

**INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A STUDY
WITHIN THE BANKING SECTOR**

By

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on investigating the impact learning and development has on employee engagement. The research used a company in the banking sector as case study. This research focused on finding results to 3 main objective questions: (a) to discuss the nature of a properly defined learning and development practice as well as identify some existing methods of learning and development practices that exist in organizations. (b) to ascertain if there is a correlation, and what correlation there is between learning and development practices and enhanced level of employee engagement; and (c) to observe and analyze if there are other contributing influences on employee engagement, and if so, how they impact employee engagement.

In an attempt to respond to these objectives questions, a review of literature was carried out to review existing literatures to consider any findings of previous researchers. The review showed that most researchers agree that Learning and Development have a positive impact on Employee Engagement. However, this assertion comes with various opinions attached. For example, some consider Learning and Development as the most important Employee engagement factor, while some others simply agree that Learning and Development contributes to Employee Engagement without enquiries into its level of impact. A research methodology was also fully discussed in this research work, to show and explain the method that was used to carry out a survey. The analysis of the results obtained from the survey was also considered, after which the results, recommendations and conclusions were analyzed, in line with the findings of the research.

The research found that Learning and Development positively impacts Employee Engagement, however Learning and Development is not the most important engagement

factor for employees, although it contributes significantly to engagement of employees. Instead, employees are more motivated by some other factors such as management, remuneration, interaction with colleagues, to mention but a few.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The dynamic realities of organizations have challenged the traditional view of employee engagement (Nikolova *et al.*, 2019). In view of the fact that competitiveness, rapid innovation and continuous change have taken place and dominating the current market, the focus shifted from the skills of employees to their ability to adapt to new organizational challenges (Nikolova *et al.*, 2019). The fast-improving environment challenges the classical view of the employee-organization relationship, particularly as regards the level of activity expected from employees (Wilson, 2010) and the need to achieve more with fewer employees (Wilson, 2010). As a result, the concept of employee engagement, characterized by high energy and deep commitment, has been introduced into literature as a potentially optimal means of redefining employee-organization relationships (e.g. Bakker *et al.*, 2011; Vigoda-Gadot *et al.*, 2013).

In addition, Eesley (2016) believes that human capital can be considered as one of the essential needs of an organization to function and grow. Even where the organization is one mainly run by robots; humans are needed to setup these robots as well as to ensure maintenance of same. Hence, every organization need to acquire, retain and keep a motivated/engaged workforce which would be a tool towards achieving organizational goals (Armstrong, 2011). Amongst other things such as recruitment and selection, strong compensation and benefit strategies, etc., this also involves taking necessary steps to develop the inherent capabilities of staff by providing learning and development schemes (Armstrong, 2017). These schemes aim towards maintaining employee engagement which in turn ought to contribute to organizational growth. The need to optimize the engagement of employees

towards achieving the aims and objectives of the organization cannot be over emphasized (Khalil *et al*, 2019).

Accordingly, this study focuses on the learning and development at the workplace as a resource that enhances the employee engagement. In addition, the literature increasingly sees the learning climate as a key element in providing an advantage to organizations and as a currency for the efficiency of employees (e.g. Salciuviene, 2019). As such, the necessity of this study cannot be over emphasized.

In addition, when employees are selected and recruited, it is of essence to develop and secure the engagement of such employees, while aiming to make them a better fit for their job and for the organization (Merry, 2014). On the other hand, it would not be beneficial for the organization, if considerable money and time is invested into tailoring learning and development scheme for the workforce, and unfortunately, the benefits of this investment is not clearly seen among the workforce. This gives an insight as to why there is an unavoidable need to ensure learning and development schemes are indeed effective in the workplace; Hence, giving rise to the essence of this study, which seeks to examine how effective learning and development strategies are on employee engagement.'

This dissertation proposes to test the interacting influences of learning and development practices on employee engagement, using a company in the banking sector as case study.

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In every work industry, organizations compete vigorously for clients as a result of very high competition related to the likelihood of gaining or losing clients. Thus, it is expected that

these organizations put in sufficient efforts towards surviving the competition in the industry. Learning and development (L&D) is an important factor that could largely determine whether an organization is able to maintain its market value and survive competition in its industry (Cattell, 2007). It is usually aimed at strengthening skills that employees need to improve their engagement and productivity as well as help ensure employees remain qualified for their jobs (Presbitero, 2017). It is an important factor that contributes largely to the profitability of an organization (Albercht et al, 2015). As such, it is very important to check regularly and ensure the L & D programs put in place are in actual fact, contributing positively to employee engagement.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Learning/training and development are defined as strategic knowledge and experience that show employees how to carry out their existing and future tasks more effectively (Khalil *et al*, 2019). Improving the performance and engagement of employees in the workplace is central to this process. Learning is achieved through training and development tools that translate into organizational resources that people learn. As a result, performance contributes to the development of the organization (Khalil *et al*, 2019). Learning and development activities are considered to be one of the most universal methods of improving the productivity, engagement and performance of the employees in an organization. It is also an important administrative function for the human resource management (HRM). In 2012, the United States spent \$164.2 billion on training and development programs (Sitzmann, 2015).

Some researchers (Amadi, 2014; Ibrahim *et al*, 2017; Na-Nan & Sanamthong, 2019; Calvo & Reio, 2018) studied the relationship between training and development and employee performance, and found that employee performance is indeed affected positively by training and development in the workplace. Employee performance and employee engagement (which

is the focus of this research work) are two different terms, and thus could be impacted differently by training and development. According to Jin and McDonalds (2016) employee engagement is increased through supervisor support in the workplace. Furthermore, Hansen *et al* (2014) posited that employee engagement is fully associated with interpersonal leaders, employee health and wellbeing. While Soni and Mehta (2020) found that there exists a link between employee engagement and internal corporate social responsibility through with organizational trust. Cayanan (2019) discovered that almost all leadership styles have significant relationships with employee engagement. Cayanan (2019) further suggested that leadership training programs should be regularly implemented to maintain and improve employee engagement.

This study would contribute reasonably to general field of research. Most studies, such as discussed above have focused on examining and testing the effect of training and development on various factors (relating to human resources), such as employee performance, motivation, employee loyalty, leadership, as well as productivity, etc., using variety of industries as survey, whereas this study focuses on learning and development.

Additionally, this study will help organizations better understand what a properly defined learning and development scheme entails, the importance of same, as well as how learning and development impacts employee engagement. The study would achieve this by attempting to measure the impact learning and development has on employee engagement, and this impact would be compared vis-à-vis other factors of engagement on the other hand. Again, the study would be useful to investors and potential employees, who may draw some criteria for assessing brands' employee engagement and be able to identify with a growing organization as a result of a commendable employee engagement through their learning and

development program. A promising employee engagement as a result of effective learning and development could encourage more investors to invest in an organization (Brook, 2019).

Moreover, studies on the effect of job training, the job satisfaction level of employees and their intention to stay with the organization by Huang and Su (2016), found that training and development of employee work as a platform for providing a sense of success and progress in employees and also work as a powerful tool to shape the attitude and motivation of employees towards work hence improving employee engagement level in process.

A recent study by Afroz, as cited by Siddiqui and Sahar (2019), focused on employee engagement in the banking sector in the Bangladesh. The result showed that most of the respondents were regular participants in training programs organized by their respective employer banks. Most of those trained believed that the training they received makes them more engaged, satisfied and motivated to work in their respective banks. This disclosure is evidenced by the study's hypothesis that job training in the banking sector has a very strong and positive relationship to employee engagement.

However, Afroz's study, as described by Siddiqui and Sahar (2019) differs from this research work in that Afroz studied the relationship of training on employee engagement, while this work seeks to study the impact of learning (a much wider context than training) and development on employee engagement, using a company in the banking sector as case study. Thus, this research work considers other factors that concerns employee development, hence, not being streamlined to training only.

The goal of this study is to add to existing literature on the pivotal role of learning and development on employee engagement. Hence, this research work will attempt to fill this gap by examining how employee engagement is impacted by learning and development programs for both employees and key role players in the organization. Building on this, this study will contribute to existing research, however, focusing fully on examining learning and development activities as it affects employee engagement, while using a company in the banking sector as sample population. The name of this company has been withheld throughout this research work for confidentiality purposes. However, the official supervisor of this research work is fully aware of same and has permitted that this company be referred to as Bank X for the purpose of this research.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of training and development on employee engagement using Bank X as case study.

To address the overarching research objective, a range of detailed research questions and objectives need to be addressed in the primary research. Some of these questions/objectives include:

- a) To discuss the nature of a properly defined learning and development practice as well as identify some existing methods of learning and development practices that exist in organizations.
- b) To ascertain if there is a correlation, and what correlation there is between learning and development practices and enhanced level of employee engagement.
- c) To observe and analyze if there are other contributing influences on employee engagement, and if so, how they impact employee engagement.

- d) To provide organizations with key assessment criteria for the evaluation of their learning and development program, as well as to understand the benefit of implementing an efficient learning and development program.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will be conducted using a quantitative research method. Quantitative research methods are objective and elaborate and is an ideal method of collecting information which involves the opinion of people (Barnham, 2015), which is well suited to this research. Considering the nature of the investigation in this study, data will be collected through the use of questionnaires, which would be distributed among about 100 employees of a bank who are willing to participate in the survey. The name of this bank is withheld for confidentiality purposes. However, the supervisor assigned for this project research is fully aware of the details of the bank under survey. A descriptive research approach will be undertaken in analyzing and collecting data from the members of staff of the bank so that research quality and quantity can be ensured. Gender equality and will be ensured with the sample, while executive members of leadership will be exempted.

The questionnaire would mostly contain closed ended questions tailored to draw facts that will be used to respond to the research questions in this study. Questions for the questionnaire will emerge from the literature review and some questions would be drawn from questionnaires used to conduct similar studies (Azmy, 2019; Schaufeli et al., 2002). The research methodology employed in the primary study will be more elaborated on in Chapter 3 of this research work.

1.6 DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

This research work comprises of six chapters. Chapter one introduces the research topic, highlighting the background of the study, the significance of the research, the rationale for the study as well as the objectives of the study. This Chapter also briefly describes the research methodology adopted for the study. Chapter two attempts to review and critique existing literatures relating to the scope of the study, hence identifying the existing knowledge, drawing some conclusions from them, and also recognizing existing gaps in between which would form the basis for the primary research. The chapter also sets up the research questions. Chapter Three extensively considers the research methodology adopted for the study, discussing the methods used to gather data and information which is explained in Chapter four. Chapter four covers the report on findings and discussion/analysis of these findings. Chapter five reveals further discussions of arising issues/topics in the primary research in relation to results obtained from data analysis, while drawing conclusions and recommendations, while Chapter Six outlines a list of all sources (References) used in carrying out the primary research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to engage in a study of literature that will consider diverse perceptions of ‘learning and development’ and ‘employee engagement’; juxtapose ideas and opinions relating to these concepts; as well as consider the relationship between both, if any. This chapter would also discuss relevant theories and concepts relating to ‘learning and development’ and employee engagement.

This review will establish a meaning of these two concepts and an analysis of the relationship between both concepts in an organization. Learning and Development (L&D) as a concept will be defined in order to establish its nature in organizations and what it entails. The concept of Employee Engagement would also be reviewed in this chapter, with close reference to existing literature. Both concepts will be differentiated from similar concepts as it relates to human resource management. Various factors influencing employee engagement would be briefly highlighted while bulk emphasis will be focused on discussing the impact learning and development has on employee engagement. This chapter also aims to identify gaps or emerging issues from extant literature, which would form the basis for this research work.

This chapter will critically analyze the impact learning and development has on employee engagement, while subsequent chapters will test (through a survey) the findings uncovered in this literature review, as well as answer to the main focus of this paper.

2.2. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Learning and development (L&D) are two separate words that when brought together, fit within a different context. Zoran *et al*, (2016) describe learning and development as involving the introduction, elimination, modification, direction, and guiding of processes in such a way that all individuals and teams are equipped with the skills, knowledge and competences they require undertaking current and future tasks required by the organization.

