



Exploring the effectiveness of employee engagement strategies in the manufacturing industry: a South African perspective

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 May 2024

Received in rev. form 22 June 2024

Accepted 28 July 2024

Keywords:

Employee engagement, engagement framework, paint industry, organisational satisfaction, strategy, implementation

JEL Classification:

J24

ABSTRACT

The paint manufacturing sector has not received sufficient attention, having its unique challenges with employee engagement, despite numerous investigations on employee engagement in several industries. This study seeks to address this deficiency by performing a targeted investigation on the levels of employee involvement within the paint manufacturing sector. This study aims to assess the level of employee involvement in the paint manufacturing industry in South Africa. This study systematically assesses the strategies and practices of employee engagement implemented by paint manufacturing companies operating in the region. This study utilises a mixed methods approach and follows an exploratory research design to accomplish its objectives. This methodology utilises many research techniques to provide a thorough understanding of the complex employee engagement processes in the paint manufacturing industry. The survey instrument, comprising of 320 questionnaires, was distributed to managerial professionals, human resource practitioners, and general employees working at paint production plants in South Africa. In addition to collecting quantitative data, interviews were undertaken to further enrich the depth of insights. The findings reveal a beneficial and interconnected link between the factors studied, suggesting a reciprocal strengthening that enhances employee engagement. Moreover, the study highlights the complex interconnection between the six aspects of employee involvement in the company environment. These characteristics jointly contribute to the fundamental aspects of employee engagement within paint manufacturing firms. Industry stakeholders should work together to develop an organisational culture that is deeply ingrained in the industry's identity and resonates with all personnel. One key remedy suggested is to conduct an employee engagement survey across the entire organisation, which will help gain a thorough understanding of engagement dynamics. This study highlights a strong association between employee engagement, departmental affiliation, racial demographics, and age groups. Therefore, organisations can improve workplace engagement by carefully taking into account the impact of departmental divisions, racial origins, and age cohorts on the overall engagement picture. The study's findings shed light on the significant influence of these factors in determining the dynamics of employee engagement.

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Introduction

The paint manufacturing business is currently facing a high level of uncertainty, which requires companies to continuously adjust to changing conditions and meet the varied needs of their employees. Organisations often employ competitive strategies to improve their chances of survival, such as lowering prices, reducing costs, reforming business processes, and decreasing their personnel. Chytiri (2019) argues that due to limitations on cost reduction and downsizing, companies must embrace innovative approaches to human resource management in order to guarantee their survival and progress. Mehrajunnisa, et al., (2023) state that the prevailing trend in human resource management is a shift in focus from cost reduction to the promotion of employee engagement. As a result, numerous academic studies have been published promoting a transition to a more productive approach that focusses on the workforce.

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<https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v13i5.3130>

This involves promoting employee engagement instead of solely focussing on strategies for problem management. The notion of employee engagement has received much focus in the last ten years. While there may be slight discrepancies in research results, the majority of these studies agree that engaged employees have a substantial impact on improving organisational competitiveness. Engaged employees are those that constantly display a high degree of discretionary effort in their work, demonstrating a strong sense of enthusiasm and dedication to their employment. On the other hand, disengaged personnel are identified by a lack of desire and interest in their work, resulting in a lack of effort and excitement in their professional pursuits. Multiple sources have indicated that employee engagement has a substantial influence on several organisational results, such as productivity, profitability, staff retention, and customer services (Al-Suraihi, et al., 2023; Ahmed, et al., 2020; Nguyen, & Pham, 2020). Nevertheless, the current body of research on employee participation in the paint manufacturing sector is narrow in its coverage.

The workforce of Company X's paint production division is diverse, encompassing persons of various ages, ranging from young to old. It includes both graduates and trainees who are still in the process of obtaining official qualifications. The company's workforce is comprised of approximately 64% individuals aged 20 to 39, with foreigners accounting for 15% of the overall working population. Company (x) is encountering challenges in developing a resilient employee engagement culture that promotes a strong feeling of identification and alignment with the company's values, mostly because of the diverse ethnic composition of its workforce. The Kansai Paint Corporate Report (Kansai Paint, 2022) suggests that creating a strong employee engagement environment can greatly enhance a company's success. Company (x) is currently facing this issue as one of its main challenges. According to the research conducted by Foxcroft and Roodt (2015), businesses that face difficulties with low employee engagement face a substantial obstacle in successfully incorporating workers with diverse ethnic backgrounds and personalities into their organisational culture. Currently, Company (x) is struggling to effectively communicate its organisational objectives to its varied workforce and cultivate an understanding of the specific contributions needed to accomplish these objectives. The lack of studies investigating employee engagement levels specifically within the paint manufacturing business worsens the difficulties experienced by Company (x). Furthermore, there is a lack of clear understanding on the level of employee involvement inside paint manufacturing businesses and their specific business units, especially within a defined time frame.

