. The level of communication relates to leaders' ability to choose wording that is suitable to the intended audience's level of understanding or frame of reference. Regardless of the medium leaders use to communicate, ensuring that the correct level of communication to facilitate interpretation is critical. Conversely, downward communication relates to leaders ensuring that the message reaches all levels throughout the organization. From the data, it emerged that downward communication took place in either group or one-on-one communication.

Level of communication and downward communication. All leaders (L1, L2, L3, and L4) believe that communication is an essential aspect of employee engagement. Additionally, from the data analysis, it emerged that, more often than not, it is the practical application of communication that was problematic. Leader L1 pointed out that leadership skills are important when it comes to communicating with employees. Leader L1 shared,

> …because if you are a leader, you want to make people understand your strategies… for example, something is being communicated between months [from one month to the next], sometimes people don't get to understand

> because… whoever might be communicating that, might not have those leadership skills. Until a mass meeting where [the Company leader] will emphasize on that. Because he's got that… leadership skills and he can, whatever message he wants to pass on, he talks it to the level of those [people] to understand… particularly then because it was then that they understood what is really said to them.

Another participant (L3) believes that clear communication is one of the most effective strategies for engaging people, particularly "making sure that people understand exactly what is meant…, I think that is very important." Leader L3 further elaborated on the importance of communication in the effective running of a business, grouping communication together with concepts, such as business strategy and outcomes. Respondent L4 articulated that using email for communication hinders one's ability to express oneself. Participant L4 further noted that he believes that it is important to look at the person you are talking to in the eye and assess the body language before deciding if the person "is taking it in or not taking it in." Similarly, another leader (L3) pointed out the importance of transparent communication to ensure the receipt of clear and concise messages without hidden meanings. Leader L3 shared that when working across departments, leaders "force[d] them [employees] to sit down and chat to each other" to ensure they receive the same message. Participant L3 noted the importance of ensuring the context of the message is communicated by saying,

> Don't speak to the, the shift supervisor, speak to the person on the face [rock face, i.e., underground working place], because the shift supervisor may not get that

> message across. Or they give the message, but it is not how you intended the message. So if you speak to everybody in the organization, they all become the same goal driven people.

Similarly, some employees (DF2, DF6, and DF9) shared leaders' belief that communication was an essential aspect of employee engagement. One employee (DF6) supports the belief that when one's supervisor openly shares information, that individual has confidence in the information but when,

> …you do not know the direction the company goes, there is no way that you can feel that you belong, …but if you know that we are moving into a certain direction, and you can participate, …you feel [a sense of] belonging, because it, it feels that you are part of, of the movement.

Another participant (DF9) shared that having open and direct communication at a level one can understand "makes you feel that you are part of a family and, there is a lot more loyalty. There's an open communication and, …a relationship between even the superiors [supervisors] and the, and the colleagues and the employees." Employee DF2 articulated that it is important to observe nonverbal communication cues and to take part in two-way communication to ensure that there are no misunderstandings. Employee DF2 shared that he prefers one-on-one meetings because it allows him to evaluate his supervisor's body language, which assists him in understanding the seriousness of the matter.

A review of internal communication documents allowed me to gain a better understanding of the case organization's communication strategies. Daily production emails (DR13) followed up by corresponding Facebook posts (DR14) from the organizational leaders provides employees with relevant information about production performance and the company's values,

> Our production performance has improved slightly over the last day, but we are still in need of a greater effort and commitment from each and every [employee]. We need to dig deep into our collective strength to reflect our true performance, and we need to do it safely! I remind everyone of our [Company] Values of Accountability (all doing our part), and of Integrity (we follow the rules, even when no one is watching).

Kunnanatt (2016) noted that employees more readily accept and embrace communication received from a leader regarded as a truly transformational leader. Therefore, leaders must first *qualify* themselves as transformational leaders before followers will readily accept and embrace leaders' messages (Kunnanatt, 2016). Communication forms a critical part of employee engagement (Mishra et al., 2014).

Correlation to the literature. Although Mishra et al. (2014) mentioned communication as an employee engagement strategy, as noted in the literature review of this study, subsequent investigation revealed that other researchers similarly found that communication plays an important role in developing employee engagement (Karanges, Johnston, Beatson & Lings, 2015). In addition, various researchers (Karanges et al., 2015; Mishra et al., 2014) found that internal communication also plays an essential role in developing the relationship between the employee and the supervisor. Similarly, Smith, Peters, and Caldwell (2016) found that communication is critical for employee engagement, especially when the communication was sincere, open, and reliable. In a study conducted by Karanges, Johnston, Beatson, and Lings (2015), study findings revealed a significant relationship between internal organizational and supervisory communication and developing and maintaining employee engagement. Furthermore, research findings demonstrated that storytelling as a form of internal communication, improved employee engagement because it evolved with new developments and employees related to it (Gill, 2016).