With regards to nomenclature, Learning & Development is similar to training and development as well as strategic human resource development. The term has been considered quite indistinguishable from training and development, as it entails similar structures, methods and objective of making sure the organization has the proficient, expert and engaged workforce it needs, which is similar to the nature of training and development (Leitch *et al.*, 2009). Tahir *et al.*, (2014), agrees with this as they describe training as an aspect of capacity building in any organization that is carried out to improve staff performance and to enable an organization to meet her objectives, in line with the nature of learning and development. In essence, these opinions do not acknowledge any key difference between ‘training and development’ and ‘learning and development’ but rather gives both a blanket definition.

In contrast, Bierema and Eraut (2004) consider learning from a wider point of view vis-à-vis training, as they describe learning in the workplace as focusing on both professional education/development (which covers academic degrees, formal course works, attendance of conferences, knowledge acquired on the job, as well as informal learning, to mention a few). Margaryan *et al* (2013) aligns with this view by including training as one of the numerous modes of learning. The primary research would focus on analyzing ‘learning’ from this wider context while studying its impact on employee engagement.

Additionally, Robinson (2018), while stating that learning should be a continuous process, defined learning as being more than attendance of a mandatory course. For some, it is an unending process which gives them an opportunity to quench their curiosity, try out new things and pursue interested areas. People in this category were referred to by the authors as ‘Lifelong learners.’ She added that, the ATD carried out a research sponsored by OpenSesame, and the report of the research, which was titled; ‘Lifelong Learning: The Path to Personal and Organizational Performance’, revealed that, the number one benefit of encouraging lifelong learning, is improved employee engagement levels.

There are diverse variations of the basis/foundation of learning and development in an organization as provided by Stuart (2015). While some define learning and development practices as largely based on organization objectives (Leitch *et al.*, 2009), others believe that it is mainly structured for the development of the personal capacity of the employee by providing the knowledge, skills and behaviors required for sustainable success of the individual (Stuart, 2015). However, Richardson (2019) emphasizes that there is an essential need to tailor these development schemes to suit the interests of the employees. In every case however, it is observed that both the employee and organization’s goals are considered in devising learning and development practices.

Additionally, Engetou (2017) opines that with a properly defined Learning and development program, two features, amongst others should be discernible. First is that employees would see development experiences as relevant to their current work environment; and second, learners need to be self-directed in that they will be active participants in the learning process. The primary research will test this assertion while carrying out a survey at the chosen population sample.

2.2.1 APPROACHES AND METHODS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Having established what learning and development is, it will be necessary to briefly feature some approaches and methods of learning and development. There is an unending list of diverse methods of learning and development. Learning could be through formal or informal techniques (Dunlosky, *et al* (2013), learning directly at place of work (Bierema and Eraut, 2004; Zoran et al, 2016), experimental learning (Manzon, 2020), formal courses, training and development schemes (Spabekov, *et al* (2020) etc.

For more detailed considerations, the figure below demonstrates various methods of learning and development

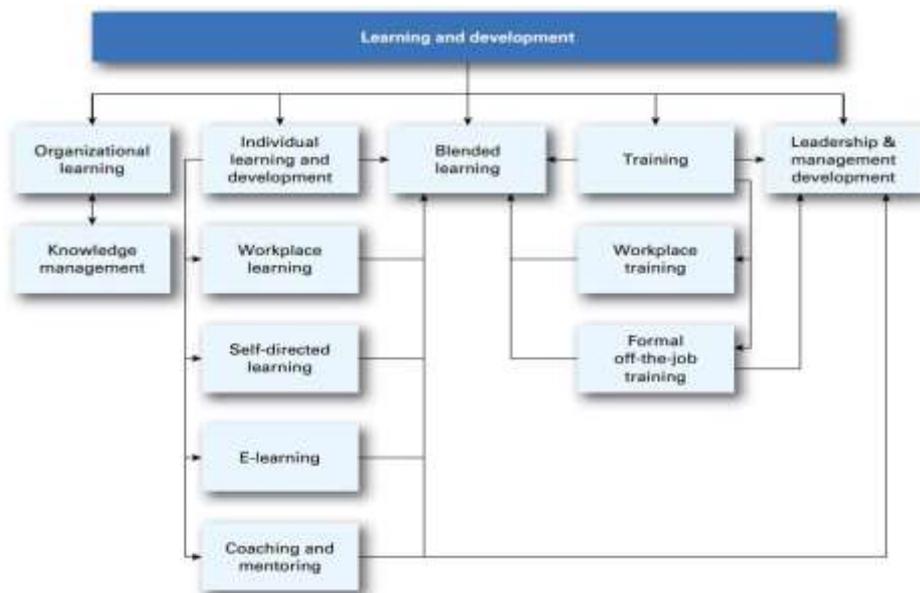


Figure 1: Learning and Development Components (Zoran et al, 2016)

Within any of the above-mentioned methods, an organisation may seek to develop its learning and development program, picking whichever best suits the person, the task to be trained for and the organization's needs at the moment as earlier identified. It is such methodical approach that makes it a cost-effective as well as needs-efficient system (Vinesh, 2014).

Historical writings (Armstrong, 1998, Ruthwell et al, 1994, Jacob and Jones, 1985) and recent research (Zoran et al, 2016) suggest that learning and development can be executed using two broad methods: on-the-job and off-the-job training. While still the same in today's organisation, the above table by Zoran et al (2016) appear more apt on the different methods that an organisation can employ in delivering trainings to its employees. On-the-job training include the verbal instructions and physical observation, in no particularly sophisticated manner and is useful for practicing specific managerial, leadership, technical, manual and administrative skills. Off-the-job training will typically involve an out of office experience with theoretic information and/ or exposure to innovation. These include conferences, brainstorming sessions, case studies, etc. that help staff to get some more technical expertise on a subject.

Such a robust approach from both manner of delivery to decisions on what needs are being met by the training to be delivered will create a learning organisation indeed. While this may be challenging from a point of strategy, it presents the ideal learning and development program in an organisation. An understanding of these approaches helps validate the nature and efficiency of the learning and development program of any organisation. It may be assumed that a learning and development program must be conceived and implemented at any point in time, during the organisation's existence, that the need arises. Upon identification of such program, useful information for this research will be the timing to learning and development initiatives, in implementation and frequency.

2.3 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement can be defined in both psychological and emotional contexts. In both contexts, it is crucial for organizational performance. In the psychological context, employee engagement has been defined by Welch (2012) as fulfilling, positive and work-related mental

state that is branded with vigorous dedication and commitment. Another understanding regarding employee engagement in its psychological context can be phrased simply as: passion for the job and emotional involvement with work. The mental and physical engagements are two other aspects that are determined by sufficient focus on work and willingness to put maximum effort for employer and job, respectively (Macey & Schneider, 2008)

According to Kahn (2010), the employee engagement can be highly influenced by intervention from management. In order to keep this constant engagement with employees to improve the organizational performance, the organization must seek to intervene in the working environment of employees mainly through a comprehensive and effective learning and development curriculum (Kahn, 2010).

With several literatures, there are different descriptions of employee engagement that may make it somewhat confusing to box within a universally acceptable construct. It is important to situate employee engagement within such in order to fully understand how to conduct a research on what its influences are. The above contexts on psychological and physical, if not properly understood may be confused with organisational commitment or organisational citizenship behaviour. There however exist some differences between these related concepts.

Robinson *et al* (2004) state that:

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

Saks (2006) argues that organisational commitment also differs from engagement in that it refers to a person's attitude and attachment towards their organisation, whilst it could be argued that engagement is not merely an attitude; it is the degree to which an individual is attentive to their work and absorbed in the performance of their role. While organisational citizenship behaviour comprises behaviours that are voluntary and informal, leading to organisational profit, employee engagement involves more formal role performance towards improvement of both employee and the organization.

According to Fletcher (2013) engagement is most closely associated with the constructs of job involvement and 'flow' (Beard, 2015). Job involvement is defined as 'a cognitive or belief state of psychological identification' (Christian *et al*, 2011). This differs from engagement in that it is concerned more with how the individual employs him/herself during the performance of his/her job. Furthermore, whilst the focus of job involvement is on cognitions, engagement, according to most definitions, also encompasses emotions and behaviours. Schaufeli (2014) observed that earlier explanations of employee engagement were rather narrow, he called for a broader conceptualisation of the construct that includes the behaviours engaged employees display while striving to achieve organisational goals. He described employee engagement to fall into three dimensions (vigour, dedication and absorption). Vigour refers to the individual's mental resilience and high levels of energy during task performance, and their willingness to put extra effort in their work and to display persistence in facing difficulties. Dedication refers to the individual's sense of enthusiasm, significance, pride, inspiration and challenge, while absorption describes individuals who are deeply engrossed and fully focused while performing their tasks.

2.3.1 Theories of employee engagement

A) Kahn Model of Employee Engagement

Kahn's 1990 model of employee engagement can be engaged on three different levels, which are physical, emotional and cognitive. These three levels are affected by three diverse psychological situations which include meaningfulness, safety and availability. These conditions influence the performance of employees at their works (Sakovska, 2012). Kahn also found that workers were more engaged at work in situations that offer them more psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety and when they were more psychologically available.

Kahn's theory provides a hypothetical basis to discuss why employees become more or less engaged towards their works (Saks, 2006).

B) Social Exchange Theory

The proposal of social exchange theory is that obligations are made through a series of interactions between parties who are in a state of reciprocal interdependence. It is a 'give and take' relationship and perceived fairness between the two parties which dictates how successful the relationship is, hence it is fostered on the principle of reciprocity and indebtedness (O'connor and Crowley-Henry, 2019) AbuKhalifeh and Som (2013) posited that the fundamental rule of social exchange theory is that the relationship grows over time into trusting, loyal and mutual understanding as long as the parties stand by certain rules of exchange. Therefore, one effective technique for an employee to pay their organization is through their level of engagement towards their work. In other words, the level of engagement of the employees is largely dependent upon the facilities and resources which they receive from their organization. The act of devoting full involvement towards their works and committing higher amount of cognitive, emotional and physical resources, is a significant way of every employee to respond to the organizational action (Rutishauser and Sender, 2019). When the employees receive resources from their employer, they feel indebted

to the organization thus becoming more engaged and they involve themselves more into their work effectively to repay their organization. When an organization fails to provide these kinds of resources, employees are more likely to withdraw and disengage themselves from their work (Yin, 2018). Therefore, all of the resources; cognitive, emotional and physical which an employee brings to their works are provisional and its maximum potential is only achieved based on the resources which they receive from their organization (O’connor and Crowley-Henry, 2019). Thus employee engagement involves psychological and emotional connection between employees and organization that paves way for positive or negative performance at work (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013; O’connor and Crowley-Henry, 2019).

C) Kang Model of Employee Engagement

Drawing from the social exchange theory, Kang developed his own conceptual model of employee engagement. According to the Kang model of employee engagement, psychological capital and perceived service climate influence the level of employee engagement in the organization (Kang and Sung, 2017). He further explained that level of employee engagement within the organization influences their level of satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior and the turnover intention. Employees’ levels of satisfaction also influence the organizational citizenship behavior and turnover intention of the employees (Kang and Sung, 2017).

2.3.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Storey et al (2008) write on a number of factors that help organisations achieve employee engagement. From their study, vision, opportunity, incentive, impact, community, communication and experimentation are the elements that an organisation can employ in influencing employee engagement. They discuss training and development under the opportunity header alongside work exposures that allow the employee to feel both

psychologically and physically committed to the organisation's objectives. The primary research will investigate what the employees in Bank X regard as elements that influence their engagement; testing this with the assertions derived from literature as being reviewed in this chapter.

There are indeed a number of factors that affect employee engagement in an organisation and different works take a whole look at all of them or just picks on one of them. One of the aims of the primary research which will be explored is to probe to what extent training and development affects engagement vis-à-vis these other factors.

Employee engagement is one factor that is necessary for the continuous profitability and growth of any company (Kortmann et al, 2014). Osborne and Hammoud (2017) sought to research on the different strategies as used by the business leaders in engaging their employees, using samples of employees as collected in USA. A major premise upon which this research was conducted was the fact that competence, autonomy and psychological needs motivate an individual to work and if satisfied, may keep an employee constantly fulfilled and engaged. This turned out to be validated by the research as three large themes were established. According to the conclusions drawn from Osborne and Hammoud (2017), if business leaders can provide rewards and recognition, empowerment of employees and a bond between leaders and employees, these psychological needs will be largely satisfied, thereby creating an environment of engagement. This is further corroborated by Hynes (2012) who suggested in his work that leaders should employ processes that address employee needs and expectations' concerns, such as corporate awareness, team skill development, among others. It is the objective of this research to identify the contributing influences on employee engagement, using bank X as case study and to consider how these

factors impact employee engagement. While achieving this, this study will also attempt to test the veracity of the highlighted assertions.