Literature Review

One of the essential elements of a business is its workforce. According to Ekhsan (2019), the significance of employees in ensuring the sustainability and competitive advantage of a business cannot be overstated. Furthermore, engaged employees are regarded as invaluable resources for an organisation. According to Dixit, & Narendran, (2019), organisations like Company (x) can enhance talent retention, cultivate customer loyalty, and enhance organisational performance and stakeholder value through the cultivation of high levels of employee engagement. Engagement is conceptualised within the framework of positive psychology, emphasising the cultivation of human strengths and the attainment of optimal performance, rather than the identification of weaknesses and malfunctions (De Waal and Pienaar, 2013). This perspective aligns engagement with the broader positive organisational behaviour paradigm (Van Zyl, et al., 2020).). Furthermore, they stated that engagement refers to the concept of establishing a favourable connection and achieving peak performance within the professional setting, specifically in relation to one's overall well-being. This entails exhibiting elevated levels of energy, active participation, and dedication towards one's job (Dixit, & Narendran,2019), According to Van Zyl, et al., (2020), engagement can be defined as a favourable state of well-being or satisfaction in relation to one's work. Engaged personnel exhibit elevated levels of energy, demonstrate enthusiasm towards their work, and display a strong sense of affiliation with it.

Based on the literature research, six distinct categories of work-related engagement have been identified: job engagement, organisation engagement, personal engagement, burnout/engagement, work engagement, and staff engagement. According to Fulmore, (2023),there is a reported correlation between employee engagement and the attitudes, intentions, and behaviours of employees. Additionally, it has been suggested that job engagement has the ability to positively impact the firms that employ engaged individuals. Kahn's (1990, as cited by Nusrat, (2021) research delineated three psychological factors, namely psychological meaningfulness, psychological availability, and psychological safety, which influence individual involvement within work environments.

According to Nusrat (2021), psychological "meaningfulness" can be understood as the subjective perception of receiving a reciprocal benefit in terms of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy invested. On the other hand, "psychological availability" refers to an individual's preparedness and self-assurance to actively participate in their work role. Engaging in extracurricular activities might divert individuals' attention and diminish their psychological readiness for their professional responsibilities. These activities, together with the time commitments they require, have the potential to divert an individual's attention, so hindering their ability to concentrate on their assigned work. Psychological safety is defined as the subjective perception of individuals feeling comfortable and secure in expressing their authentic selves, utilising their full range of talents and expertise within their respective roles, without the apprehension of facing ridicule or adverse outcomes (Sjöblom, 2022).

Nagori (2019) identified four key enablers/drivers of successful engagement:

(i)Leadership: It is the establishment of a robust strategic narrative that garners extensive ownership and commitment from managers and employees across all organisational levels. The narrative provides a coherent account of the objectives and underlying rationale

of an organisation, elucidating its overarching vision, and delineating the ways in which individual members contribute to the realisation of such objectives. Employees possess a lucid perception of the connection between their occupational responsibilities and the overarching story, thereby comprehending the contextual relevance of their work. The aforementioned objectives and principles are evident in a robust, open, and unequivocal corporate culture and *modus operandi*.

(ii)Engaging managers: Managers who actively participate in the organisational culture play a major role through promoting facilitation and empowerment, rather than exerting control or imposing restrictions on their workforce. The organisation demonstrates a strong commitment to valuing and respecting their employees, while also prioritising the development, growth, and recognition of the skills and abilities of their managerial team. According to Nagori (2019), the primary focus of their approach is to regard their personnel and teams as individuals with human qualities, rather than simply as "human resources."

(iii)Voice: An "effective and empowered employee voice" refers to the active solicitation of employees' perspectives and opinions. Individuals perceive that their voices are heard and acknowledged, thereby recognising the significance and impact of their thoughts. Individuals express their opinions and question prevailing norms when it is deemed suitable. The company has a notable emphasis on attentive listening and prompt responsiveness, facilitated by proficient communication.

(iv)Integrity: Integrity refers to the alignment of behaviour within an organisation with its declared ideals, resulting in the establishment of trust and the cultivation of a sense of integrity. According to Nagori (2019), it is imperative for organisations to demonstrate trust and authenticity by ensuring that the principles they proclaim are genuinely practised. In other words, there should be no disparity between the rhetoric and the actual implementation of these beliefs.