Correlation to the conceptual framework. The findings of Theme 3 aligned with the conceptual framework because of the relatedness between communication and the different facets of employee engagement. Zhang et al. (2014) found that expansive communication is an antecedent of employee engagement. Similarly, Karanges et al. (2015) found that internal communication serves as a resource that employees perceived as beneficial resulting in employees reciprocating with engagement. Various researchers (Breevaart et al., 2014; Kopperud et al., 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012) found that transformational leaders develop and communicate a vision that motivates and inspires their followers to strive beyond just organizational goals. According to Shuck and Reio (2011), employees base their willingness to engage at work on the outcome of their cognitive appraisal of Kahn’s (1990) psychological conditions for engagement. When employees do not experience meaningfulness, safety, and availability of resources at work, they are unlikely to engage on a cognitive level at work (Kahn, 1990). Shuck and Reio asserted that the facets of engagement are dependent on one another. Therefore, without cognitive engagement, emotional and behavioral engagement cannot follow.

Applications to Professional Practice

I conducted this qualitative case study to explore the strategies that mining leaders utilize to engage employees at a mining company in South Africa. The leader interviews, employee focus group interview, and organizational documents provided insight into employee engagement strategies. From the data, it emerged that leader behavior, situationally relevant strategies, and communication improved employee engagement. Researchers found that employee engagement is both an iterative process and context specific (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). The study findings provide supervisors, managers, organizational leaders, and business professions with information enabling them to gain a better understand the complexities of employee engagement. Additionally, the findings afford organizational leaders insight into evaluating employee engagement within their specific business concept. Moreover, the findings contribute to the various components required for developing successful employee engagement strategies that are business specific.

Another contribution of this research to professional practice related to the role of leader behavior in employee engagement strategies. Reviewing current leader behavior and considering the impact of current leader behavior on existing or future employee engagement strategies may assist organizational leaders. Similarly, organizational leaders might consider the situational relevance of selected employee engagement strategies. Particularly, because there exists no single universally applicable employee engagement strategy. Furthermore, organizational leaders and business professionals might consider the role of effective communication strategies in the development of effective employee engagement strategies for business. The findings of this study might enable business professionals to recognize the duality of the benefits of employee engagement in the business context. Not only does increased employee engagement within an organization improve profitability, productivity, and competitiveness, it also brings about social change through improved overall employee well-being. Gupta and Sharma (2016) noted engagement is a *two-way process* that required the business to invest in employees and employees to reciprocate with discretionary effort to achieve organizational goals.

Implications for Social Change

Shuck and Rose (2013) cautioned organizational leaders against embarking on employee engagement as a strategy solely for the improvement of organizational performance. Conversely, Oswick (2015) posited that leaders consider employee engagement as something to enable as opposed to something to directly manage. The potential for social change manifests through the successful implementation of strategies that promote employee engagement as a *two-way process* (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Particularly, from the perspective of improving employees' well-being and motivation, as opposed to focusing only on improving performance or competitiveness (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Leaders implementing employee engagement strategies should aim to achieve a mutually beneficial state where both the organization and the employee experience positive change.

Employees experiencing active engagement at work reciprocate by displaying discretionary effort resulting in improved performance (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Shuck & Herd, 2012). Therefore, creating a work environment that is conducive to employee engagement might assist mining leaders in bringing about social change through enabling employees to improve their personal well-being and living conditions while maintaining a balance between work and personal lives. Social benefits of employee engagement include employees experiencing meaningfulness at work and having a sense of belonging and purpose (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). When employees experience these social benefits, their personal well-being is likely to improve as well (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Behavioral engagement manifests through employees exercising discretionary effort, meaning employees are willing to go above and beyond what is required of them to ensure the achievement of organizational goals (Raelin, 2016).

Conversely, researchers found possible unintended consequences of over-engagement (Banihani et al., 2013; Valentin, 2014), which include over involvement at work and conflict between work and home life (Karatepe, 2013; Shuck & Herd, 2012; Valentin, 2014). The risk of over-engagement highlights the necessity for organizational leaders to understand the employee engagement continuum. Therefore, an understanding of employee engagement might contribute to social change by avoiding both ends of the continuum, disengagement and over-engagement. Avoiding disengagement and over-engagement would assist employees with maintaining a work life balance. Similarly, implementing successful employee engagement strategies might reduce emotional distress experienced by over-engaged, unengaged, and disengaged employees, resulting in a positive change for employees both at work and at home.