Khan, Khan and Khan (2011) opine that employees with more work experience tend to be better equipped with competency and technical skills. However, Learning is not limited to technical skills. It can and should include soft skills like management and leadership training (Ahmad et al, 2014).

A skilled workforce is an organization's asset and organizations must therefore seek to train and develop them in order to improve performance, although cost may be high (Ahmad et al, 2014). With this cost of training comes the benefit of reduced operational cost, increased profits, constructive certainty as well as decrease in company waste (McManus & Mosca, 2015). Islam and Rahman (2016) write that training and development of employees helps the company in building a competitive advantage. The primary research will test the veracity of these assertions as it relates to employee engagement.

In summary, there is a theoretical foundation to explain why employees choose to become more or less engaged in their work and organisation. In terms of Kahn's (2011) definition of engagement, employees feel obliged to bring themselves more deeply into their role performances as repayment for the resources they receive from their organisation. When the organisation fails to provide these resources, individuals are more likely to withdraw and disengage themselves from their roles. Thus, the amount of cognitive, emotional, and physical resources that an individual is prepared to devote in the performance of their work role may be contingent on the economic and socio-emotional resources received from the organisation.

The primary research will test to discover whether employees indeed become more effective and more engaged with their jobs by virtue of the development programs they are being exposed to.

2.4 EMPIRICAL REVIEW: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Several research contributions have been made towards explaining these two broad areas of learning and development for example, Azeem *et al.*, (2013) in their work sought to find the relationship between L&D and employee engagement in the telecommunication sector in Pakistan. They were able to identify key areas of L&D that had a direct impact on how employees stayed committed to innovation in the organizations they worked for within the industry. These include stress management, error management, conflict management and ethics training. These four areas were identified as areas for continuous learning experience as well as strategic future growth preparedness for employees regardless of rank or level and the primary research shall be investigating which of the four areas form part of the L&D content of Bank X as part of identifying the bank's L&D program practices. Osborne and Hammond (2017) suggest that when the employees are committed to the organization, it will be evident in how they innovate to improve the brand and consequently the profit of the organization. This shows engagement both physically and psychological. The primary research will test if this is obtainable in bank X and provide any further component of L&D that affects employee engagement.

One of the theoretic views to employee engagement is its being a transactional consideration in exchange of learning and development (Kahn, 2011). Employee engagement, as a subject, matters to both employees and organizations as the world makes a huge shift in business best

practices (McCuiston and DeLucenay, 2010). Ariani (2014) writes that one of the ways that organizations can seek to take care of its employees will be through the simultaneous implementation of empowerment and training; this creates rippling consequences of a more engaged behavior at work by employees, which also leads to better performance on expectations that are set (Nawaz et al, 2014). In other words, one can allude to the resultant engagement as some form of transactional benefit of the organizations for cost of the learning and development invested in the employees (Otieno *et al.*, 2015). If this is true, it means that where employees are not trained then they can withdraw their engagement. However, from previous research as discussed above, we can see that there are several other factors that influence employee engagement and learning and development is just one of them. This will form part of the objectives of the primary research to understand the extent to which L&D plays a role in employee engagement.

Moreover, Litwin & Stringer (2018) while stating that employee engagement should be the duty of leaders hinted that Employee engagement is one of the major propellers of business for organizational success. Stating that, high levels of engagement promote preservation of talent and increase performance. They aver that, employee engagement has become an apex business priority for senior executives. Business leaders know that having a high-performing workforce is essential for the growth and survival of the business. In one study conducted, business leaders were asked to identify the factors most important to the success of their growth strategy, employee engagement made it to the top three with 71% citing employee engagement as critical. They posited that, human capital professionals need to bear the burden of ensuring that their organizations are learning organizations, and that interventions of employee engagement are not foreign to the business but are part of the organizational culture. They seem to hold quite a contrasting view with respect to the level of impact

learning and developments have on employee engagement. This is deducible from their response to the question; how do you get employee engagement? Employee engagement results from leaders who lead in ways that engage employees. They may not have outrightly extinguished the role of learning and development to employee engagement, but they hold the view that leadership plays a prominent role in employee engagement than learning/training and development.

There is a psychological effect that trainings have on employees in the short and long run. Literature suggests that L&D practices contributes to factors that make employees feel empowered with the right tools to be efficient at work and contribute to the organization's margins, market share, etc. which makes them feel committed and attached to the organization (Sanneh & Taj, 2015). Amanda *et al.*, (2013) argued that through training, employee engagement is increased by promoting a positive attitude characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption. These attitudes promote job satisfaction and commitment to the organization and can be observed in their efforts and observable behavior in social interactions as well as organizational citizenship.

Some characteristics of highly engaged people at their work include the excitement and enthusiasm about their roles, positive energy, devotion of extra time to complete tasks, dedication of emotional and cognitive resources to work and identification of initiatives towards growth and efficiency. These, as argued by Rashid *et al.*, (2011), mean that engaged employees are interested in the success of organizations and identify with it. Employee engagement can therefore be a predictor of employee performance since it leads to positive behavior, such as taking personal initiative, organizational citizenship behavior and employee effectiveness (Otieno *et al.*, 2015). This assertion would be tested in this research work.

Accordingly, it follows that when the organization invests on employees through training, employees show more engaged behavior to their work, leading to better performance outcomes in the workplace (Kang and Sung, 2017). Sendawula *et al* in 2018 conducted a study to test this relationship between training and employee satisfaction and performance with the mediating role of employee engagement, the result came out to be positive. Basically, the paper shows the mediating role of employee engagement which occurs due to training and development of employees and significantly influence the performance level of both: that is organization and individual. The research was conducted using evidences from the health sector. Correlation analysis of the variables indicated a very positive relationship between training and employee performance through employee engagement.

As mentioned above, upon understanding whether the employees identify L&D as a factor influencing their engagement, it will be very important to test to what extent the L&D activities affect their engagement. The primary research will also analyze the psychological and transactional nature of the L&D activities on their engagement in order for management to understand how better to pursue these activities from an employee satisfaction standpoint.

Jadhav (2013) in his study of effectiveness of learning and development programs for employees to discharge their duties and to study how learning and development programs helps to achieve customer satisfaction among bank employees, found that private and public Indian banks undertake learning and development programs for their employees to increase their efficiency. Banks provide training programs to enhance their knowledge and skills to satisfy the customers. Growth of banking sector in India is the result of skilled manpower which is one of the outcomes of training and development.

In addition, Ramakrishna et al. (2012), amongst other areas, studied the role of the human resource department in shaping the employees' engagement. The study revealed the need for the banks to not only make plans, policies and devise strategies, but the crucial role of the managing staff in showing competence and effectiveness in executing the said policies and strategies. They found that the employees had attended more training and development programs, employees strongly agreed about the necessity of training and development programs, majority of the employees rated trainer's preparation as good, employees rated trainers as good in creating learning atmosphere and employees overall rating for the contribution of training and development programs to their engagement was above average, amongst other factors.

More so, Kapur (2020) mentions a couple of other factors, such as making provision of promotional opportunities, giving rewards and incentives, and communicating effectively, that motivate and engage employees and lists training and development opportunities. This will be further discussed below but, it suffices at this point to understand that the training equips individual employees to deliver value to the organisation as well as him and that boosts confidence, thereby creating loyalty and commitment in the employee, towards the organisation. The primary research will test two things in this regard: first will be the various factors that employees believe make them engaged at work and the second will be to what extent learning and development plays a role vis-à-vis any other factor identified.

Purohit (2012) studied the existing policies practiced in co-operative banks to appraise the level of Human Resource (HR) practices, to assess the satisfaction level of employees about HR practices particularly learning and development & reward and recognition of employees.

In Purohit's study structured questionnaire via in-depth personal interviews was used to collect primary data. From large number of banks in Pune region 16 were selected for the study. Information was collected from 30 employees of different level. The study adopted random sampling with regard to the selection of cooperative banks. The study revealed that training helps employees to gain better understanding in the area of Job and this will enhance their stock of knowledge. Extensive training providing the continuous development, such as on-the-job training, training programs and workshops can be a driving factor for the activities in the firm. The paper also suggested the ways & means by which the selected co-operative banks can improve their high performances of work practices.

Nassazi A. (2013) while looking at the effects of training on employee performance, using the telecommunication industry in Uganda as case study, they identified the active roles employees play towards a company's success, stating that such roles cannot be underestimated. As a result, equipping these unique assets through effective training becomes imperative in order to maximize the job performance. The research was based on three case studies of the largest telecommunication companies operating in Uganda. The results obtained indicated that training does indeed have a clear effect on the performance of employees. This primary research will however test this clear effect in relation to engagement of employees.

Siddiqui and Sahar (2019) defined training and development as strategic knowledge and experiences that show employees how to perform and complete their existing and subsequent task. They considered training as an important administrative function of human resource management, and as one of the most universal methods of improving employee engagement, productivity and performance. They advanced the need for increased efforts in designing

required training system, while stating that such approach leads to significant impact on employee engagement. Also, they supported the recommendation that trainings (learning and development) should focus on enhancing peer relationships, understanding of organisational objectives clarity of individuals' goals etc., the research concluded by stating that the implementation of credible training frameworks, will increase the engagement level of employees in a way that it will work effectively for individual and organisational prosperity.

Jain & Khurana (2017) in trying to map the impact of training and development practices on overall employee engagement posited that, employee engagement connotes employee commitment to his or her organization and the eagerness to perform beyond expected expectations has become a target area for management. They hinted that there is a significant impact of training and development practices on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, pride and the overall employee engagement. They arrived at the conclusion that, there are many factors through which employee engagement can be improved, and out of these factors, training and development make up the most important of all factors. The primary research will inquire into the importance of learning and development to determine if it can be deemed as the most important factor for employee engagement, as asserted by Jain and Khurana (2017).

Munoz and Salinero, (2011) showed in his research how Human Resource Development (HRD) needs which arise from different business strategies will depend on, among other things, the purpose and structure of the strategies involved. It considers the motivation for strategic HRD, expenditure and responsibility. The study concluded that a strategic approach to learning and development necessitates increased theoretical rigor, more rigorous evaluation of effectiveness, and resolution of responsibility for training and development.

Sylvester & Patel (2014) while trying to draw a connection between engagement and motivation re-echoed the position that, employees will be more engaged if they feel they are learning and advancing in their role and bringing extra value to the aspirations of the business). They went on to state that the result of a survey carried out by the Civil Service in 2012, showed that amongst the four themes with great influence on engagement levels were, 'Learning and Development'. They asserted that learning and development is at the center of how businesses or organizations should foster engagement; while hammering on the need for employees to feel confident that they would have access to the training which is required of them to stay competent in their given roles.

2.5 The Rationale for Current Research

Most existing studies (for example, Na-Nan & Sanamthong, 2019; Calvo & Reio, 2018) relating to employee development have studied the relationship of same as it relates to other factors such as employee performance, training, motivation, employee loyalty, to mention but a few.

A few others, as considered in this literature review, for example, Afroz, according to Siddiqui and Sahar (2019), attempted a study of training and development and employee engagement, however, this scope can still be reflected as streamlined as it concerns employee development. These literatures, by focusing on training and development, failed to consider other forms of development besides training. Thus, this research seeks to fill the gap by widening the scope in consideration to cover not just training, but learning as a whole.

Although these two terms are inextricably linked, there exists a difference. The Oxford dictionary describes training as involving the giving of information to another through

speech, or written words, etc. while learning is the process of absorbing the knowledge communicated/given in order to grow abilities and skills. From this, one can deduce that learning is a more intense and useful developmental exercise for the organization vis-à-vis training. Perhaps, this creates a more detailed picture of what Richardson (2019) intends when he emphasizes that organization ought to focus on getting employees to engage in learning and development activities instead of merely experiencing same.