Dimensions and Factors of Employee Engagement

According to Obuobisa-Darko (2019)), employee engagement encompasses three dimensions. These dimensions include a physical component, which involves being actively involved in tasks and displaying vigour and a positive affective state. Additionally, there is a cognitive component, which entails being alert at work and experiencing absorption and involvement. Lastly, there is an emotional component, which involves feeling connected to one's job and colleagues, and demonstrating dedication and commitment. Contemporary organisations are placing emphasis on employee engagement and its related determinants, as they anticipate employees to exhibit engagement, proactivity, dedication to elevated performance standards, and assume accountability for their personal growth (Delina, 2020).

Na-Nan (2020) asserts that the problem of employee engagement holds significant importance for South Africa, as it is crucial for the country's advancement in the competitive landscape. For a considerable period, South African firms have faced persistent negative opinions from the international community over their subpar performance and lack of competitiveness. These perceptions have been exacerbated by the country's heavy dependence on the mining sector. Since 1994, there has been a gradual improvement in this perception. However, moving forward, it is necessary for businesses to exhibit greater urgency in order to achieve additional success. Employee engagement is a crucial aspect that significantly impacts several macro and micro concerns within the economy, corporate productivity, and sustainability of a nation (Baran and Sypniewska, 2020).

According to Delina (2020), employee engagement is a crucial determinant of success for organisations, and on a broader scale, it serves as a more significant distinguishing factor between prosperous and less successful nations. There is an undeniable need for South African businesses to reevaluate their major asset, namely its workforce, in order to achieve a level of enterprise comparable to that of economies such as China. It is worth acknowledging that South Africa faces several significant factors that pose challenges to employee engagement. These include the insufficient development of leadership skills within companies, the limited availability of essential talent, labour disputes, the sluggish pace of transformation, and external factors such as high poverty rates, unemployment, and inadequate education. All of these factors have a consequential impact on employee engagement. However, it can be argued that South Africa does not possess a special uniqueness when compared to other countries worldwide. As a member of the global community, it is imperative for us to seek sustainable resolutions to the various obstacles we face (Na-Nan, et al., , 2020).

The importance of an employee engagement strategy

The essence of the company's design and communication of its engagement strategy is crucial to the success of this pivotal intervention. The engagement strategy encompasses the company's business reasoning and its intended objectives. According to Na-Nan, et al., (2020), the complete integration of employee engagement as a legitimate business concern necessitates a dedicated effort to construct a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. Furthermore, the implementation of a tailored employee engagement plan developed by the firm itself, considering factors such as the company's culture, leadership, and other internal aspects, enhances the probability of achieving favourable outcomes compared to utilising generic items or imitating strategies from other organisations (Na-Nan, 2020). Kamel (2019), asserts that the primary difficulties encountered in the strategic planning, conceptualization, and execution of employee engagement initiatives have stemmed from a lack of clarity on the precise definition and understanding of engagement at the operational level. After conducting a comprehensive analysis of the reactive approaches implemented in organisations' engagement initiatives over a span of four to five years, the researcher put forth the subsequent proposed process:

According to Baran, & Sypniewska (2020), the cultivation of engaged people within an organisation necessitates managerial attention to ten specific factors. It is believed that the implementation of the employee engagement tactics outlined below has the potential to enhance the levels of employee engagement within any given firm. According to Delina (2020), the absence of clearly defined tactics would not effectively foster employee engagement, and these proposed techniques undoubtedly carry cost ramifications for firms. Nevertheless, many studies fail to clearly demonstrate the financial implications of initiatives targeted at enhancing employee engagement.

Creating a culture of employee engagement

According to Na-Nan, et al., (2020), the primary purpose of an organization's culture is to establish boundaries, communicate a distinct identity, foster dedication to a broader purpose, reinforce organisational stability, establish a social system, and serve as a mechanism for directing and influencing employee attitudes and behaviours. According to Baran, & Sypniewska (2020), organisational culture is identified as a significant determinant of employee engagement. According to Baran, & Sypniewska (2020), the culture of a work place is identified as a significant determinant of employee engagement. The establishment of a culture that fosters support within a congenial work environment is crucial in cultivating employee engagement. Employees who receive greater compensation and perks are more likely to experience higher levels of engagement with their respective organisations. In addition, the establishment and pursuit of the organization's mission and vision, the manner in which staff members are treated, the policies governing work, and the maintenance of work-life balance collectively contribute to the cultivation and promotion of employee engagement.

According to Brenyah and Obuobisa-Darko (2017), the connection between organisational culture and employee engagement can be elucidated through the lens of the social exchange theory. According to this theoretical framework, social behaviour can be understood as an outcome of an exchange process, wherein individuals engage in the exchange of goods. According to Brenyah and Obuobisa-Darko (2017), employees are more likely to exhibit high levels of dedication and vigour in their work when they perceive that the organisational culture fosters positive relationships among members and provides the necessary support and empowerment, among other factors.