The findings of the study might contribute to social change by providing organizational leaders with comparative information, whereby they could compare their leader behavior, situational relevance of strategies, and communication approaches against the findings of the study and adjust where required. By developing and implementing strategies that actively engage employees, organizational leaders might contribute to creating stability in employees' personal lives by providing meaningfulness, thereby reducing the likelihood of resignation. In the SA context, providing job security is particularly relevant given the high unemployment statistics (Humby, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2014). Organizational leaders effectively engaging employees could reduce employees' intention to leave and improve productivity (Shuck et al., 2014). Additionally, improved employee engagement leads to an improvement in living conditions and emotional well-being (Guest, 2014; Shuck & Reio, 2014; Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). Moreover, Consiglio, Borgogni, Di Tecco, and Schaufeli (2016) found that employee engagement improved well-being in the form of increased belief in their own ability to perform at work.

Recommendations for Action

Various researchers noted that there is no single strategy leading to employee engagement because, for engagement to be effective, there needs to be an understanding of organizational interactions (Fearon et al., 2013; Townsend et al., 2014). However, some universal underlying principles for effectively implementing successful employee engagement strategies exist. Most notable, the acknowledgment of the situational context associated with employee engagement on the part of organizational leaders. Therefore, I recommend, as a very first consideration, that organizational leaders acknowledge and accept that merely copying a strategic approach used by another company would not suffice. Organizational leaders should begin by identifying their unique situational indicators that would influence their employee engagement strategic approach.

Moreover, I recommend mining leaders adopt an iterative 4-step approach to developing and implementing an employee engagement strategy. The four steps are (a) review, (b) assess, (c) compare, and (d) adjust. The recommended 4-step process requires organizational leaders to review employee engagement in the organizational context with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the influencers relevant to their organization. Specifically, organizational leaders should (a) focus on existing leader behavior, (b) determine the relevance of situational employee engagement strategies, and (c) review the most frequently used communication strategies. The second step requires organizational leaders to assess their current practices in terms of the three overarching findings of this study from the perspective of the employee, followed by the third step of comparing employee engagement strategy expectations against current practice. Lastly, organizational leaders should align expectations with current practice by adjusting employee engagement strategies.

As Shuck and Rose (2013) noted, employee engagement is in a constant state of movement, making it a “moving, and varied target” (p. 344). Additionally, organizations often expect more engagement from employees but neglect to make the necessary investment to develop such engagement. Furthermore, Rose et al. (2015) noted that employee engagement starts with an engaged leader. Unengaged or disengaged leaders would find it difficult to engage employees. It is worth noting that although the intended audience for this study is mining leaders, organizational leaders, managers, and supervisors in charge of employees in any organization might benefit from applying this study's recommendations in their business environments. Typically, the supervisory level in an organization interacts more regularly with employees than managers and leaders higher up in the organizational hierarchy. It is therefore important to ensure that alignment exists among leaders, managers, and supervisors when it comes to developing and implementing employee engagement strategies.

The final part of the research process and another role of the researcher is the dissemination of the findings (Kyvik, 2012). Therefore, I intend to share the findings of this study with academic research journals and at relevant business and professional conferences. Possible journals include the *South African Journal of Human Resource Management*, *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology*, and *Journal of the South African Institute for Mining and Metallurgy*. Conferences or professional meetings that present a potential for sharing the findings are The Quality Life Company and the Association of Mine Managers of South Africa's regular professional meetings. Sharing the findings of this study using the mentioned platforms might increase the chances of reaching the intended audience.

Recommendations for Further Research

From the perspective of the three overarching findings, certain recommendations for further research emerged. The first recommendation for further research is the need for additional longitudinal research relating to the leader behaviors that enhance employee engagement. This need for additional research was also identified by Carasco-Saul et al. (2015), Nübold et al. (2013), Shuck and Herd (2012), and Soieb et al. (2013).

Although the findings indicated that employees associate certain leader behavior with higher levels of engagement, a limitation of this study is that I followed a single case study approach. Repeating a similar study at other SA mining organizations might improve the validity and reliability of this study's findings. Additionally, such studies would provide leaders and researchers with additional insights, such as whether employees expect the same leader behaviors for engagement at different case organizations or whether the situational context also influences the types of behaviors expected.