In addition, existing studies as discussed in this literature review, which looks into the impact of organizational developmental activities on employee engagement, seem to portray a hypothesis that developmental activities boost employee engagement in the organization. Thus, this research will test this hypothesis through the survey to be carried out in this study. Furthermore, this research work will not only seek to test if organizational developmental activities boost employee engagement but will attempt to find out if learning and development increases/maintains employee engagement vis-à-vis other motivating factors in the organization.

Moreover, while reviewing literature, a critical gap was observed. Most of the studies conducted have stated how learning/training and development have improved performance and efficiency but none stated how it has improved employee engagement with respect to its various dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption). The critical gap between the two could be due to a lack in considering the psychological attributes of employees and how this could further improve performance and efficiency. Theories (e.g. social exchange theory and Kahn employee engagement) have stated the role of giving and receiving in which the organization and employees engage beyond material rewards to staff development. Therefore, there is the need to also fill in the gap of what role learning and development plays in the

engagement of the employees in the workplace, with close attention to the various dimensions (vigor, dedication and absorption).

2.6 Conclusion

This literature review covered the two broad concepts of this research: learning and development, and employee engagement. Learning and development was understood to be one that both serves the organization and the employee in the company, as the employee is prepared with requisite skills and competencies for personal goals related to efficiency at work. Some approaches and methods of learning and development as available in research were also highlighted for more detailed understanding of the topic under consideration.

On the other hand, employee engagement was also considered and brief reference made to literatures attempting to discuss factors that influence employee engagement. This chapter further attempted an empirical review of literatures on the relationship/impact of learning and development on employee engagement, while identifying assertions to be tested for veracity in this research work, as well as identifying gaps which the primary research seeks to cover.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methodology/design used to investigate the impact of training and development on employee performance. Amongst other areas of discussion, the research designs and methods used in carrying out the study are discussed and justified in this chapter. Following the design set out in Saunders' (2016) research onion (Figure as set out below), this chapter will describe the research philosophy, approaches, strategy, choices, time-horizons, and techniques and procedures.

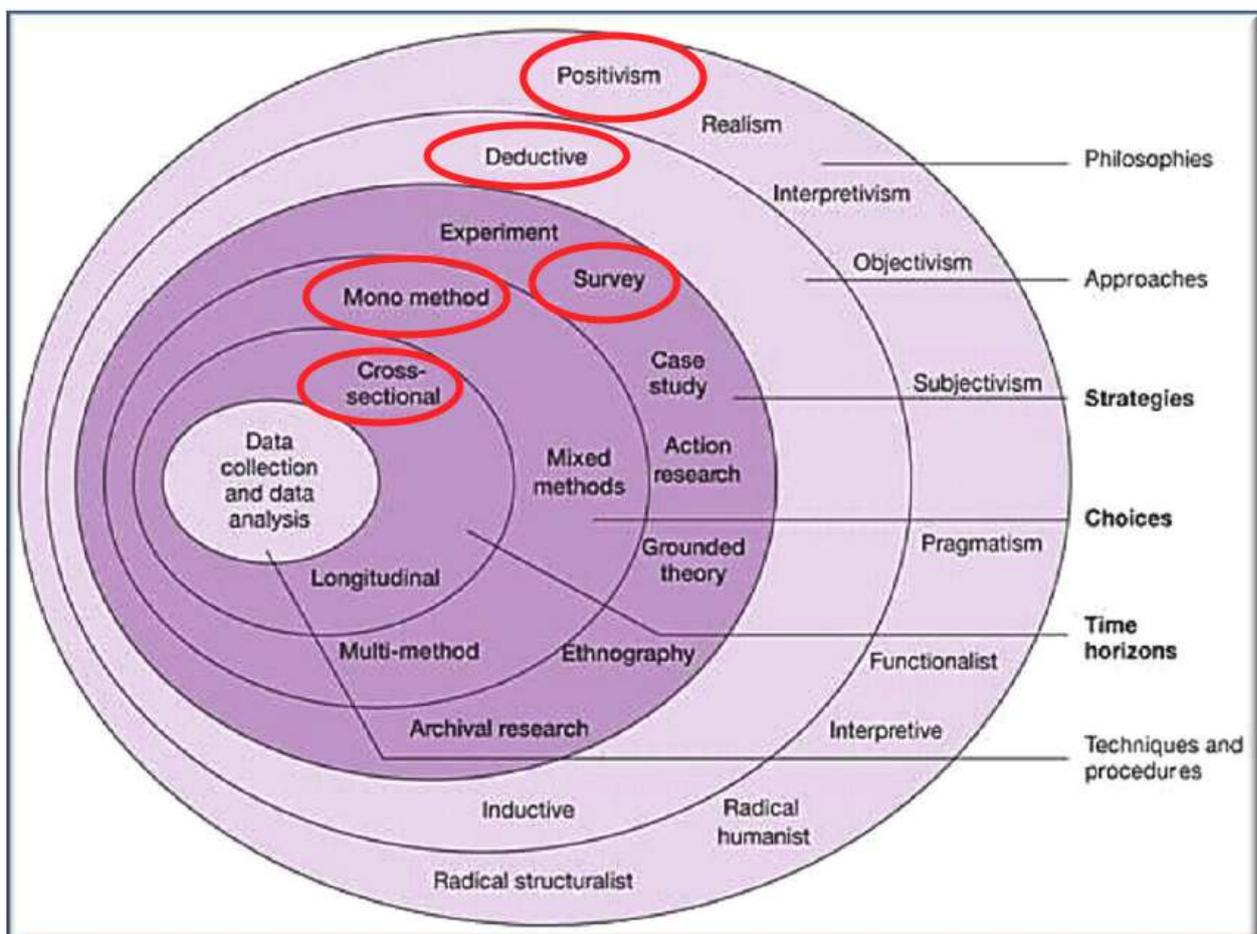


Figure 1: The Research Onion

Source: Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2012). Research Methods for Business Students. England: Pearson Education Limited.

The diagram as depicted in figure 1 summarily highlights the following:

- a. The research philosophy adopted in this study is positivism.
- b. The researcher adopts a deductive approach in carrying out the study.
- c. The researcher uses a survey as strategy for gathering data for this study.
- d. The methodological choice for this research is a quantitative mono method.
- e. The time horizon is cross sectional
- f. The research instrument used for this study is a questionnaire.

The above listed would be discussed in more details in the course of this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Identifying research questions is of paramount importance in every research work (Saunders *et al*, 2019). A solid research question(s) is a fundamental part of a research project, and this entails an outline of the research problems to be investigated in the study (Khoo, 2005; Saunders *et al*, 2019). The research questions and objectives helps readers to clearly understand what the study is about and the processes that may be adopted while carrying out the study (Khoo, 2005; Saunders *et al*, 2019). The research aims and objectives expresses the intention of the study.

The research objectives developed for this research work are:

- e) To discuss the nature of a properly defined learning and development practice as well as identify some existing methods of learning and development practices that exist in organizations.

In carrying out a research, it is of essence to study the research objects in other to achieve a balanced conclusion/result (Saunders *et al*, 2019). This study focuses on exploring the effectiveness of learning and development schemes on employee engagement, using Bank X as population sample. Hence, it is necessary to study the nature of a properly defined learning

and development practice(s) and also consider some methods of learning and development that exist.

- f) To ascertain if there's a correlation and what correlation there is between learning and development practices and enhanced level of employee engagement.

Considering that the major aim of this study is to explore the impact learning and development has on employee engagement; and after having considered the learning and development schemes put in place for the population under study, there is a need to study and inquire into the relationship between learning and development practices and employee engagement.

- g) To observe and analyze if there are other contributing influences on employee engagement, and if so, how they impact employee engagement.

The study's main aim is to find out whether or not training and development impacts employee engagement. However, there is a high chance that the implementation of training and development schemes may not be the only factor boosting employee engagement. Hence, in order to give the research a well-rounded approach and a more solid conclusion, there is a need to discover whether or not there are other contributing factors influencing employee engagement, using the chosen population sample.

- h) To provide organizations with key assessment criteria for the evaluation of their learning and development program, as well as to understand the benefit of implementing an efficient learning and development program.

One major aim of the study is to discuss learning and development in relation to employee engagement critically, to create some assessment criteria that organizations may use to evaluate their learning and development programs.

3.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), the research philosophy is the first step in conducting a research study. Saunders *et al.* (2016) further emphasizes that amongst the various research philosophies there is, the major philosophies include positivism, interpretivism and post-positivism.

Interpretivism requires humans to interpret elements, as such interpretivism rejects an objective view, considers human interest in a study, and this philosophy lend itself more to a qualitative analysis over a quantitative analysis (Saunders *et al.*,2016; Myers, 2019; Sahay, 2016). In contrast, positivism relates to a viewpoint that the researcher needs to concentrate on facts, thus paving way for objectivity (Crowther &Lancaster, 2012; Saunders *et al.*,2016). Positivist study usually adopt a deductive approach while interpretivism usually adopts an inductive approach, however this is not definite (Wilson, 2014). Wilson (2014) further states that a positivist study is purely based on facts and objectivity, and the researcher must be completely independent of the research. Thus, it is safe to agree that positivism analyses factual knowledge objectively through observation and measurements, as stated by Collins (2018) and Remenyi, et al (1998). Furthermore, post positivism seems to be an amended stance of positivism. While positivism emphasizes that the researcher is totally independent of the research objects, post-positivism portrays that it is permissible to allow background knowledge, values and hypotheses of the researcher to influence the outcome of the research, hence rejecting the total objectivity stance of positivism (Panhwar *et al.*, 2017; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Different management studies follow different epistemologies.

In the light of the above, interpretivism and post positivism are deemed unsuitable for this research as this study aims to investigate the effectiveness training and development

programs have on employee engagement. In addition, the nature of this study demands/requires complete objectivity throughout the study and human interest need not be considered. Consequently, the researcher adopts positivism as the research philosophy for the study. The reason for this being that this type of research philosophy lends itself fully to this research process which focuses on investigating the impact of training and development on employee engagement. This research requires a fully independent and objective research process which positivism upholds.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approach simply considers the method of research the researcher adopts in answering the research questions set out in the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), a deductive strategy permits the researcher to develop a theory and hypothesis(s) and design a research strategy to test the hypothesis; while an inductive strategy obligates the researcher to gather data and develop theory as a result of data analysis. Saunders *et al.* (2019) believes that quantitative research is mostly associated with positivism, and uses data collection method and deductive approach to test a theory.

In this study, drawing from theories and arguments as set out in the literature review, the researcher was able to draw a conclusion that learning and development impacts employee engagement positively. Thus, the researcher seeks to test how and to what extent learning and development does impact employee engagement. Following this, the nature of this research process is one which seeks to test an existing theory. Following this discuss, the researcher would adopt a deductive approach in this study which also aligns with positivism as described by Wilson (2014). In addition, the deductive approach is mostly related with quantitative data (Saunders *et al.*, 2019), hence making it most suitable for this study.

The inductive approach is unsuitable because it is used largely to build theories, being largely connected to humanities, and emphasizes on the importance of subjective interpretation of data, thus inductive approach tends to be more rigid in nature than the deductive approach (Saunders *et al*, 2019). This study requires high objectivity for a solid conclusion to be achieved.

3.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

Saunders *et al* (2016) describes research strategy as the blueprint which the researcher intends to follow when carrying out the research. There are many strategies available and each strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages (Haq, 2014). However, some researchers have argued that quantitative data is much easier to employ and is more abridged, making presentation easier, thus most researcher use questionnaires for data collection (Saunders & Tosey, 2015; Haq, 2014). Putting the research philosophy, approach and purpose into consideration, the researcher adopts a survey strategy which would involve the use of structured questionnaires.

3.5.1 JUSTIFYING THE USE OF SURVEY BASED QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey research is defined as “the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions” (Check & Schutt, 2012). Jackson (2011) further defines this method as a method of questioning individuals from the target population, on a topic, and using their response to determine research questions. This type of research allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. Survey method can be used in both quantitative and qualitative studies, and is mostly used to test hypotheses (Jackson 2011). In addition, the use of questionnaire under the

survey method is considerably cheaper than a lot of other data collection methods (Jackson, 2011). Furthermore, the survey research is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. In other words, only a part of the population is studied, and findings from this are expected to be generalized to the entire population (Ponto, 2015).