The role of leadership and management in employee engagement

According to the research conducted by Madi et al., (2023) leaders play a crucial role in an organisation by establishing the overall atmosphere and values. Leadership, on the other hand, may be defined as the process by which an individual exerts influence over a group of others in order to collectively accomplish a shared objective. A proficient leader has the capability to exert influence over their subordinates, hence facilitating the achievement of the organization's objectives Madi, et al., (2023), presented a comprehensive differentiation between the roles of managers and leaders. Managers are responsible for establishing and maintaining order and consistency within an organisation, while leaders are focused on driving change and inspiring their people. The dynamic between a leader and their followers necessitates the leader's recognition and understanding of the individual values held by people who willingly contribute their efforts and abilities towards achieving common goals.

Purwanto, (2020), stated that leadership exerts a significant influence on the level of employee engagement within a company. Nevertheless, transactional leadership imposes constraints on the leader's use of reward-oriented behaviours to enhance employee performance, resulting in transient outcomes. Transformational leadership is a leadership style that has the ability to alter the self-perception of followers, shifting their perspective from being isolated individuals to becoming integral members of a broader collective. When individuals perceive themselves as part of a collective, they are more likely to support and prioritise the values and objectives of the group, hence increasing their willingness to actively participate towards the betterment of the collective. Transformational leaders play a crucial role in organisations by offering a compelling vision of objectives that can effectively mitigate self-interest and limited factionalism. Nurlina, (2022), asserts that the summoning of new and expanded energies occurs inside the ranks of followers. Employees that experience pleasant encounters with their managers demonstrate heightened levels of engagement. According to Malik, Javed, and Hassan (2017), the implementation of the transformational leadership style has been found to result in heightened levels of organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Furthermore, leaders that prioritise the cultivation of relationships and the establishment of trust have been observed to enhance levels of engagement among employees. Furthermore, Purwanto, (2020), established that transformational leaders are not perceived as authoritative characters, but rather as providers of reciprocal assistance towards a shared objective, namely the overall welfare of an organisation.

Transformational leaders exhibit behaviours that have the ability to influence the degree of engagement among their workforces. According to Malik et al. (2017), it is imperative for training programmes aimed at developing leaders to highlight the significance of cultivating transformational leadership skills as an organisational development initiative, rather than solely a human resource endeavour. Organisations are required to formulate comprehensive strategies targeting CEOs, equipping them with the necessary tools to cultivate skills in trust-building, vision-sharing, and fostering productive relationships between employees and the organisation. Leaders that effectively utilise these qualities are generally regarded more favourably by their subordinates, leading to heightened levels of organisational commitment and increased productivity among staff. It is imperative for leaders to possess a comprehensive comprehension of the influence they wield on their subordinates and recognise the significance of cultivating a shared vision for the future in collaboration with each individual employee. Furthermore, it has been shown by Asada, et al., (2021), that leaders who possess a higher level of self-efficacy and exhibit confidence, particularly transformational leaders, are more adept at

cultivating employee engagement compared to those with lesser self-efficacy. Purwanto, (2020), established that), providing employees with a comprehensive understanding of the organization's vision and their role within it can yield a more efficient and effective workforce, extending beyond mere task completion.

Talent mind-set as a critical condition for engagement

Based on the findings of Na-Nan, et al., (2020), it may be inferred that skills exhibit few changes beyond adolescence, indicating that individuals' interests, strengths, demands, and pressures, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects, tend to remain relatively stable into adulthood. This observation suggests that individuals tend to exhibit limited changes in the aforementioned dimensions even after being employed, regardless of the provision of training, coaching, and other developmental initiatives. In order to address this circumstance, it is imperative to recognise and assess talents based on their abilities, expertise, and traits that align with the specific requirements of a business. This is associated with the use of an appropriate assessment tool that facilitates the identification of the optimal alignment between candidates.

Key drivers of employee engagement

According to Sibonde & Dassah (2021), while discussing the public sector in South Africa, it is crucial for managers to possess a comprehensive understanding of the diverse factors that influence employee engagement, along with the consequences of these factors inside the business. Furthermore, the authors assert that, the identification of a comprehensive and universally applicable list of engagement drivers is challenging due to the multitude of individual and organisational factors that influence employee engagement levels. Nonetheless, Sibone & Dassah (2021), outline a set of key drivers that contribute to employee engagement, which include the following:

- i. Trust and integrity: This “driver indicates how managers communicate and relate to their” employees.
- ii. Nature of the job: Is the “job mentally stimulating on a” day-to-day basis?
- iii. Line of sight “between employee performance and company” performance: Does the employee understand how his/her work influences organisational performance?
- iv. Career growth “opportunities: Do employees have future growth opportunities?
- v. Pride in the “company: How much self-esteem does the employee feel by associating with the” organisation?
- vi. Co-workers/team members: This “significantly influences the level of engagement in the” organisation.
- vii. Employee development: Is the “organisation trying to develop employees’ skills?
- viii. Relationship with one’s manager: Does “the employee value his/her relationship with the manager? (Sibonde & Dassah 2021).