The second recommendation for further research addresses the need for leaders to identify relevant situational contexts that influence the selection or development of employee engagement strategies. Further research at similar organizations might focus on the manner in which leaders might identify relevant situational context that influence employee engagement strategy selection or development. Researchers might focus on developing a research instrument that provides organizational leaders with the means to identify relevant situational contexts, influencing the selection and development of employee engagement strategies. The employee engagement strategy that a leader selects for an unengaged employee would presumably differ from the employee engagement strategy selected for maintaining an existing level of active employee engagement. Lastly, such further research might include a larger group of participating leaders and employees to address another limitation of this study.

Giving due consideration to the importance of communication in employee engagement, further research might focus on leaders' communication strategies related to employee engagement. It might also be worthwhile for researchers to determine if communication itself serves as an antecedent for employee engagement, as opposed to a strategy for employee engagement. From this study's findings, it emerged that employees believe that *how* and *what* leaders chose to communicate influence their experience of engagement.

Lastly, from the literature review, it became apparent that practitioners and researchers need to develop a deeper understanding of employee engagement to improve productivity and competitiveness (Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Geldenhuys, Łaba, & Venter, 2014; Ghadi, 2013; Renwick, Redman, & Maguire, 2013). Although the focus of this study is on the strategies mining leaders use to increase employee engagement, the findings contribute to the overall body of knowledge on employee engagement. Future research could focus on establishing validated instruments to quantify the increase in productivity and competitiveness, as a result of increased levels of employee engagement.

Reflections

Reflecting on the Doctorate of Business Administration's doctoral study process forced me to review my role as the researcher. Particularly in the light of Unluer's (2012) cautionary statement regarding insider-researchers. Being an insider-researcher allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the organizational context and to establish a relationship with the participants, albeit in a advisory role. Conversely, conducting insider-research held disadvantages, such as role confusion and the potential for introducing bias. To overcome the disadvantages, I adhered to the ethical requirements and refrained from sharing my views and opinions during interviews and the focus group interview. The established working relationship between myself and the participants facilitated open and honest discussions and sharing during the data collection process.

I found that the interviews with leaders and the focus group with employees sparked new discoveries and profound understandings of the situational complexity of employee engagement irrespective of industry. Interestingly, facilitating the focus group resulted in participants broadening their perspective and understanding of employee engagement in their peer-context. This broadening of perspectices and understanding was a somewhat unexpected learning experience, as attested to by participants after the formal recorded focus group. However, the experience was inspiring and highlighted the need for organizations to encourage and support such knowledge and experience sharing to create cohesion and understanding within their organizations. Once the initial nervousnous of being recorded during the interviews and focus group subsided, participants progressed from just answering the questions to reflecting on the topic as a whole. This progression resulted in participants sharing their own unexpected realizations toward the end of the interview.

Changes in my thinking following the completion of the study include the realization that employee engagement is reliant on underlying principles irrespective of the industry or organization. Any organizational leader wishing to implement successful employee engagement strategies must acknowledge, and more importantly, understand the context-specific influencers for employee engagement. The identification of these context-specific influencers requires sincere, authentic, and in-depth interaction with both leaders and employees. Just as leaders cannot demand engagement from employees, employees cannot demand it from leaders. Leaders must be true believers and supporters of the value employee engagement adds to achieving business objectives through improving organizational performance.

Conclusion

The findings from this qualitative, single case study revealed that leader behavior, relevant situational context, and communication approach influence the success of employee engagement initiatives. Using data collected from interviews, a focus group interview, and document review, I found that leaders employ certain behaviors to increase employee engagement. Similarly, employees expect similar leader behaviors to improve their experience of engagement. Additionally, leaders need to exercise an awareness about the relevancy of situational context when selecting and developing employee engagement strategies. When employee engagement strategies took into account the situational context, employee engagement improved. Further contributing to the complexity and interrelatedness of employee engagement is the finding that the communication approach utilized by leaders affects engagement levels within the organization.

Simply copying other organizational leaders' successful strategies for employee engagement will not yield the expected results due to the situational and contextual complexity of employee engagement. Organizational leaders wishing to develop and implement successful employee engagement strategies to satisfy the true intention of employee engagement should consider following the recommended 4-step approach mentioned under Recommendations for Action. Reviewing organizational members' expectations and assessing current practice effectively provides a basis for comparison, which will enable organizational leaders to adjust existing strategies to ensure successful implementation of an overall organizational employee engagement strategy. Successful employee engagement supports improved operational performance and organizational competitiveness, imperative to the success and survival of any business in the constantly changing business environment.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date Location

Interviewer Interviewee

Unique Participant Identification Number

Introductory Protocol:

Good morning/afternoon. My name is Lee Marais. I want to start by thanking you for agreeing to participate in this study and explaining to you how I will conduct the interview. I will record the interview to ensure that I get all the details but also to allow me to have a comfortable conversation with you. I will start by asking you a few general background question to contextualize your experiences with employee engagement. Following the introductory questions, I will ask you some more direct questions about your experiences with employee engagement in your every-day work at the mine. Please remember that you are sharing with me your experiences and therefore, there are no right or wrong answers. Everyone experiences their world differently. For my study to be successful, I need you to be very honest when you answer the questions. I remind you again that this interview will be kept confidential, and no one will treat you any differently because of what you say and share with me in this interview. The interview is planned to take about 60 minutes, if our interview time begins to run short I may have to interrupt you in some instances to ensure that you answer all the questions. Before we start with the interview, let us review the consent form after which I will need you to sign the consent form. (*Read through the consent form with the interviewee and obtain a signature. Give a copy of the form to the interviewee*).

Introduction to the study

You have been selected to share your experiences with me because you have at least one direct subordinate, and you have at least 2 years of experience with employee engagement in the mining industry. The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the skills and strategies mining leaders need to engage employees. The questions I will ask will help me collect data on your experiences. The purpose of the interview is not to evaluate your skills and strategies. I am only interested in your experiences of and views on employee engagement.

Recording Instructions

As I mentioned, I will be recording our conversation so that I have all the details of this conversation. It will also help me to focus on what you are saying instead of making notes all the time. I will include only your unique participant identification number on the recording. Are you comfortable that we start the interview now? (*Only when I have the signed consent form and the participant(s) agreed to the recording will I turn the recording on and (a) identify the researcher, (b) state the date, (c) state the time, and (d) state the participant identification number*).

Interviewee Background Information

1. How long have you been working at the operation?
2. How long have you been working in the mining industry?
3. How many direct reports do you have?
4. How many employees in your entire section?
5. Please briefly describe your role in the organization.
6. How would you describe this organization compared to other mining organizations?

Interview Questions

After completing the background information, I will continue with the appropriate interview question. For the Leaders I will use the Interview Questions (Leaders Only) while I will use the Focus Group Interview Questions (Employees Only) for the focus group interview. The questions are available in Appendix B.

Debriefing and Final Thoughts

That brings us to the closing of this interview. Thank you again for taking the time participate in this study about employee engagement in the South African mining industry. Your answers have been most helpful and insightful. Remember the purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of your experiences with employee engagement. There is no evaluation or measurement of your skills as a mining leader, only an interest in your opinions. The only requirement for this interview was that you provide your honest and real experiences with employee engagement.

The findings of this study will provide other researchers and leaders with useful information about the skills and strategies mining leaders need to engage employees. I remind you again that you will remain anonymous throughout all the stages of the research process. Even when I use direct quotations from this interview in the findings of this study, I will not include any of your identifying information. I will provide you with a copy of the transcript of this interview for you to review to ensure that it is a true reflection of what you said. This will also provide you with an opportunity to add any additional or clarifying information you may deem necessary.

Lastly, is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with employee engagement that you think might be useful?

Thank you again for participating. (*I will now turn off the recorder*).

Interview Reflections

Immediately after the interview, I will take a few minutes to complete the Interview Reflections. Reflections will include reactions and observations about the interview.

1. Describe the participant's attitude toward you and the interview process:

2. Describe any unusual circumstances and or any events that took place during the interview:

3. Describe any other event that may have affected or may influence the study:

4. Note any additional observations or comments:

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview Questions (for Leaders)

I will use the questions below in semistructured face-to-face interviews with leaders to collect data.

1. What is your role in engaging your employees?
2. What strategies have you used to engage your employees?
3. How did your employees respond to those strategies?
4. What strategies were most effective in engaging your employees?
5. What are some examples of successful strategies to engage subordinates?
6. Which of the strategies were least effective?
7. What role does leadership play in engaging employees?
8. What are some of the benefits of successful employee engagement strategies?
9. What are some of the consequences of not having employee engagement strategies?
10. How important is it for mining leaders to develop and implement employee engagement strategies?
11. What additional information would you like to share about employee engagement?
12. What additional information would you like to share about employee engagement?

Focus Group Interview Questions (for Employees)

I will use the questions below in a focus group with employees to collect data.

1. How important is it to you to have a leader who commits to employee engagement strategies?
2. What engagement strategies or techniques are best for engaging you at work?
3. How do engagement techniques affect your productivity at work?
4. Which engagement methods are least effective engaging you at work?
5. What do you consider an effective engagement strategy that your leaders are not using to engage employees?
6. What would you recommend to your leadership team when it comes to employee engagement?

7. What additional information would you like to share about employee engagement?