The researcher chose a survey method, precisely the use of questionnaires, because it best served to answer the questions and the purposes of the study (Fowler, 2013). In addition, this method of survey gives the researcher the objectivity required for this study, as well as a cost efficient method of survey. Again, the survey method gives the researcher a good opportunity to collect data from members of the target population, and use such data to make deductions applicable for the entire group.

3.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Saunders et. al (2003), almost all research will involve some form of numerical data or quantifiable data, in order to help a researcher answer their research questions and address objectives of the study. Research methodology can either involve a qualitative data collection and analysis or a quantitative data collection and analysis (Saunders et al. 2016).

Qualitative data collection methods are exploratory in nature and consider human feelings and emotions. It is also argued that qualitative methods allow for the acknowledgement of abstraction and generalization in a research project (Monette et al., 2010; Polonsky & Waller, 2018). Thus, this method of research allows theories to be developed after the research. Furthermore, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2012) suggest that qualitative research method is mostly used where there is little or no knowledge of a phenomenon while quantitative method

is used to find a cause, verify or nullify some kind of theories. Qualitative research method can be carried out in various ways: through the use of recorded sounds, media, images; As such, it could include case study analysis, the use of interviews, personal experiences, historical texts, etc (Polonsky & Waller, 2018). Following this, qualitative research can be said to be subjective and unstructured. One notable advantage of quantitative research method is its characteristic of accommodating/understanding human behavior in a wider context, as such; it usually provides rich data about real life people (De Vaus & De Vaus, 2013). However, this method is also criticized for being wholly dependent on the researcher's subjective opinion and interpretations, hence, various researchers could end up with diverse or even conflicting interpretations of same topic (De Vaus & De Vaus, 2013).

In contrast, a quantitative research involves the collecting of numerical data, analyzing it through the use of statistical method, and explaining and drawing conclusions from the analysis (Haq, 2014). Bell, Bryman & Harley (2018) considers this method as one that involves the use of data and calculations in collecting and interpreting data, while having an objective conception of reality. In this method, data is gathered, interpreted and generalized across groups of people, in describing a theory (Saunders et al., 2016). Quantitative methods employ the use of questionnaires, experiments, regression analysis, amongst others (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). Quantitative research method is claimed to be employed in many research projects and is advantageous because it is designed to accommodate more data and allow testing of this data, which makes it more reliable and less prone to arguments (Goertzen, 2017; Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018). It is also argued that the use of numerical data to explain theories makes quantitative research method more straightforward (Goertzen, 2017). However, it is conversely argued that quantitative research methods can be misleading and unreliable like the qualitative method because the bias opinion of a researcher may also

creep its way into the data interpretation regardless of the use of numeric (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018).

Based on philosophical/theoretical assumptions and informative research approaches to be used in gathering and interpreting data in this project, the researcher embraces a quantitative mono choice as the methodology approach for this study. The researcher considers the qualitative research method as unsuitable for this study because this study seeks to test theories discussed and derived from the literature review of this study, which focuses on exploring whether and how learning and development schemes impact employee engagement.

3.7 TIME HORIZONS

Research time horizons can either be cross-sectional or longitudinal (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Longitudinal studies are usually carried out over a prolonged period of time, while cross-sectional studies are carried out within a shorter precise time frame. This study is carried out within a specific time frame, thus the study adopts a cross-sectional time horizon.

3.8 SAMPLE SELECTION

According to Saunders *et al.* (2016), a research work must include a research object. However, it is almost impossible to involve the participation of every item with the group referred to as the research object. The goal of sampling strategies in survey research is to obtain a sufficient sample that is representative of the population of interest. It is often not feasible to collect data from an entire population of interest; therefore, a subset of the population or sample is used to estimate the population responses (Ponto, 2015).

According to Taherdoost (2016), sample selection can either be probability or random sampling or non-probability/non-random sampling. Taherdoost (2016) explains that probability sampling means that every item (or individual) in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample size, and this type of sampling can be said to have the greatest freedom from bias, however may be energy and time consuming. On the other hand, non-probability sampling is associated with case study research design, such that the case study is focused on a small sample and is intended to examine a real life phenomenon, not to take statistical references in relation to the wider population (Yin, 2003).

According to Taherdoost (2016), probability sampling can either be a simple random sampling style, a systematic sampling style, a stratified random sampling style, a cluster sampling style, or a multi-stage sampling style. Amongst the various types, Taherdoost describes the stratified sampling style as one where the population is divided into subgroups and a random sample is taken from each subgroup. In this research, the researcher's sample population covered all employees of Bank X. The researcher divided this population into subgroups (comprising of managers and non-managers), such that an equal sample is taken from both groups. Hence, the researcher adopted probability sampling, precisely a stratified random sampling technique for this study. The researcher also intended to achieve unbiased and well considered deductions, thus, sees the necessity of giving every item/individual of the population an equal chance in the sample.

Saunders *et al.* (2016) asserts that in most research works, it is challenging to collect or analyze all data form the entire target group, due to constraining factors such as time limitation, budget, and many times, access to the population. In this research work, the researcher is restrained by the aforementioned factors, including the effects of the COVID-19

Pandemic. Building on this, the researcher aims to achieve the participation of at 100 participants from the population under study, using a probability sampling technique. The survey form was distributed among 300 employees of Bank X and was able to achieve the target of 100 participants, as not all amongst the 300 employees participated in the survey. The age, gender, educational level, level in the bank, and years of work experience in the bank will be measured. The research seeks to test the effectiveness of training and development on the engagement of employees, thus the population was selected to satisfy this criterion. Hence, one can safely say that the convenience sampling technique was also used to achieve the desired sampling number (Saunders, *et al*, 2016).

3.9 SAMPLE DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The researcher employed the use of online survey method (Google Form) to administer the questionnaires among the employees of Bank X, who volunteered to assist with carrying out the survey. Participants' gender distribution comprised of about 48% male, 44% female, and 8% undisclosed gender.

The questionnaire can be found through this link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf3i-BY2UjJPB4D2Fh-xjxsMLju-I_m11et5Xsnam3kAg7n3g/viewform?usp=sf_link, while a copy of this questionnaire can also be found in appendix A of this research work. The first section of the questionnaire notified all participants that participation was voluntary and that data will remain confidential. Ethical approval was taken from NCI ethics committee. The timeframe for completing the questionnaire was estimated at approximately 10 minutes. In the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the research topic, the estimated time frame for responding to the questionnaire, their rights not to answer any question, the

confidentiality and anonymity involved, as well as an appreciation message should they agree to participate in the survey. This survey form was shared with about 300 employees of the chosen population in this research, with a target to achieve at least 100 participants.

The online survey is considered a good technique to carry out the survey in this research work in light of the COVID-19 outbreak. Additionally, the researcher also agrees with Wójcik-Karpacz (2018) who opines that the online survey helps researchers to achieve easier access to the organization, quicker collection of data, lower costs in carrying out research as well as increased anonymity of respondents.

The online questionnaire form amongst other things includes: a) Methods of learning and development program inventory, and (b) Work engagement scale.

(a) Methods of learning and development program inventory

The Methods of learning and development program inventory is a 10-item inventory (as seen in questions 10 and 11 of questionnaire in Appendix A) developed by the researcher to measure the approaches and methods employed in learning and development programs used in bank X. The response pattern was mainly dichotomous (yes or no). Example of the items are ‘have you been trained on stress management?’, ‘is the training method classroom based?’. A pilot study was conducted using 30 bankers from another bank in Ireland. To VERIFY the validity of the instrument developed by the researcher, the research adopted the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This is analyzed and elaborated on in Chapter 4 of this research.

B) Work engagement scale

The scale used to measure employee engagement in this research work follows the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The UWES is the most widely used instrument used to measure work engagement and is a 24-item measure of work engagement which was

developed to include survey questions based on three constituting aspects of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006; Lovakov, et al 2017). According to the UWES manual, vigor seeks to test the level of energy and resilience as well as the readiness to devote effort into work. For example: ‘At my work, I feel bursting with energy’. Dedication seeks to test the sense of significance one feels from one’s work, as well as how proud one feels about a job. For example: ‘I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose’. Absorption seeks to test how happily immersed one is while doing their job/work. For example: ‘Time flies when I’m working’ (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). UWES scores these three highly correlating aspects on a 6- point response format as follows: Never (0), almost never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), very often (5), and always (6).

The researcher followed UWES work engagement scale in carving a scale to test work engagement for the purpose of this research work. However, the researcher modified the number of questions in the survey to achieve an even spread across the three aspects (as earlier mentioned) while attempting to keep the survey brief and concise.

The UWES work engagement has been used in various studies [Pereira & Souza (2017); Wójcik-Karpacz (2018); Juyumaya (2019); Baker & Lee (2020); Martin (2020)] to successfully test/measure and identify work engagement in a workplace, identify job resources that act as a mediator to achieve work engagement, identify the job attitudes of engaged employees, as well as work performance of engaged employees, amongst others. Work/employee engagement was measured in this study with an 8-item scale, being a version of UWES’s scale shortened by the researcher since the sole aim of this study is not only focused on employee engagement but also on training and development and measuring the link between both.

3.9 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

According to Lutabingwa & Auriacombe (2007), there are various analysis softwares that can be used to analyze quantitative data: Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, and Social Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Since the data collation instrument for this study is a questionnaire, which would produce numerical data which needs to be analyzed, the researcher would employ the use of SPSS in analyzing the data in this study. Results from data analyzed would be presented with the use of tables and charts; this would be represented in the following chapter for this study.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS & LIMITATIONS

This research informed prospective participants of their right to participate or refuse to participate in the survey, without any consequences. The response of the participants was automatically saved at the back end of the form, where it was only accessible to researcher. Participants' responses were kept fully confidential and used only for the purpose of this research work.

A major determinant however of a proper sample is the access of the researcher to the respondents (Glasow, 2005). The researcher experienced some limitations while carrying out this survey. This research was conducted during the COVID-19 Pandemic Outbreak, thus, it was difficult to follow up on participants and achieve more participation. With the spread and increase of the virus in countries, including Ireland, there were several movement restrictions imposed which affected access to the respondents for the survey. The virus outbreak resulted in the shutdown of work places and most employees were made to work from home. Due to an increased pressure from work because of the Pandemic, there was a high possibility of many prospective participants overlooking the survey emails, thus affecting participation.

However, the researcher was able to reach respondents via an online method to still allow for a sizeable number for the sample. In addition, the researcher was able to manage the challenge by making the questionnaire as brief as was possible to encourage participation. The researcher was additionally able to pursue several follow up through emails and text messages to achieve more participation. Regardless, the researcher may have been able to achieve more participation in the absence of the virus Outbreak. Hence, the volume of the sample may not be enough data to make a totally conclusive generalization for the findings of this research work.

Theoretical sampling was used to identify available employees that could fill the questionnaire and provide results useful for analysis. This was more described in the previous section, i.e. sample selection, in this chapter.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the research methods, research philosophy, and other research approaches used in research studies, and distinctly pointed out what methods, philosophy and approaches were being used for this study, with justifications. This chapter also outlined the research objectives being pursued in this study, including the methodology adopted for the study, as well as the criteria for sample selection, while also highlighting the ethical considerations and limitations the researcher faced while carrying on this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyze the data obtained from the survey carried out in this research work, in an attempt to respond to the main objective of this research work which is to investigate the impact of learning and development practices on employee engagement. In this light, this chapter will carefully consider the findings in context of the literature review of this research work, as seen in chapter 2.

The data being analyzed in this was obtained through a questionnaire which was created via Google Form (a copy of the questionnaire is attached to this work as Appendix A) due to the challenges associated with the COVID-19 restrictions on physical contact (asides other reasons). The link was distributed to about 300 employees in Bank X, with a target to achieve at least 100 responses. 100 responses were achieved after which the researcher stopped accepting responses to allow time for analysis of the received data and allow for accuracy of same. However, there were slight variations in total number of responses as some respondents skipped answering few questions for some unknown reason.