Khodakarami & Dirani (2020) mentions the following five drivers as key to increasing employee engagement in a workplace:

- i. Competent managers who are capable of judging the effectiveness of employees and support them;
- ii. Overarching goals that are established within the proper context;
- iii. Employee empowerment to objectively measure the progress or regression of their work;
- iv. The necessary resources for employees to perform their jobs well; and
- v. Sufficient autonomy for employees to do their best work (Khofakarami & Dirani,2020).

Moletsane, et al., (2019) state that managers must do the following in” order to increase the employee engagement:

- i. Align efforts with the company’s strategy.
- ii. Empower employees.
- iii. Promote and encourage teamwork and cooperation.
- iv. Help employees to grow and develop.
- v. Provide support and recognition where appropriate.

The works of Govender (2010), Hlapho (2016), and Morokane et al. (2016) converge in their perspectives, as they collectively assert the significance of certain factors. These factors include the necessity for congruence between employee engagement and organisational strategy, the empowerment of employees, the cultivation of trust, teamwork, and cooperation, as well as the development of employees and the provision of support and recognition for high-performing individuals.

Work-life balance

According to Nurlina, (2020), the concept of work-life balance pertains to the extent to which employees possess a level of autonomy in determining the timing, location, and manner in which they engage in their work. The attainment of work-life balance occurs when an individual's entitlement to a gratifying existence both within and outside their professional obligations is acknowledged and upheld as the prevailing standard, resulting in advantages for the individual, the business, and society as a whole.

Additionally, Nurlina (2020), states that the implementation of effective work-life balance policies and practises can yield positive outcomes for businesses, with certain benefits being quantifiable in financial terms. The benefits encompass enhanced productivity, enhanced recruitment and employee retention, decreased absenteeism rates, reduced overhead costs, improved customer experience, and a workforce that is more motivated, pleased, and characterised by equity. According to Na-Nan, et al., (2020), businesses have acknowledged the fact that employees are members of a broader society, leading to a growing realisation of the significance of achieving a harmonious work-life balance in fostering a more engaged workforce. The prevalence of burnout and subsequent decline in productivity can be attributed to the business sector's lack of interest or neglect in addressing this issue, resulting in heightened levels of stress.

According to Pandita and Singhal (2017), a retrospective examination of the development of human resource management reveals a noteworthy observation: with each progression, the expectations of both employees and employers have undergone transformation. Organisations have transitioned from a paternalistic approach to one focused on guidance and mentorship. Consequently, they now strive to create a loving and flourishing atmosphere that empowers employees to make decisions in a more dynamic manner without encountering obstacles. In the current era of performance management, organisations engage in competitive endeavours, with a primary emphasis on strengthening their employee-employer relationships. In contemporary times, companies are effectively overseeing a workforce characterised by diversity, primarily influenced by the presence of Generation Y. According to Pandita and Singhal (2017), there is a notable difference in the career aspirations and expectations between Generation X and Generation Y employees. While Generation X employees tend to join an organisation with the intention of remaining there until retirement, Generation Y employees do not share the same long-term commitment. Despite the potential benefits of Generation Y employees bringing fresh perspectives and innovative approaches, organisations are faced with the inherent risk of experiencing unwanted staff turnover. This turnover, in turn, leads to significant financial losses amounting to billions of dollars annually.

The importance of measurement and benchmarks

According to Na-Nan, et al., (2020) the absence of measurement in an organisation hinders its ability to attain success. The assessment of employee engagement is crucial in order to substantiate the notion that it is not merely a passing trend, but rather a tangible factor that contributes to enhanced financial performance within the corporate community. Moreover, it is imperative that the instruments employed for such endeavours have characteristics of consistency, simplicity, defensibility, and relevance to the aims of the organisation.

Na-Nan, et al., (2020) identifies five essential domains that can be examined to support organisations in successfully incorporating these metrics within a comprehensive framework, which serves as a guiding tool for management and facilitates performance enhancement. The aforementioned domains encompass aspects such as personnel management strategies, workforce involvement, client contentment, organisational metrics, and stakeholder value. Many firms prioritise the comprehension of their consumers, although they often neglect to spend adequately in comprehending the internal factors that produce client value. Specifically, they tend to overlook the impact of staff engagement on customer satisfaction, perceptions, and behaviours.