This chapter represents and discusses the results achieved from the survey carried out on this research work. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to generate the graphical correlations among the various variables and responses in line with the objectives of the research. The alpha Cronbach's measurement will be briefly discussed and used to analyze the reliability of the questionnaire. Subsequently, each objective, as stated and discussed earlier in previous chapters of this study, will be discussed and finding from the survey will be applied to achieve responses to these objectives.

4.2 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Table 1: Reliability Test1

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.484	.465	22

Table 2: Reliability Test2

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.771	.686	18

Before testing the research objectives, a reliability analysis was carried out and the Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha at 0.48 shows the questionnaire is unreliable with low internal consistency as shown in Table 1 above. Majority of the questions were worth being retained resulting to decreased alpha value if deleted. There were three exceptions to this which were questions 1,2,6 and 17 that would eventually increase the alpha to **0.77** as illustrated in Table 2 above and makes the questionnaire reach acceptable reliability. Therefore, removal of these questions should be considered.

4.3 MULTIPLE REGRESSION AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Table 3: Multiple Regression

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.800 ^a	.639	.538	.740

Table 4: Analysis of variance

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	72.838	21	3.468	6.329	.000 ^b
	Residual	41.100	75	.548		
	Total	113.938	96			

Table 3 above shows the multiple regression analysis which was used to test the hypothesis of the study and indicates a multiple correlation of 0.80. Table 4 above shows the analysis of variance that was used to test the statistical significance of the R-square value in Table 3. The ANOVA results indicates statistical significance $F(21,75) = 6.329$, $P < 0.001$ and signifies that the null hypothesis is rejected giving a clear indication that there is definite relationship.

4.4 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES IN SECTION ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

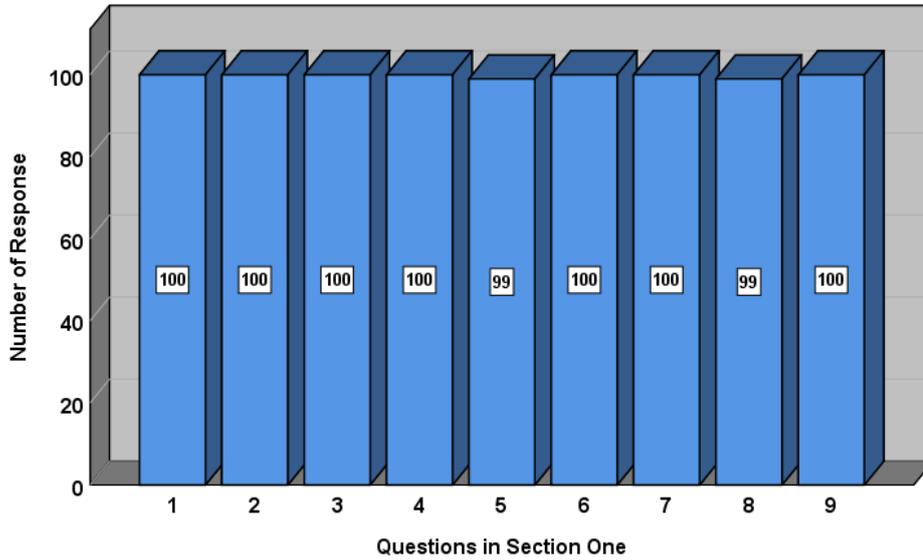


Figure 1: Distribution of Responses in Section One: General Information

Table 5: Analysis of Questions in Section One

Question	Reponses	Frequency
1. What is your gender?	—Male	48
	—Female	44
	—Prefer not to say	8
2. What is your Educational Level?	—Bachelors Degree	50
	—Masters Degree	38
	—PhD Degree	2
	—Other	10
3. How long have you worked for the Bank?	1-5 Years	38
	6-10 Years	44
	11-15 Years	16

	16 Years and Above	02
4. What is your current level in the Bank?	—Junior Staff	47
	—Senior Staff	34
	—Managing Staff	16
	—Human Resource Personnel	03
5. Have you engaged in any learning and development scheme since you joined the bank?	—Yes	92(93%)
	—No	07(07%)
	—Not Sure	00
6. If yes, how often are you made to engage in these programs?	—Monthly	86
	—Quarterly	09
	—Half Yearly	00
	—Yearly	00
	—Other	05
7. Tick the option/options that best describes the process(es) of learning and development programs in the Bank?	—By nomination and agreement	76
	—There is a program for every staff	89
	—Staff sources for training externally	44
	—Other	07
8. In your opinion, are the learning and development programs given relevant to your current role?	—Yes	91(92%)
	—No	07(07%)

	—Not Sure	01(01%)
9. Please pick what kind/kinds of development program you have been exposed to, from the list:	—Management and organizational support programs	92
	—Project based training	87
	—Self development and leadership programs	88
	—Technical skills training	64
	—Other	23

Section 1 of the questionnaire (as seen in Appendix A) contains general questions all tailored towards achieving the aims/objectives of this research work. Figure 2 summarizes the frequency of responses received for all questions in section 1 of the questionnaire. For each of questions 5 and 8 that had less than 100 respondents, it can be attributed to uncertainty of the respondent which was neglected in the analysis.

As shown in Table 5 above, out of 100 respondents, 48% were males, 44% were females, while 8% preferred not to disclose their gender. The results also showed that 50% of respondents had a Bachelor degree, 38% had a Masters degree, and 2% had a PhD degree, while 10% were others (including those without a degree or with degrees below a bachelor 's degree). However, 44% of the respondents had between 6-10 years of work experience at Bank X, 38% had between 1-5 years' experience, 16% had between 11-15years experience, while 2% had worked with Bank X for 15 years and above. The researcher considers this a fine mix of respondents on which to base the results of this survey. The survey also shows that both junior (47%), senior (34%), managing staff (16%) and Human Resource Personnel (3%) participated in the survey.

Furthermore, response from this section of the questionnaire shows that 93% percent of respondents agree that they have undergone some sort of learning and development scheme while at Bank X, while 7% opines that they have not undergone any training while at Bank X. Following this, 86% or respondents highlight that they undergo learning and development in Bank X monthly, 9% claims the learning and development scheme is done quarterly, while 5% are not sure of what intervals the learning and development programs at Bank X are organized. The responses further shows that 89% of respondents believe that Bank X's training and development scheme is tailored such that there is a program for everyone. 76% believes that the learning and development scheme is based on nominations and agreements, while 44% claim that staff has to source for training externally.

Importantly, 92% of the respondents agree that the learning and development schemes (whatever the category) are relevant to their current roles; 7% claim there is relevancy of same with their current roles, while 1% are not sure. Finally, there is a fair spread across the kinds of learning and development programs showing that the various kinds of training and development as listed by the researcher were covered at Bank X, as seen in Table 5 above.

4.5 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES IN SECTION TWO: APPROACHES TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

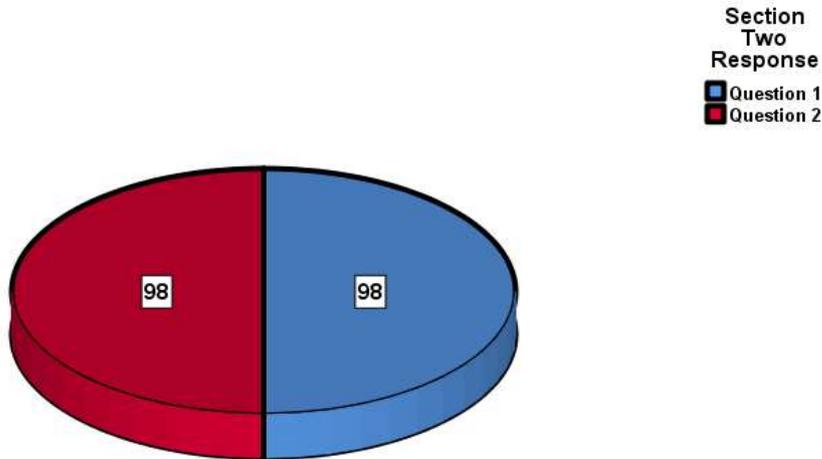


Figure 2. Distribution of Responses in Section Two: Approaches to Learning and Development

Table 6: Analysis on Approaches and Methods of Learning and Development

Question	Response	Frequency
1. Please indicate which of the following areas you have been educated in?	—Stress management	96(98%)
	—Error management	92(94%)
	—Conflict management	93(95%)
	—Ethics training	16(16%)
	—Technical training	76(77%)
2. Please indicate what kind of learning methods you have been exposed to, from the list below:	—Classroom based	91(93%)
	—On-the-job training	94(96%)
	—External conference trainings	52(53%)

–Electronic/Online courses	84(86%)
–Coaching/Mentoring	89(91%)

Figure 2 above briefly explains the number of responses received for the two questions in Section two. It is also important to note that these questions are not mandatory if the respondent feels they have not undergone any of the listed training areas and training methods. The detailed statistics is illustrated in Table 6.

4.5.1 Research objective one: To discuss the nature of a properly defined learning and development practice as well as identify some existing methods of learning and development practices that exist in organizations.

Table 6 above shows the learning and development approaches and methods adopted in Bank X made available for employee. This list may not be exhaustive; however, it achieves a fine mix. The statistics dictates that majority of employees agree to the presence of on-the-job training (96%) and classroom lectures (93%) as learning and development practices used by Bank X. Furthermore, the results from the survey reveals that coaching/mentoring (91%) is also reasonably implemented in Bank X, online/electronic course are not left out as well (86%), while there is an average presence of external conference trainings (53%). This deduction aligns with Dunlosky, *et al* (2013) who broadly categorizes methods of learning into formal and informal, as highlighted in the literature review. This broad categorization absorbs all the various methods of learning and development. For example, online/electronic course is an independent method of learning and development, but can be categorized as a formal method of learning, while learning-on-the-job, being another independent method of learning can be categorized as an informal learning method.

Furthermore, findings from survey carried out in this study, as depicted in table 5 (questions 7 and 8), 89% or respondents claim that there is a program for every staff, thus, one can say that the various learning and development programs are well tailored to suit the needs of all employees. In addition, 92% agree that the development programs they receive are relevant to their jobs. Measuring this with Engetou (2017)'s opinion of what a properly defined learning and development program should be, as discussed in the literature review, two criteria must be fulfilled: employees must find the development programs relevant to their work; and the learning program needs be one tailored to suit the learners to achieve active participation. Consequently, the finding in this study verifies and aligns with Engetou (2017).

4.6 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES IN SECTION 3: MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

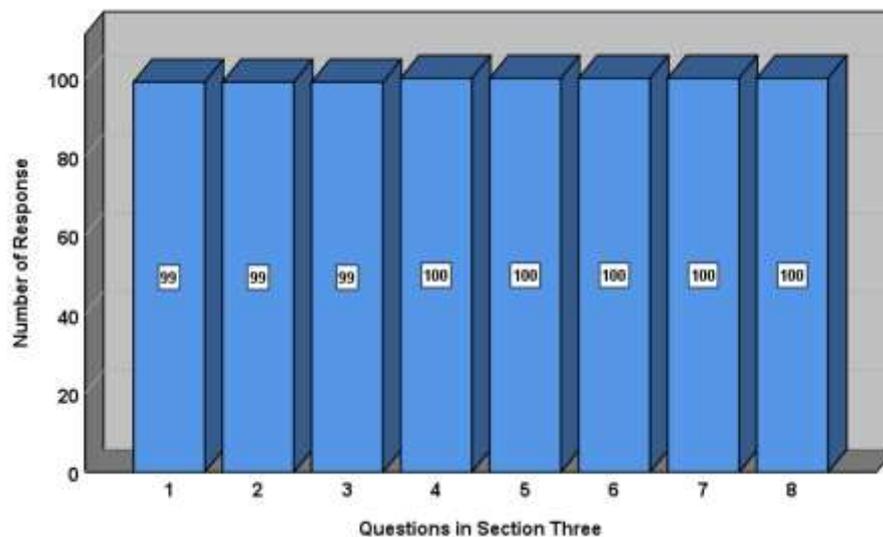


Figure 3: Distribution of responses in Section3: Employee Engagement

Figure 3 above shows the number of responses for employee engagement questions in Section three of the research questionnaire: Employee Engagement. Three out of the eight questions had 99 responses each (as shown in figure 3 above), thus was less than the expected 100 responses which was regarded as null and subsequently neglected in the analysis of employee engagement section of the questionnaire.