Stakeholder involvement

Na-Nan, et al., (2020) asserts that the significance of all stakeholders in the success of the employee engagement concept should not be overlooked, although their contributions may differ. The existing body of literature pertaining to employee engagement consistently emphasises the significant role played by stakeholders in determining the overall effectiveness or ineffectiveness of this notion. The active participation of all stakeholders yields significant advantages, namely, it facilitates education and enhances knowledge acquisition, encourages individuals to internalise key concepts, transforms strategy into a collective endeavour that fosters a sense of ownership, integrity, and confidence. The author also asserts that in organisational contexts characterised by a lack of linkage between the boardroom and employees, the ability to fully leverage the capabilities of individuals and the company as a whole becomes challenging, as the potential benefits of synergy are disregarded. According to Na-Nan, et al., (2020) the cumulative effect of all the components, strategically coordinated, has significant influence inside any given market.

An organisations' reputation and brand

According to Silva, (2020) the activities and conduct of leaders have a crucial role in shaping an organization's reputation, highlighting that financial wealth should not be the exclusive determinant of success. One could posit that the success of company branding is heavily contingent upon the level of employee engagement (Huang (2022)).The concept of branding encompasses more than just visual aesthetics; it also encompasses the psychological and emotional bond that customers form with a company. This bond can only be fostered through the active involvement of dedicated employees who embody the values and essence of the brand. Consequently, employees play a crucial role in the development of corporate brand equity (Potgieter, A., & Doubell, M. (2020).).

Communication

As stated by Na-Nan, et al., (2020) the concept of communication extends beyond the commonly seen notion of a simple two-way exchange. Communication within the framework of employee engagement encompasses various aspects, such as integrity, consideration for the medium used, adherence to suitable cultural norms, and awareness of environmental factors. The author elaborates on the fundamental components of actively participating in respectful conversations. These elements include conveying presence by exhibiting psychological availability and respectfulness, demonstrating authenticity by discarding pretences and speaking and reacting genuinely and honestly, expressing affirmation by highlighting and envisioning others in a positive manner, demonstrating recognition and genuine interest, and ultimately, emphasising the significance of effective listening and supportive communication.

Heath (2020) asserts that the concept of "internal communication" is commonly acknowledged in the literature on corporate communication and public relations as referring to communication that occurs within the confines of an organisation. The author additionally posits that the utilisation of interchangeable phrases pertaining to a certain notion can present challenges for researchers in doing research that is both meaningful and comparable across studies, as well as in expanding upon findings from previous investigations. The aforementioned viewpoint is substantiated by a number of scholars (Na-Nan, et al., (2020); Nurlina; Moletsane, et al., (2019)) who have advocated for a more comprehensive exploration of internal communication, with the aim of formulating a precise and universally applicable definition for use in subsequent scholarly investigations.

According to Meirinhos, et al., (2022) the concept of internal communication may be seen as a multidimensional construct consisting of four dimensions: communication frequency, communication modality, communication content, and communication direction. The author posits that a significant portion of research on corporate communication follows a systematic viewpoint, either explicitly or implicitly. This perspective suggests that internal communication can be effectively characterised by considering four aspects.

Research and Methodology

Within this particular section, the specific approaches and methodologies that were utilised for the purpose of gathering, manipulating, and analysing the data that was obtained within the confines of this particular study are outlined. The study project incorporated both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, a deliberate decision made to capitalise on the unique strengths associated with each methodology. The integration of different methodological paradigms is consistent with the overarching framework of a mixed methods research design, efficiently addressing the study objectives. The chosen methodology aligns well with the exploratory nature of the study, since it allows for the utilisation of several research approaches, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the employee engagement practises employed at Company X. The decision to employ a mixed methods approach in this study was driven by the specific requirements of the research, which called for the simultaneous use of many forms of data. This issue is especially relevant in the present circumstances, as the research required the incorporation of diverse participant cohorts in order to constitute the study sample. The integration of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies is seen as crucial in maximising the representativeness of the study sample (Johnson et al., 2007).

The data collection procedure commenced by disseminating a total of 320 surveys among different segments of Company X, encompassing management, human resource professionals, and general employees situated at the organization's operational facilities in Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Johannesburg. Following the distribution of surveys, a total of 317 respondents completed and returned them, yielding a commendable response rate of 99 percent. The high level of participation seen in this study highlights the strong engagement of most of the selected employees, as evidenced by their active participation in completing the questionnaires. The study instrument consisted of 56 items, each of which was measured at either a nominal or ordinal level.