4.6.1 MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics of work/Employee Engagement

Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Vigor	3.27	0.68
Dedication	2.73	0.86
Absorption	3.34	0.68
Employee Engagement	3.09	0.62

V=Vigor Scale, D=Dedication Scale, A=Absorption Scale

Scale: 0 (Never) to 5 (Always)

Having conducted the reliability test as shown in Tables 1 and 2, the mean levels and standard deviation of individual responses were analyzed. Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics of the three scales used while response to the items were based on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 5 (always). The responses to all dimensions of the employee engagement exceeded the mid-point of the scale (3.0) except dedication which means a relative high level of employee engagement. From the standard deviations the difference choice in employee's view is low because it fluctuates around +/- 0.68 to 0.86.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of work/Employee Engagement components

Items	Dimensions	Number of			Mean	Standard deviation	Min	Max
		Valid Answers	Missing Systems	Standard				
At my work,								
I feel	Vigor	99	1	3.36	0.630	1	4	
bursting								

with energy.

(V1)

I find the

work that I

do full of

meaning

and purpose

(D1)

Time flies

when I'm

working

(A1)

I am

enthusiastic

about my

job (D2)

When I get

up in the

morning, I

feel like

going to

work (V2)

To me, my

job is

challenging

Dedication	99	1	3.27	0.652	1	5
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Absorption	99	1	3.45	0.689	1	5
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Dedication	100	0	3.36	0.704	1	5
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Vigor	100	0	3.17	0.726	0	4
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Dedication	100	0	1.56	1.225	0	5
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(D3)

It is difficult

**to detach
myself from**

Absorption 100 0 3.23 0.664 1 5

my job (A2)

At my job, I

always

persevere

even when

thing do not

go well (V3)

Employee

Engagement

100 3.086 0.62 1.57 5

V=Vigor Scale, D=Dedication Scale, A=Absorption Scale

Scale: 0 (Never) to 5 (Always)

Table 9: Analysis on Employee Engagement

	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Ne ver	Rar ely	Someti mes	Often	Very Often	Alw ays
1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy	0	1(1 %)	5(5%)	50(51 %)	43(43 %)	0
2. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	0	1(1 %)	7(7%)	56(57 %)	34(34 %)	1(1 %)
3. Time flies when I'm working	0	1(1 %)	3(3%)	50(51 %)	40(40 %)	5(5 %)

		%)		%)	%)	%)
4. I am enthusiastic about my job	0	2	3	56	35	4
5. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	1	2	7	59	31	0
6. To me, my job is challenging	17	40	25	9	6	3
7. It is difficult to detach myself from my job	0	2	6	60	31	1
8. At my job, I always persevere even when thing do not go well	1	0	6	56	36	1

Table 8 shows the descriptive statistics describing the mean, standard deviation and boundaries of the scales adopted, which also gives a clear indication of the high level of enthusiasm, dedication, engagement and satisfaction exhibited by the employee in carrying out their work.

Furthermore, Table 9 shows that over 50% of respondent often feel bursting with energy while on the job; an admirable fraction of the employees (57%) find their work meaningful; 51% of employees agree that they are fully absorbed in the work; 56% claim to be enthusiastic about their job; 59% confirm that they often feel motivated to go to work in the morning; only 9% assert that they often find their job challenging; 60% further pronounce that it is often difficult for them to detach from their work; while an over-average number of 56% agree that they often persevere when things do not go well while on the job. These responses cut across the three aspects as categorized by UWES (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006; Lovakov, et al 2017): absorption, vigor, and dedication, used to measure employee engagement. As discussed in the methodology chapter, employee engagement can be said to be high where these factors (vigor, dedication and absorption) measures high. Judging from these indicators set out by UWES, the employee engagement in Bank X is believed to be high.

From the results of the survey, over 50% of respondents signify that they are fully engaged with their work, they find their work meaningful, enthusiastic about their job, amongst others, while a very little fraction of employees finds their jobs challenging. This indicates a high level of employee engagement. As studied in the literature review, some studies (Sakovska, 2012; (AbuKhalifeh & Som, 2013; O'connor and Crowley-Henry, 2019) notes that employee engagement is not only measured with the physical dedication, but also covers the emotional and cognitive factors. The findings of this survey agree with assertion as the factors used to

measure the engagement of the employees sits through physical, cognitive and emotional considerations.

4.7 ANALYSING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYEE ENGAAGEMENT

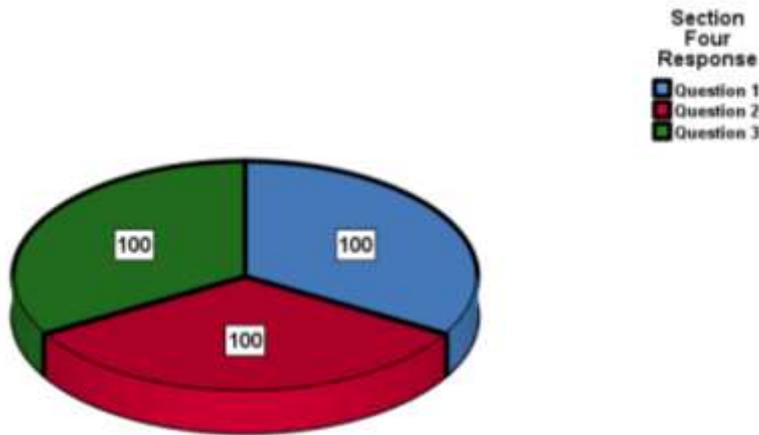


Figure 4: Distribution of Responses in Section 4: Employee Engagement and Learning and Development

Table 10: Employee engagement and Learning and Development

Question	Yes	No	Not Sure	Maybe	Other
1. I am engaged in my workplace as a result of the learning and development opportunities available?	87	10	2	1	-
2. There are other motivating factors that keep me engaged in my workplace asides from learning and development opportunities.	89	7	3	1	-

3. If any, other motivating factors keep me						
engaged in my workplace, MUCH MORE THAN	59	34	3		2	2
opportunities of learning and development						

Figure 4 above graphically shows the number of responses received for the three questions in section four. All respondents answered all the questions in this section that relates to employee engagement on learning and development in the bank. This section was aimed at finding out if there is an existing relationship between the engagement of employees and the learning and development practices in place at Bank X. The section also aimed to find out if there were other motivating factors that keep employees engaged with their work, other than learning and development opportunities. Lastly, the section was tailored to discover if these other motivating factors (if any) influences employee engagement more than learning and development. Hence this section attempts to respond to objective 2 and 3.

4.7.1 Research objective 2: To ascertain if there is a correlation, and what correlation there is between learning and development practices and enhanced level of employee engagement. Table A1 in appendix B shows the Pearson’s correlation which was used to determine the relationship and correlation between learning and development and enhanced level of employee engagement. The significant level was marked with double asterisks (0.01) and in Table A1, it is shown that there is statistically significant linear relationship ($p < 0.001$) existing between learning and development and enhanced level of employee engagement. The direction of this relationship is positive (they are positively correlated) and this implies that a well-structured learning and development practice results in improved level of employee engagement. However, the null hypothesis test earlier conducted is also an indication of a relationship between learning and development practices and enhanced level of employee engagement.

Sendawula *et al* (2018), as examined in the literature review, in their study concluded that learning and development programs do have a positive relationship on employee engagement. The findings of this research agrees with Sendawula *et al* (2018), from the indications seen in the Person's correlation test, as reflected in table A1 (Appendix B).

4.7.2 Research objective three: To analyze if there are other contributing influences on employee engagement, and if so, how they impact employee engagement.

From Table 9 and Table 10 above, there are clear indications that there are other influencing factors that encourage the commitment of employees in carrying out their daily tasks at work. 87% of respondents agree that they are indeed motivated in their work as a resulted of the learning and development programs made available to them. However, 89% suggest that there are other factors asides learning and development that keeps them engaged in their work. These factors were described to include good relationship with other staff, well-structured management, amongst others, as predicted by 2% of the 89 respondents who agreed to this; while 59 out of the 100 respondents predicts that these other factors keep them engaged much more than learning and development practices. Thus, it can be asserted that the survey shows that amongst the 100 respondents who assert that there are other engaging factors asides learning and development schemes, 41 respondents claim that learning and development practices tops the list of motivating factors in their workplace.

Relating this to the study considered in the literature review, Jain & Khurana (2017) emphasized that there are many important factors that positively impacts employee engagement, however, learning and development is the most important, as it tops the list of engagement factors for employees. The findings of this study differs from Jain & Khurana

(2017)'s findings. From the result of this study as aforementioned earlier, more respondents seem to be more engaged as a result of other factors besides learning and development.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this research was to identify and measure the correlation between learning and development programs and employee engagement. Having raised objective questions and conducting a survey, as seen in previous chapters in this research, the results obtained from the survey would be discussed in this chapter examining and responding to the objective questions while making reference to necessary literatures. The limitations of this research would also be outlined as well as recommendations for further research.

5.2 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed in the literature review, Engetou (2017) highlighted two features, amongst others, that should be evident in the nature of a properly defined learning and development program: First, employees would see training experiences as relevant to their current work environment; and second, trainees need to be self-directed in that they will be active participants in the learning process. From the results of the survey carried out in this research as emphasized in chapter 4, 92% of respondents from Bank X consider their learning and development activities relevant to their roles and environment; and 89% of respondents agree that there is a relevant learning and development program for every staff. Thus, it is safe to align with Engetou's (2017) opinion and thus observe that the nature of Bank X's learning and development program can be considered as properly defined. This test may be also used to safely measure the nature of learning and development practices in other organizations, although this test may not be absolute.

Discussing the correlation between learning and development and employee engagement, Sylvester & Patel (2014) in their study of employee engagement and learning and development pointed out that employees will feel more engaged when they feel they are acquiring knowledge, advancing in their roles and bringing extra value to the business aspirations. This assertion was also tested in the survey carried out in the primary research and results showed that the employees at Bank X were happy with their learning and development programs as the programs were well tailored to equip them for their roles, thus, they felt engaged with achieving the organization's objective. As such, the study in this primary research agrees that there is a significant correlation between learning and development and employee engagement, thus aligning with the assertions made in some studies (Azeem *et al.*,2013; Ariani, 2014; Nawaz et al, 2014; Litwin & Stringer ,2018; amongst many others), as considered in the literature review; although this studies were silent on the extent to which learning and development influences employee engagement but they do admit a positive correlation between the two concepts.

In this light, it is suggested that tailoring learning programs to impact employees and giving them a platform to exercise this knowledge as well as advancement in their roles could boost employee engagement. This is important because an employee who feels unprepared for the burden that comes with his job is more likely to put up poor performance, disengage, or even leave the organization entirely. Sylvester & Patel (2014) concluded by saying, any sum or budget allocated to training, with the aim of engaging employees is likely to contribute more to the organization than when the same amount is expended on training new hires.

In contrast to some studies as considered in the literature review (Azeem *et al.*,2013; Ariani, 2014; Nawaz et al, 2014; Litwin & Stringer ,2018; amongst many others), Jain and Khurana

(2017), in their study considered in the literature review; although agreeing that learning and development practices in the organization significantly impacts employee engagement positively, went ahead to emphasize learning and development practices as the most important factor that contributes to employee engagement. The finding of this primary research rejects this assertion made by Jain and Khurana (2017). The findings of this research, as analyzed in chapter 4, shows that although 87 out of 100 respondents agree that the learning and development programs contribute to their engagement level while at their jobs, 89 of these respondents claim that there are also other motivating factors besides learning and development, while 59 out of 100 respondents further assert that these other engagement factors influence their level of engagement much more than learning and development. Hence, only 41 respondents agree that learning and development engages them much more than other factors. This evidently disagrees with Jain and Khurana (2017) who consider learning and development as the most important factor contributing to increased level of employee engagement.

Additionally, adequate care needs to be taken to ensure that employees are not merely encouraged to engage in learning and development schemes, rather they are made to experience it. Richardson (2019) explains the line of difference between making learners experience a scheme vis-à-vis engaging in one, as highlighted in the literature review. According to him, engaging employees in a learning and development scheme can be described as when employees attend/involve in generic learning and development programs/practices whether or not they gain meaningfully from it; while employees 'experience' development schemes when it is tailored to suit their preferences, thus creating the necessary connection emotionally which lays a solid ground for the aim of the development scheme to be achieved. Richardson (2019) concludes his study by

recommending that experiencing rather than engaging in development activities empowers the employees more.