Within the domain of data quality, accuracy holds utmost importance, while dependability and validity emerge as crucial factors to be taken into account. The assessment of reliability, which refers to the consistency and reproducibility of measures, involved obtaining several replies from the same subjects. According to Creswell and Clark (2017), a dependability coefficient of 0.70 or above is considered to meet the acceptable criteria as per established norms. The following table presents a detailed summary of the Cronbach's alpha scores assigned to each item comprising the questionnaire.

Discussion And Analyses

The present study engages in a debate and analysis that pertains to the researcher's interpretation of the data derived from the investigation. It aims to elucidate the researcher's understanding and significance attributed to the findings regarding employee engagement within the paint manufacturing business in South Africa. This section provides a concise overview of the biographical attributes of the participants. The following table provides an overview of the gender distribution across different age groups.

Table 1: Gender distribution by age

Age		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
20 – 25	Count	5	9	14
	% within Age	35.7%	64.3%	100.0%
	% within Gender	8.1%	3.5%	4.4%
	% of Total	1.6%	2.8%	4.4%
26 – 30	Count	10	48	58
	% within Age	17.2%	82.8%	100.0%
	% within Gender	16.1%	18.8%	18.3%
	% of Total	3.2%	15.1%	18.3%
31 – 35	Count	10	72	82
	% within Age	12.2%	87.8%	100.0%
	% within Gender	16.1%	28.2%	25.9%
	% of Total	3.2%	22.7%	25.9%
36 – 40	Count	10	44	54
	% within Age	18.5%	81.5%	100.0%
	% within Gender	16.1%	17.3%	17.0%
	% of Total	3.2%	13.9%	17.0%
> 40	Count	27	82	109
	% within Age	24.8%	75.2%	100.0%
	% within Gender	43.5%	32.2%	34.4%
	% of Total	8.5%	25.9%	34.4%
Total	Count	62	255	317
	% within Age	19.6%	80.4%	100.0%
	% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	19.6%	80.4%	100.0%

In general, the proportion of males to females was almost 4:1 (80.4%: 19.6%) ($p < 0.001$). Among those aged 31 to 35 years, the proportion of males was found to be 87.8 percent. Among the male population only, a notable proportion of 28.2 percent fell within the age range of 31 to 35 years. The demographic group consisting of males aged 36 to 40 years accounted for 22.7 percent of the overall sample. In the age cohort ranging from 36 to 40 years, the proportion of males was 81.5 percent. Among the male population alone, a proportion of 17.3 percent fell within the age range of 36 to 40 years. The demographic group consisting of males aged 36 to 40 years accounted for 13.9 percent of the overall sample. The age distributions exhibited dissimilarity, with a significantly higher proportion of responders under the age of 40 ($p < 0.001$). The present discovery aligns with the assertion made by Martins (2018) that most South African enterprises employ individuals under the age of 40. This implies that data was gathered from the organization's most engaged and aware population in relation to its activities.

Table 2: Organisational commitment and employee engagement

Statements	Q2 N	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Chi Square
		Co unt	Row N %	Co unt	Row N %	Co unt	Row N %	Co unt	Row N %	Co unt	Row N %	p-value
I am excited with the vision of company X	Q2 .1	15	11.6 %	22	6.9 %	80	3.6 %	153	63.1 %	47	14.8 %	< 0.001
I am excited with the mission of company X	Q2 .2	12	3.8 %	23	7.3 %	80	25.3 %	149	47.2 %	52	16.5 %	< 0.001
I am excited with the goals of company X	Q2 .3	11	3.5 %	25	7.9 %	70	22.2 %	160	50.8 %	49	15.6 %	< 0.001
I am excited with the aims of company X	Q2 .4	13	4.1 %	18	5.7 %	84	26.8 %	148	47.1 %	51	16.2 %	< 0.001
My values are in line with the values of company X	Q2 .5	13	4.1 %	23	7.3 %	57	18.0 %	151	47.8 %	72	22.8 %	< 0.001
Top management communicates the vision of company X	Q2 .6	21	6.6 %	30	9.5 %	95	30.0 %	130	41.0 %	41	12.9 %	< 0.001
Top management communicates the mission of company X	Q2 .7	16	5.1 %	33	10.5 %	88	27.9 %	138	43.8 %	40	12.7 %	< 0.001

When participants were surveyed regarding their views on the relationship between organisational commitment and employee engagement at company X, it was found that 63.1% agreed, 11.6% disagreed, and 3.6% remained neutral regarding their excitement towards the vision of company X. The statistical analysis revealed a significant relationship, with a p-value of 0.001. Similarly, 60.7% agreed, 11.1% disagreed, and 3.6% remained neutral regarding their excitement towards the mission of company X, with a significant relationship indicated by a p-value of 0.001. Consistent results were found across all themes examined in the study on the impact of organisational commitment on employee engagement. Specifically, the statements used in the investigation elicited significantly higher levels of agreement compared to levels of disagreement, although the latter were still greater than the levels of disagreement. None of the assertions evoked substantial degrees of disagreement, and none of the statements elicited answers indicating strong agreement or strong disagreement. These findings are substantiated by qualitative evidence indicating that employees consider their organisation in terms of its vision, purpose, goals, aims, values, and vision as being actively involved in the organisation. The obtained scores provide evidence of the strength and dependability of the research instrument, confirming the stability and logical consistency of the questionnaire items. This, in turn, enhances trust in the data gathered and subsequently examined in this study.