Furthermore, Baltrunaite and Sekliuckiene's (2020) study on using organizational learning complements Richardson's emphasis on 'experiencing' the learning and development activities. According to Baltrunaite and Sekliuckiene (2020), where an employee has 'experienced' learning and development, there is a possibility of intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing these practices (the 4I model) which in turn fosters organizational growth. This is very useful especially for start-ups growth.

Further discussing assessment criteria for evaluation of learning and development activities in organizations, McGehee and Thayer (1961) as cited by Noe et al (2017) suggested a three-fold approach to determine the types of training and development experiences that should be implemented, namely:

- i. organizational analyses,
- ii. task analyses, and
- iii. person analyses.

Organizational analyses here refer to the focus of the organization on its ability to support training. Task analyses focus on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personal characteristics required to perform the tasks in the organization. Person analyses focus on the needs of the individual, identifying personal characteristics possessed by the particular individual who is believed will make such a person more efficient at his work.

Some basic questions will help the organization develop a proper learning and development plan. These questions are targeted towards different objectives (Eunice, 2014). The first sets

of questions are on how the learning experience should be delivered. This also involves who should participate; where the course should be held; and what types of learning tools should be used in the program, among others. The second aspect of the program development is the creation of a learning experience that improves the transfer of knowledge. It is not enough for the trainees to learn; they must be able and willing to seek new abilities on their job.

It is certain that every organisation adopts methods that are properly suited to drive the objectives sought to be attained from them. Organisations also must understand the different methods that align with the learning and development program developed for employees. Such objectives will not only be used to train staff for immediate needs but to meet future challenges as described by Rhebergen and Ida (2002). This ensures that those employees are trained to take on higher responsibilities and sustainable growth.

A challenge to the approach an organisation may have in developing an efficient L&D program may also include cost, size and the availability of a strong HR function. With many start-ups and technology-based companies in today, it is important that organisations properly assess the approach that is necessary for the organisational and personal goals to see how best to deliver L&D. But these challenges may be overcome when the organisation has important factors that create the need for learning and development.

In an ever-changing world and the need to continue to adapt and innovate, there is a constant need for organisations to stay attractive of talent and also retain them. A consequential result of attracting and retaining a strongly qualified workforce is that the organisation builds a quality brand. Zoran et al (2016) write that this is a direct benefit of an organisation that invests in training and development. Employees are trained, there is strength built in the collaboration, skill and diversity of thoughts, yet uniformity of purpose. Khan et al (2011)

suggest that there is a difference between the brands of a learning organisation and the other that does not and this will be visible in output, performance and engagement of the employees. From the result carried out in Bank X, over 50% of respondents claim that they are exposed to some form of training on monthly basis. It can be assumed that the monthly structured learning and development program would allow for more flexibility and regular updating of structure of learning programs to suit times. It also shows that Bank X invests reasonably in learning and development programs, thus the increased level of employee engagement. Consequently, it may be safe to assume that the high employee engagement would contribute significantly to the employer brand, all things being equal. This finding also agrees with Kang and Sung (2017) who believes that employee engagement boosts supportive employee communication behaviors and eases turnover intentions; and with Kumar and Kapoor (2019) who opine that employee engagement boosts workplace happiness which in turn increases organizational productivity.

Govil (2014) as well as Susomrith and Coetzer (2019) among other benefits of learning and development write on the better quality created out of an employee that is trained. This is not just based on personal goals but also based on the quality of the L&D program. Where such program focuses not only on core technical skills of the individual, but also on communication, management and leadership skills, a holistic and improved staff is the result and that can as much help retention of the staff as it can ensure a robust workforce with excellent competence and character for present and future growth. The findings from the survey revealed that Bank X has a high level of employee engagement amongst staff. Their learning and development programs also cut across technical skills, communication, management and leadership skills, to mention but a few. Thus, agreeing with Govil (2014), Bank X can be said to have a holistic and improved staff.

Munoz and Salinero (2011) as discussed in the literature review, considers that achieving human resource development needs is largely dependent on the strategies put in place. He further noted that a strategic approach to learning and development involves rigorous evaluation of effectiveness, amongst other factors. Relating this to the findings of this primary research, as considered in Chapter 4, Bank X seem to have adopted a strategic approach to their learning and development programs by closely tailoring them to suit the individual needs of employees. This increases the participation of the learners and in turn positively strike employee engagement. Thus, drawing from these, it is suggested that organizations adopt a solid convenient development strategy for their learning and development programs and evaluate from time to time to ensure it consistently achieves the engagement, performance and productivity it is implemented to achieve (Merry, 2014).

Additionally, these organizations must give attention to the key indicators of a properly defined learning and development programs which increases employee engagement. Engetou (2017) asserts that a properly defined program has two features: relevance to the current job and duties of employees; and well-tailored nature to suit the needs of employees. As discussed in Chapter 4, the findings of this study agree with this assertion, and thus, suggest same for organizations as a key assessment criterion of their learning and development programs.

Furthermore, another recommendation for organization relating to learning and development and employee engagement would be the need to ensure that policies/strategies devised for these programs are followed. As such management staff needs demonstrate competence and effectiveness. This recommendation is drawn from Ramakrishna et al. (2012)'s study on training and development, where it was found that employees attended and participated more

in training and development exercises when the management staffs create a good learning atmosphere and are competent enough for such development activities. The findings of this study are also tested and verified in this primary research.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, from the overall result of the survey, one can deduce that respondents at Bank X are fully engaged in the work, they find their job meaningful and important, and are happy with their job (vigor, absorption, and dedication). The survey also reveals the learning and development program at Bank X to be a properly defined one; and the properly defined learning and development programs put in place at Bank X contributes significantly to the increased employee engagement. Hence, this verifies Amanda *et al.*,(2013) assertions discussed in the literature review linking employee engagement to the presence of vigor, dedication and absorption. The primary research also concludes and asserts that there is a positive correlation between learning and development and employee engagement, however, learning and development cannot be said to be the most significant factor that boosts employee engagement in the workplace.

5.4 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This primary research was carried out during the COVID-19 outbreak which introduced massive changes within organizations. It was very difficult to access people for the primary research as a result of effects of the pandemic and subsequent rules implemented by the government in response to the pandemic situation. Thus, the researcher had to limit survey to 100 respondents.

The researcher was also constrained by cost and time. Allowing for greater diversity within a particular work sector or diversity across one work sector may have allowed for more data and a much more in depth study/research. However, the researcher could only take data from one company in the banking sector due to cost restraint and time factor.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

This research investigated the impact learning and development has on employee performance and used a company in the banking sector as case study. The result of this research may be applicable to other companies within the banking sector. However, the results may differ for a different sector. The researcher was constrained by time and resources, amongst other factors, thus, was only able to carry out the survey in one company within the banking sector. Evidently, this research leaves a gap for more research to be done studying the impact of learning and development on employee engagement within other diverse sectors there are.

From this research the researcher realizes the importance of learning and development and how it influences employee engagement. The researcher found that learning and development contributes greatly to employee engagement, although there are several other factors which impact employee engagement much more than learning and development, thus, learning and development is not the most important engagement factor. In conclusion, from the results of the research, the researcher acknowledges the need for organizations to invest in learning and development schemes as this contributes significantly to employee engagement. Thus, learning and development can be considered as a good investment for organizations although

it could be an expensive investment. Such investments should be made according to the capacity of the organization in consideration.

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Hi, there!

I am an HRM post-graduate student who is currently carrying out a research work on THE IMPACT OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT. I would appreciate if you can volunteer and participate in this 10-minutes survey.

This questionnaire is tailored to be fully anonymous and every information obtained during the process of carrying out this research would be used for academic purpose only. Your response would be treated with utmost confidentiality. You also have a right to withdraw from participating in this survey. The questionnaire contains 5 very brief sections.

Thanks in anticipation of your cooperation.

1) What is your gender?

Male

Female

2) What is your Educational level?

Bachelors Degree

Masters Holder

Other

PhD Holder

3) What is your current level in the Bank?

Junior Staff

Senior Staff

Managing Staff

Human Resource Personnel

4) How long have you worked for State Street Bank, Ireland?

1 – 5 years

6 – 10 years

11 – 15 years

16 years and above

5) Have you engaged in any learning and development scheme since you joined the Bank?

Yes

No

Not sure

6) If yes, how often do you engage in these programs?

Monthly

Quarterly

Half Yearly

Yearly

Biannually

Other

7) Which of these best describes the process of learning and development programs in the Bank?

(a) By nomination and appointment

(b) There is a program for every staff

(c) Staff sources for training externally

(d) Others

8) In your opinion, are the learning and development programs you are given related to your current role?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Answer these, if you answered Yes to 8 above

9) What kind of training have you been exposed to:

a. management and organizational support programs

b. Project based training

- c. self-development and leadership programs.
- d. technical skills training
- e. Others.....

SECTION 2: APPROACHES AND METHODS OF L& D PROGRAM

10) Please indicate if you have been educated in any of these areas

	Yes	No
Stress management		
Error management		
Conflict management		
Ethics training		
Technical training		
11) what kind of learning methods have you been exposed to		
Is the training method ...		
Class room based		
On-the-job training		
External conference trainings		
Electronic / online courses		
Coaching / mentoring		

**SECTION 3A-
- EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

The following 8 statements are about how you feel at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever feel this way about your job. If you have never had this feeling, cross the '0' (zero) in the space after the statement. If you have had this feeling, indicate how often you feel it by crossing the number (from 1 to 5) that best describes how frequently you feel that way.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Always
0	1	2	3	4	5
Never	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

1. _____ At my work, I feel bursting with energy (V1)
2. _____ I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose (D1)
3. _____ Time flies when I'm working (A1)
4. _____ I am enthusiastic about my job (D2)
5. _____ When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work (V2)
6. _____ To me, my job is challenging (D3)
7. _____ It is difficult to detach myself from my job (A2)
8. _____ At my job, i always persevere even when thing do not go well (V3)

SECTION 4: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

1. I am engaged in my workplace as a result of the learning and development opportunities available?
2. There are other motivating factors that keep me engaged in my workplace asides from learning and development opportunities?
3. If any, other motivating factors keep me engaged in my work much more than opportunities of learning and development?

APPENDIX B

Correlations									
		At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	I find the work that i do full of meaning and purpose	Time flies when I'm working	I am enthusiastic about my job	When i get up in the morning , i feel like going to work	To me, my job is challengin g	It is difficult to detach myself from my job	At my job, i always persevere even when thing do not go well
At my work, I feel bursting with energy.	Pearson Correlation	1	.526**	.438**	.420**	.518**	-.387**	.452**	.161
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.111
	N	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
I find the work that i do full of meaning and purpose	Pearson Correlation	.526**	1	.539**	.655**	.403**	-.436**	.392**	.305**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.002
	N	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
Time flies when I'm working	Pearson Correlation	.438**	.539**	1	.548**	.362**	-.354**	.323**	.287**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000	.001	.004
	N	99	99	99	99	99	99	99	99
I am enthusiastic about my job	Pearson Correlation	.420**	.655**	.548**	1	.492**	-.400**	.340**	.388**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.001	.000

	N	99	99	99	100	100	100	100	100
When i get up in the morning, i feel like going to work	Pearson Correlation	.518**	.403**	.362**	.492**	1	-.438**	.379**	.407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	99	99	99	100	100	100	100	100
To me, my job is challenging	Pearson Correlation	-.387**	-.436**	-.354**	-.400**	-.438**	1	-.284**	-.315**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		.004	.001
	N	99	99	99	100	100	100	100	100
It is difficult to detach myself from my job	Pearson Correlation	.452**	.392**	.323**	.340**	.379**	-.284**	1	.539**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.001	.000	.004		.000
	N	99	99	99	100	100	100	100	100
At my job, i always persevere even when thing do not go well	Pearson Correlation	.161	.305**	.287**	.388**	.407**	-.315**	.539**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.111	.002	.004	.000	.000	.001	.000	
	N	99	99	99	100	100	100	100	100
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									

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