Conclusions

The current study sought to address a significant gap in the existing research by investigating the participation of employees in the paint manufacturing industry, which has received relatively less attention in this field of study. This research, conducted in the South African setting, makes substantial contributions to the comprehension of employee engagement techniques and practices in the paint manufacturing industry. The results indicate a positive and interrelated relationship between several facets of employee engagement, emphasising the significance of implementing a comprehensive approach to foster engagement.

The results underscore the need of cultivating an organisational culture that is in harmony with the values and convictions of all staff members, especially within the framework of a heterogeneous workforce. The report suggests implementing employee engagement surveys throughout the company to have a more thorough understanding of engagement dynamics.

This report provides valuable information tailored specifically for the paint manufacturing industry in South Africa. Organisations in this industry can use the research findings to enhance their employee engagement activities, successfully addressing the specific challenges they encounter and the different backgrounds of their employees. The study emphasises the need of creating an organisational culture that successfully matches the varied backgrounds of all staff members. The concept can be implemented in several sectors, emphasising the importance of cultural inclusivity to improve employee involvement. It is strongly recommended to conduct employee engagement surveys extensively in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of engagement dynamics. The practical implication might potentially be applied across several businesses as a tactic for continuous monitoring and improvement of employee engagement. The consequences of these findings can be applied not only to the paint manufacturing industry in South Africa, but also to companies in other sectors that aim to improve their employee engagement efforts and, as a result, better their overall performance and competitiveness. The results can be a great asset for industry stakeholders and organisations aiming to enhance their employee engagement strategies and, consequently, their overall performance and sustainability. Amidst the persistent difficulties and uncertainties in the paint manufacturing industry, the focus on employee engagement becomes a vital factor in guaranteeing the prosperity and expansion of the organisation.

However, it is important to acknowledge that this research, similar to all empirical studies, has inherent limitations. The study focused on the operational facilities of the company situated in Durban, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Johannesburg, South Africa. It is crucial to acknowledge that the findings may have restricted applicability to different regions or businesses. In addition, the study employed survey data, a methodology that is vulnerable to respondent bias and may not fully capture the complex consequences of implementing employee engagement.

Although this study offers vital insights into employee engagement in the paint manufacturing industry, it is crucial to recognise its limits and suggest areas for future research:

- i. The study's sample size was constrained to a certain geographic area and a sole entity (Company X). Future study should strive to obtain a larger and more diverse sample in order to improve the applicability of the findings to a wider array of paint production enterprises and geographic areas.
- ii. In order to gain a deeper comprehension of the distinct difficulties and possibilities within the paint manufacturing domain, researchers may undertake comparative analyses encompassing other sectors. This would facilitate the identification of industry-specific characteristics that impact employee engagement.
- iii. Employee engagement is a fluid term that can evolve over time. Longitudinal studies that monitor employee engagement within the same organisations over a prolonged duration can offer valuable insights into patterns, fluctuations throughout the year, and the effects of actions.
- iv. External factors including as economic conditions, industry developments, and societal changes have an impact on employee engagement. Future research should take into account these external variables in their analysis to offer a more comprehensive perspective on the factors that influence involvement.
- v. Including worldwide comparisons in the research scope would yield useful insights into cultural and geographical disparities in employee engagement methods.
- vi. Studying the reactions of the paint manufacturing business and its workers to crises, like as economic downturns or pandemics, can offer significant insights into the effectiveness of engagement techniques.
- vii. Examining the impact of cultural differences on employee engagement in a diverse workforce across different countries and cultures in the sector could be an important area for future research. By recognising and examining these limitations, and also pursuing these possible areas of future research, scholars and industry stakeholders can improve our understanding of employee engagement in the paint manufacturing industry and develop more effective strategies for fostering a motivated and dedicated workforce.

Acknowledgement

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, T.M., C.C. and W.M.; methodology, T.M., W.M. validation, C.C.; formal analysis, T.M. and W.M.; investigation, C.C.; resources, T.M.; writing—original draft preparation, T.M.; writing—review and editing, W.M., T.M. and C.C.

Funding: This research was funded by Vaal University of Technology.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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